

**CHELMSFORD COLLEGE
QUALITY AND LEARNERS COMMITTEE
11 May 2021 – 2.30 pm**

PRESENT: Sarah Noble (Chair)
Susan Hughes
Christian Norman
Elaine Oddie
Andy Sparks (Principal)
Barbara Vohmann

IN ATTENDANCE:

Penny Petch (Director of Teaching, Learning & Quality)
Caroline Williams (Deputy Principal)
Debs Hurst (Vice Principal, Finance & Corporate Services)
Alison Davies (Director of Curriculum, Moulsham Street)
Marco Iciek (Director of Learner Development & Inclusion)
Mark Emerson (Director of Information Services)
Simon Drane (Director of Curriculum, Princes Road)
Rob Millea FCA (Clerk to the Corporation)
Joanne Harrington (Assistant Clerk)

The Chair attended the Meeting in person together with the Chair of the Corporation, the Principal, the Clerk and the Assistant Clerk. All other attendees accessed the Meeting through MS Teams, in the light of the restrictions of Lockdown3.

The Meeting began later than the scheduled time of 2.00 pm due to the Meeting of the Search Governance & Remuneration Meeting, which preceded this Meeting, overrunning.

706. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Nedas Laurinavicius (Staff Governor), Natalie Devaney (Student Governor) and Amanda Montague (Chair Designate).

707. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS AND CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Barbara Vohmann declared her interest as a staff member at Anglia Ruskin University. Christian Norman declared his interest as an employee of Essex County Council – Adult Learning.

The Clerk declared his interest as Company Secretary of Essex Shared Services Limited.

Elaine Oddie and Andy Sparks declared their interests as Directors of Essex Shared Services Limited.

Debs Hurst informed the Committee that she continues in her role as a Member Representative on the Essex LGPS Advisory Board.

No other declarations made.

No **confidential** items were notified but see minute **708** below.

708. URGENT BUSINESS

This was deemed to be a confidential item and a separate minute has been prepared and is attached to these minutes.

There were no other items of Urgent Business.

709. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 23 FEBRUARY 2021

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 23 February 2021 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chair.

710. MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk provided a summary of Action Points from the last Meeting and current status.

It was noted that two matters regarding achievement rates will be carried forward to a later Meeting.

The Committee agreed that Committee Development issues will be pursued between the Chair Designate and the Chair of this Committee, with input from the Deputy Principal, and a Meeting was held on 20 April 2021 for this purpose, with the Clerk present. This is covered in minute **717**.

Simon Drane reported that discussions with JTL, regarding a possible partnership are continuing in order to meet a defined local need. Two options are being considered and the College is awaiting formal proposals from JTL Board. Some investment from them is possible or, alternatively, joint participation in our curriculum (see minute **704** from last Meeting).

711. COVID 19 UPDATES

The Deputy Principal gave a PowerPoint update on the continuing changing situation regarding College provision now that Colleges are open for students to attend on campus in a limited way and the COVID19 pandemic generally. She was assisted by Penny Petch, Mark Emerson and Marco Iciek.

COVID 19 procedures

- Lateral Flow Testing has now moved to home testing
- Remind students to report results of tests
- Mask wearing no longer necessary from next Monday for students and only for staff and visitors where social distancing cannot be observed (e.g. communal areas)
- Work experience has commenced
- Local educational trips are possible but have to be carefully risk assessed

Debs Hurst commented that £15,000 has been received as a first payment for carrying out testing which covers the College's costs.

In answer to the Chair, Penny Petch and the Principal said that there are no surprises in testing results and that home testing is continuing twice a week.

Learner Voice

Marco Iciek reported on the most recent Student Survey carried out, virtually entirely in Lockdown3. There have been three surveys this year and another is planned for the end of this term. A survey of Apprentices is planned for the summer term.

Students have been asked to focus on the student experience this year and looking ahead to future years when some remote learning may continue.

An Employer Satisfaction Survey is being launched shortly.

The Chair felt that the level of response has gone up since previous surveys which Marco confirmed. Students are prodded into responding through log in procedures on the IT system. The Chair asked if there were any areas of concern.

Marco responded by saying that there is not as there is a consistency in responses received and in the questions being asked.

The Committee was told that there is a Learner Voice Meeting planned for 28 May and online invitations will be sent. Governors can submit questions in advance of the meeting if wished or ask them during the Meeting.

Barbara Vohmann asked if the student responses tie up with staff perception of how students feel. Marco reported that staff have been pleasantly surprised at the positive response by students to this year's learning especially being happy with COVID19 procedures and positive about them. There had been an expectation that there would have been a greater level of anxiety.

Barbara Vohmann noted that the latest survey showed 11% less than satisfied. Marco replied that alternative assessment methodology recently published is understandably a concern for students.

Examinations and Assessment

The Deputy Principal reported on the alternative arrangements for assessment of GCSEs and general technical qualifications for this year, following recent Government announcements.

Different approaches will be taken for 3 different groups, and these were detailed by the Deputy Principal in her PowerPoint presentation.

The Committee asked that their thanks be communicated to all staff responding to the challenge of assessment during this difficult year.

The Chair referred again to Engineering and Electrical department issues. Simon Drane said the area has moved to critical intervention and processes are in place to address weaknesses. Some improvement emerging, but it remains his main area of concern.

The Deputy Principal mentioned the following:

- Functional skills have to be assessed by examination.
- Quality assurances being used includes moderation and internal verification in awarding grades.
- Qualifications in Extended Learning have to demonstrate evidence across full range of curriculum.
- VTQ have to focus on skills assessments and developments, not just theory.
- Hair & Beauty and Catering are working late to get practical work completed.

Learner Recruitment 2021/22

The College has a lower number of 16-18 students this year compared to last year (2107 as against 2141), due to lower numbers of part-time students. Full time learners have actually increased by 40.

The College allocation for 16-18 students for 2021/22 has been received and is approximately £250K lower than this year because of the effect of the lower learner numbers last year, on the lagged funding model. It is expected that the College allocation in 2022/23 should return to the same level as for this current year.

The recruitment position is looking positive for next year (better than same stage last year). Applications and actual enrolments are considerably up across the board for next year except for Hair & Beauty, which is slightly lower, but the overall situation generally looks good. This seems to be reflected across most FE Colleges in the country.

Mark said every effort being made to convert applications into actual enrolments.

The Principal said that, in respect of adult and apprenticeships for next year, applications are similar to this year maybe marginally up for apprenticeships, but adult recruitment position is not clear. It is unlikely to be more than this year, which was, in turn, lower than previous years.

GCSE and Functional Skills in English and Mathematics

The Chair was told that there is no specific deadline for Functional Skills assessment to be completed. The College will give these students as many opportunities as possible to achieve satisfactorily.

GCSE awards are based on a reduced curriculum and three assessments and functional skills is a full assessment on the entire curriculum via examinations.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report.

712. LESSON OBSERVATIONS

The Director of Teaching, Learning & Quality **PRESENTED** a detailed Report of the above for the information of the Committee.

The Report stated that 140 observations have taken place this year to date with 69% meeting all 5 Key Expectations. These observations cover both remote learning (99, all since 22 February during Lockdown3) and

41 up to the date the lockdown began in January. It is expected that the College target of 80% meeting all 5KEs will be met for the year.

Approximately 40 observations still need to be completed for this year within the next four weeks.

Penny commented that it has been a very difficult year for teachers and learners due to Lockdowns 2 and 3. In addition, observations of remote delivery of learning was delayed due to consultation with UCU before it began.

In particular, it was noted that observations of remote learning for apprentices have been very successful with all KEs being met.

KE3 and KE4 have the lowest achievement rate within remote learning observations.

KE3 looks for evidence that learners can 'do more' and have developed their practical skills in some way, and remote delivery provides huge challenges in attempting to meet this key expectation.

KE4 involves the checking of knowledge and understanding, correcting misunderstanding and closing the gaps in knowledge and skills. Teachers have found this the most challenging part of delivering remotely.

Penny explained the practical issues involved in both of these areas in the Report and steps being taken to support teachers in trying to achieve the 5KEs. Interestingly, the delivery of lessons and observing them was remarkably similar as between remote lessons and face to face lessons.

Penny commented that lessons can be accessed after it was delivered by students through the College computer links.

Governor questions

The Principal asked the DTLQ about areas of concern in observations. Penny responded by saying both Electrical and Engineering were a concern, though mainly engineering, whose students did not embrace remote learning as well as some other areas. Hair & Beauty is catching up now students back in College and can do the practical work as part of their curriculum.

The Principal asked how the College can break the cycle of areas of concern in teaching & learning where some curriculum areas have not really moved forward despite some intervention over the last few years.

Susan Hughes felt the observations did not demonstrate much difference between face-to-face learning and remote learning. Penny said generally that is shown to be the case. There are some technology issues, but they can be and are being overcome – it is about pedagogy primarily.

The Chair observed that the change to developmental observations would mean no re-observations this year since focus is on assessment for the rest of this year and providing grades to students. Simon Drane noted the point but said that managers can still ensure that teachers are performing satisfactorily with intervention being taken if needed, e.g Electrical and Engineering.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report.

713. LEARNER PROGRESS 2020-21

The Deputy Principal and the Director of Information Services **PRESENTED** this Report, including an analysis of the data used as at 27 April 2021. This data compared retention for this year and projected achievement against College targets, the outturn for 2019/20 and the most recent National Provider Rates. It is divided between 16-18 learners and 19+. Attendance is also documented.

The key points of the progress are as follows:

- 16-18: high retention (94%), projected achievement similar to last year (84%), the College target and the most recent NPR.
- 19+: high retention (93%), projected achievement similar to last year (85%) but below target and 5pp below most recent NPR.

The Deputy Principal noted that Functional Skills in English and Mathematics studied by learners on 16-18 programmes continues to impact negatively on projected achievement rates.

Regarding 19+, the area of concern is in level 2, which has been a challenging area of provision for some time, due to delayed assessments in AAT and Electrical Installation.

The DP emphasized the fact that high retention is very positive and will contribute strongly to good final achievement.

Attendance was reported as between remote and face to face. For 16-18 learners, there is little difference. For 19+, remote attendance is 5 pp higher at 91% than face to face. The most challenging area here is for 16-18 learners at level 2.

The Committee were provided with the detailed supporting data tables for 16-18 and 19+ learners, analysed by level in order that the areas of concern could be highlighted, particularly relating to level 2.

Governor questions

The Principal asked about achievement predicted re female 19+ learners, which was a concern last year. The DIS said that expected good results from Access course will improve overall female achievement this year as this is an area with predominately female students. There remain challenges for female adult learners if they must work alongside studying and if they are having to act as home carers.

The DIS said that there is flexible level 3 learning available (use of remote delivery) which will mitigate some of the challenges which have been experienced with female learners regarding having to choose between employment and training. Adults can engage more easily with MS Teams and hence attendance has been good.

The Chair said that the predicted level 3 for 16-18 students appears to be affected by the programme areas with levels expected to be below the overall projected achievement rate of 87% (Engineering, Public Services, IT Media, Art and Design). The College is aware of the issues in these areas and action is being taken to ensure these areas can bounce back in the final achievement figures. The QTAG model, instead of completion of the full curriculum, is likely to impact positively in terms of achievement.

Elaine Oddie asked if students know that the College will not 'let them be left behind'. The Deputy Principal said that students do seem to understand this objective and there seems to be an energy and motivation present on campus from students to get their qualifications for employment.

The Report was **NOTED**.

714. CURRICULUM PLAN 2021/22

The Deputy Principal **PRESENTED** the **first draft** of the Curriculum Plan for next year. The final Plan will be presented to the Board Meeting on 8 July for formal **APPROVAL**.

The Deputy Principal reminded the Committee that the Plan is driven by the College Strategic Plan and the plans for each individual academic department. The Plan incorporates the COVID19 Curriculum Supplement 2020-21, focusing on the effects of each COVID alert level (1-5). Generally, it is an internal document to apply Intent and Implementation and it is shared with outside stakeholders when relevant.

It details new initiatives for next year (and beyond) and demonstrates the linkage between the curriculum offer and the skills needs of the local community. It reinforces the need for a blended learning offer in the future, combining elements of remote learning and delivery on site at each Campus.

The Deputy Principal also mentioned the first stage of the IoT as highlighted in FE Week this week and the five year roll out programme for this Government initiative.

Governor questions

The Chair asked whether the College is meeting Government aspirations to improve skills and if the College can implement T Levels in areas which may be marginal in cost terms and in learner numbers with little prospect of increase e.g. Hospitality & Catering.

The Deputy Principal recognised the challenge but was reluctant to remove from our present suite of subject areas at this stage. However, this might not be a long-term viable area. The Principal observed that this curriculum area uses a lot of space for relatively few learners.

Christian Norman commented that C&H should be an area of potential as there was a shortage of chefs pre-pandemic and after lockdown restrictions ease, this area could bounce back in the community. The Principal felt that there may be an opportunity to work with ACL Essex.

Christian Norman also felt that sustainability could be a growth area as the national and local carbon footprint is addressed in the community at large.

Barbara Vohmann sought assurance regarding the College's liaison with employers and whether the College is meeting their needs.

The Deputy Principal reminded the Committee that Sarah Hamilton heads the College's Business Development Department with a small team supporting her. She has numerous local connections and networks. She also has a constant cycle of feedback with employers. There are considerable number of return customers and companies coming to the College as their preferred provider. The Deputy Principal also mentioned that where relevant, The College will always cooperate with other local Colleges to deliver a perceived community need.

Barbara Vohmann was concerned as to the risk if Sarah were to leave the College. The Principal said this would be a loss, but she heads up a team of staff so, although there would be a gap, it would not be catastrophic to the College's efforts in the Business Development area.

The Committee **RECOMMENDED** the draft Plan, in principle, to the Board for their approval.

715. SELF-ASSESSMENT & IMPROVEMENT

The Deputy Principal **PRESENTED** this Report, which showed the monitoring of the College Improvement Plan 2020/21 for the year to date.

The Deputy Principal reminded governors that the CIP continues to focus on the six priorities for the College and the various actions in the Plan are clearly noted. The most recent update to April 2021 (Version 5) is highlighted in RED in the Report.

Good progress is being made against four of the six College priorities.

However, Priority 3 has been identified as AMBER because of the delay in completing formal observations of remote teaching and learning and the challenge of educating learners who have experienced high levels of disruption in their learning.

Priority 4 has also been identified as AMBER because of the range of alternative arrangements for summative assessment and the controversial decision to require all study programme learners studying for functional skills to be assessed under examination conditions for all the course content.

The Committee considered the progress made in implementing and monitoring the Plan thus far this academic year as detailed in the Report and further actions deemed necessary to meet the objectives outlined.

Governor questions

The Principal referred to Priority 1 regarding the development of middle managers still being an issue especially individual skills, yet the progress is shown as GREEN – 80% achieved. The Deputy Principal said that the College is having an impact on this priority and she felt it is fair to rate the Priority as GREEN because the overall trajectory is upwards. It is likely to require being carried forward for next year as the aspiration to excel in this area will remain.

The Chair observed that time and money need to be invested in middle management so that they can contribute to updating and improving the curriculum.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report and **APPROVED** the progress to date against the Plan criteria and objectives.

716. RISK REPORT AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Vice Principal (Finance & Corporate Services) and the Director of Information Services **PRESENTED** the updated (to end April 2021) **College Risk Report** in respect of curriculum related issues, together with the related **Curriculum Dartboard**, which was **NOTED**.

The Senior Leadership Team reviews the Register regularly.

In respect of Curriculum issues, there are five RED risks, as noted below:

- English & Maths – functional skills examinations (see **715** above)
- Engineering & Electrical – engineering is an intervention area
- Long term PAM vacancy in Construction
- Lockdown3 impacting on practical teaching in part time trades (especially engineering)
- Curriculum leadership in Engineering

There are 9 AMBER and 5 GREEN risks, which are itemised on the Dartboard.

The Report detailed the AMBER and GREEN risks and the current position mitigating/addressing the risks in question.

The Director of Information Services reported on progress to date (April 2021) this academic year against the agreed set of **Key Performance Indicators** (approved by the Board on 4 December 2020) relating to curriculum issues (achievement, retention, attendance), which were discussed.

In most respects, progress is either AMBER or GREEN, however, there remains issues regarding attendance in English and Maths and students making progress against their Target Achievable Grade.

The current forecast for provision at level E and 1 and Adult Learning remain below target although it is broadly the same as last year although 4pp lower than the previous year (2018-19). In response to the Principal, the DIS indicated that both areas have been impacted by functional skills as the number of students studying for functional skills make up the largest cohort. The pandemic has probably had some impact as well.

The Principal noted that the staff indicators (turnover and sickness levels) were low and that all new staff have set performance targets agreed with their line manager.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

717. COMMITTEE MATTERS

Governor Visits (verbal)

The Clerk **REPORTED** that there had been a number of remote visits since those reported at the last Committee Meeting and these are documented on a spread sheet by the Assistant Clerk. The Members were reminded to inform the Assistant Clerk of visits that they make to College.

These included Showcase Events, FE Commissioners' follow-up visit (November 2020) and a regular meeting between the Chair of the Committee and the Deputy Principal.

Governor Development

As noted under Matters Arising, a Meeting took place on 20 April 2021 remotely between the Chair of the Committee, the Chair Designate of the Board and the Deputy Principal, with the Clerk present to take notes, to discuss and progress the areas of development which Members had highlighted in the Committee Self-Assessment for 2019-20 (reference minute **687** – 3 November 2020).

The Clerk tabled a paper summarising the actions being taken or planned, subject to COVID 19 restrictions, to address the areas of development raised by the Committee.

The Committee **ENDORSED** the Clerk's paper.

Governor Champions

The Clerk **PRESENTED** a paper discussing how the concept of Governor Champions can be progressed. This initiative has been considered for some time but, not least because of COVID 19 most recently, has not been taken forward.

The Paper explained the concept and how it might work, noting that it only relates to independent governors on the Board. The Clerk also made the point that there are two vacancies currently on the Board and a further vacancy expected in July when the Chair of the Corporation retires from the Board.

Therefore, the allocation of Governor Champions will take place with effect from 1 August 2021, when there hopefully will be 12 governors available.

The Clerk also **PRESENTED** a suggested set of guidelines for the operation of the Governor Champions proposal.

College senior managers present in the Meeting were enthusiastic about the proposals.

The Committee **ENDORSED** the proposal, including the guidelines referred to above, outlined in the Report and **RECOMMENDED** it to the Board for approval on 8 July 2021.

ACTION: CLERK

Meeting Dates and Schedule of Business 2021/22

The Clerk presented a Schedule of Business for next academic year for the Committee, which was **APPROVED**. The Clerk commented that it is subject to change in line with any continuing COVID 19 restrictions.

718. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair acknowledged that this was the last Meeting of this Committee for both Caroline Williams and Elaine Oddie and she recorded her thanks to both for their contribution to this Committee’s work and to the College generally. This was **ENDORSED** by the Committee wholeheartedly.

The Principal reported that the College is carrying out Due diligence relating to a possible partnership in Performing Arts with a dance studio, effectively a sub-contracting arrangement. There are potentially 20 learners per year in a bespoke off-site facility.

The Principal reported that the College, together with other Essex Colleges, is participating in a Sector Development Fund, partnering with Harlow, as part of the Green Skills Agenda to upskill the workforce. This needs to be agreed by the Board at each stage of the bid and an email seeking approval will be sent to the Board in the next couple of weeks.

There were no other items of AOB.

719. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 9 November 2021 at 2 pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 5.15 pm.

Signed.....Dated.....