

Minutes of the Standards Committee Meeting held in the Board Room at the Derby Road site on Thursday 8th December 2016 at 5.00 pm

BOARD MEMBERS Prof John Holford, Chair
PRESENT: Dame Asha Khemka DBE
Chris Hatherall
Mark Williams

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Jane Clarke, Interim Director Quality and Performance
Amanda Jogela, Director Quality and Performance
Eleanor Taylor, Head of Higher Education and International
Lucy Howes, Staff Observer for the academic year
Louise Knott, Director: Communications, Marketing and Learner Engagement
Paul Rana, Head of Student Services

| | ACTION by whom | DATE by when |
|---|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| <p>16.48 <u>DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</u></p> <p>The Chair reminded those present to declare at the start of the meeting any interests in matters to be discussed. No interests were declared. Standing interests were noted.</p> | | |
| <p>16.49 <u>WELCOME INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>Apologies for absence were noted from Jean Marriott and Patricia Harman.</p> | | |
| <p>16.50 <u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 6TH OCTOBER 2016</u></p> <p>The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.</p> <p>AGREED: to approve the content of the minutes of the meeting held on 6th October 2016.</p> | | |
| <p>16.51 <u>ACTION PROGRESS REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>Members reviewed the action progress table and there were a number of comments made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 1 – Entrepreneur programme is still to be developed. It was agreed that Paul Rana would be asked to provide an update report on this at the next meeting. | Head of SS | Feb 2017 |

Signed : _____Chair

Date:

- Item 2 – on the agenda.
- Item 3 – on the agenda.
- Item 4 – the point of clarification requested is included within the action table.
- Item 5 – to be presented at the next meeting.
- Item 6 – it was noted that the first point of the action had been addressed, however a full report on attendance was not included on the agenda. It was agreed that Amanda Jogela would be asked to provide this at the next meeting.
- Item 7 – completed.
- Item 8 – it was agreed that an update will be included in the papers for the next meeting.
- Item 9 – completed.
- Item 10 – completed.
- Item 11 – not yet due and is planned.
- Item 12 – included within the Head of Student Services report. The Committee were advised that moving forward Louise Knott will have oversight of Work Based Learning surveys as there is more that needs to be done in this area.
- Item 13 – outstanding.
- Item 14 – on the agenda.
- Item 15 – to be clarified at the February 2017 meeting.

Dir CM&LE

Feb 2017

Dir Q&S

23.02.17

AGREED: to note the update provided.

16.52 LEARNER VOICE REPORTS

Paul Rana introduced this item and key matters brought to members attention were:

- The Work Based Learner survey for 2015/16 was combined in to one survey. There was no separate induction/on-programme survey and exit survey as there was for College based learners. A total of 1623 learners completed the survey representing a response rate of 17%. Members' attention was drawn to section 2 of the report which details the responses to the 18 questions presented in the survey. It was explained that the main cause of the low response rates is the logistics of the learners in the work place being enabled to access online survey links. Several strategies have been used for example QR readers, emailing learners directly, paper based surveys and within subcontractor provision many partners conduct their own learner voice activity. It is felt that the key to a good response rate is when assessors/trainers are proactive in ensuring learners complete their survey. For 2016/17 the overarching work based learner survey has returned to QTLP to manage and monitor response rates. The questions have been reviewed and are more in line with the common inspection framework and it has been issued earlier in the academic year to maximise response rates.

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Plans are in place to monitor and report on response rates on a weekly basis to the Head of Employer Engagement/Partnerships, partner performance officers and learning consultants, to communicate to WRT leaders/assessors within subcontractor provision. It was explained that the questions have been re-scoped and the survey window is already open for comments. At this point in the year in 15/16 there had been 569 responses, the College is currently at 635 by way of comparison.

- The campus based learner exit survey for 2015/16 had a total of 2174 responses, representing a response rate of 76%. The number of questions increased from 40 in 2014/15 to 44 in 2015/16.
- In the national learner survey, 86.5% of respondents were likely to recommend the College to a friend or a relative. The College rating placed it 32nd overall out of 189 general FE Colleges who took part. This places the College in the top 17%. The Committee were advised that the top 10 now more closely align to those Colleges graded as outstanding at inspection. Regionally WNC is one of the top in the Midlands area.
- The total number of complaints logged has risen from 100 in 2013/14 and 130 in 2014/15 to 151 in 2015/16. 64 of the complaints were related to the way to pay system, a rise of 40 from the previous year.
- 365 students voted in the EU referendum mock elections. 55.6% of students voted for remain. A debate was also organised and attended by two local MEPs.

CH As a general observation regarding the reports provided in terms of student surveys, the Committee felt that the information provided did not go far enough. The report provides detail of percentage responses and simply gives statistics but does not explain key issues identified and what the College is doing to address to ensure improvements. The Committee challenged the report writer and indicated that what they need to know more clearly is what is being measured and they also felt that the reports could be smarter in terms of presentation and recording.

CH In relation to the 13% of students who did not say that they would recommend the College to a friend, the Committee questioned whether staff know why. It was agreed that more details on this would be provided at the next meeting.

Q In terms of the survey results for campus based individuals the Committee asked that the exit survey results and the national QDP survey be cross referenced so that they could better see how the responses correlate. The Committee questioned whether it was possible with the QDP responses to break down in to cohorts, for example 16-18, 19+, full time, part time as this would better show trends.

CH/Q

Head of SS Feb 2017

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It was explained that this is not possible with the QDP survey however this can be done for College delivered surveys.

Q/CH In reviewing the report the Committee questioned and challenged the senior team to better inform them in terms of actions and impact. There was a view expressed that a lot of work has been done to capture student views but what is presented at the meeting today is not sharp enough in terms of a focus on issues identified, changes made and the impact of undertaking these surveys. The Committee were advised that the College undertakes QA reviews every 6 weeks and that these feed in to the action plans in place. One element of this is the detail obtained from student surveys.

The Committee Chairman felt that in terms of the report today there was an inability to triangulate to obtain the assurances needed. The Committee were advised and assured that the data for each School goes back to the Heads of School so that staff can pick up and address issues and agree actions. It was confirmed that profiles on a School by School basis are available.

CH The Committee challenged the senior team and indicated that they would like to know the connectivity between surveys and actions/changes. In future reports they want clarity regarding the highlights and/or the exceptions. They would like to better understand what the priorities are for staff and what is being done to improve the position for learners if any negative issues are consistently being raised.

In terms of items for debate and external speakers to the College it was explained that student services are quite driven by curriculum demand and the areas of interest identified by staff and students.

As a general observation the Committee indicated that for future reports they wanted to see much more detail on the impact rather than just the statistical results from the surveys.

The Committees attention was drawn to the Learner Voice Strategy for 2016-2019. They were happy to approve the content but reiterated that they wanted to see more evidence of actions and impact.

AGREED:

- a) to note the content of the report provided; and
- b) approve the Learner Voice Strategy for 2016-2019.

16.53 STUDENT DISCIPLINARIES 2015/16

The Head of Student Support introduced this item and key matters noted were:

- There were a total of 534 disciplinaries in 2015/16.
- 55% of all stage 1, 2 and 3 disciplinaries were of males.

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- 90% of all disciplinarys were of 16-18 students.
- There were a total of 4 exclusions in 2015/16 following stage 3 disciplinary meetings.
- All 4 exclusions were of males and the reasons were in 3 cases violence and 1 case theft.
- Of the exclusions 2 students were 19+.
- 2 of the 4 students excluded had a learning difficulty/disability disclosed, these being ASD and Dyslexia.

Q The Committee questioned whether the fact that all exclusions were male was a cause for concern. They were advised that it was not per se a cause for concern, however it was worthy of investigation. What was described as more worrying to the Principal is the fact that the number of disciplinarys in 2016/17 has significantly increased already and the College has seen a large spike.

As a general observation staff indicated to the Committee that females tend to be involved in more low level disruption that does not spill over into violence. This is generally so when compared with males. The College has a zero tolerance in relation to violence and therefore any instances will be treated incredibly seriously.

It was explained that there has been significantly more staff training this year and the College is seeing more referrals regarding online activity. Assurance was given that there is parity of treatment in terms of males and females.

The Committee all agreed that the high numbers seen in 2016/17 need to be investigated. The Director: Communications, Marketing and Learner Engagement expressed the view that the College needs to look at a deceleration of behaviour and carry out some preventative work.

Q The Committee questioned whether the increase in intolerance is linked to the Brexit decision. It was noted that nationally there has been a rise in terms of anti-social behaviour. The Committee asked whether it was possible to compare the WNC position with other colleges locally and nationally.

The Committee were advised that the sector generally is seeing a significant rise in mental health issues and the AoC is taking a lead in further exploring this and identifying strategies to support these students and colleges.

It was agreed that there is a piece of work to be done to assess why so many more disciplinarys have taken place in 2016/17. The Committee felt that there needs to be analysis as to whether it is poorer behaviour or that processes are not working effectively. Staff expressed the view that it was likely to be a mix of issues and there was a view that WNC is not out of step either regionally or nationally.

Dir CM&LE Jan 2017

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Q The Committee questioned whether the poor behaviours seen were predominately related to year 11 leavers or were they continuing students. It was agreed that staff would carry out some further analysis on this and ascertain if there are any particular trends. There was also the view expressed that the general rhetoric of intolerance, particularly in politics, is likely to be having an effect on acceptable behaviours. It was felt that the transition from schools to colleges is often difficult and the College needs to know whether this is more so for the current academic year.

AGREED: to note the update provided.

16.54 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2015/16 DRAFT

The Principal presented this item and confirmed that it includes; a) An executive report, b) Executive summary c) The full SAR. In terms of what it tells Governors and the wider public about the College it includes:

- A consistent vision which has been in place for the last 10 years and which is thoroughly embedded.
- Learners are at the heart of all College activity and decisions and there is evidence to confirm this.
- The College has a clear strategic direction.
- The College has high values which are embedded with staff and students 'living and breathing' these.
- Leadership and governance – she expressed the view that the report could better articulate the impact and that further work could be done particularly to;
 - a) Articulate the impact of actions taken, for example both the national and local position regarding apprenticeship delivery, including the high volume numbers and the fact that the College is in the top decile in the country in terms of achievement.
 - b) The quality of apprenticeship provision.
 - c) College direct delivery is at national average and this needs to be improved.
 - d) The College has transformed its estate and this will support students to aspire and achieve.
 - e) Robust embedding of College values.
 - f) The College has a track record of making bold and timely decisions. It is leading and shaping' not following.
 - g) Impact of robust leadership and governance is a sustained financial position and this should be compared with others in the sector who are not so fortunate.
 - h) The College has been able to provide pay awards and progression. This is a clear example of empowering the work force.
 - i) Governors have strategically led this organisation. Whether or not this is at all levels and for all Governors there is a need to analyse this.

Signed : _____Chair

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The Committee expressed the view that Governors could more support the work of this Committee and be more informed about curriculum and quality matters.

- j) There is a need to continue to drive forward and improve teaching and learning.
- k) Results for maths and English for full time students needs to be improved.

In terms of the content and format of the SAR the Principal indicated that there were a number of things that she would like to see differently. These include:

- A punchy summary of strengths and areas for improvement.
- Greater cross referencing back to the last inspection outcome and a clear articulation of what the organisation has done to address any issues and any actions taken. This to be by way of bullet points, for example hair and beauty delivery, teaching and learning, what do we do better now.
- Greater clarity regarding why we are so good, particularly teaching and learning. Reference should be made to 16-19, 19+, apprentices, success rates destinations etc.
- Progress of students and particularly whether they are employable and are moving in to jobs.
- What do staff, students and employers say about the College.
- It is important that the SAR clearly demonstrates the College's own understanding of where it is and what is needed to get to outstanding
- Resources and estate - there needs to be greater clarity within the document regarding the impact of investment, for example market share, results, efficiencies etc.
- Finances – the College has invested £50million and has borrowed £17 million of that. There needs to be greater clarity regarding the impact of that investment what is different, what has improved etc. Has value for money improved because of the investment?
- Equality and Diversity - we are champions however this does not come across in the current document.

CH

What she would like to see in the document is a comparison of where the College was 4 years ago and explain where it is now. She expressed the view that the executive summary does not add enough value and simply repeats matters within the larger document. She challenged the senior team and indicated that Governors should be able to more clearly see the evidence of impact rather than just actions. It was felt that the Governor links initiative will help to support this. The Committee all agreed that greater engagement by Governors in the College is to be supported and that the informal interactions with staff and students are very important. The Principal agreed and stated that it was important that all Governors 'see' the College in action.

Signed : _____Chair

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The Committee Chairman and the Principal agreed that membership of Governors on this Committee could be strengthened and that this is something that they would ask the Board to discuss/review.

Principal /
Com Chair

2017

The Committee Chairman indicated that the Governor link programme was incredibly important and asked that the Clerk periodically reiterate this to all Governors on his behalf.

Clerk

2017

Members in reviewing the detailed document referred to page 108 and the section on 'Prevent'. It was noted that there were 16 staff who had not undertaken prevent training. It was explained that this has now moved on and more staff have been trained and that this is 16 out of 900+ employees. The Committee agreed that sometimes it was hard for them to know the context of a comment. They were advised that in terms of invigilators all have now had paper training as it had become clear that face to face was not feasible.

The Committee were happy to recommend the SAR for Board approval in terms of grades and profile, however it was agreed that given the matters brought to the Committee's attention today by the Principal that there was some further work needed in terms of context and wording. The Principal indicated that at inspection the College will produce an addendum which shows the journey which has taken place already in 2016/17.

AGREED (Subject to the changes identified today) to recommend that the Board approve the Self-Assessment Report for 2015/16.

16.55 SELF EVALUATION DOCUMENT (SED) 2015/16

Eleanor Taylor, the Head of Higher Education (HE) and International introduced this item and confirmed that the format is different from the SAR as it responds to the HE quality code. She expressed the view that there were two tensions within the document and these relate to the quality of teaching and learning. There is difference in terms of the view given by student feedback when compared with graded observations and external examiners. To better understand this, these will be focus areas for learning walks. The Committee were advised that the first set of curriculum reviews are planned for next week.

The Committee were reminded that the Self-Assessment of HE is distinct from the College SAR process. It was noted that the HEFCE Quality Assurance statement went to the Board for approval at its last meeting.

Q Members discussed the detail provided on page 41 in terms of the National Student Survey and questioned what had gone wrong to lead to the decline. It was explained that there were some very specific course issues particularly in sports with an element of co-taught provision.

Signed : _____ Chair

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Satisfaction rates for the two elements, in terms of teaching, were vastly different i.e. 90% v 30% and this simply does not correlate. The Committee were advised that a pulse survey is done internally and there is a much more positive satisfaction rate reported in these.

Q The Committee questioned whether the 2015/16 deterioration in student satisfaction reported has led to a reduction in 2016/17 student numbers. The Committee felt that it was critically important to know this as HE numbers are a key element of the financial sustainability strategy and therefore it is essential that the College gets the student experience right for HE.

The Head of HE expressed the view that there were a number of key issues in 2015/16 which will have impacted upon the satisfaction rate, these include:

- a) Significant staff changes;
- b) Transitional year in terms of facilities;
- c) Difficulty in staff recruitment has meant that in certain areas HE provision has had to be withdrawn.

Q The Committee questioned whether staff recruitment was likely to be a reoccurring problem. The Head of HE expressed the view that there will always be some staff movement and shift. What the College does see is that staff come out of the university sector but then move back after a period. The key for the College is the management of change with students and it was acknowledged that this could be improved.

Members discussed the data provided in 3.4.6 and felt that the discrepancy in terms of positive responses between full-time and part-time students needed to be properly understood, as it could be assumed that FE Colleges could better support part-time learners when compared with universities. It was explained that the results this year were very significantly influenced by one particular course and that the results for part-time students are drawn from a single course (FdA Children and Young People Services) where there was significant staffing changes. The Committee were provided with assurance that the College does all that it can to fully accommodate part time learners and there is an action plan in place that supports this and it is anticipated that the College and Governors will see an improving picture.

AGREED: to approve the Self-Evaluation Document (SED) for 2015/16.

16.56 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

As a matter of additional business the Committee Chairman again raised a concern regarding Committee membership and asked that this be discussed by the Board. He questioned whether the name of this Committee needed to be refreshed and whether that was potentially putting off Governors from joining the Committee.

Signed : _____Chair

Date:

16.57 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Clerk confirmed that the next scheduled meeting was 23rd February 2017 at 5.00 pm.

Meeting closed at 6.30 pm

Signed : _____Chair

Date: