

Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Monday 5th February 2024 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 1, Broadway

Members Present: Julius Adams
Paul Hartridge
Valerie Little
Paul Noon (Chair)
Jack Stokes
Neil Thomas (Chief Executive and Principal) (CEP)

In attendance: Susanne Davies (Director of IoT & Partnerships)
Gill Darwood (Director of Corporate Governance) (DCG)
Lynn Glazzard (Assistant Principal)
Kathryn Jones (Director of HR)
Diana Martin (Vice Principal) (VP)
Claire Millard (Assistant Principal)
Dean Price (Standards & Performance Manager)
Adrian Walker (Assistant Principal)

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 had been received from Nirmal Gupta, Samantha Jocelyn-Sears and Rachel Corns.

3 **Declarations of interest**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Approve minutes of previous meeting held on 21st November 2023**

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 21st November 2023 were agreed as a true record.

5 **Matters arising**

5.1 There were no matters arising from the previous meeting not covered on the agenda.

Standards and Performance Matters

6 **Operational Development Plan 2024**

6.1 The CEP presented the draft College Operational Development Plan (CODP) for the coming 12 months. This plan took on board key actions from the Strategic Plan that related to the coming year as well as areas identified through the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment (ASIA), the recent Ofsted feedback or other regional and national priorities. This was then supported by Quality Improvement Plans in every curriculum area and professional services team, delivered through the

performance management system and monitored through the annual cycle of performance data. The Standards Committee would then review progress against actions within the CODP at each meeting.

6.2 He advised that the plan comprised nine key themes:

- Responding to skills needs
- Responding to national curriculum reform
- Intervention
- Employer engagement
- Learner experience
- Systems development
- Staff
- Facilities
- Work with Dudley Academies Trust

6.3 The Chair noted that externally there was uncertainty with an impending general election as well as mayoral elections, therefore the College needed to be able to respond to change and opportunities as they arose. The CEP noted that this was particularly relevant in relation to national curriculum reform, for example the withdrawal of some T Level qualifications planned for September. Members noted that a change of West Midlands mayor may result in different approaches to the commissioning of adult education but that the skills needs of the region would not change.

6.4 J Stokes requested further clarification in relation to the proposed revised enrichment programme. The CEP advised that this was to ensure that more students engaged with the existing enrichment offer as well as expanding the offer, subject to availability of funding. The VP advised that the leadership team would work closely with the Students' Union and class representatives to develop this offer, and would consider timetabling implications to enable students to participate.

6.5 **It was resolved** to recommend the College Operational Development Plan 2024 to the Corporation for approval.

7 **Data dashboard review**

7.1 The CEP advised that the data dashboard had now been updated, as previously agreed, to include a new High Needs section. In-year sections on enrolments and attendance were updated with latest data and all other sections had been updated to reflect the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment for 2022-23.

7.2 Enrolments were as previously reported with no significant changes and members were able to interrogate this data on the public dashboard.

7.3 In response to a question from V Little, the VP provided an update in relation to attendance on English and mathematics programmes, which had shown a small improvement but was still an area which was being closely monitored with actions in place to improve the gap between attendance on main programme compared to English and mathematics attendance. The VP and C Millard detailed the actions

which were being undertaken, including specific staff PMR targets, regular reports to the wider management group, and access to new management reports which could identify learners who were in College but had skipped a particular class. In addition, regular rewards and recognitions had been introduced to acknowledge and encourage good attendance. The next staff College Conference would have a focus on mathematics and English within the curriculum.

7.4 **It was resolved** to note the data dashboard review.

8 **EDI Action Plan**

8.1 K Jones presented the report which provided an update on progress made on the EDI Action Plan for 2023/24 approved at the previous meeting. Key points were noted as:

- 2023/24 Student EDI Ambassadors recruited.
- Recruitment video through College's West Midlands workstream filmed and due to go live early February 2024.
- Equality Impact Assessment training rolled out to all managers and new paperwork in place.
- Equality and Diversity training rolled out and now mandatory for all staff to complete bi-annually.
- The College was an active member of the newly established AoC EDI steering group.
- Bronze accreditation achieved with Thrive at Work.
- A range of training opportunities available to all staff through WMCA funding.

8.2 The CEP advised that the action relating to working with employers was being picked up to develop resources to promote to employers.

8.3 In response to a question from the Chair, J Stokes advised that the Students' Union was involved in a wide range of representative work, for example with the National Union of Students. He advised that there was a strong commitment in the College to equality, diversity and inclusion but this was a big topic and so there was always lots more which could be done. K Jones noted that the profile of student-centred activities related to EDI would be raised through the review of enrichment activity referred to under item 6.

8.4 **It was resolved** to note progress on the EDI action plan.

9 **Risk register monitoring**

9.1 The CEP advised that the College's risk register had been updated to reflect the new strategic plan 2024-27. Now aligned to the strategic plan, there were six risks that would be reported to the committee going forward:

- Four existing risks had been mapped to the new categories of People, Place, Innovation and Sustainability.
- One risk on Safeguarding had been dropped from the risk register. The net risk score had been consistently low, the College had demonstrated that it was taking a robust approach to safeguarding and this had been endorsed by Ofsted.
- Two new risks have been introduced, both with a net risk score of 4:

- Engaging with education and community partners to create seamless progression pathways;
 - Professional services responding to customer needs.
- 9.2 The risk register included with the report showed the actions that were being taken to further mitigate the risks identified. Most actions were on track to be completed, however there were delays being experienced on the following risks:
- Apprenticeships: setting up clear milestones on SmartAssessor to enable progress tracking and monitoring.
 - Work experience strategy: implementation of new procedure, undertaking on site risk assessments, reporting to the Health and Safety Committee and recording on ProMonitor.
- 9.3 Both areas were subject to close scrutiny by the senior leadership team to ensure that any barriers to successful completion were being tackled and no concerns had been identified.
- 9.4 **It was resolved** to note the risk register update.
- 10 **Meeting Skills Needs: change to guidance on annual Accountability Agreements 2024/25 and the Local Needs Duty**
- 10.1 The CEP advised that guidance for colleges on the annual Accountability Agreement and the duty for Corporations to review how effectively the College was meeting local needs had been updated by the Department for Education, with one set of guidance now replacing the *‘Review how well the education or training provided meets local needs’* guidance (published in July 2022) and *Accountability Agreements guidance* (published in April 2023). Colleges would now be required to include an assessment of how they were fulfilling their statutory duty within their annual Accountability Statement, which was due for submission by 30 June 2024.
- 10.2 A further update on production of the College’s Accountability Statement for 2024 would be brought to the committee for consideration at the May meeting, prior to approval by the full Corporation for submission by the 30th June deadline.
- 10.3 **It was resolved** to note the update on the accountability statement.

Teaching and Learning Matters

11 Teaching and learning update

- 11.1 D Price presented the teaching and learning update, highlighting a number of key points from the report:
- The College continued to have a key focus on quality of teaching and learning.
 - During Ofsted’s inspection in November 2023 there were a number of key strengths relating to teaching and learning and one area for improvement.
 - The College was implementing a ‘360 model’, which looked at how effective staff were at every element of academic quality.

- ‘Triangles’ were still being used, however the Quality team were using a variety of models to ensure that those curriculum areas/individuals of underperformance were identified and supported.
 - Current retention on programmes for young people and adults was strong at 95%. Retention on Access to HE programme remained a challenge but was showing improvement compared with the previous year.
 - Retention on apprenticeships was a key challenge for the College and was currently 78% which was stronger than the end position in 2022/23.
 - As part of its commitment to sustainability, the College was on a journey to ensure learners developed the skills and knowledge to minimise their impact on the planet.
 - A range of CPD had been undertaken by staff in relation to T Levels and other topics.
- 11.2 D Price provided further information on points of detail in relation to the conduct of walk-throughs, which might happen by a particular theme or in a particular curriculum area. Areas which performed well in Ofsted would have a lighter touch than other areas. He noted that the addition to the team of A Walker, Assistant Principal, would support a detailed review of quality assurance approaches in the coming year.
- 11.3 In response to a question from the Chair, P Hartridge noted that staff welcomed the current arrangements as being supportive. The VP advised that higher levels of intervention were targeted at those areas identified as in need of further support in order to ensure the best experience for learners. A Walker highlighted the need to ensure that the College was mindful of external factors in ensuring continuous development of practice.
- 11.4 **It was resolved** to note the teaching and learning update.

12 Compliments and complaints analysis

- 12.1 D Price presented the compliments and complaints report which outlined six official complaints received from 28 October 2023 to 19 January 2024. Two complaints had related to course management, one to equality and diversity, one to safeguarding and two to teaching and learning.
- 12.2 All of the complaints have been investigated, four had been closed and two were still open in accordance with College procedure. The report included additional information around diversity characteristics as requested at the previous meeting and this highlighted no particular patterns. There were no compliments or suggestions recorded during this period.
- 12.3 **It was resolved** to note the complaints and compliments analysis.

Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

- 13 **Confidential - safeguarding and learner conduct report**
This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.

Higher Education Matters

14 Higher Education update

14.1 S Davies presented the HE update noting the following key items:

- Changes in HE management – A Walker, new Assistant Principal for Quality, would provide oversight of HE quality, whilst contractual and regulatory oversight would remain with S Davies.
- The HE calendar continued to be used as an effective tool to ensure the College kept on top of deadlines and met requirements relating to Boards of Study meetings, Ethics Panels and other areas of compliance. New terms of reference and group membership were to be refreshed to ensure meetings were effective.
- A review of OfS by the House of Lords had recently been undertaken and the senior leadership team would be looking at the implications of the recommendations from that enquiry.
- Work on the HE data dashboard was ongoing. The MIS team were working to complete this work [to present at the next standards committee meeting in the summer term.](#)
- Consultations were taking place by the Office for Students to regulate universities and colleges, and their students' unions, on free speech issues.
- An update was provided on the widening participation project, 'Aspire to HE' project and activity to date, which included engagement so far this year with 274 Level 3 learners from the lowest quintile for progression to HE within the College catchment.
- An update was provided on student loan reform within Higher Education.

14.2 **It was resolved** to note the Higher Education update.

15 Any Other Business

15.1 P Hartridge requested clarification in relation to the review of programme hours for the next academic year. The VP advised that greater flexibility was being given to Curriculum Managers within their programmes and she agreed that she would pick this up outside of the meeting to provide further clarification. [The CEP advised that an update would be provided to the committee as part of the curriculum planning cycle at the next meeting.](#)

16 Date of next meeting:

16.1 Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 4.30pm.

The meeting closed at 17.42 hours.

Approved by committee members at the meeting held on 7th May 2024.