MINUTES

Standards & Performance Committee Meeting

Date: **Tuesday 2nd November 2021**
Time: **2.00pm**
Venue: **Boardroom / Video Conference**

Present:
Sue Lomax (Chair)
Andrew Fawcett
Chris Ball
Bill Webster (Principal)
Gill Waugh
Fardean Farooq
Rebecca Davison

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 (Secretary)

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

1.1 Election of Committee Chair

Members were invited to put forward a nomination and elect a Chair for the Committee.

Mrs Sue Lomax was nominated.

RESOLVED:

Mrs Sue Lomax be elected Chair of the Committee for the current academic year.

1.2 Welcome to Members/Officers

Members were welcomed to the meeting, which commenced at 2.09pm.

1.3 Apologies for absence

No apologies were received for the meeting.

1.4 Declarations of Interest

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

No interests were declared.

1.5 Request for an item to be unstarred

No requests were received.

1.6* Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held 22 June 2021 had been previously circulated to members for consideration.

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

1.7 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) Adults & HE

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

- Despite the pandemic, adult achievement had achieved a slight increase from 87% to 87.95%. Achievements were behind the pre-pandemic national rate with strategies to be implemented as part of the quality improvement plan.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the report provided.

(ii) Community Learning

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

- The Community Learning Report provided a detailed account of the last quarter in 2020/21.
- Contract delivery was mindful of working to the wider Bolton Vision and Skills agenda, serving its residents and local partnership groups in order to meet local needs.
- The Community Learning Team had held information and guidance events across the borough and delivered the first sector academy at The Beehive in Horwich that resulted in 11 out of 12 people in attendance obtaining gainful employment of 30 hours or more.

Governor Questions:

- Is there an issue with the amount of paperwork required for short courses?

  RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) must be completed as a legal requirement for any course that is not externally validated. Moving forward consideration would be given to amending the RARPA paperwork for short courses whilst still maintaining high rigor. The College RARPA systems were robust with teams completing internal validations. Learners had moved to ProMonitor except those on 12 hours or less learning.

- Were GMCA auditors experienced?

  The majority were auditors from councils with some knowledge of the funding regulations. There had been concern expressed in relation to timely planning with guidance issued late in the College's planning cycle.

- Why did it appear that there was little activity in Breightmet?

  This was a priority for the College with work being undertaken to improve take-up that included looking at new venues to increase participation. Adult learners had a complex pattern of learning with a preference for drop-in sessions.

- If ESOL was removed, did the learning pattern change?

  There was a rich mix of ESOL requirements with a number of ESOL learners working and studying who were also well qualified.

The Principal updated the Committee on recent communication for the community learning provision to be brought in-house and delivered directly by the College as the sole provider, whilst continuing to work closely with the Council. Bringing the two contracts together would enable the College to provide a much richer adult learning story. Combining the adult learning contact would mean a change of provider that could trigger an earlier Ofsted visit.

RESOLVED:

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

ACTION:

Alternative Breightmet accommodation information to be provided to the Director of Curriculum and Quality.

(iii) Apprenticeships

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

- Overall achievement for 2020/21 was 65.3% that was a decline against target due to the pandemic. Apprenticeships, unlike other provision, did not have Teacher Assessed Grades ('TAGs') or dispensations.
- 60 apprentices had rolled into 2021/22 due to being unable to attend College during lockdown.
- Teaching staff and Work Based Tutors worked hard throughout 2020/21 to fill any skills gaps due to College closure and had secured EPAs that enabled learners to complete ensuring any impact was limited.
- Minimum standards for 2020/21 was 32% with actions set for those areas that required improvement.
- Employer engagement was strong and continued to be supported through the Government incentive scheme.
- The register of training provider's application was completed and submitted by the deadline.

Governor Questions:

- How was the College coping with recruiting staff and staffing availability in areas like construction as a result of the increase in demand?

Construction learner numbers have been capped in recognition of challenges in the area. The recruitment strategy has changed with Work Based Tutors ('WBT') no longer being subject specific, a generic WBT is being piloted to focus on the administrative burden, enabling subject specialists to focus on teaching and learning. This is still a challenge as construction is booming.

- Was the minimum standards not being met a common problem and will this be a concern for the ESFA?

  32% is below the achievement threshold. However, this will not be a cause for concern for ESFA given the circumstances. The process is being proactively managed with learners actively engaged.

- From the 80 withdrawals, could any of these have been placed elsewhere?

  All withdrawals go through a weekly 'Withdrawal Surgery' where all options are considered and withdrawals only made once authorised by the Director of Curriculum, Employers and Student Services. Every funding rule is explored and exhausted prior to withdrawal.

- How many apprentices were there?

  563 apprentices with new starters not yet on the ILR. There were on average between 500 to 600 apprentices in learning at any given time.

RESOLVED:

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

(iv) Maths and English

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

- 41% of learners enrolled without either English or maths.
- Learners enrolling with both English and maths had increased from 24% to 31% that could be a result of grade inflation.
- TAGs required an assessed piece of work as opposed to the forecast of calculated grades the previous year. The TAGs were an increased burden on teachers following a difficult year engaging learners through online delivery and a number of classes isolating.
- The English and maths data would be reviewed on a granular level and with a view to developing a strategy to increase attendance and progression.

Governor Questions:

- Is there a correlation between non-attendance in English and maths and achievement in other areas?

  There is not a clear correlation. Individuals were impacted regardless of best efforts. Moving to face-to-face learning there is the expectation of an improvement in the figures.

The College would look to use catch up funding to complete practice examinations, as some learners were not familiar with sitting examinations.

RESOLVED:

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

(v) 16 – 19 Study Programmes

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

- Overall achievement for 2020/21 was 86.19%, 2.3% below the national rate pre-pandemic. Learners were supported in small groups to reduce the gap and catch up on learning that had been missed due to the pandemic.
- External work experience or industry placements in 2020/21 did not take place due to the pandemic. The College was maximising meaningful encounters as part of learner enrichment and had built in the capacity for external work experience.
- Curriculum areas and the marketing team were working with schools to promote and support the framework of transition programmes.

RESOLVED:

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

(vi) T Levels:

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

- There would be an in-year claw back due to the under recruitment to T Levels.
- The College was supporting local schools in their knowledge and understanding of T Levels to drive and improve recruitment next academic year.
- The College had been successful in securing two T Level capital bids (circa. £4m) that would be consolidated for a single building. Work was underway to identify the space for the new building with positive feasibility studies.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the information provided in the T Levels Update report.

2.2 Applications and Enrolments 2021/22

The Director of MIS and Curriculum Planning presented the report, highlighting the following key points:

- 16-18 recruitment was 40 learners ahead at the same time last year. Although recruitment was 37 learners behind the external allocation for the year, ESOL and Foundation Learning continued to recruit throughout the year with the expectation that the target would be met.
- 176 learners were funded through the advanced learning loans that was less than target at the same time last year. The National Skills Fund and the GMCA L3 Entitlement Fund allowed some learners to undertake L3 courses without cost.

- There had been 185 apprenticeship new starters that was circa £119k higher than at the same point last year.
- Community learning had achieved 42% of the enrolment target for the year with marketing campaigns in place to increase recruitment to the area.
- HE had achieved 91% of the target for the year. There had been a large expansion of delivery at L4 and L5 and the College would work closely with the University of Bolton to support this.

RESOLVED:

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

2.3 Student Destinations

The Director of MIS and Curriculum Planning presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Sustained positive outcomes (learners in education or employment for a specified period of time) was 67% against national average of 80.7%.
- Sustained education was 35% against national average of 47.4%.
- Sustained apprenticeships was 9.6% against national average of 8.4%.
- Sustained employment was 22.7% against national average of 24.9%.
- The College had agreed to engage a third party provider to collect destinations data to increase yield.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Student Destinations report.

2.4 Subcontracting Activity Update

The Deputy Principal presented the update, highlighting the following points:

- The College continued to support Shockout Arts in 2020/21. The quality of provision was consistently good with further visits to take place in the year.
- Strategic partnerships across the Group continued to be developed.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Subcontracting Activity Update.

2.5 Achievement Rates 2020/21 and Performance Targets 2021/22

The Deputy Principal presented the Achievement Rates and Performance Targets report, highlighting the following points:

- The report showed the achievement rates against each funding line over the last three academic years.

- The College acknowledged that English and maths required improvement to increase attendance and achievement rates.
- The year had been challenging and the recommendation was made for the achievement targets of 89% for 16-18 year old learners and adult provision, 94% for community learning and 70% for apprenticeships.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the achievement targets for 2021//22 and agreed that they would be recommended to the Board.

ACTION:

Clerk / Board Agenda

(G Waugh left the meeting at 3.56pm)

2.6 SAR Validation Panels

The SAR dates and times had been circulated to all Board members. There were a small number of SAR panels that did not have a Board member in attendance.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the SAR validation panel dates.

2.7 End of Year Survey

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

- 51% of learners had completed the survey that was considered an average return in comparison to the sector.
- Learner's perception of the quality of education remained stable.
- The largest decline was in relation to personal development that was linked to limited learner enrichment activities and opportunities.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the End of year Survey report.

2.8 Annual External Quality Assurance Reports 2020/21

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

- External reports were marked against specific criteria that had shown an increase in the number of reports graded at Grade 4. These were due to internal quality assurance that had been difficult during lockdown
- Internal quality assurance would be more robust throughout the current academic year.

Governor Questions:

- How did the College measure achievement in the nursery?

  There was a full Early Year's curriculum that would be reviewed by the Early Year's team as a whole that would be presented at the SAR panel.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Annual External Quality Assurance report.

ACTION:

Early Year's SAR to be circulated to Committee Members.

2.9 Link Governor Scheme

The Clerk informed members that each 'Linked Governor' had been provided with the policy and had either arranged, or were in the process of arranging a meeting with the relevant member of staff at the College.

Following feedback from the Senior Management Team, 'Digital' had been included as an additional link area with Environment and Sustainability still requiring a link governor.

The College would continue to provide Board members with both formal and informal opportunities to become more involved at the College including invites to SAR panels and the Learner Voice forum.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the Link Governor Scheme.

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

None.

4. SECTION D - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4.1 Bolton College of Medical Sciences

The 'levelling up' bid had been successful with funding secured from the Council. The project would be led by the University and would drive forward the health agenda.

4.2 Chartered Institute of Further Education (CIFE):

The College had submitted a successful application for CIFE membership. This would be another step towards upgrading the CPD offering to staff and another step towards being an 'outstanding' institution. There would be development provision that could be offered to governors.

5. SECTION E - FUTURE MEETINGS

Tuesday 19th January 2022 at 2.00pm

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting closed at 4.20pm