

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday 9th February 2021 at 4.30pm via Microsoft Teams

Members Present: Katharine Clough
Alison Hodge
Helen Lawley
Suhail Rana
Neil Thomas
David Whatton (Chair)

In attendance: Andy Comyn (Chief Operating Officer)
Gill Darwood (Senior Officer Corporate Governance) (SOCG)
Diana Martin (Vice Principal)
Dean Price (Standards & Performance Manager)
Carl Riding (Vice Principal Curriculum & Performance)

1 Confirmation of quorum and apologies for absence

1.1 There were no apologies for absence. The SOCG confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 November 2020

3.1 A Hodge noted that the date of the next meeting should read 9th February 2021. The minutes were otherwise confirmed as a true record for signature by the Chair.

4 Matters arising

4.1 There were no matters arising other than those covered on the agenda.

5 Data dashboard review for 2020/21

5.1 The CE&P confirmed that in year updates had been completed on enrolments, attendance and satisfaction for all key client groups. Following publication of the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment report, all of the end of year updates had also been completed in respect of achievements, diversity and currently available destinations data.

5.2 In respect of destinations data gathering, the CE&P explained that a third party organisation would be collecting this data, in line with an agreement with WMCA to develop a consistent approach across all 21 members of Colleges West Midlands. The data collection had however been delayed due to the pandemic, although all information had now been submitted by the College to enable this work to be undertaken. In the meantime, the dashboard contained the destination data which could be compiled internally relating to continuing learners. This would be updated with the full destination

data once the exercise was completed. D Martin agreed to follow up with the external company to confirm the timescale for completing the destination survey.

- 5.3 The CE&P explained that the combined approach would mean that a benchmark would be available to compare all West Midlands colleges as a whole, but would not enable comparison on an individual college basis. It was agreed that the Colleges West Midlands data dashboard would be presented at the next meeting.
- 5.4 In respect of in year updates, the CE&P showed the current dashboard position, noting that:
- *Apprenticeships* - enrolment numbers were down on the previous year, attendance was strong and satisfaction remained high, although there was a reduced response rate due to the survey being conducted purely online compared to the usual face to face approach with many apprentices.
 - *Full time learners* – enrolments were increased by 188 compared to the previous year (with a decision from ESFA on in year support still awaited), attendance was increased and satisfaction was reasonably high but slightly below benchmark in some areas, although the benchmark was based on the previous year. Specific curriculum areas who were less satisfied would be followed up.
 - *A levels* – enrolments were increased compared to the previous year and above target with high attendance. Satisfaction was also very high.
 - *Adults* – enrolments were behind by 11% compared to the previous year but recruitment for this cohort was ongoing throughout the year. The CE&P advised that as soon as was possible when lockdown restrictions were lifted the adult offer would again be relaunched and promoted in order to address this gap. Attendance was very strong and satisfaction very high and above benchmarks.
 - *Higher Education* – enrolments were down compared to the previous year and the January intake had been delayed due to lockdown. There was also concern about application levels for the following year. Attendance was very strong and satisfaction high.
 - *Dudley Worldwide* – this key client group did not report in year data.
- 5.5 The financial section of the dashboard and other supporting areas had also been updated to include yearend data. The CE&P confirmed that the dashboard data matched the data within the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment report approved by Corporation, which was now published on the College website.
- 5.6 In response to a question from A Hodge, the CE&P advised that it was possible to track the number of visits to the data dashboard and obtain an insight into activity, which he agreed to report to the next meeting. He noted that the Dudley Dashboard was promoted with stakeholders and demonstrated the College's transparency in the availability of this information.
- 5.7 **It was resolved** To note the dashboard update.

6 Operational Development Plan 2020

- 6.1 The CE&P advised that in a normal annual cycle, members would be aware that the College would submit a draft set of Operational Development Plans (ODPs) for every section of the Strategic Plan to this committee at this point in time. These would then be submitted to Corporation for approval and would form the blueprint for development activity in the calendar year, ensuring that the College was delivering on the aspirations set out in its Strategic Plan. The ODPs for 2020 were now closed down and while good progress had been made with many actions, there had inevitably been an impact on some activity as a result of Covid 19.
- 6.2 This year there were a number of reasons why the preference would be to delay and modify this process. The impact of Covid-19 continued to be felt and clearly had ongoing implications whilst in another national lockdown. The College was currently in consultation on restructuring of curriculum responsibilities. In addition, the outcome of a number of important consultations and reports was awaited, such as the FE White Paper, consultation on level 3 vocational programmes, the future of level 2 and proposals for exams and accreditation this year.
- 6.3 For these reasons it was proposed to delay production of the new ODPs until after completion of the proposed restructuring. These plans would then be submitted to the Corporation in March. It was also proposed that these plans be relatively short term - running from March to November and that they focused on two key elements:
- Actions related to ongoing response to Covid 19 pandemic.
 - Priority short term actions from Strategic Plan.
- 6.4 These plans would therefore be more focused on the short term needs whilst maintaining momentum on strategic developments where possible. At the end of this period (end of 2021) it was hoped that the position would be substantially recovered from the pandemic and a heightened focus on middle to long term developments from the Strategic Plan 2020-23 could then return. It would also be a good opportunity to review this plan in line with the impact of Covid 19.
- 6.5 The Chair asked what the timescale was likely to be in respect of an announcement for exams and the review of the impact of missed education and whether a March deadline fit in with those timescales. The CE&P noted that in his opinion the College needed to progress with short term plans rather than wait for further announcements and consultation outcomes. He advised that it was envisaged to create task and finish groups to look at various aspects of operational arrangements as had taken place in the previous year, and the work of these groups would be included in the plans.
- 6.6 K Clough noted that there was continuing uncertainty at the present time but a light touch approach would satisfy the need to capture the corporate memory and monitor actions to reflect in individuals' PMR targets.
- 6.7 Members agreed that in the absence of any further clarity the plans should be progressed within the proposed timescale.
- 6.8 **It was resolved** To recommend the proposal in relation to Operational Development Plans for 2021 to Corporation for approval.

7 Sector specific strategic developments

7.1 Consultations on level 2 and level 3 qualifications and potential impact

7.1.1 D Martin and C Riding presented an update on the three key current consultations.

7.1.2 *Review of post 16 qualifications at level 3 – second stage – now closed.*

- Streamlining so that there were two pathways – a technical pathway and an academic pathway.
- Technical route populated by T levels.
- No longer fund qualifications where there was an overlap with T levels.
- Developing new qualifications within this pathway based on competency, recognising the fact that T levels do not suit everyone.
- Academic pathway – primarily A levels. No longer funded where they overlap.

7.1.3 Concerns on these proposals were noted as:

- The proposal may lead to the removal of funding from many vocational qualifications including many BTEC and level 3 nationals.
- An offer at level 3 based only on A level and T level would not meet the needs of all students.
- Impact on inclusion and social mobility.
- Learners not able to achieve a grade 4 in English or mathematics may be ‘lost in transition’.

7.1.4 *Post 16 study at level 2 and below – call for evidence closed 14 February*

- Part of the review of post 16 qualifications at level 3 and below.
- Desire to improve study at level 2 ensuring clear and coherent pathways.
- What was working and what more support do level 2 students need?
- Transition programme introduced in first wave of T levels.

7.1.5 Concerns:

- Feeling level 2 and below not valued.
- Perception level 2 does not lead to employment (incorrect in many areas).
- Relaxation about level 2 qualifications.
- Focus on English and mathematics.

7.1.6 A Hodge noted that particularly in the current circumstances there would be a high demand for technology and science and so many students would need more than ever to progress through these routes.

7.1.7 The CE&P noted that level 2 was an entry to employment for a large number of students. Many students were more suited to a vocational route and left school without qualifications but still progressed on to achieve at HE level.

7.1.8 In response to a question from the Chair, D Martin confirmed that phasing out of other qualifications was planned once the equivalent T level was available with the aim of completing this by 2024.

7.1.9 It was not known when feedback from the consultation would be received, however it was unlikely to be before next academic year. It was felt that the FE sector would need to demonstrate the impact of alternative routes.

7.1.10 *Summer assessment 2021 consultation – now closed.*

- Students would continue with their education during this academic year.
- Students would be assessed by their teachers May to early June.

- Teachers would submit grades to exam boards by mid June.
- External quality assurance would be undertaken by exam boards.
- Results may be issued in early July.
- Student appeals could be submitted immediately following the issue of results and would first be considered by schools and colleges.

7.1.11 It was noted that the College would need to look at the implications of the proposals, for example bringing forward enrolment to July so that students could enrol on receipt of their results.

7.1.12 The Chair noted that in the multi academy trust there was peer moderation in place and enquired what arrangements were in place in the College. The CE&P explained that this was done internally last year but given more time this year, this could be looked at further.

7.1.13 D Martin advised that work on systems for recording grades had commenced internally so that the infrastructure was in place to monitor this and potentially share information with another college for moderation. Clear lines of communication were in place with the awarding bodies with the College's quality nominee.

7.1.14 The CE&P noted that there would be a number of qualifications where assessed grades would not be possible which would need to be completed over the summer period.

7.1.15 K Clough noted the potential knock on effect on staffing resources involved in any early enrolment activities and D Martin acknowledged that this would be an issue in terms of staff wellbeing and those on term time only contracts.

7.1.16 **It was resolved** To note the update on consultations.

8 Teaching and Learning Matters

8.1 Teaching and learning update

8.1.1 D Price presented the report which provided a summary of teaching and learning activity for this reporting period. The report identified how the College had adapted teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, focusing on the key teaching and learning challenges and how these had been addressed. Items highlighted included:

- Digital delivery: how the College was supporting staff and learners to ensure a smooth transition to digital delivery.
- Digital poverty: how the College was supporting learners with limited/no digital resources. Physical learning packs had been issued to learners in the early days and more recently laptops had been issued. 608 laptops had now been allocated through DfE support. 800 4G routers had also been requested and data allocations were available for learners in receipt of free school meals. Headsets had been provided to learners coming into College to access IP to enable them to engage with their lessons.
- Wellbeing: what the College was doing to support staff and learners in these challenging times.
- Maintaining quality: what the College was doing to maintain and enhance the quality of digital delivery. A College wide 'Digiweek' had taken place to ensure that staff were able to access remote delivery and so that quality assurance could be carried out. Digital teaching standards had been set. Microsoft were in the process of developing an application to enable access into lessons within Teams without an invite link to enable observation of classes. Health checks

had also been undertaken on induction passports, intervention sessions and learner progress checks.

- All lessons delivered on line at the CAT Centre during Digiweek which had developed staff confidence to do this.
- Aspire staff, learners and parents had been offered support sessions to access Teams, learners had arranged a virtual Christmas Fayre and were now selling their products on Etsy.

8.1.2 The Chair asked if there had been any issues with disruption of online lessons. D Price explained that this had happened when links to lessons had been shared with third parties. Guidance had now been sent out to staff on how to avoid this and College systems were being set so that this could not occur. D Martin noted that any evidence of students behaving inappropriately was dealt with in the same way as if this had happened in College and the code of conduct had been reviewed at the end of the Summer term to ensure that it covered online lessons.

8.1.3 In response to a question from the Chair in relation to lost learning time for learners who needed to access practical sessions, C Riding explained that this challenge was recognised and technical face to face provision would be prioritised in terms of access to resources when restrictions were relaxed. The CE&P noted that practical activity had been front loaded in September in case of a further lockdown, although he acknowledged there would nevertheless be a lot of activity to catch up on when onsite learning recommenced. [The Chair requested a specific paper on this at the next meeting which identified any resources required to manage this challenge.](#)

8.1.4 The Chair expressed thanks to all staff for the amount of work, time and effort going into these arrangements.

8.1.5 Members noted a confidential summary of complaints and compliments received in the first term of this academic year. The CE&P noted that he had asked for the same degree of information about compliments as was included on complaints in future reports. It was noted that all complaints had been resolved to the complainants' satisfaction and all matters had been followed up with relevant staff as required.

8.1.6 **It was resolved** To note the teaching and learning update, including the confidential analysis of compliments and complaints.

9 Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

9.1 Safeguarding and Learner Conduct Report

9.1.1 D Martin presented the report which provided a summary of safeguarding arrangements in the College as well as updates in developments across the College. The key points of the report were noted as:

9.1.2 *Staff:*

- Online safeguarding, prevent, safer recruitment and prevent training continues for staff and associates where required during this period of lockdown.

9.1.3 *Safeguarding:*

- There had been 360 referrals this reporting period.
- 261 safeguarding concerns had been logged.
- 68 learners were Children in Care (CiC).
- 20 students and their families were supported through the Early Help.

- 13 learners were Children in Need (CiN).
- 16 learners were on a Child Protection Plan (CPP).
- 9 learners were identified as "at risk" of sexual exploitation.
- 5 learners were involved in or "at risk" of criminal exploitation.

9.1.4 *Discipline - Code of Conduct:*

- 31 suspensions for this period.
- 3 exclusions.

9.1.5 Incidences were significantly lower than the previous year due to the limited attendance at College and restrictions on movement around the College.

9.1.6 *Counselling:*

- 188 referrals.

9.1.7 This was less than the previous year, it was felt that there was some reluctance to engage through online means. The counselling service continued to work remotely in the third lockdown using mainly Teams, telephone and email however learner feedback was very positive about the services provided. The staff reported that students were presenting with less resilience during this lockdown period and they were finding students were having more anxiety linked to bereavement and exams uncertainty.

9.1.8 D Martin reported that the College had purchased Senso for Microsoft Teams which was a cloud based software tool to monitor Teams chat on messages and inspect images which may link to a potential safeguarding concern. The Acceptable use of IT and Privacy policies had been updated to reflect this.

9.1.9 D Price noted that the College was currently trialling a wellbeing app for students which would be rolled out.

9.1.10 In response to a question from the Chair in relation to the wellbeing of safeguarding and counselling staff, D Martin explained the support arrangements in place which included regular informal catch ups with their line manager as well as monthly supervision with a counsellor which was funded through the College, which was being continued virtually.

9.1.11 **It was resolved** To note the safeguarding and learner conduct update.

10 **Office for Students Update**

10.1 The CE&P advised that the Office for Students had revised its requirements for reportable events to minimise the regulatory burden on providers during the period of disruption resulting from the Coronavirus pandemic and ensure it had the information necessary in the current circumstances.

10.2 There were no substantial changes to note, but the latest copy of guidance had been included in the document library in Convene for members' reference.

10.3 **It was resolved** To note the update in relation to the Office for Students.

11 **Date of Next Meeting**

6 May 2021 at 4.30pm

12 Any Other Business

- 12.1 A Hodge commended College staff for their positive approach to maintaining a high quality of provision and support in very difficult circumstances. The CE&P noted that he would ensure that this message of appreciation from the Corporation was conveyed to all staff.

The meeting closed at 17.57.



David Whatton, Chair

6th May 2021