

Minutes of Learning & Quality Committee held virtually at 2pm on 03 March 2021

Present: Prue Amner (joined the meeting at 3.40pm), Stephen Burke, Vanessa Cooter, Tim Jackson & Tim Mason (Chair).

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Helen Brennan Director Student Services (Min 53)
Liz Davies Quality & Standards Manager (Min 59)
Pat Denham Interim Vice-Principal Quality & Learning
Paola Schweitzer Clerk to the Corporation
Sarah Warren Director of Learning for Young People (Min60)
Tony Wright HE Manager (Min 60)
Penny Wycherley Interim Principal

Minutes

1 – Standing Items

48 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence. Prue joined the meeting late due to a mix up with the start time.

49 Membership

Following a discussion at Search & Governance Committee the day before and subject to Association of College guidance, Phoenix would be invited to join Learning & Quality Committee as an observer.

50 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

51 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 November 2020 were **Agreed** as a correct record.

52 Matters Arising

Minute 46: Quality Improvement Plan: This was covered in Pat's report (Min. 57).

2 – Matters for Discussion & Decision

53 Equality and Diversity Targets

Helen joined the meeting and presented paper 2780/21/L&Q setting out the proposed equality and diversity indicators and targets.

The indicators and targets would inform the College's Equality Policy and Single Equality Scheme, which would be brought to Corporation for approval on 06 July 2021, and ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. They reflected the revised College priorities for 2020/21 and would be reviewed following the proposed merger with Portsmouth College. There was a discussion and it was **Agreed** the indicators and targets would be amended to:

- Refer to advancing opportunities for everyone (not just those with protected characteristics)
- Amend indicator 2: achievement rates are consistent across student cohorts
- Clarify indicator 4: proportionate representation with local community
- Refer to social enterprise in target 3(c)

One governor wondered whether the 4th indicator should be included as it was a management action. Governors believed the targets were robust and **Agreed** the proposed targets.

Helen left the meeting.

54 Merger Update

Penny provided an update on the proposed merger with Portsmouth College, focusing on learning and quality.

It is proposed that Portsmouth College's 75 existing SEND students plus any new students would move from Tangier Road to the Tower at Cosham and the legalities of amending students' ECHPs to transfer provision was in hand. These students had more complex but not necessarily higher needs than Highbury students. In response to a question, Penny stated that initially Portsmouth College staff were nervous of the move but they now seemed happier and were visiting the College on a regular basis. This was important as staff support had a direct bearing on parents' support. Both colleges were planning to work closely with parents. The College was exploring the feasibility of a Centre of Excellence for students with high needs using accommodation in the Tower. Portsmouth City Council were supportive, believing it would enhance student opportunity, experience and employability pathways. Tim M stated that a social enterprise called Toucan Diversity could provide training for staff in this area.

Portsmouth College had approval to run T levels in health and science and it was proposed that the health pathway would be taught at Cosham and the science pathway at Portsmouth College. This provision was covered in the ESFA funding bid to be submitted by 26 March 2021. Applications for T levels in construction, engineering and digital would be submitted. Governors were pleased that the merger offered opportunities to expand the T level programme. There was a brief discussion on the likely focus on green jobs and retrofitting to respond to the high level of unemployment as a result of the pandemic however this would be constrained by the curriculum on the T Levels. It was agreed that Tim M and Pat would talk further about links with Havant Climate Alliance. Vanessa referred to the budget announcement naming Portsmouth International Port as a key UK port and suggested the College might respond to the opportunities this presented.

There had not yet been discussions about the quality cycle for 2021/22 between the two colleges but work was underway to ensure consistency in approach for example a single definition of attendance. In response to a question, Penny stated that she had seen no indication that Portsmouth College's Ofsted grade of *Good* had slipped since it was inspected in 2017. Penny confirmed that some work was required at Portsmouth College on apprenticeships but not on the scale required at Highbury. Work was underway on a draft leadership and management structure for the new college but no major changes were envisaged.

Tim M thanked Penny for this useful update.

55 Covid-19 update with reference to learning outcomes and quality assurance

Pat provided a Covid-19 update to governors, noting that the College had continued to offer education and training to students throughout lockdown. The College was organising a phased return from 08 March starting with vulnerable students, 16-19 year old apprentices with practicals and/or end point assessments, high level 16-18 year olds and finally all remaining adult provision. The aim was to see all classroom based students onsite by the Easter break. Individual learning and assessment plans would be drawn up and appropriate support identified. The College was working with staff to ensure they felt safe, supported and not overwhelmed.

Preparations were in hand for the testing of students with the expectation that after two or three tests in College, most students would self-test at home. It was not possible for the College to enforce testing so other precautions would continue to be taken. Staff were in College this week for testing and to collect their home testing kits. Feedback from surveys indicated that student and staff were very happy with safety measures in the College. Tim M noted that learner voice feedback indicated that students wanted tougher enforcement of mask wearing. Pat confirmed the College ensured the students adhered to best practice and was linking behaviours to employability skills. Tim J asked how the College ensured that Covid-19 compliant behaviours didn't negatively impact other health and safety requirements and Pat confirmed that messages were reinforced in a number of ways, not just verbal. Pat concluded by stating that, notwithstanding the fact that students were keen to return

to College, remote learning offered some interesting lessons to carry forward. Governors thanked Pat for her update and noted that, coupled with the VP report, it provided assurance that the College was managing Covid-19 well.

56 Learning & Quality and Covid-19 Risk Register

Penny introduced paper 2781/21/L&Q which set out the learning and quality risk register as well as the Covid-19 risk register which Corporation had agreed the Committee would review. Risk registers were updated every half term and reference would be made to changes from the previous register.

Penny noted that risks scoring 10 and above featured on the headline risk register. The biggest risk remained the IT system and it was anticipated this would be resolved in the next six weeks. Ofsted had suspended inspections until the next academic year, with the exception of nurseries. Tim J asked about the apprenticeship risk and its continuing score of 14, asking whether Penny was happy the issue was now under control. Penny stated that the College had now recruited some specialist support to resolve the outstanding issues and whilst there was still a way to go, the College was getting there. The Covid-19 risk register provided detail on the risks and how they were being managed. It would be reassessed in the light of students returning to College the following week. Governors **Noted** the learning and quality and the Covid-19 risk registers.

57 VP Learning & Quality Monitoring Report

The VP Learning & Quality Monitoring Report (paper 2782/21/L&Q) provided updates in a number of areas including teaching, learning and assessments, staff development, 16-19 Disadvantaged Funding, English and maths, curriculum developments including T Levels and the Quality Improvement Plan. The report was taken as read with Pat updating governors on developments subsequent to the report being written.

The Teachers Conference/Staff Development Day had been postponed but many of the training sessions were delivered remotely. These would be shared with governors. A programme of training had been developed for teachers and this included Nearpod, an interactive platform through which students could follow lessons, watch videos, answer quizzes etc on their phones. The College was developing a Communities of Practice with Derby College to implement changes that improve support for learners. Kara Hall, Learning & Development Manager, would shortly complete the ETF's six month Advanced Mentoring Programme which would enable a more effective and formal mentoring programme within the College for new staff. The College had been awarded £214,061 of disadvantaged funding to support learners who had fallen behind. Funding was directed at learners who were identified as high risk and was being used to provide intensive support in maths and/or English including the use of maths coaches. All learners took part in work experience/placements during their study either through their qualification, as part of the 540 study programme hours or a 45 day industry placement. This had been

challenging during the pandemic and whilst there were opportunities for virtual work placements, these were hard to secure as they were national and offered on a first come, first served basis. It was hoped the situation would improve in the summer term. Pat confirmed that funding for the 45 day industry placements would not now be clawed back. Finally, the report provided an overview of destinations of learners who completed a course or apprenticeship in 2019/20. In response to a question Pat confirmed that work was underway to ensure this information was more granular.

Governors thanked Pat for her comprehensive report.

58 **Apprenticeship Update**

Craig presented paper 2783/21/L&Q providing an update on apprenticeships.

The apprenticeship team's focus had widened since the last report and included:

- Getting apprentices to completion against the backdrop of current lockdown restrictions. The booking of end point assessments remained a challenge.
- Restructuring the apprenticeship team. A new management structure would improve oversight and carry out the intervention activities required.
- Implementing new progress, monitoring and management information tools to improve monitoring, forecasting and intervention activities.
- Creating working groups to review all apprenticeship processes to identify and action improvements.

Craig noted that progress had been made since the report had been written, with 697 apprentices on programme, 37% of whom were out of funding. Apprenticeship achievement was currently 47.7%. The number of furloughed apprentices had increased to 32 and there had been 8 redundancies. Tim J asked how optimistic Craig felt that apprentices would finish their apprenticeships. Craig stated that he was more confident than previously, with forecasts predicting a further 200 completions by the end of the year dependent on a number of factors such as the availability of end point assessments (EPA). Some EPAs were now more flexible and permitted online testing for example, and the College was using as many of these allowances as possible. In response to a question, Craig confirmed that he sat on several employer-led skills boards in the region and beyond and so was able to see how this agenda would develop with regards to employers' needs.

Tim M congratulated Rob Abdul, teacher and assessor in Digital Marketing, who had gained ten distinction outcomes at EPA in a row during the pandemic. Craig noted that there were also four distinctions in journalism the previous week, the challenge was getting the numbers through.

Governors **Noted** the apprenticeship update.

59 **Learner Voice (paper 2784/21/L&Q)**

Liz provided an update on learner voice within the College.

The report identified the learner voice cycle and framework for 2020/21 and included how outcomes were fed back to students and relevant staff. The quality cycle had been revised to include the different forums and mechanisms for learner voice and activities were aligned to help the College constantly evaluate its processes and improve the learner experience. The report also provided feedback from learners concerning teaching, support and Covid safety/testing in the spring term. The report to the next meeting would include the HE learner voice.

Tim M noted that previously the College had multiple mechanisms for collecting learner views but they were disjointed. He welcomed the new framework and believed there was greater engagement now students could see how the College responded to their views. In response to a question Liz stated that *'you said, we did'* was fed back to students in a number of ways including posters, student bulletin articles and course reps. Tim M suggested there should be a lead governor for staff, in the same way that there was one for students. Penny noted that the College was about to sign the AoC Charter on Mental Health and Wellbeing and one of its recommendations was that a lead governor be assigned to this area. This would be discussed at the forthcoming Corporation meeting. A staff forum, open to all staff, had been created and recently discussed the merger and catering arrangements. The College's health and safety committee also covered staff wellbeing.

Governors **Noted** the current learner voice forums and **Agreed** the various methods of engagement to collect the learner voice and that it was included in the overall quality cycle in 2020/21. Governors also **Agreed** that there should be a governor/learner voice event in the summer term.

Liz left the meeting.

60 HE Update on Partnership (paper 2785/21/L&Q)

Tony and Sarah joined the meeting and gave a presentation summarising the College's partnership with the University of Portsmouth since September 2020.

The report set out the new higher education (HE) meeting structure and identified the activities and developments underway with the University. It also identified future actions including formally establishing a partnership arrangement with the University as a main HE partner (meaning the College would no longer have to subscribe to the Office for Students). The report also outlined the low volume of HNC/NHD enrolments and the growing number of Access enrolments.

The following groups had been created:

- Partnership Working Group (half termly) to develop progression pathways, learner engagement experiences and relationships across faculties.

- The Strategic HE group (termly) to discuss strategies to provide access and progression routes to HE.
- HE Quality Review Board (termly) to monitor the learner experience and quality of existing provision
- HE Learner Forum to meet with learners (terms of reference to be agreed).

The College currently offered HNC/HND qualifications in business, computing, built environment and engineering (electrical and mechanical) and had a total of 70 enrolments in 2020/21. Only HNC computing had more than ten students and the University of Portsmouth would not consider a partnership in areas where there were small numbers. The College believed it was not feasible to run courses with small numbers (they were currently run on a breakeven basis) as it didn't offer a good HE experience. Exploratory work was being undertaken regarding the creation of a consortium to address this issue. Discussions with staff and learners were ongoing. Pat emphasised the College was not closing its HNC/D provision at this stage.

Over the last 18 months the College had enrolled a large number of online Access to HE students, 25-30% of whom had a Portsmouth postcode. The University was interested in these students as they were more likely to progress to the University and further work was being undertaken to explore students pathways. Finally, a great deal of communication was taking place with faculty members to examine curriculum planning including business and criminology.

Vanessa asked if the proposed merger with Portsmouth College would, given their A level provision, open more opportunities. Pat believed it would and that alignment between pathways, including T Levels, would be enhanced. Tim M thanked Tony and Sarah for reporting on these exciting HE developments. Governors **Noted** the report and the intention to discontinue with HNC/D provision due to low numbers.

Tony and Sarah left the meeting

61 **Ofsted Guidance & Framework on What's working well in remote education: A review of remote education provision**

Pat presented paper 2786/21/L&Q updating the Committee on the Ofsted guidance and framework as well as the College's teaching and learning guidance document for the delivery of remote learning.

The senior management team had self-assessed against the Ofsted framework published by the Department for Education, identifying strengths and gaps that would further inform remote learning and assessment. The College's guidance document was produced by Kara and Advanced Practitioners and captured best practice identified by Ofsted. Governors congratulated staff on the useful document and noted that Covid-19 had instigated the development of technologies to support online learning, some of which could inform future learning.

Vanessa noted the learning journey for teaching staff had been amazing since the start of the pandemic, with staff sharing good practice and no longer afraid of trying new things. When face to face learning resumed, practice would need to adapt and, for example accommodate the use of devices in class. Tim J mentioned Vivox which enabled people to type into their phones with answers appearing on a smart board and agreed to share this information with Pat. Prue also expressed an interest in supporting the College with her pedagogical background experience. Finally, Prue asked if the IT help desk supported students and Pat confirmed it did, including telephone support. She noted there was a greater understanding of curriculum requirements now Stuart (whose portfolio as Director of Operations included IT) was a member of SLT. Tim M thanked Pat for the report, which governors **Noted**.

62 Committee Business Plan 2021

Paola presented paper 2787/21/L&Q setting out the Committee's business plan for 202, noting that it would need reviewing in the light of the merger. Pat noted that the Committee had approved the Quality Strategy in the autumn term so it would return to the Committee again this autumn (not in June as in the plan). Governors **Agreed** the Committee's 2021 business plan.

63 Meeting without staff and students present

Governors were happy with the meeting, noting that reports were clear and focused on students. They noted the area of most concern, apprenticeships, now appeared to be under control.

The meeting finished at 4.30pm.

Date of next meeting 16 June 2021