

## **Record of the Proceedings of the Meeting of the Governing Body of Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance held on Friday 13 March 2020 at 14.00 at College.**

**Present:** Monisha Shah (Chair)  
Clarie Middleton (Principal)  
Rogan Dixon  
Clare Guindi  
George Littlejohn  
Hassan Mahamdallie  
Professor Mike Saks  
Thomas Wilson (Staff governor)

**In attendance:** Dr Andrew Walker (Vice Principal)  
Dr Sally East (Director of Finance & Operations)  
Angela Taylor (Academic Registrar)  
Jim Benson (Governance Advisor) Secretary to the Board

### **2020/19 Welcome**

Clare Guindi was welcomed to her first meeting of the Board as a Student Governor. The Chair thanked all staff and Governors who attended the meeting, noting the recent PHE advice in the corona virus situation which had prevented several Governors from travelling to the meeting.

### **2020/20 Apologies**

Apologies were received from Rod Brown, Matthew Condon, Paul Dale, Sarah Howard, Don Massey, Michael Oyo (Student Observer), Jennifer Sims, Kathryn Southworth and Sam Perez-Lumbreras (Staff governor).

### **2020/21 Conflict of Interest Declarations**

No new conflicts of interest were declared.

### **2020/22 Confirmation of minutes**

22.1 The Board agreed that the following amendments (underlined> should be made so that they read as follows:

#### **7.1 Student recruitment**

i. Student Recruitment looked extremely positive with there being 2700 applications received this year which was an increase of some 1200 on the previous year.

## **7.5 Sustainability**

The College had not been viewed favourably in a recently published league table report on sustainability. The Vice Principal confirmed that this work would be taken forward with the first meeting of the Environmental Sustainability Committee on 26 February 2020 which aimed to engage students further with these issues.

22.2 The Board confirmed the rest as an accurate record.

### **2020/23 Matters arising from the minutes**

#### **23.1 Update on Governor Development**

The Vice Principal stated he was still waiting to hear from a few Governors about the development opportunity events that they planned to attend. The Chair also reminded Governors to complete and return the proforma that had been distributed once they had attended an event.

#### **23.2 Catalyst Project**

The Principal confirmed that the Project was progressing well despite being interrupted by waterlogging of the site. It was noted that Module 1 was due to be delivered next week with Module 2 following in April. This was noted by the Board.

#### **23.3 Update on establishment of Access and Participation Committee**

The Principal confirmed that she was in the process of approaching people to be appointed to the Committee and was in the process of discussing the membership with the Governance Committee. She would update the Board in due course.

#### **23.4 Governance Committee-Nominations for a second Student Governor**

It was noted that both Ms Claire Gunidi and Mr Michael Oyar had accepted their appointments as Student Governor and Student Observer respectively.

### **2020/24 Principal's Report**

Additional matters on the Report were detailed to the Board as follows:

#### **Student Recruitment**

i. It was confirmed that Student Recruitment was reaching a crucial.. The Principal agreed to share the figures for the number of international students that had been made offers at the earliest convenience.

ii. In response to a question it was confirmed that the process for making offers to students applying for the Acting course was necessarily complex as a short audition was a part of the process.

#### **Cause 4**

It was noted that a presentation on the Cause 4 campaign had been made to the Chairs of Committee meeting on 5 March 2020 and it had been agreed to form a steering committee so that the Board could have some input to the process.

George Littlejohn confirmed he was content to Chair this group. It was further confirmed:

i. That all Governors would be informed of the Steering Group and those who wished to participate could signal their interest to the Chair of Governors

ii. the group would need to ensure that it determined a role for the Governors in the campaign;

ii. to arrange for there to be a presentation on the Cause 4 campaign to a future meeting of the Board.

#### **Mental Health**

The need for enhancing Student Services to deal with cases of mental health was noted and supported by the Board. It was agreed that this would commence with the appointment of a part time professional mental health advisor, possibly shared with another HEI.

Ms Guinidi stated that some students suffered anxiety and stress caused by course demands leading to long hours with apparently unreasonable targets. She added that this was sometimes justified as 'demands of the industry.' The Board were advised by the Staff Member that there was a on-going effort to define what was best practice and not simply to accept what were perceived to be industry standards and expectations. It was agreed that the College should support students to ensure that expectations were presented in a structured manner and to give guidance on dealing with pressures that were inherent in the industry.

#### **24.5 COVID-19**

The Principal confirmed that since her report was drafted the College had undertaken scenario mapping to update the contingency plans and was preparing to respond to COBRA advice when this was provided. The College had previously circulated business continuity plans to all Governors but as this was an evolving situation, it needed continuous updating. The Chair confirmed that she was in regular contact with the Principal and SMT and was content with the arrangements that had been put in place.

It was noted that should the College be required to close at any point before the end of June there would be considerable disruption to final year assessments. The Vice Principal stated that as a contingency the External Examiners had been consulted on possible alternative assessments and it was noted that GuildHE had advised previously when final year assessments had been disrupted. The Board requested that it be kept updated and provided with information on the potential impact including details on the number of students that might be affected.

#### **24.6 Staffing**

Dr Sally East was welcomed as the substantive Director of Finance and Operations. The Board noted that Jean Bibbey was to leave the College and thanked her for her outstanding service.

#### **2020/25 Academic Report**

Key matters arising from the report were as follows:

##### **25.1 Academic Board.**

- i. The report outlining that six of the College's staff held external examiner appointments and five were engaged in external review activities was noted and demonstrated that the College was well connected externally.
- ii. The three recent validation events for the MA Light in Performance, BA (Hons) Digital Content Design, and BA (Hons) Virtual Theatre and Digital Experiences were noted.
- iii. In relation to degree outcomes, the proportion of 'good' degrees being awarded over the past five years was given consideration by the Board. The Board noted that the external examiners had confirmed the standards of the awards, but agreed that the algorithms used by the College to calculate its own awards, in light of its new Degree Awarding Powers, and its outcome statements should assure stakeholders that rigorous standards were being applied. The Vice Principal agreed to report back on this issue later in the academic year.

##### **25.2 Learning Quality and Standards Committee.**

- i. The Board noted the College Productions Annual Monitoring Report for 2018-19 and reported that there had been a much more diverse body of directors and playwrights engaged by the programmes overall than in previous years. This was welcomed by the Board and it was agreed that this should be discussed further at the Equality and Diversity Committee.
- ii. It was confirmed that the College's external student transfer policy was an OfS requirement and needed to be placed alongside the Student Protection Plan on

the website. It was noted that the only change required to the Student Protection Plan was updating the deadlines.

### **25.3 Environment and Sustainability Committee.**

It was agreed that details from the Environment and Sustainability Committee should be included in future Academic Reports.

### **2020/26 Student Report**

The Chair reported on this matter on behalf of the President of the Students' Union. She advised:

- i. That there had been a Mental Health day which focused on the issues highlighted by the death of Caroline Flack;
- ii. that participation in Sports Relief had been enthusiastic;
- iii. activities around the Symposium continued and Governors would be invited to attend events;
- iv. that the efforts of the College around the COVID 19 issue were appreciated and the Students' Union were supportive of the position adopted by the College, and the regular email communications from the Principal.

This was noted by the Board.

### **2020/27 Finance Report**

#### **27.1 Management Accounts.**

- i. The Director of Finance and Operations advised that it was likely that a break-even budget would be delivered at the end of the year. She added that some transactions were likely to be capitalised which would lead to a slightly more favourable balance and confirmed that the cash reserves had not been used. The Director of Finance and Operations concluded her report by confirming that she had been providing the Chair of F&GP Committee with financial updates and, with the implementation of the new finance system, this would extend to departmental information.
- ii. In response to a question about the potential impact of COVID 19, the Director of Finance and Operations confirmed that there would be separate transaction reports generated for matters that would be needed for insurance and compensation claims. It was noted that separate business recovery arrangements were in place for Christopher Court and the Student Loan Company was about to issue a guidance note about the arrangements that would be put in place for the next academic year.

## **27.2 Implementation of the IT Systems - Update.**

- i. The Director of Finance and Operations confirmed that following the two remote training sessions that had taken place, the chartered accounts and supplier details had been loaded on to the new system and the management accounts would be added next week. She confirmed that all staff who raised Purchase Orders would have to be trained on the system.
- ii. In relation to the HR system it was confirmed that while two training sessions had also taken place, the system was not user friendly in terms of HESA returns although the data could be manipulated for this purpose. In response to a question about HR taking over payroll, the Director of Finance and Operations confirmed that payments to self-employed contractors would still be made by Finance. She added that data cleansing should also see that HR are able to process payments efficiently. The Principal stated that the cultural change across the College prompted by the implementation of the new systems could not be under-estimated.
- iii. The Director of Finance and Operations confirmed that she had conducted the negotiations with Sky and had successfully terminated their contract with the College.
- iv. The Chair advised that the College should aspire to implementing the London Living Wage to all College employees including contractors. It was agreed that catering, cleaning and security staff had shown dedication and loyalty in carrying out their duties and deserved support should they be impacted by COVID 19 issues. The Director of Finance and Operations agreed to establish which staff were not on the London Living Wage and those who might be affected by being laid off as a result of COVID 19. She would liaise with the Chair on any cases for concern and possible remedial actions as soon as possible.

## **2019/28 Key points from the minutes of committees**

### **28.1 Finance & General Purposes Committee – 11 February 2020**

The Chair of F&GP Committee confirmed that it had been agreed to defer implementing a new student records system as it had proved cost effective to develop the existing one. He added that a detailed HR report had been presented noting that the new system would be able to generate more meaningful reports. In response to a question the Director of Finance and Operations confirmed that it was possible to monitor the number of people on campus by monitoring their access cards.

### **28.2 Estates Strategy Committee – 18 February 2020**

The Secretary spoke to the paper and asked the Board to note:

- i. The decision in respect of the cost of replacing the boilers in Lamorbey House where the College had entered into a five-year rolling contract for maintenance, service and repair charges;
- ii. the Committee had agreed that the Principal should explore the options of securing additional teaching spaces.

### **28.3 Audit Committee – 24 February 2020**

The Chair of Audit Committee spoke to the paper and asked the Board to note:

- i. That the Risk Register was being redrafted to bring it in line with the new strategic plan and would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee;
- ii. that the performance of the Internal Auditors was improving and they were now providing an effective service to the College;
- iii. Eugene McCrossan had agreed to join the Committee as an external member and the logistics of how this might be facilitated were being attended to.

### **28.4 Chairs of Committee meeting – 5 March 2020**

The Chair gave a verbal report and asked the Board to note:

- i. The meeting had been attended by the Chair, four out of five Committee Chairs, the Director of Finance and Operations and the Principal and a short, formal report of the meeting would be made to the Board on 7 May 2020;
- ii. a presentation on Cause 4 had been given and was well received;
- iii. subjects discussed included staffing and HR, business continuity preparation for Covid-19; student experience and mental health and well-being; on-going monitoring of OfS registration conditions

## **FORMAL BUSINESS**

### **2020/29 Update on the Application for University Title**

29.1 The Vice Principal spoke to the paper advising that Academic Board supported the application for University Title and considered it should be made towards the end of the 2020/21 academic year. Concerns had been expressed about whether the acquisition of University title would dilute the notion of the College being a conservatoire, but it was agreed that the perception of a University had changed and extended to specialist institutions. The Board advised that a stakeholder engagement process should commence at the earliest opportunity on the proposed name of the university. It was noted that achieving University title would present an

opportunity to raise the profile of the College, internationally, nationally and locally. The following was agreed:

- i. To start the process of applying for University Title shortly with a view to having an application ready for submission towards the end of the 2020/21 academic year;
- ii. to contact the Board members who were not able to attend the meeting to ascertain their support for this initiative;

#### **2020/30 Update on the Staffing Report**

30.1 It was noted that an update on staffing had been provided as part of the Principal's report.

#### **2020/31 Research Report**

31.1 The Vice Principal spoke to the paper and asked the Board to note four matters:

- i. The new initiatives set out in the paper such as the Research Podcasts and those undertaken by the Stanislavski Centre for Contemporary Practice;
- ii. the Collaborative Review of Research Degree Provision with the University of East London;
- iii. the Symposium which was due to take place on 14-16 April 2020;
- iv. the Bexley Literary Festival which was due to take place on 15-29 February 2020.

The Board considered the issue of staff entry into the Research Excellence Framework (REF) for 2021. The Vice Principal advised that it was not possible to give a definitive number of staff entries at this stage as discussions were taking place with the University and College Union (UCU) with regard to contractual issues linked to REF research eligibility.

31.1 The Vice Principal thanked Thomas Wilson for his work on the Bexley Literary Festival and for the contributions of Brian Lobel and Nicola Sainsbury.

#### **2020/32 Office for Students Monitoring Conditions**

The Chair advised the Board to consider adopting the proposed RAG system for monitoring the General ongoing conditions of registration with the OfS. SMT would be invited to revise this for the next meeting updating the ratings and providing information as indicated on the template. It was noted that some information would not be available, such as the DELHE outcomes, the NSS results and the full analysis of

the effect of financial support on student access and attainment. The Board agreed that these details could be provided at a later stage and agreed that SMT should provide an update, where possible, on progress against each condition of registration for the next meeting.

**2020/33 Office for Students Communications-General ongoing condition A1: Access and Participation plan-Data Strategy and Transparency Return**

The Board noted that the College's Strategy for data submission as part of the Access and Participation plan had been submitted to the OfS by 28 February 2020. It further noted that the transparency information had to be submitted to the OfS by 23 April 2020.

**2020/34 Report on Student Complaints**

The Chair advised that the information provided to the Board on the College's student complaints was to assure it of the processes and policies in place and not to comment on individual cases. The Board agreed that the paper was useful for institutional learning and showed that the College was receptive to challenge and willing to respond positively to issues of complaint.

**2020/35 Transparent Governance: updates on websites**

The Secretary advised that the purpose of this paper was to inform the Board of the information currently published on the College's website and agree what details should be provided in future. He added that there was a need to ensure the website was not overloaded with superfluous information and to make sure what was not available could be obtained on request. The Board agreed that, in addition to the information currently provided, redacted minutes of each Board meeting should be made available. This would start from the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year and be maintained on a one year rolling basis.

**2020/36**

The Board dates for 2020/21 were agreed as follows:

Tuesday 15 September 2020 (to incorporate an away day)  
Thursday 12 November 2020  
Thursday 21 January 2021  
Thursday 18 March 2021  
Thursday 6 May 2021  
Thursday 1 July 2021

**2020/37 Any other business**

There was none.

**2020/38 Date of next meeting**

The Board noted the next meeting would take place on Thursday 7 May 2020 at 14.00.