

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION & STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT 4.30 PM ON 7 DECEMBER 2023

Present: Lesley Rollason (Chair), Francis Tunney, David O'Neill, Craig Hodgson, Sam Barber

In attendance: Shelley Brown (Director of Curriculum and Performance), Lesley Morrey (Director of Student Engagement and Partnerships), Georgina Barnard (Director of IoT), Carl Riding (Director of Employer Engagement and Estates), Andy Bailey (Head of Compliance and Governance), Gavin Barker (Assistant Principal: Teaching and Learning)

23.4.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Alan Aston.

23.4.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in any items on the agenda.

23.4.3 Minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2023

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

23.4.4 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

23.4.5 2022-23 NSCG Self-Assessment Reports

Shelley referred to the Self-Assessment Report shared with members and explained that going forward, we expect to adopt the Ofsted SAR format which will contain different language and different approaches, heavily focussing on skills and personal development, with less of a focus on data but with lots of examples. Lesley asked about the fundamental purpose of the SAR and Craig confirmed that its use is for Ofsted primarily.

Shelley confirmed that we will take the opportunity to strongly highlight our T Level successes, as we stand out from the sector in this respect. We are aware that Ofsted will inspect T Levels and we will provide information in the SAR that they can use effectively. Shelley confirmed that the consultant had given us some very useful advice in terms of putting T Levels, EHCPs and Safeguarding in the context of what we are doing. In addition, students' progress and adding value will be an important element of focus.

Shelley confirmed that the final SAR will be a lot shorter and consequently is likely to be carefully scrutinised. Francis felt that the current iteration does show the areas of focus and the work we are doing, but he felt that the College is quite harsh on itself in some areas relating to achievement

rates and progress, for example A Level Chemistry, a very difficult subject, shows that progress needs improving, however, the achievement rates are in fact high.

Shelley advised that many of the queries arising from the current iterations will be clearer with the new report with strong examples of the work we have undertaken providing better clarification. Francis added that student support is something that we can provide excellent contextualised examples about in the new SAR.

Craig confirmed that the College will provide members with a detailed crib sheet and all required supporting information with lots of strong examples to use in their answers for the meetings with Inspectors. He added that we have been advised to quote contextualising information in our reports and outline where we sit in terms of demographics, numbers etc which will underpin the strength of our position. Destinations information will also be strengthened as this is a particular focus of Ofsted.

Craig confirmed that advice received is to use narrative to talk about our Outstanding provision and to have the data available as a back-up if required. As an organisation we need to make a decision about exactly what data we share.

Members thanked Shelley for her work on the document.

Lesley R commented on the lack of curriculum and skills information considered by the Corporation compared to other aspects of the College's operation and it was agreed that, given its importance, the College would look at ways to enhance the level of information provided to the full Board.

23.4.6 Learner Data Report

Shelley introduced the latest Learner Data Report and reminded members that this is the first report of the year and shows the initial position. Members noted that retention is strong and attendance in some areas is not yet where we want it to be but we are working hard towards this, although it was noted that our position is strong compared to the sector.

In Maths and English attendance had dropped with those students who sat the November exam and we are focussing on addressing this, as well as strengthening other aspects of Maths and English. Shelley reminded members of the steps already taken in restructuring Maths and English in order to drive the required improvements.

Carl drew attention to the latest apprenticeships achievement rates where the overall rate of 68% is significantly above the most recent national average of 52%. Carl confirmed that we are working on identified areas to bring about further improvements, particularly around Construction and some elements of Engineering.

Craig referred to the particular challenges with End Point Assessments where exam boards do not have the capacity to deal with the numbers of learners involved. Georgina added that there are a number of other issues that are not within the College's control, eg learners who move to a new employer who is unable to continue with the apprenticeship, therefore, the

learner involved would be classed as a fail. Gavin added that we do have extremely positive destinations for our apprentices and members noted that the wrap around support that we provide for apprentices is available whether they are in the workplace or in the classroom with us.

Craig referred to a recent safeguarding issue relating to an apprentice in the workplace when the learner drove nearly 50 miles to come to College as she felt this would be a place where she would be safe and she had confidence in our systems. It was noted that the increase in work experience placement requirements along with the time spent in the workplace as part of a T Level programme increases the need for health and safety and safeguarding awareness/training. Lesley M advised on the work that is currently ongoing in order to ensure the safety of our T Level students who may be working in close confines on a one to one basis with small business owners. This has involved educating employers and guiding them in the right direction to safeguard everyone; both the learners and themselves. It was noted that there is no legislation for employers providing placements to have enhanced DBS clearance, nor is it a requirement for employers taking 16-18 apprentices.

David felt that the problems that the College is experiencing in Construction, for example, are issues that are being seen nationally where young people enter the trade but then find that they are able to find better paid work elsewhere.

Carl was pleased to advise that the College is one of four to be asked to join the Expert Apprenticeship Providers Group where we will work with the DfE to shape policy and help other providers to meet the challenges that apprenticeships bring. Carl also advised that with the reduction in L2 apprenticeships there are pathways that are no longer available to some young learners.

Members were very pleased to note the strength of the College's apprenticeship provision and the steps taken to mitigate the safeguarding risks along with the enormous amount of work the team undertake to deal with the complexities involved.

Lesley R asked about the issues relating to adult learning and Craig confirmed that this is not as strong as we would like it to be, despite efforts to relaunch it. We will revisit this going forward, aligning it to the LSIP's five priorities and the work of the IoT and Craig confirmed that the senior team will be meeting at Gradbach early in the new year to look at how we will approach this element of our provision. He referred to the community dimension of adult education which may be part of our approach. David asked if funding has been withdrawn from adult learning and members noted that the leisure part of the funding was withdrawn. Craig advised on the significant increases in the cost of adult learning to the student and cited hairdressing as an example which was previously our most popular adult course with a fee of around £75 pa. This fee has now increased to around £1300 pa which has resulted in a negative impact on demand, as would be expected. There remain some areas of adult provision where funding is available eg some higher level courses and we will look at what we wish to offer going forward in line with the local skills plan.

Francis asked about the level 3 defunding proposals, and Shelley drew attention to those programmes that will be withdrawn from 2025. She advised that the worrying element is Health and Social Care where if BTEC is removed, a significant number of learners will be left unable to access an appropriate qualification. Applied Science is also a worry as, again, there will not be a suitable alternative.

Shelley referred to the proposals for an Advanced British Standard (ABS) qualification which the Government is currently moving ahead with. This will eventually replace A Levels, although the approach and whether this comes to fruition is likely to depend on whether there is a change in Government. It was noted that the qualification itself is felt to be a strong alternative although Francis commented that there have been many attempts to replace A Levels over the years with none succeeding. Craig confirmed that updated information on the new ABS qualification is anticipated early next year and will be shared as soon as we receive it.

Francis asked about the 524 learners requiring additional support for examinations and Shelley reported on the many logistical challenges this presents. On some days we have c900 learners taking exams and we have less accommodation available so we have had to take the decision to make those days CP days, therefore, there will be no normal classes running, thus freeing up accommodation. Craig added that this is made worse by the number of papers that the GCSE maths students need to sit.

Referring to the areas of concern in safeguarding and prevent Lesley M advised that this year's numbers are tracking those this time last year.

David asked who is responsible for HE attendance and Shelley confirmed that this is the College's responsibility and the figure quoted is high in terms of HE. Gavin reported that the universities are not interested in attendance; their only concern is that the students are submitting their work and achieving their qualification.

Referring to the 14% work placement query from David, Gavin indicated that this is low due to timing issues/putting information on the system. Shelley confirmed that, with the exception of T Level students, most work placements are arranged in terms two and three.

23.4.7 Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

23.4.8 Date and Time of Next Meeting

11 March 2024 at 4.30 pm at Stafford College