

MORLEY COLLEGE LIMITED

PROPERTY STRATEGY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2011

Present:

Linda Linehan (Chair)
Stuart Edwards
Martin Goffe (Student Representative)
Kathy McLauchlan (Staff Governor)
Jenny Scribbins (Chair of Governors)
Ela Piotrowska (Principal)

In attendance:

Nick Rampley (Vice Principal)
Cass Breen (Deputy Principal)

Steve Burr and Paul Hinkin (Black Architects) [Item 4 presentation only]

Clerk:

Graham Cooper

Prior to the formal meeting, the Committee received a presentation by Black Architects in relation to Agenda item 4, as follows:-

4. Capital Development Plan – Phase 2 Strategic Priorities (NR)

The Chair welcomed Steve Burr and Paul Hinkin of Black Architects.

Further to the request at the previous meeting for an update on plans to scope work required to improve use of and access to Emma Cons, the Vice Principal explained that the College had now engaged architectural advisors Black Architects. This was to help the College define its needs, to explore how these longer term projects could be realised and to look at options for doing so. The two priorities identified, and which the architects had been instructed to make the subject of an initial feasibility study were:-

- a) to improve the College's accessibility, in particular access to the Art block above the gallery and to the drama studio and ancillary areas beyond the Emma Cons Hall stage; and
- b) inter-linked with the latter, to maximise the potential of the Emma Cons Hall and drama studio spaces.

SB and PH presented the findings of their initial study to the Committee. These were very much ideas for discussion, based on a number of site visits undertaken in December 2010 and January 2011. A Constraints and Opportunities analysis had been undertaken and advice obtained from other specialist firms on specific issues. Some of the key aspects of the suggested design approach included:-

- a) Addressing current accessibility issues from Westminster Bridge Road by creating a new fully accessible entrance pavilion in the garden area connecting to the existing reception area;
- b) An additional accessible link/corridor from the entrance, running down the side of the Emma Cons Hall, providing access to the hall and backstage areas, and possible raising of the hall floor to stage level;
- c) A new vertical core at the rear of that link to improve access;
- d) A remodelled lift and stair core to the Visual Arts Block to improve access;
- e) A new lift to all levels in the Nancy Seear building;
- f) A landmark covered bridge link between the main building, Visual Arts Block and Nancy Seear building to physically link the whole campus, to rationalise student/staff circulation, and enabling a single point of access to the whole campus via the main Westminster Bridge Road entrance.

The Committee explored each of these ideas further with SB and PH, who advised that the overall suggested scheme could be naturally divided into three phases, with (a) and (b) representing the key elements of the first phase, (c) (d) and (e) as the second phase and (f) representing the final third phase. It was explained that to take these ideas forward, the next stage would be to develop the ideas further to more substantive plans to commence consultation with planning authorities. The first stage would likely take around six months, with a further 3-6 months for planning, suggesting a one year timeframe before any of the work could commence. Breaking down a planning application into phases could help to avoid any obstacles created by the third phase (likely to be the most challenging from a planning viewpoint) from holding up the earlier phases.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked SB and PH for their presentation and ideas.

[SB and PH left the meeting. The Committee resumed discussion on this item later in the meeting, as minuted below]

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2011

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.

3. Matters arising other than on the Agenda

i) Health & Beauty Studio – The Vice Principal advised that plans for a new health and beauty studio had not re-emerged a part of this year's Curriculum Review and Development, and that this was not regarded as a priority.

ii) Jewellery Studio – A query had been raised at the previous meeting in relation to the suitability for wheelchair users of the height of workstations. The Staff Governor confirmed the workstations to be satisfactory, and it was noted that one wheelchair user was already using the equipment very satisfactorily.

4. Capital Development Plan – Phase 2 Strategic Priorities (NR)

The Committee discussed further the way forward with regard to the scoping study and related ideas put forward by Black Architects. In particular, the Chair of Governors was keen to establish the extent to which Black had been commissioned to work on proposals and how the

College would move forward in tendering and appointing for the next stage of the development work. The Vice Principal advised that Black had been appointed to develop possible options, for which a small budget had been approved, and that they had now met this brief. Some ball-park costs associated with these ideas had only just been provided, and not yet reviewed.

Whilst appreciating the benefits of many of the ideas put forward, the Committee noted that the CLT had not at this stage had the opportunity to formulate firm proposals based upon these. Also, in taking any ideas forward, the Committee considered that it was important for this to be done against the background of a very clear strategy for future use of the Emma Cons Hall and associated areas. Both of these would be important aspects of presenting ideas to the Governing Body as a whole. The Chair suggested, nevertheless, that it was important to start the process of engaging other Governors, and it was therefore proposed that a further discussion should take place either at the Governor/CLT strategy meeting on 2nd April or at the next Governing Body meeting. The Committee requested that such a discussion should be facilitated by papers that include:-

- a) The CLT's views on future strategy for use of the Emma Cons Hall and associated areas;
- b) The CLT's views on the ideas and suggestions put forward by Black Architects;
- c) An indication of the likely costs associated with the various ideas.
- d) Clarity with regard to the process for taking proposals forward, by way of an outline staged plan, to include major decision points and the stages for tendering for each piece of work on the proposals/plans.

Action:- Paper to go forward, covering the above, to either the 2 April Governor/CLT strategy meeting or the Governing Body meeting on 4 April.

5. Capital Development Plan – Phase 1 – Update on progress (NR)

As requested at the previous meeting, as part of his update, the Vice Principal provided the Committee with enrolment data relating to courses utilising the new facilities already completed as part of Phase 1, including the Jewellery Studio, Digital Design Studio and Music Technology Suite. He noted, however, that he considered it too early to be making a formal evaluation, and also that enrolment figures for these courses needed to be looked at in the context of the wider fall in enrolment numbers. Now that these facilities had been completed, it would be important to ensure that future marketing activity enables the College to derive maximum value from them.

The Vice Principal then reported on outstanding and newly identified projects, as follows:-

a) Upgrading of the Telephone Network

An exercise to determine the optimum configuration of a new system had been undertaken during the course of the current term. Installation remained planned for the Easter vacation, with costs expected to remain within the approved £55-60k budget.

b) Refurbishment of the Holst Room

This work remained planned for the summer 2011 recess, and at an estimated cost of £27-30k.

c) Provision of External Lighting and Signage

The Property Strategy and Finance & Resources Committees had previously requested more detailed proposals for improving the College's external profile through new lighting and signage. The Vice Principal advised that a firm of lighting consultants (Lightsmiths) had been commissioned to provide a specification for the project that could be used for contractors to quote against, and which took into account the issues which the local council's planning department had indicated would need to be addressed.

A copy of the consultants' presentation had been circulated to members of the Committee. The proposals encompassed installing uplighters to the College's main entrance and directional lighting in the garden that would use the trees and shrubs not only as a focus, but to create striking silhouettes against the wall. Illuminated signage would be added to the entrance canopy and to the western façade of the Library/Holst Room which would attract attention from Lambeth North station. The presentation included illustrations of the proposed lighting and signage, together with examples of the types of effect intended to be created.

The Vice Principal advised that the proposed equipment costs were known and that a brief had been sent out to three firms of contractors, with responses expected in the next few weeks and the lighting work planned to be undertaken around Easter. He also confirmed that signage would be in accordance with the College's new branding. It was expected that total project costs would remain within the original estimate of c. £30k. A second, later, phase of the project envisaged use of the College façade for projections to promote events or convey information, together with an extension of the uplighting and landscape lighting.

The Committee considered the implications for this project that redevelopment of the entrance to the College, as suggested by the architects earlier in the meeting, might have. However, such redevelopment would be some time in the future and the Principal stressed the urgent need for and the essential role of the planned lighting and signage. It was considered an important goal nonetheless, in the event of future redevelopment, that as much as possible of the lighting and signage should either remain effective or be reusable in any new entrance configuration.

The Committee endorsed the project going ahead. The Vice Principal advised that he would also be presenting the detail to the forthcoming Finance & Resources Committee.

d) Modernising of the Ceramics Studio

It had been reported to the previous meeting that, for Health & Safety reasons, work was necessary to improve the ceramics studio facilities, in particular re-siting of the kilns and the glazing materials, both of which constituted significant hazards. By expanding into an adjacent classroom to provide the additional space required, the project would also enable a modest expansion in the College's ceramics provision, helping it to make the most of opportunities arising from other college's closing down this activity.

A copy of the business case had been circulated to members of the Committee, though the Vice Principal re-emphasised that the main reason for the work was to address Health & Safety concerns and that this was regarded as a priority by the College Leadership Team. Noting total anticipated costs, including equipment, of £143k, the Committee endorsed the project, with approval of the expenditure required from the Finance & Resources Committee.

e) Renewal of Network Server Hardware

The Vice Principal explained that the replacement of the computer server equipment, whilst not a property issue, had been included within the Capital Development Plan since it constituted a significant capital outlay, and needed to go forward to the Finance & Resources Committee. The Committee reflected upon current technological advances and the increasing presence of 'cloud computing'. Governors stressed the importance of maintaining an awareness of such developments to ensure that the College does not get caught out by embarking on major expenditure on equipment that might become redundant in the near future. The Committee also noted that approval of the College's ILT strategy falls within the remit of the Quality & Standards Committee. The Vice Principal confirmed that alternatives had been considered but that the current equipment was nearing the end of its reliable useful life and needed to be replaced in the short

term. The new equipment would be depreciated over a three year period. The significant up front costs would also be off-set by substantial annual maintenance savings.

f) Refurbishment of Sculpture Studio (Pelham Hall)

The Vice Principal advised that the re-wiring of Pelham Hall had long been identified as a capital priority and that it had been envisaged that the cost of this would be met from the annual capital budget rather than from the Development Reserve. However, it was now considered that closure of the building for this work presented an opportunity to undertake other much needed repair and refurbishment work to an area which had been somewhat neglected by the College in recent years. Furthermore, in assessing the potential of the building for improvement, certain structural issues had become apparent which needed addressing.

An extensive scheme for improvement and refurbishment which provided for the department's desired requirements had been costed by the building surveyor at over £300k. This envisaged not only the necessary works required and complete refurbishment of the interior, but also better utilisation of space by construction of much increased storage area at mezzanine level, installation of an internal hoist, provision of a disabled toilet and complete replacement of the roof. A less ambitious plan, with a total cost estimate of £169k, was recommended by the CLT and presented to the Committee.

The Committee noted the absence of a business case for this proposal. Whilst the Vice Principal highlighted that much of the work required, including the re-wiring and structural repairs, was a necessity, the Chair of Governors nevertheless asked that when the proposal goes forward to the Finance & Resources Committee for approval, it includes details of the numbers of students that use Pelham Hall. She considered it important for Governors to be provided with such a context when assessing proposals, in order to demonstrate that the expenditure is reasonable. The Principal highlighted the need for a template, to be completed for future proposals going forward to the Committees, to ensure relevant information is provided.

g) Expansion of Current Fashion Studio and Creation of Additional Studio

The Vice Principal advised that this proposal had emerged only recently from the Curriculum Review and Development process. Fashion was one of the most in-demand areas of the College's provision. Capacity could be increased by knocking through the current studio to the adjacent classroom and by dedicating a further large classroom for fashion use. The two classrooms that would be affected were relatively under-utilised and the CLT was confident that demand was such that the fashion studios would prove to be a far more effective utilisation of the space. The work would not involve major structural work and the Vice Principal was hopeful of having an estimate of costs in time for the forthcoming Finance & Resources Committee.

A business case was circulated and was reviewed by the Committee. The Chair of Governors highlighted a lack of rigour in some parts of the proposal, with regard to the forecasting of enrolments against increased capacity. She emphasised a need to demonstrate that there has been adequate thinking behind proposals of this nature. The Chair noted that once again a standard template for completion, setting out the rationale, costs and benefits would be useful.

The Committee endorsed the proposal to go forward to the Finance & Resources Committee, but highlighted that that Committee would need to be provided with a much clearer picture of the total costs of all projects, set in the context of the available budget. In the event that the F&R Committee felt that the aggregate spending on capital projects was too great, this Committee might need to further reappraise which projects should go ahead.

Actions:

- i) Signage & Lighting proposal to go forward to the Finance & Resources Committee.
- ii) Modernisation of the Ceramics Studio proposal to go forward to the Finance & Resources Committee.
- iii) Sculpture studio proposal to Finance & Resources Committee to include details of student numbers using the facility.
- iv) Template to be developed, to be completed for future proposals to ensure all relevant business case information is provided.
- v) Finance & Resources Committee to be provided with greater detail on the sum of and breakdown of proposed capital projects, appropriately categorised and set against the context of agreed budgets.

6. Maintenance Plan Update (NR)

The Vice Principal provided an update on the significant items of maintenance work being undertaken or planned in the present year, bringing Governors' attention in particular to replacement of the disabled stair lifts in the Nancy Seear building, upon which work had already commenced. He explained that all items of work listed in the paper were covered by either the maintenance budget or annual capital budget.

Noting progress, Governors asked again that future reporting also includes the financial context in order that the Committee is able to see the sum of expenditure relative to budget and is therefore able to fully evaluate priorities and the wider financial implications of giving its support for individual projects. The Vice Principal confirmed that this would be included as part of future reporting to both this Committee and the Finance & Resources Committee. The Chair also reiterated the need for reports to state clearly into which category (maintenance, upgrades, longer term plans) items fell.

Actions:

- i) Future reporting to include the financial context of property strategy decisions.
- ii) Future reporting always to allocate information clearly between maintenance, upgrades to facilities or equipment (quality improvements) and longer term, more strategic changes or improvements to the use of areas of the College relating to future planning/markets etc.


7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Date of next meeting (GC)

The date of the next meeting is 16 May 2011.

Graham Cooper
Clerk to the Governing Body

Signed.....
Linda Linehan, Chair