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Standards & Performance Committee Meeting

Date: Wednesday 19th January 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Venue: Video Conference

Present:

Sue Lomax (Chair)
Andrew Fawcett
Chris Ball
Dr Gill Waugh
Rameen Ambar
Tom Martin
Bill Webster (Principal)

In Attendance:

Deborah Bradburn (Clerk to the Board)
Mark Burgoyne (Deputy Principal)
Tracy Clarke (Director of MIS and Curriculum Planning)
Karen Westsmith (Director of Curriculum and Quality)
Kate Wallace (Director of Curriculum Employer and Student Services)
Jill Hebden (Minute Taker)

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

No apologies were received for the meeting.

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 2nd November 2021

The minutes of the meeting held 2 November 2021 had been previously circulated to members for consideration.

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

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1.6 Matters arising from the previous minutes

The action progress log was presented and confirmed that all actions had been completed or included on the agenda.

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

2.1 Progress Reports

(i) Adult, Community & HE

The following update was provided by the Director of Curriculum and Quality:

- Improvements continued to be made to the delivery of adult learning programmes which could be seen in the achievement rates and learner outcomes.
- Attendance remained a challenge but was improving. The College would continue to support attendance and progression via the Behaviour for Success policy.
- HE self-evaluation documents would be submitted to the Board that would include programme plans for both prescribed and non-prescribed in accordance with the recommendations from the internal auditors.

Governor Questions:

- Adult achievement looks good in the context of COVID-19, would that be accurate?

Yes, adult achievement is moving towards the national pre-pandemic rate and is maintaining incremental improvements.

- Is the College going to fill those programmes that have small learner volumes?

Yes, though a number of these are young adults.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report provided and that the HE self-evaluation documents would be presented to the Board.

ACTION:

Clerk / Board Agenda

(ii) Apprenticeships

The Director of Curriculum, Employers and Student Services presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Achievement had increased to 55% with a best case of 82%. There was significant focus on those learners that had rolled over into this academic year due to the pandemic.
- Through the SAR process two areas were graded as 'outstanding', two required improvement and the remaining were graded 'good'. Those areas that required

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improvement would be provided with intensive support to ensure improvement this academic year.

- 234 apprentices had been recruited with the College on track to achieve its target of 323.
- The ROATP had been submitted with the outcome due shortly.

Governor Questions:

- Are there any correlations between staff shortages in certain subject areas and the requiring improvement grade?

Yes, there had been a high staff turnover within building services that had contributed to the requiring improvement outcome.

- Is the projection of £900k ahead of budget accurate?

Yes, apprenticeships has recruited very well and the team continue to recruit with integrity.

- Why has the College been so successful?

There has been a change in curriculum focus with the College maximising growth where possible. The employer engagement team continued to work with employers throughout the pandemic that had a positive impact and the College had also been successful in winning bids.

RESOLVED:

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

ACTION:

The number of apprentices in each sector area and percentage of early leavers to be included in future reporting.

(iii) Maths and English

The Director of Curriculum, Employer and Student Services presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- The College had received the MIDES report that gave a comparison of learning providers and provided a benchmark against other colleges and in-year progress.
- The College's pass rate for English and maths was the lowest in the MIDES report. It was to be noted that the College had a higher proportion of learners that had neither English or maths in comparison to other colleges.
- The College recognised a decrease in achievement and a full implementation plan had been created to work towards improvements in engagement, attendance and achievement. Streaming would be removed and timetabling would focus on English

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and maths to maximise attendance with delivery times also increased to maximise improvement.

Governor Questions:

- This is a major strategic issue of young people failing in English and maths in the Bolton area, could a discussion be arranged with the local authority?

The College would pick this up with the Council noting that this would not cover all schools and required a cross sector approach. The College has a grasp on the challenges it faces and has outlined a significant number of changes although it cannot be ignored that the pandemic has had a significant impact over the last two years.

- The College has not been that far away from the overall national achievement rates in previous years, why is it so adrift on the MIDES data?

Due to the pandemic there has been some grade inflation on GCSE results, the College did not do this and when learners sit their examinations it is expected this will level out. The College as an inclusive provider has a large number of learners where English is not their first or second language and with that comes a level of underachievement due to the demographic. The data needs to be contextualised and the College is adding value that will be presented in the next report.

- English and maths has always been a real issue in areas of deprivation, do GMCA still provide specific funding for English and maths to support learners from deprived areas?

Funding for additional tutor support will be looked at.

RESOLVED:

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

ACTION:

- GMCA additional funding support to be reviewed.
- Added value to be included in the English and maths report.
- College to raise low achievement rates in math and English with the local authority.

(iv) 16 – 19 Study Programmes and T-Level Provision

The Director of Curriculum, Employers and Student Services presented the report with the following points highlighted:

- Learner attendance was 83% against a target of 90%.
- In-year retention was 97.1% with curriculum teams working with employer engagement advisors to support learners who may be at risk.
- The College continued to work with groups of learners to close curriculum knowledge gaps with staff development activities for T-Levels.

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Governor Questions:

- What is the position on T-Level recruitment across the country?

Other colleges have seen the same low level recruitment for T-Levels. There has been a lack of a national campaign that has been discussed with the ESFA. However, there has been a shift in learners at the College asking about T-levels at open evenings with good news stories getting out via the marketing team to maximise recruitment, which is a priority.

- It has been reported in newspapers that most Universities will reject the first cohort of T-Level students, is this something the College has found?

This has been a concern. Colleges have been working with local Universities to update and inform them of what a T Level is and why it should be accepted.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the information provided in the 16 – 19 Study Programmes and T-Level Update report.

ACTION:

- Report to detail those University's not accepting T-Levels.

2.2 Self-Assessment Report 2020/21 and Quality Improvement Plan

The Director of Curriculum & Quality presented the report, highlighting the following key points:

- The process had evolved to a widened panel approach that included peer-to-peer review and offered a more reflective approach. The curriculum leaders valued this approach that looked at different aspects of the curriculum.
- Each SAR panel had at least one Board member in attendance.
- There was a streamlined approach that integrated the community and College SAR for when the community contract was brought in-house at the end of the academic year.
- English, maths and building services graded themselves as requiring improvement and would have intensive support going forward.
- Business support areas undertook SARs this academic year that looked at strengths and areas for development which informed their quality improvement plan.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Self-Assessment Report 2020/21 and Quality Improvement Plan.

2.3 Start of Course Survey 2021/22

The Director of Curriculum & Quality presented the report, highlighting the following points:

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- The survey captured the views of learners in a number of ways and at different points throughout the academic year and had been reviewed and updated with the input of the Quality Manager.
- The average satisfaction rate across all questions was 91%. The distance travelled for all headline perception indicators had declined when measuring satisfaction scores against the same time last year which remained above the national benchmark.
- Apprenticeship programmes had been included in the survey.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Start of Course Survey report.

2.4 Enrolments 2021/22 & Applications 2022/23 Overview

The Director of MIS & Curriculum Development presented the update, highlighting the following points:

Enrolments:

- 234 for apprenticeships, 100 more than the same time last year
- Community learning and adult enrolments had fallen by 3%. It was anticipated that enrolments would increase to pre-pandemic levels following the marketing campaign.
- There had been no change to HE recruitment that remained at 90% with no further intakes planned for the academic year.
- Income for full cost recovery courses was 38% of the annual target. These courses would continue to recruit throughout the year.

Applications:

- Application numbers were slightly down on this time last year. Open evenings had been well attended with the latest open evening held online.
- The impact of the January guide would show an impact over the next month with the College gaining a strong reputation for delivering sector based academies and helping people into employment.

Governor Questions:

- Could the tiredness within the labour market and high number of vacancies impact on the number of people undertaking courses?

There are a lot of entry level jobs available at the moment. Previously there was a focus on the long-term unemployed and now the focus is more on community learning, employability plans and short-term unemployment in order to reduce these numbers becoming long-term unemployed.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Enrolments 2021/22 and Applications 2022/23 Overview.

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2.5 Student Progressions and Destinations Report

The Director of MIS & Curriculum Development presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Destinations were recorded within six months of the end of the academic year. The College had engaged with an external organisation to undertake the function which had increased the yield by 20%.
- 76% of learners had a positive progression with 12% of those going onto HE. 28% of learners that studied L3 progressed to HE.
- 72% of adult learners had a positive progression with 9% of those going onto HE and 26% into paid employment.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Student Progression and Destination Report.

2.6 Curriculum Strategic Planning

The Deputy Principal provided the report noting that this robust system had operated for five years and was where curriculum leaders analysed what their area did and how they worked towards meeting the needs of the local area and employers etc. with feedback from interested stakeholder groups included in the planning process.

Governor Questions:

- Does this process lead to staff going out on industry placements for academic development?
Yes, although this had been paused due to the pandemic.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Curriculum Strategic Planning report.

2.7 Link Governor Scheme

The Clerk confirmed that communication was issued to all link governors informing them of their area contacts. There were two remaining link areas to be filled, digital and environment and sustainability.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Link Governor Scheme update.

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

The College had received notification from the ESFA for the Section 28 Designation follow up review visit that would take place on the 22 and 23 March.

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4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Bolton College of Medical Sciences

The Deputy Principal provided an update on the BCMS project:

- £20m in level-up funding through Bolton Council and money from the University had moved the project forward with building completion scheduled for 2024.
- There was a stronger focus on HE and FE would still have a presence with the Deputy Principal involved in project development to secure the sustained growth of the Group's healthcare education and training provision. It was considered a great project with large Bolton town investment that would benefit the College.
- The University Group was also involved with the GM Health Innovation Hub bid that centered on a wider Bolton Health Innovation Hub to include areas of specialism and health innovation.

5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 16th March 2022 at 2.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 4.05pm