

MINUTES

Standards & Performance Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday 23rd June 2020
Time: 2.00pm
Venue: Video Conference

Present:

Andrew Fawcett (Vice Chair)
Chris Ball
Bill Webster (Principal)
Dave Haslam

In Attendance:

Deborah Bradburn (Clerk to the Board)
Joanne Green (Director of Quality)
Sharon Marriot (Director of Curriculum)
Karen Westsmith (Director of Adults & H.E.)
Tracy Clarke (Director of MIS)
Kate Wallace (Director of Apprenticeships)

1. SECTION A - BUSINESS MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

1.1 Welcome to Members/Officers

Members were welcomed to the meeting, which commenced at 2.02pm.

1.2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Sue Lomax, Josue Losasa and Gill Waugh.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

Members were invited to declare any interests in relation to any item on the agenda.

No interests were declared.

1.3 Request for an item to be unstarred

No requests were received.

1.5* Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd January 2020

The minutes of the meeting held 22 January 2020 had been previously circulated to members for consideration.

Agreed: that the minutes are approved as a correct record and authorised for publication.

1.6 Matters arising from the previous minutes

The action progress log was presented and it was noted that the outstanding action into the wellbeing strategy would be deferred.

2. SECTION B - COLLEGE MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

2.1 College Re-opening (Verbal Update)

An update was provided by the Principal and the following points were noted:

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- The College re-opened on 22 June 2020 with a lot of work undertaken completing detailed risk assessments. The Prime Minister announced that on 4 July social distancing would be reduced to 1 metre that would result in a further change to risk assessments.
- Union consultations had taken place with two Unions rejecting the risk assessments with discussions still ongoing. The College would be moving to Phase 2 of its plans from Autumn.

Governor Questions

- Did the College have employees with vulnerabilities?
The College had different categories of shielding. There were approximately 50 staff that had underlying health conditions and some with other considerations ie. living with someone that was shielding or childcare provision.

With the relaxation of shielding and self-isolation the College had been working with staff in an orderly manner. There were individuals in protected situations that were very engaged with work, the broader re-opening would be more complex.

There had been a huge change and shift in digital skills for staff and students over a very short period of time. Informal video conference meetings were regular with a hybrid model of working with some staff at the College and some at home.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the verbal update.

2.2 Progress Reports

(i) HE & Adult

The following update was provided by the Director of Adults & H.E:

- There had been a significant improvement in retention. The national achievement rate report had shown an improvement by 6% that was in line with the national rate. The retention and pass rates were above the national average showing great improvement given the focus of the College on integrity, maintaining learners on track with any withdrawals updated in a timely manner. It was unfortunate that the data would not be published.
- The majority of adult learners had made good progress. There were those with low level digital skills or without equipment and the College was looking at different ways to engage with those learners as well as the possibility of re-allocating AEB funds for further digital equipment.

Governor Questions

- Would the College adjust its targets for those HE programmes that would not take place next year?
It was agreed that identical provision at the University and College would be removed with discussions on targets not yet taken place. A STRIVE bid would be considered to progress the new hospitality and international tourism programmes.
- Was the College aware of applications for Level 3 learners progressing into HE?
The College had not noticed an increase in applications as all HE applications went direct to the University who would notify the College.

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RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report and supported the review of rationalising academic areas that could be a risk for the College which the College was successfully managing.

(ii) Community Learning

The following update was provided by the Director of Adults & H.E:

- The community learning governance panel convened focusing on the community magazine and partnership work. The next focus area would be to develop a long term accommodation strategy.
- GMCA had verbally confirmed that it was the most successful community learning provision in Greater Manchester and was a beacon of good practice.
- Contract extension would take place at Bolton Council that would consider if this provision should be brought in-house with an AEB bid. If brought in-house the College would continue to work with the Council but without the current Council oversight. A comprehensive options paper would be available in autumn.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report.

(iii) Apprenticeships

The Group Director of Apprenticeships presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- In year achievements were good at 70.6%. There were 72 remaining to achieve with some learners back on campus that would complete soon.
- It was expected that no more than 30 learners would be rolled over due to external factors that had prevented them from achieving this year.
- Three performance boards had taken place via video conferencing with the College keeping abreast of furlough arrangements and the funding rules.
- Recruitment had been affected but work across all teams continued to ensure good recruitment come September 2020.
- Achievement funding would be received next year with the team successful in a relief funding bid of £39k.

Governor Questions

- To what extent was there likely to be flexibility to vire funding and targets?
Teams were working to maximise all possible areas eg. health and childcare. Some areas were awaiting further government announcements eg. hair salons, with some employers wanting to recruit or defer apprentice recruitment and taking time to assess their position.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the information provided in the Apprenticeship Update report and that the number of redundancies was very low across providers. 25% of apprenticeships had been furloughed which was higher for the College as there were more apprentices in construction.

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(iv) Maths and English

The Director of Dir of 14 – 19 presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Focus was given to the achievements of staff in processing calculated grades. Predicated achievement was up slightly on previous years with the overall pass rate up by 6%. The College was hopeful that the predictions would be accepted with every grade justified for each learner. If any learners were downgraded it would occur across the whole sector.

Governor Questions

- Would the College look to review its awarding bodies as some providers had seen an advantage to moving learners to digital platforms and had moved to other awarding bodies given how curriculum development had progressed.
There would be an annual review of awarding bodies with the College making an informed choice for learners.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the information provided in the Maths and English Update report.

(v) 16 – 19 Study Programmes

The Director of 14 – 19 presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Enrolment had increased by 2% against its external target allocation which the College would look to improve further. Funding is capped at band 4a for 18 year old learners, the College has no control of this dimension of enrolment. Enrolment of 18 year old learners was higher than the previous year. Enrolment to bands will be reviewed after the next enrolment cycle to ensure that the band 5 target is met.

Governor Questions

- What were the factors that had improved learner attendance?
The College policy and expectations of learners were examples of a number of factors that had resulted in improved attendance, factors also included tutorial support, learner behavior and respect.
- Why did the pathways to progression figures not add up to 100%?
The number of learners in scope had fluctuated and therefore some learners had not been included in the relevant listings.

It was noted that there was a great level of engagement and the College appeared good against benchmark data. A lot of positive feedback had been provided from networks. The Chair asked the Director of 14 – 19 to collate the feedback that would be useful to provide to the Board and staff.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the information provided in the 16 – 19 Study Programmes Update report.

ACTION:

- Director of Dir of 14 – 19 to provide the Board with positive feedback received.

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2.3 Applications and Enrolments for 2020 -21

The following update was provided by the Director of MIS:

- The College was 7% ahead of applications compared to this time last year. 1,200 phone calls were made to applicants during lockdown with over 50% converted into offers.
- As a result of COVID-19 the re-enrolment process had been moved back and a complete on-line process had commenced w/c 8 June 2020.
- External enrolment allocation for 2020-21 was 2243, an increase of 5%. The College was confident that it would achieve this and would expect another two student cohorts from Shockout Academy and Bolton Muslim Boys School.

Governor Questions

- Could the change in the application process be a potential risk?
In previous years schools maintained control of the application process and more than one application could be made to a number of colleges. Learners now go through a direct application process for each individual college.
- What was the mood at the College given that a lot of people would consider going into learning as the result of a recession?
The test would be the number of requests received for learner loans.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the applications and enrolments for 2020/21.

2.4 Student Attendance Report

The following update was provided by the Director of MIS:

- The report was presented differently to reflect each separate funding stream.
- A partner organisation summary was presented with Shockout Academy having some of the highest attendance rates.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the student attendance report update.

2.5 DfE National Performance Tables 2018/19

The Committee reviewed the update on DfE National Performance Tables with one noted area of concern being 19 – 23 year olds that had shown a decline of over 4%.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the DfE national performance tables.

2.6 Draft Careers Strategy

The Director of Quality presented the strategy with the following point:

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- The strategy had required amendment as a result of COVID-19. The College had used the learner journey and careers and included all other areas that the College was completing ie. improvement plans, which had proven beneficial to have in one place.

The Committee reviewed the updated draft career strategy and it was noted that a lead Board member had not been identified to support the careers strategy agenda.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the draft careers strategy and recommended it for approval by the Board.

ACTION:

Clerk / Board Agenda

2.7 Update on Vulnerable Learners

The Director of Quality presented the update with the following points highlighted:

- There were circa. 500 vulnerable learners that had been identified from intelligence collated across all College teams.
- 100 laptops had been distributed with more equipment referrals received.
- The Times Education supplement was pleased with the College's response across all well-being agendas highlighting the College dedication in placing learner well-being at the core of its operations.

The Committee reviewed the update on vulnerable learners and it was noted that the work completed had been exceptional.

The Chair emphasised the additional effort that staff had made to make the College welcoming and a safe space. The post-16 sector was at the forefront of learner well-being and collective working which were reflected in the College engagement figures.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update on well-being and vulnerable learners.

3. SECTION C - UNIVERSITY GROUP MATTERS - FOR CONSIDERATION UNLESS INDICATED OTHERWISE

3.1 Academic Quality Assurance

The Assistant Vice Chancellor (Office for Students) at the University had inspected and reviewed College academic quality and was satisfied with all areas under review.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Learner Support during COVID-19

The Committee noted that the College had never experienced anything of this nature before and that the Principal, Senior Management Team and staff had displayed fantastic commitment to learners and thanked everyone for their outstanding efforts.

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5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 3rd November 2020 at 2.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 3.45pm

Chair's Signature:



Date: 3 November 2020