

Record of the Proceedings of the Meeting of the Governing Body of Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance held on Thursday 31 March 2022 at the College

Present:

Jennifer Sims (Chair)
Clarie Middleton (Principal)
Rogan Dixon
Anni Domingo
Caroline Jenkins (Staff governor)
George Littlejohn (Vice-Chair)
Dr Brian Lobel (Staff governor)
Don Massey
Professor Mike Saks
Professor Steven Spier

In attendance:

Joseph Lowe – Director of Finance and Operations
Professor Mary Oliver – Vice Principal
Angela Taylor – Academic Registrar
Jim Benson – Secretary

In attendance for Item 6 Principal's Report:

Nolan Smith – Office for Students
David Smy – Office for Students
Brook Storer Church – Office for Students

2021/49 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2021/50 Apologies

These were received from Akshita Brahma (Student governor), Rod Brown and Sylvia Darkwa Ohemeng, Sarah Howard and Hassan Mahamdallie.

2021/51 Conflict of Interest Declarations

The Secretary had a standing declaration a due to his appointment at the University of East London.

2021/52 Confirmation of minutes

Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 January 2022

52.1 The Board approved the minutes for publication.

52.2 It was noted that in minute 38.2 the person that was engaged to assist with the bids for specialist funding was a freelancer and not an interim who had been working with the Vice Principal.

2021/53 Matters arising from the minutes

Confirm details of the statutory return

53.1 The Director of Finance and Operations confirmed that the statutory return had been completed on time.

Provide the Board with the outcome of the Fire Brigade Inspection

53.2 The Director of Finance and Operations stated that in response to the fire brigade inspection minor modifications were made to Lamorbey House. He added that the advice of a fire expert was taken on fitting the fire doors as the recommendations from the Fire Brigade seemed disproportionate. It was confirmed that about two thirds of the work had been completed.

OfS Reportable Events Update

53.3 The Academic Registrar confirmed that this matter was in hand and would be finalised shortly.

53.4 The Secretary confirmed that the Remunerations Committee's Annual Report was published in January 2022.

53.5 The Secretary confirmed that the recommendations outlined in the report from the Governance Committee were being acted on and, in one case, an advert for Board Members would shortly be published.

53.6 The Academic Registrar confirmed that a fully articulated Risk Register would be submitted to the Board in June 2022.

2021/54 Principal's Report

54.1 The Principal stated that the main matter for consideration was the meeting with the representatives from the Office for Students to discuss the arrangements for transferring students from the Academy of Live & Recorded Arts (ALRA). The Principal confirmed that staff were being extremely responsive in this round of student recruitment. The Vice Principal stated that there was concern that making offers without interviews might be having a negative impact to which the Principal confirmed that this practice would be changed if this was the case.

2021/55 Academic Report

The Vice Principal stated that work on developing the single academic framework was progressing more slowly than anticipated due to staff having to cope with additional teaching. She added that in time the single academic framework would ease the teaching workload but for now the priority was to cope within the means available for this academic year.

2021/56 Student Report

56.1 The President of the Students' Union was not available to answer questions.

2021/57 Finance Report

Management Accounts

57.1 The Director of Finance and Operations stated that the development of the finance systems and the financial reporting systems was proceeding satisfactorily.

57.2 The Director of Finance and Operations reported that income for 2021/22 was holding up and should be marginally above budget for the year. He stated that, in relation to expenditure, there needed to be greater costs control on payroll and professional fees. The Director of Finance and Operations advised that payroll expenditure for March 2022 was where it was expected to be and professional fees had fallen below the level it was at in previous months.

57.3 In response to a question the Director of Finance and Operations stated that there had been a positive response from staff in reducing reliance on Visiting Lecturers. It was confirmed that morale had improved as the academic year progressed and the Vice Principal added that giving staff a clear indication of the changes required, as had been achieved through the co-design workshop, tended to encourage positive engagement.

57.4 The Principal advised that the Director of Finance and Operations had managed to break down costs by course but to do this further by module would be an enormous task. The Board noted that the information provided seemed robust and it was useful to see the periodic comparisons.

TRAC Return

57.5 The Director of Finance and Operations confirmed that the TRAC submission was in progress and did not need to be reported to the Board or any of its committees.

2021/58 Key points from minutes of committees

Joint Audit and Finance & General Purposes Committee – 8 February 2022

58.1 The report from the joint meeting was noted by the Board.

Finance & General Purposes Committee – 8 February 2022

58.2 The report from the Committee was noted by the Board.

Audit Committee – 21 February 2022

58.3 The report from the Committee was noted by the Board.

Governance Committee – 31 March 2022

58.4 The Chair that the Committee had recommended Janet Smith, Principal - Havering GFE and 6th form campuses at New City College, to be appointed to the Board of Governors. This was agreed with her term of office commencing on 1 April 2022 for a period of three years. The Chair of the Board was in the process of establishing whether Ms Smith would also be willing to serve on Audit Committee.

Appointment of the Chair of Audit Committee

58.5 It was reported that Don Massey had agreed to be the external Chair of Audit Committee from 1 August 2022 until 31 July 2023.

Appointment of the Chair of Remunerations Committee

58.6 It was reported that Hassan Mahamdallie had agreed to be appointed as Chair of Remunerations Committee. His appointment would commence immediately.

58.7 The Chair advised that the Committee was seeking to make two further Board Member appointments in 2021/22 and a further 2-3 appointments by the end of 2022/23.

Strategic Discussion

2021/59 Strategy Update

59.1 The Chair stated that at some point the Board needed to have a detailed discussion about the future strategic direction of the College. The Principal advised that this might best happen when the outcome of the ISTA bid was known. The Vice Principal added that this should also incorporate an academic development strategy.

59.2 The Vice Principal stated that the ISTA bid highlighted the strengths of the College particularly in the area of research. She added that it was not drafted to a particular template and had been guided by the bid writer. This was noted by the Board.

2021/60 Research and PhD Developments

Dr Lobel added that research at the College would move forward if it could attract larger funds. He added that he was working with Nicola Sainsbury on this matter. This was noted by the Board.

2021/61 Report on Access & Participation

61.1 The Principal advised that the College's Access and Participation Plan was working well in respect of new entrants and this was showing improvement in progression and degree status.

61.2 It was noted that the Principal had met with John Blake (the Director of Fair Access and Participation at the OfS) who had outlined his plans for changing the emphasis of access and participation. Access targets would be reviewed in light of student experience. He had indicated that the College could be a model for the sector in the way that it worked in schools. The Principal confirmed that it had been a useful meeting.

Formal Business

2021/62 Report on Student Complaints and Academic Appeals

The report was noted by the Committee.

2021/63 Office for Students Consultations

The report was noted by the Committee. The Principal confirmed that the College was providing a separate response on the Department for Education consultation on minimum entry requirements, the Augur Report et al although this was following the GuildHE line.

2021/64 Office for Students Communications

The report was noted by the Committee.

2021/65 Any other business

65.1 The Chair thanked SLT for their hard work but requested that an effort be made to produce Board and Committee papers in a more timely fashion.

65.2 The Board were thanked for their help with the ALRA issue. The Principal agreed to have a communications plan in draft by 1 April 2022 and would get back to the OfS once the letter of comfort had been received. She added that the communications plan would need to have input from the OfS.

65.3 It was noted that Lisa Nandy was the local MP for Wigan. It was agreed that she would be a useful contact. The Board advised that both ALRA and the ISTA should feature prominently in the annual report for 2021/22.

2021/66 Dates of future meetings

The Chair asked the Board to note the dates of meetings for 2021/22.

Thursday 5 May 2022
Thursday 30 June 2022

2021/67 Dates of future meetings in 2022/23

The Chair asked the Board to note the dates of meetings for 2022/23 including the dates for Committee meetings:

Thursday 22 September 2022
Thursday 24 November 2022+AGM (to incorporate an away day to start at 10am)
Thursday 26 January 2023
Thursday 23 March 2023
Thursday 4 May 2023
Thursday 6 July 2023

