

## Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 2, Broadway

Members Present: Paul Hartridge  
Mollie-Amelia Hehir  
Paul Noon  
Neil Thomas (Chief Executive and Principal) (CEP)

In attendance: Georgina Barnard (Managing Director of Institute of Technology)  
Rachel Corns (Assistant Principal)  
Gill Darwood (Director of Corporate Governance) (DCG)  
Samantha Jocelyn-Sears (Assistant Principal)  
Kathryn Jones (Director of HR)  
Diana Martin (Vice Principal) (VP)  
Dean Price (Standards & Performance Manager)

### Committee administrative matters

#### 1 **Confirmation of quorum**

1.1 The Director of Corporate Governance (DCG) confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

#### 2 **Apologies for absence**

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Julius Adams, Sukhninder Panesar, Lynn Glazzard and Claire Millard.

#### 3 **Declarations of interest**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### 4 **Approve minutes of previous meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023 were confirmed as a true record for signature by the Vice Chair.

#### 5 **Matters arising**

5.1 All matters arising from the previous meeting had been actioned.

#### 6.1 **Appointment of Vice Chair for 2022/23**

6.1.1 Paul Noon was appointed as Vice Chair for the remainder of 2022/23 and Acting Chair for the meeting in the absence of S Panesar.

#### 6.2 **Election of Chair and Vice Chair for 2023/24**

6.2.1 This item was deferred to the next meeting.

#### 7 **Committee business plan and meeting schedule 2023/24**

7.1 The DCG advised that the business plan for the Committee provided an indication of business and reports which would be submitted to the meetings of the committee scheduled for 2023/24. It was not a rigid document but was intended as a guide and would remain flexible to accommodate emerging priorities and unforeseen eventualities. The business plan also contained the proposed dates for committee meetings during 2023/24. A number of items

had been added to the plan to accommodate changing requirements including the Annual Accountability Statement, Freedom of Speech Annual Report and monitoring of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

- 7.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the committee business plan and meeting schedule for 2023/24.

## Standards and Performance Matters

### 8 **Operational Development Plan 2023**

8.1 The CEP presented the report showing progress on actions within the Operational Development Plan for 2023. He noted that it was fairly early on in the plan, so updates mainly related to those actions with deadlines in the spring or early summer. There were a few milestones that had fallen behind the original due date for reasons which were noted:

- Ref 5 A review of Advance programmes had been taken but the action had been left open in order to allow for a further review once new staff were in place.
- Ref 9 Marketing Plans had been completed, but actions left open as further activity was being added in the lead up to main enrolment.
- Ref 10. Plans for a Parent Portal pilot were behind schedule after the original software solution did not meet requirements. A new solution was now being developed and would be piloted with some parents this academic year.
- Ref 11. The new animal management facility appeared delayed, but this was actually because a solution had been developed that removed the need for demolition of the existing block and so the overall programme was still on schedule.

8.2 Members noted the update and the CEP advised that there would be discussion of some of the key themes during the forthcoming Corporation Development Event.

8.3 The Vice Chair noted that the plan only included red and green ratings, which meant that attention was focussed on any items which were behind schedule.

8.4 **It was resolved** to note progress on the operational development plan 2023.

### 9 **Accountability Framework**

9.1 The CEP advised that under the new reforms of skills and accountability, the College was now required to produce and publish an annual Accountability Statement. The draft content and priorities for this were discussed and agreed at the previous meeting and shared with Corporation.

9.2 On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 the Chamber of Commerce produced the 'Local Skills Improvement Plan – draft priorities'. Whilst the College had to wait until the end of May for the final LSIP, this document gave providers an overview of the areas of focus to support the creation of their Accountability Statement.

- 9.3 Based on these draft priorities and other consultation with stakeholders, the objectives in the Accountability Statement had now been updated. These remained aligned to those agreed previously, but now contained specifics in response to the LSIP. The current draft document was provided for members to review.
- 9.4 Members considered the report focussing on the six strategic objectives under which there were a number of contributory actions. The CEP provided further clarification on points of detail in response to questions from members, noting that the objectives and milestones would link to the College's Operational Development Plan.
- 9.5 The report would be recommended to Corporation with a final deadline for submission to DfE of 31<sup>st</sup> May.
- 9.6 The CEP further advised that Local Skills Improvement Funds would be allocated to the region of the West Midlands and Warwickshire. This funding would pump prime some of the resource required to address identified needs, although it was not yet established how these funds would be distributed amongst providers. The Vice Chair noted it would be helpful to be clear on the funding requirements in anticipation of this funding being available to bid for within a short timescale.
- 9.7 **It was resolved** to recommend the Accountability Statement to Corporation for approval.
- 10 **Data dashboard review**
- 10.1 The CEP provided a live demonstration of the data dashboard noting the enrolments and attendance data for each key client group were regularly updated with live data. He noted that enrolments were broadly as expected, with 16-18 slightly down on the previous year, HE and adult enrolments above last year, apprenticeships in line with the previous year and sub-contracted provision reduced as planned.
- 10.2 Attendance was broadly similar but was currently showing reduced attendance on English and mathematics for 16-18 learners. The CEP advised that a new delivery methodology was being developed to address this issue, otherwise attendance remained high in all areas.
- 10.3 **It was resolved** to note the data dashboard review of enrolments and attendance.
- 11 **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan update**
- 11.1 K Jones presented an update on progress made on the EDI Action Plan for 2022/23. Key progress updates included:-
- EDI day took place across the College on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2023.
  - Mixed heritage student workshop as part of the College's West Midlands workstream took place on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023 with the summit taking place on the 8<sup>th</sup> May 2023.

- Two staff put forward to take part in the aspiring managers programme as part of the College's West Midlands workstream on supporting more managers from diverse backgrounds to progress into leadership roles.
  - Disability Confident Leader reaccreditation had been achieved.
  - Pro noun pin badges had been sourced and would be available for both staff and students for the next academic year.
  - 20 new mental health first aiders had completed their training taking total to just over 50 trained staff.
- 11.2 In response to a question from M Hehir on the status of the transgender policy which the Students' Union had helped to draft, K Jones advised that this had not yet been finalised, explaining that consideration was being given to whether this was most effective as a stand-alone policy or if it should be incorporated into other relevant policies. The VP advised that to support this, there would be staff training on key issues such as the management of educational trips and visits. She assured members that the Students' Union would continue to be consulted on the policy development.
- 11.3 **It was resolved** to note progress on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion action plan.
- 12 **Risk register monitoring**
- 12.1 The CEP presented the report which provided committee members with an update on risks relating to curriculum and standards.
- 12.2 There were five risks that were relevant to this committee. One risk had a higher level of risk appetite but a low risk score, relating to changes in government policy and funding. Opportunities continued to be sought to generate further activity and funding where possible. Examples of such activity were on the Skills Accelerator project, a collaborative bid with Colleges West Midlands and the FE Capital Transformation Fund that had resulted in an award of £8.8m capital grant for the four projects bid for.
- 12.3 There were no changes to the net risk score for these six risks when compared to the report presented to this committee in February, other than the removal of the risk relating to Covid.
- 12.4 There were three actions subject to delay in respect of:
- Implementing a training programme (on apprenticeship delivery) for assessors and managers, only the latter so far had received training. Due to the changing nature of the assessor role, the focus on the need for this training had reduced.
  - Undertaking a review of SEND provision to make recommendations for improvement. The recent curriculum restructure had ensured a focus on SEND and student support and it was expected that the review would now be implemented for September.
  - Use of the PREVENT self-assessment toolkit to review the College's position and make recommendations. The assessment had been undertaken and the results would be shared with SLG.

- 12.5 The CEP advised that currently, employer engagement staff worked within different teams for each area of operation, for example work placements for T Levels and apprentices. It had been decided that this engagement would be more effective if staff worked directly within the relevant curriculum area and dealt with all aspects of employer engagement. They would be performance managed by a central manager but the relevant curriculum manager would determine the tasks for that individual in their area.
- 12.6 The Vice Chair noted that it would be important not to lose the opportunity for cross selling for other curriculum areas and for sharing of good practice which it was felt would be achieved through central management arrangements.
- 12.7 **It was resolved** to note the risk register update.

### Teaching and Learning Matters

- 13 **Teaching and learning update**
- 13.1 D Price presented the paper which provided a summary of the progress and development of teaching and learning across the current academic year. Key points from this paper were noted as:
- The teaching and learning focus for the remainder of academic year was on completing teaching triangles, learner visits and Ofsted readiness.
  - A teaching and learning area had been further developed on Teams to include a curriculum summary, which included triangle progress, learner visit feedback and current staff support/intervention.
  - Teaching and learning across the College remained consistently strong. Key areas for development had been identified with continued intervention in place.
  - Learner visits had been highly positive. Paul Hartridge noted that learner visits had been well received by staff and felt they should continue.
  - Plenty of continued activity around Ofsted readiness, striking a balance between improving teaching and learning, and doing what was best for Dudley, whilst being Ofsted-aware, was key.
  - Successful recent College Conference around the theme of sustainability.
- 13.2 In response to a question from the Vice Chair, D Price advised that staff were not currently unduly anxious in relation to Ofsted, but this may be heightened should an inspection be announced. The VP noted that the focus was on preparing teaching staff so that they were well prepared for engagement with inspectors.
- 13.3 The VP explained that an alternative approach to teaching students about Prevent was being considered. Students were not expected to understand the terminology and definition of Prevent but to know how to keep themselves safe and to know what to do if they had concerns.
- 13.4 **It was resolved** to note the teaching and learning update.

14 **Confidential - Compliments and complaints analysis**

*This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.*

15 **Admissions Policy**

15.1 The CEP presented the admissions policy which was due for regular review and update and was presented to the committee for approval. This policy had been reviewed by a member of the senior leadership group.

15.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the Admissions Policy to the Corporation for approval.

### Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

16 **Safeguarding and learner conduct report**

16.1 The VP presented the paper which provided an overview of safeguarding and learner conduct for the period September 2022 to 25/4/23. The report noted that:

- 69 new staff started in this period, of which 62 staff completed safeguarding and prevent training within 6 weeks
- 35 members of staff trained as Mental Health First Aiders
- 51 learners had child in care status
- 35 learners being supported by Early Help
- 24 learners on Child in Need plan
- 27 learners subject to Child Protection Plan
- 17 learners at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation and 3 at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation
- 16 reports of child-on-child abuse
- 2 victims of modern-day slavery
- 29 Operation Encompass reports
- There had been 125 suspensions resulting in 18 exclusions. This was high compared to previous years but some of the suspensions related to groups of students in a single incident. A review was being undertaken to see if any earlier intervention could have reduced the number of suspensions. The number of exclusions at 18 was not unduly high for a college of this size. The VP advised that suspensions could be for a varying amount of time from one day or more if there was an investigation requirement. Staff aimed to ensure that learners were able to return to learning at the earliest opportunity.
- 382 referrals to the counselling service. This was an overall increase of 21 compared to the previous year.
- 4 fitness to study referrals had been received and Counsellors managed that process.
- Safeguarding arrangements, including Prevent, continued to be highly effective.

16.2 Police liaison was continuing to develop and officers had been responsive to recent requests for support.

16.3 In response to a question from P Hartridge who asked if the College planned to review the discipline policy in light of this year's experiences, the VP noted

that this would be considered as part of the annual review of the policy. There would also be a wider look at intervention and support with a particular focus on vulnerable groups such as children looked after. Members acknowledged the balance between providing support and maintaining high expectations in respect of behaviour.

16.4 **It was resolved** to note the safeguarding and learner conduct report.

## Higher Education Matters

### 17 **Higher Education update**

17.1 G Barnard presented the Higher Education update. She noted that the College's Higher Skills provision continued to operate successfully, and practice was being reviewed and updated in anticipation of steadily growing this provision over the coming years. The role of the Board of Studies would continue to be enhanced, improving collection and collation of data in relation to HE performance measures, working towards HE quality standards such as Teaching Excellence Framework.

17.2 The PowerBi dashboard was being designed to mirror OfS metrics and the Board of Studies would monitor this at their meetings. [A demonstration of the dashboard would be provided at the next committee meeting.](#)

17.3 The groundwork for 2023-24 recruitment was being laid, in line with the UCAS application cycle, with early indications pointing towards another successful year. While remaining cognisant of sectoral changes, such as legislative developments and changes in the sector's approach to quality assurance, it was felt that these challenges could be met with confidence.

17.4 G Barnard advised that the College's Aspire to HE officer worked with students to encourage progression to HE including SEN learners. A review of policies and practices would be undertaken to assess their impact for SEND students and a [full report of this review would be brought to the next committee meeting.](#)

17.5 **It was resolved** to note the higher education update.

### 18 **Freedom of Speech Annual Report**

18.1 G Barnard advised that the College had a legal duty to ensure Freedom of Speech for all staff, students and wider stakeholders. This report highlighted the current position of Freedom of Speech at the College and the ongoing activities that ensured legal obligations were met regarding this duty.

18.2 The report included a summary of activities that the College undertook to ensure that Freedom of Speech was protected, as well as an outline of forthcoming legislation that would impact the approach to Freedom of Speech in regard to Higher Education Provision.

18.3 **It was resolved** to note the Freedom of Speech Annual Report.

19 **Any Other Business**

19.1 *Committee membership* – the DCG advised that V Little, the lead governor for Safeguarding, would be joining the committee for the 2023/24 academic year.

19.2 There were no further matters of business.

20 **Date of next meeting**

20.1 The provisional meeting dates for 2023/24 were noted as:

21 November 2023	Tues	16:30:00
05 February 2024	Mon	16:30:00
07 May 2024	Tues	16:30:00

The meeting closed at 17.47.

*Approved by committee members at the meeting held 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023*