

MINUTES

Standards & Performance Committee Meeting

Date: Tuesday 22nd June 2021
Time: 2.00pm
Venue: Video Conference

Present:

Sue Lomax (Chair)
Andrew Fawcett
Chris Ball
Bill Webster (Principal)
Gill Waugh
Dave Haslam
Rebecca Davison

In Attendance:

Deborah Bradburn (Clerk to the Board)
Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Sharon Marriott (Director of Curriculum 14-19)
Karen Westsmith (Director of Adults & H.E.)
Kate Wallace (Director of Apprenticeships)
Jill Hebden (Secretary)

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 Joanne Green and Tracy Clarke.

1.3 Declarations of Interest

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

No interests were declared.

1.4 Request for an item to be unstarred

No requests were received.

1.5* Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th March 2021

The minutes of the meeting held 16 March 2021 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.

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

2.1 College Strategic Update - Coronavirus

The Principal presented the Strategic Update, noting that a more detailed report would be presented to the Board. The following update was provided:

- The number of COVID-19 cases had steadily reduced across Bolton with the number of recorded cases 257 per 100k. Reports from the Health Protection Board presented the majority of people hospitalised due to COVID-19 were older and had not been vaccinated.
- There had been 315 positive cases at the College since March 2020 with 47 cases since May half term (37 students and 10 members of staff). There were currently 16 positive cases and 40 isolating due to being close contacts.
- All College staff had had the opportunity to have at least the first dose of the vaccination.
- COVID-19 secure measures remained in place and would do so until the end of the academic year.

The Principal noted the HR Director's contribution in leading the oversight of the COVID-19 measures implemented at the College and in ensuring the College fully discharged its responsibilities.

Governor Questions:

- As the College is at the epicenter of the Delta wave, had there been any feedback on how other Colleges compared?
Greater Manchester ('GM') Colleges were reporting very similar issues. The College had supported the mobile PCR tests, over four days 2,000 tests were taken with zero positive results.

The Chair noted her praise for the College and the positive attitude adopted throughout.

2.2 Progress Reports

(i) Adults & HE

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

- Unusually high retention rates were masking some non-participation, which had caused retention rates to drop at a later stage than normal. Discussions with other Colleges in GM had shown similar issues.
- GMCA had asked providers to state if they required the full funding allocation or if funding should be matched to learner turnout. The College was confident in its request and justification for the full allocation. Although enrolments did not meet the allocation, mainly due to the necessary reductions in class sizes, courses were still offered.
- A remote audit of adult provision would be conducted with an emphasis on initial assessments and the requirement for adults to have one specific to their course.
- The adult data had been benchmarked against 2019-20 national rates, as rates had not been produced during the pandemic. In the absence of any other national rates, the College had aligned itself to what would be the norm, although these were not normal times.
- There would be an impact on next year's enrolment and achievement rates as there would be far fewer learners progressing than normal.

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(Gill Waugh left the meeting at 2.29pm)

The Committee noted that whilst the lockdown was lifting, it was clear that there were a significant number of people who remained anxious about being in large group settings.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report provided.

(ii) Community Learning

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

- Governance meetings had not taken place with the Council. Gill Waugh, as link governor for community learning, would have the opportunity to attend these meetings going forward.
- There had been an increased focus on monitoring by GMCA.
- Class sizes remained small in order to comply with social distancing measures with learner support continued remotely.
- 28.7% were enrolled against the course provision for acquiring skills to prepare people for training and employment and the College was working with the NHS on Social Prescription and Wellbeing coaching.
- The College had worked closely with partners to submit a bid for the Community Renewal Fund that focused on adults and young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and those in long-term unemployment to remove the barriers associated with the lack of engagement in local communities. The outcome of the bid was expected soon.

The Principal noted that the bid had been completed with partners against a very short deadline. There had been a number of bids with short deadlines, which everyone had worked very hard to submit.

(Director of Adults & H.E left the meeting at 2.46pm)

Governor Questions:

- What is the normal non-attendance rate in an average year?

Attendance can be low as some individuals who are directed to undertake the provision are pressed to do so. Attendance can be between 5% - 50%.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the information provided in the Community Learning update report.

(iii) Apprenticeships

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

- The apprenticeship achievement target for 2020/21 had a 70% reduction compared to last year.
- 57.9% in year achievement had increased to 60% with a best case of 76.1% for 2020/21. The teams were working hard to ensure that the target was met. The pandemic and lockdowns had meant that practical assessments were end loaded whereas these would normally have been undertaken earlier in the year. Strategies were in place to minimise the roll over into next year.

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- Timely success was low which did not include those apprentices on Standards in the data methodology.
- There had been four additional withdrawals since the last report. The Employer Engagement Team and Work Based Tutors worked closely with employers to ensure that apprentices were being supported and to ensure employer's business needs were met.
- There had been some staffing issues in construction due to an increase in demand in the sector. Intensive support had been implemented to ensure achievement was maximised.
- The College would need to reapply for the register of approved training providers (RoATP) and would work with colleagues across the University Group to achieve a successful outcome.

Governor Questions:

- Where will timely sit in the future, if not in Standards?
It is important that achievements are on time as it has been committed to. However, it is not in the Standards, as it cannot be guaranteed.
- Has the due date for achievement been extended for any apprentices?
Apprentices continue to be supported but the College is not able to apply a break in learning which would be the only thing that they could do to extend the end date. The funding body has not made an allowance for apprentices to go over the date due to COVID-19, the only flexibility relates to apprentice redundancy.
- What is recruitment looking like for next year?
Recruitment is looking positive, there has not been the downturn expected due to a flexible and varied curriculum.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the information provided in the Apprenticeship Update report.

(iv) English and Maths

The Director of Curriculum (14-19) presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Due to the nature of English and maths, it had been difficult to maintain 'teaching bubbles'. Teaching had been online since October, apart from a small number of vulnerable learners.
- Attendance was a concern although retention had remained good and engagement had dropped. The College had successfully remained within 5% tolerance of the funding requirements and had met the requirements of the conditions of funding.
- The assessments coincided with the increase in COVID-19 infection rates in Bolton, this would have an impact on achievement as a number of learners could not attend their assessment due to needing to isolate.
- The assessment process may cause grade inflation and would have an impact on the autumn term.

Governor Questions:

- When will the GCSE results be announced?

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The results release day is the 12th August.

RESOLVED:

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

(Gill Waugh re-joined the meeting at 3.11pm)

(v) 16 – 19 Study Programmes

The Director of Curriculum (14-19) presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Enrolment for 2020/21 had been very positive, 104% of primary target and 103% of revised target. Retention was good at 94.3%.
- Enrolment to full time bands fell slightly with a large increase in Band 4b.
- Attendance fell 10% below the positive attendance target; however, this was largely caused by English and maths. The College position of 76% was similar to other GM Colleges.
- Where work placements had not been possible, Gatsby Benchmark 5 had been delivered with meaningful employer encounters. The Employer Engagement Team and Career Coaches had worked hard and had endorsed schemes of work going forward.

RESOLVED:

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

2.3 Learner Achievement and Performance Initiatives.

The report was provided following a request from the Board. T Level recruitment was going well and the target would be met.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Learner Achievement and Performance Initiatives report.

ACTION:

- T Level progress report to be provided at the next Standards and Performance Committee.
- Clerk / Standards & Performance Agenda

2.4 Enrolments and Applications

The Deputy Principal presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Applications were up 9% compared to last year and there had been an 18% rise on offers made.
- A number of capacity funding bids had been submitted for different expansion projects in order to combat the tensions around space and resources.
- The online application process had worked well last year and would be used again this year.
- The College would focus on increasing adult enrolments; additional spend had been agreed on marketing with particular attention on adult learners.

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RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Applications and Enrolments 2021/22 report.

2.5 Student Attendance

The Deputy Principal presented the update with the following points:

- Attendance had been sporadic with some areas having better attendance than others. Heads of Area and Curriculum Leaders were alert to the issue through discussions held in performance enhancement reviews.
- The College would aim to deliver the pockets of learning that learners had missed throughout the year on their return.

The Committee noted that Motor Vehicle and Welding was a predominantly practical course and that a 65% retention rate could be looked at positively and acknowledged the team's exemplary efforts.

The Principal endorsed his support of the Committees comments. One of the areas of work undertaken was the wellbeing strategy that started prior to the pandemic and had allowed the College to be in a better position than it would have been otherwise. There was a focus within the College to ensure learners received all the help and support available.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Student Attendance update.

2.6** Link Governor Scheme

The Clerk presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Environment and sustainability and equality, diversity and inclusion had been included as additional link areas following the FE White Paper (Skills and Post-16 Education Bill) and AoC Code of Good Governance.
- The College provided other formal and informal opportunities for governor engagement that included governors attending the Learner Voice Forum.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the link governor scheme update.

ACTION:

Clerk to circulate the link governor policy to link governors and link contacts.

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

None.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 College Operating Plan

The College Operating plan had been presented to the Resources Committee with the recommendation that it be circulated to the Standards and Performance Committee as a reference document during SAR discussions.

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4.2 ESFA Financial Health Update

The Principal informed the Committee that the College had received notification from the ESFA of a provisional 'Outstanding' financial health grading for 2021-22.

4.3 Director of Quality Retirement

The Principal informed the Committee of the forthcoming retirement of the Director of Quality and personally noted the Executive and Senior Management Team's admiration and acknowledgement of all the hard work that she had achieved in her essential role within quality and wellbeing.

5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 2nd November 2021 at 2.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 3.58pm