

Minutes of a meeting of Learning & Quality Committee Held at the College at 2pm on 18 November 2020

Present: Stephen Burke, Vanessa Cooter (staff governor), Tim Jackson & Tim Mason (Chair).

Apologies: None

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| In Attendance: | Prue Amner | Governor |
| | Helen Brennan | Director of Student Services |
| | Tess Cole | Director of Foundation & Adult Learning |
| | Liz Davies | Quality & Standards Manager |
| | Kara Hall | Learning & Development Manager |
| | Pat Denham | Interim Vice-Principal Quality & Learning |
| | Craig Mincher | Director Employer & Commercial Services |
| | Paul Quigley | Governor (Chair of Corporation) |
| | Paola Schweitzer | Clerk to the Corporation |
| | Sarah Warren | Director of Learning & Young People |
| | Penny Wycherley | Interim Principal |

Minutes

1 – Standing Items

38 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

39 Membership

In the absence of a chair, members agreed that Tim M temporarily chair the meeting. Search & Governance had met the day before and would recommend that Prue join the Committee and Tim M become Chair.

40 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

41 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 September 2020 were **Agreed** as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.

42 **Matters Arising**

Minute 35: VP L&Q Monitoring Report: Tim M noted that Northharbour students didn't appear to be social distancing outside the College premises. Pat stated that students were socially responsible in the learning environment and that teachers were vigilant and proactive but it was an ongoing issue.

Minute 36: IT discussion: Penny confirmed that the plan to spend £380k on the College's IT network (from the £617k funding total) had been approved.

2 – Matters for Discussion & Decision

43 **Safeguarding Adults & Child & Young People Protection annual report & policy review**

Helen presented paper 2729/20/L&Q reviewing the College's Safeguarding Adults and Child and Young People Protection policy as well as the annual report.

The report provided an update on how the College safeguarded and promoted the welfare of its learners including during lockdown, and covered staff recruitment, training and development. Between September 2019 and October 2020 there were 115 safeguarding interventions (135 the previous year). There were no Prevent referrals. A small number of minor amendments were proposed to the policy in line with updated government guidance published in September 2020. One amendment provided greater clarity on the nature of criminal and child sexual exploitation and another ensured that College processes addressed all concerns about staff/potential staff, not just those of a more serious nature.

Governors noted the importance of regular staff safeguarding and prevent training. In response to a question, Helen stated that a lasting positive outcome of the pandemic was the College's closer links with the City Council and multi-agency services concerning vulnerable students. The College had recorded its first incident of forced marriage with an 18 year old student and appropriate College procedures had been followed. Helen noted the importance of staff representing the student cohort as it was likely this student felt more able to disclose to her mentor as she was from a BAME background. Prue asked about staff wellbeing and Helen responded that whilst this was not specifically mentioned in the report, work was ongoing to support staff to manage their health and wellbeing. Tim J noted the rise of eating disorders amongst young people and asked if this was something the College had seen. Helen stated that it was not, but there were more instances of self-harming and suicidal thoughts. She believed the pandemic was exacerbating, rather than causing, this increase. Tim J asked what more could be done to support learners and if staff had sufficient resources. Helen responded that more resources would always be welcome but the College was constantly seeking to enhance its capacity to support learners. Penny noted her concern that the College did not yet have an established external counselling service for its counsellors and that this was being developed. Tim M declared an interest in *No Training Limits* and Penny and Tim M agreed to discuss this further.

Governors **Noted** the report and **Agreed** to recommend the amended Safeguarding Adults & Child & Young People Protection policy to Corporation.

44 **Draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) – proposed grades**

Pat noted that Tim J and Tim M's involvement in SAR validation had been helpful and appreciated by staff. Governors suggested that governors from outside the Committee be invited to participate in future.

Penny gave an overview of the 2019/20 draft SAR grades, all of which were *good* except for apprenticeships which was *requires improvement*. Data would be finalised for Corporation, prior to submission to Ofsted by the end of January. Members of staff gave an overview of their area's self-assessment (below are extracts from the slides presented):

Behaviour & attitudes/Safeguarding Grade: *Good*

Strengths: Almost all learners transition very well from school and learners benefit from high levels of very effective care and support.

Areas for improvement: Further increase attendance on programmes for young people and train Learning Assistants to better manage challenging behaviour.

Areas for development: Improve learner feedback processes to engage more learners and revise Student Disciplinary Policy to embed restorative practice.

The College now had a more nuanced approach to improving attendance and this had narrowed the gap. There was a high level of care in the College, with students feeling safe. Safeguarding arrangements were highly effective. Tim J asked for information concerning work to support learning assistants and how this was cross-referenced in the QiP. Kara stated that the ability to manage challenging behaviour was important and a member of staff had recently been appointed to implement a training plan to develop the relationship between teachers and learning assistants. Also important was to develop how learning support assistants could add value to blended and online learning. Tim M suggested that governors could support this work through their contacts in the community.

Personal development Grade: *Good*

Strengths: Students take part in a range of activities that develop their confidence, build character and resilience. Most learners have a good understanding of British values. Impartial careers guidance is of a high standard.

Areas for improvement: Improve the planning and integration of work placements

Areas for development: Improve learner opportunities to develop skills and interests beyond the curriculum. Develop further opportunities for learners to engage in activities that keep them physically fit.

Personal development was about developing learners' confidence and resilience outside the curriculum. Work placements would be planned more effectively to ensure that they took place when of most benefit for students. Tim M asked if the College trained peer mentors, noting that they could play an important role within

the College. Helen stated that peer mentoring took place in certain areas and with certain cohorts but more could be done to ensure consistency across the College. Penny agreed, believing it could improve retention. Helen confirmed that students played a proactive role in British Values activities.

Quality of education

Grade: *Good*

Strengths: Excellent subject specific knowledge, used effectively to develop employability skills and understanding of industry expectations. Intensive training programme delivered to teaching staff to ensure smooth transition to online delivery. GCSE English and maths high grades improved significantly.

Areas for improvement: Apprenticeship achievement is low. Lack of consistently stretching and challenging students within lessons.

Areas for development: Better defined progression routes for level 3 and 4 programmes. Sharing learning intentions with learners and using them to structure the lesson effectively.

Kara noted the emphasis on developing teachers' digital skills and that most staff had responded positively. Vanessa agreed, noting that Kara's planning and approach had enabled teachers to build their digital skills and therefore respond more efficiently and quickly to online/blended learning. Support for apprenticeships included monthly improvement meetings with the apprenticeship team to identify training needs and improvements to communication throughout the apprenticeship journey. Work was underway to address the lower retention on level 3 courses. Destination data expected in December was likely to strengthen this grade.

Adult Learning Programmes

Grade: *Good*

Strengths: High achievement for Entry and Level 1 provision and well-designed curriculum that meets the needs of Portsmouth and local areas.

Areas for improvement: Tutorial programme requires further development, target setting and low achievement in Level 3 programmes.

Areas for development: Improved capturing of student destinations including progress on personal and social aspects of learners' lives and introduction of monthly scorecard to better inform, individual curriculum areas of performance.

Target setting was inconsistent across the College and was therefore an area for improvement. Tim J asked why level 3 achievement was low and what further action the College could take. Tess stated that there were small numbers of level 3 adult learners and this had a disproportionate impact on the data if a learner left the course. Penny noted that the College's level 3 achievement was consistent with national data.

High Needs

Grade: *Good*

Strengths: Learners develop excellent independent living and studying skills as a result of coordinated strategies and targeted inputs from teachers and the SEN team and High Needs/EHCP students have access to discrete individually tailored foundation and vocational programmes.

Areas for improvement: A minority of teachers need to improve planning through better use of information about learners' starting points and individual targets.

Areas for development: Promote student skills in self advocacy and extend/update facilities for students requiring personal care and independent living skills to meet local needs. The College had been asked by the City Council to take students requiring more personal care and this was being explored for the Tower.

Apprenticeships

Grade: *RI*

Strengths: Provision aligned well to the local skills priorities. Apprentices develop knowledge/skills wider than their academic and vocational aims through completion of Health & Safety and Safeguarding etc units.

Areas for development: Further improve oversight of apprentice progress through College systems. Improve feedback to apprentices to encourage aspiration to higher levels of achievement. Targets and plans to be focused on all aspects of the apprenticeship and contextualised for the individual workplace. Improve management of learner journey through effective planning to reduce number of learners past their end date. Improve communication with employers to ensure they are aware of their apprentice's progress and developmental needs.

There were 429 apprentices in Portsmouth and 93 in Birmingham (although these students were nationwide). Provision was well-aligned to local skills needs, with the College covering eleven of the 13 skills priorities. 78% of apprenticeship withdrawals had occurred in the previous three years and this legacy issue had a negative impact on 2019/20 data. Penny had taken the decision to commence withdrawal of these students and was checking with other colleges to benchmark data. Achievement rates had been negatively impacted by Covid-19 as apprentices weren't in work and couldn't therefore build their skills and/or take their assessments. Penny noted that Craig and his team were working hard to address the issues identified, with a focus on maximising achievement. Tim J noted that the five areas for development were substantial, requiring significant work and asked if they were equally important. Craig believed they were and cited improvement of management oversight as key. Tim J asked if the College could be confident that the College was on the right track and wouldn't still be facing the same issues in a year's time. Craig stated that the College was confident in its current learners and plans, with the caveat that there would be challenges if workplaces closed again as this would negatively impact on the ability of apprentices to complete their work experience/portfolio. The College had tried to plan in the event of this eventuality. An action plan had been submitted to the ESFA to address the minimum level of performance issues identified previously. In response to a question, Craig stated that targets were set in tripartite with the apprentice, employer and the College. He agreed to circulate data concerning the gender breakdown of apprentices.

Education programmes for young people

Grade: *Good*

Strengths: Good retention and achievement at Level 1 and Level 2, development of maths and English is good. Teaching, Learning & Assessment is good and responsive to the individual learner needs.

Areas for development: Review of Level 3 curriculum, and quality of provision within

Automotive requires improvement.

Level 3 achievement was 74.1% in 2019/20, following the closure of the College's 6th form centre, BTEC curriculum and funding changes all having an impact. Sarah noted that there had been a number of staffing changes within automotive and there continued to be some issues with behaviour and attitudes. Significant work had been done to address this and there had been some improvement. In response to a question, Sarah stated that a focus for the work was to prepare and incentivise level 2 students for progression to level 3. Tim M asked if there was an enterprise scheme at the College, noting that self-enterprise was likely to be important as the country came out Covid-19. Sarah stated this needed to be developed further and Penny stated that there would be an enterprise zone near to the Hair and Beauty Salon on the Street. Vanessa noted that there were enterprise units in most courses and these would be reinvigorated after the pandemic. Tim M offered to support the College with his social enterprise links.

Penny summarised the three year achievement trends, funded learners data, 2020/21 achievement targets (reasonably conservative but, due to Covid-19, stretching) and progression rates. She noted that there had been a 22% improvement in progression from level 1 and 14% from level 2, a trend that had started before the pandemic, demonstrating that students wanted to stay in the College. Penny noted that for some learners progressing from entry level to level 1 was a real achievement and more work was needed on training staff on dyslexia etc as that was likely to be hampering some students' progress. She noted that the College worked hard to raise aspirations and develop enhanced cognitive skills but it took time.

Governors thanked staff for their presentations, stating that the contextualisation of the data was very insightful, clear and told a good story. They acknowledged the huge amount of work undertaken over the last eight/nine months.

45 VP Learning & Quality Monitoring Report

Pat highlighted key areas from her monitoring report (paper 2728/20/L&Q):

Covid-19 update: Work continued to ensure the College was Covid secure with information included in posters and the revamped student newsletter. 57 members of staff were self-isolating but infection had not yet been transferred within the College. Blended learning continued, with laptops provided for students where necessary. Attendance was down 1% across all subject areas and cohorts.

Risk Register: The learning and quality risks including the two highest (poor achievement rate on apprentices leading to an Minimum Level of Performance (MLP) linked to a Notice to Improve (Ntl) and failure to meet retention and achievement targets) had been discussed in the previous agenda item.

Level 3 deep dive: Level 3 achievement was a key weakness in the SAR with 2019/20 showing a significant decline in retention and achievement. Curriculum directors were reviewing curriculum and considering new developments and

pathways, including T levels.

Interim Ofsted visit - 13 and 14 October 2020: Interim visits helped stakeholders, including the government, understand how providers were meeting the needs of learners and apprentices in this period. The report was very positive and recognised the hard work and commitment to ensure learners engaged and achieved.

Headline performance data: Overall achievement in 2019/20 remained above the national achievement rate by 2.1%, although there was a slight decline from the previous year.

Curriculum SAR – Validation/Moderation Meetings: 18 validations took place in October: Two areas remained *outstanding*, one improved from *good* to *outstanding* and one moved from *requires improvement* to *outstanding*. Seven areas remained *good* and five areas improved from *requires improvement* to *good*. Two areas dropped from *outstanding* to *good* and one from *good* to *requires improvement* (automotive).

HE: The College was continuing to work with the University of Portsmouth and was reviewing its HND provision.

Apprenticeship performance: had been discussed during the previous item.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment update: Governors noted the College's support of the Further Forces Programme to aid the transition of military personnel to teaching roles within the FE sector, the impact of the ex-HMI inspector visit to the College in October, staff training and schools network.

Learner voice: Interim findings from the student induction survey indicated that whilst satisfaction rates were high in some areas (felt welcome on first day of college, told rules related to protecting self and others Covid-19 and would recommend College to family or friend), students did not feel they had '*been set challenging targets using ProPortal (ProMonitor)*' so a training video on how to use ProMonitor and a separate video on effective target setting had been shared with staff and further training would take place. In response to a question, Pat confirmed that the College was joining up learner voice activity across the College and reporting changes implemented as a result of feedback.

Governors **Noted** the Vice-Principal's Learning & Quality Monitoring Report.

46 **Quality Improvement Plan (2019/20 & 2020/21)**

Pat presented paper 2731/20/L&Q setting out the 2019/20 Quality Improvement Plan (QiP) and the draft 2020/21 QiP. The plans had been updated to show progress against actions. The 2019/20 QiP had been completed with retention and achievement data, with some targets carried forward. The draft 2020/21 QiP was currently being completed following the self-assessment process and final performance data.

Tim J had cross-referenced the SAR presentations with the QIP and believed it to be a good plan, upon which governors could place reliance. Prue asked what the College was doing to narrow/plug gaps in education due to Covid-19. Penny noted that this was addressed in the SAR. Unlike schools, colleges had not

received additional Covid-19 funding although the College had received some one-off disadvantage funding and that there was a working group to oversee the action and identify which learners required additional support. Tim J asked how effective this money was and how this was reported to governors. Pat agreed to highlight this in her report. Governors did not wish to increase staff workloads, so existing reports with contextual information and decisions taken would be sufficient. Governors **Noted** the 2019/20 and draft 2020/21 Quality Improvement Plans.

47 Committee Terms of Reference & 2021 Business Plan (paper 2730/20/L&Q)

Paola presented the Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) and 2021 business plan. Search & Governance Committee had recommended a new Corporation /Committee meeting schedule to streamline College business and reduce duplication. This would mean four Learning & Quality Committee meetings per annum. The ToR would be amended accordingly. Governors **Agreed** the ToR, with an amendment to strengthen the learner voice reference (paragraph 1.6).

The meeting finished at 5pm.