

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION & STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON MONDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2017 AT 4.30 PM IN T019/T020 AT NULC

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Present: Jeremy Pert, Alan Aston, Lynsey Shearsmith, David O'Neill, Francis Tunney, Lesley Rollason (Chair), Karen Dobson

In attendance: Lesley Morrey (Director of Student Engagement and Partnerships), Carol Thomas (Director of Curriculum & Performance), John Prescott (Clerk), Joy Smith (Deputy Clerk)

### 17.5.1 2016-17 Performance

Karen gave a presentation which explained performance at the various levels across the Group for the 2016-17 academic year, and drew out particular areas for members' attention. She advised that this is the first year going forward where we will have one set of data for the whole Group, however this presentation reflects the picture at each site individually.

At Stafford there was a decline in Level 1 performance, driven by poor performance in Functional Skills which was, at that time, delivered within the departments but which we had already planned to deliver from the English and Maths Department.

At level 2 there was some underperformance at BTEC Level 2 and issues in organisational arrangements around maths and English GCSEs, however, both areas are now substantially above the headline rate.

Level 3 vocational and skills performance was high at both sites which is very pleasing as this accounts for a substantial part of our provision.

AS levels at NULC in 2015-16 dipped, but in 2016-17 we have seen an improvement although there has been a drop in the number of students completing AS with the move to two year A Levels. A2 at NULC showed very pleasing performance in 2016-17 both in achievement and in the number of high grades achieved.

All level 3 at both sites is very pleasingly above 90% and above the headline rate.

16-18 performance overall has improved on both sites and is substantially above the national average.

In adult 19+ Level 1 numbers have declined at both sites, and is a particular problem at Stafford in terms of performance. Much of the work that has impacted on this has been pulled back and we are currently reviewing the arrangements around the existing ESOL and Functional Skills.

19+ Level 2 is consistently high at NULC and is improving at Stafford but remains below the national average. Carol added that at NULC issues

around short care courses which have impacted on the data are now being addressed.

19+ Level 3 is declining in numbers at both sites. At Stafford there are a few courses underperforming and a more detailed scrutiny of adult provision is being applied.

19+ overall is consistently high at NULC and consistently low at Stafford, highlighting the need for continued focus on this area at Stafford.

Karen advised that overall performance is just above 90% at NULC and just under 85% at Stafford and both are likely to be above the headline rate.

As indicated, this data was for the individual sites, but Karen presented a slide with how it would look if combined which showed that the main area of concern was in Level 1. Following additional work, we are expecting that for 2017-18 these pockets of under-performance will disappear.

Karen drew attention to the apprenticeship overall success performance which identified similar levels of activity on both sites, compared to the position the previous year. At NULC the outturn was over 9% above the national average and at Stafford in 2015-16 there were particular issues with subcontractors which led to a problem, but this has improved already and we expect to see further improvements going forward. We are also grappling with issues following the introduction of the levy which has led to a decline in starts since May, however, this is now starting to improve. Karen added that we have recently received a phone call from the ESFA asking us how we are managing to do so well since the Levy introduction which begs the question about how badly other organisations are performing.

Alan asked about the higher grades achieved and Karen reported that both A\*B and A\*C showed a significant improvement along with the number of 100% pass courses. We are anticipating that for NULC last year was our best performance ever and we are very pleased with this result considering it was the first year of the new A Level structure. Karen added that there are some key subjects such as Maths that are coming on to two years now and we anticipate that the two year retention will be a potential challenge going forward. We have asked Burnley and Truro Colleges, both graded Outstanding, if they would share their two year data with us. In addition, Karen advised that many of the staff will not have taught two year A Levels so it has been a learning curve for them too. Students whose continuation on to A2 would have been filtered with the exam at the end of their AS year may also have an impact on our data. We are working with staff to introduce new methods of delivery and will continue to do so to effect further improvements.

Members were delighted with the performance and congratulated the College, particularly noting the positive message that this gives to potential students at Stafford and their parents. It was noted that some of the Stafford Schools are indicating that they do not wish to work with us which is unfairly limiting the options for their students.

Jeremy asked about projections for apprenticeships going forward and what our view is about the national issue. Karen advised that the introduction of

the complicated levy, along with the co-funding requirement for those smaller non-levy payers, the increased bureaucracy associated with the system, the lack of understanding on the part of employers in relation to the training requirements etc has had a negative effect on take up and we are working hard to address this. John advised that we are budgeting for a 25% shortfall on last year's apprenticeship income although we are now starting to see some movement. David commented that from an employer's perspective there is much confusion which is leading to a "sit and wait" approach.

#### **17.5.2 Apologies for Absence**

No apologies were received.

#### **17.5.3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **17.5.4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 June 2017**

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

#### **17.5.5 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **17.5.6 Market Share**

Karen reminded members of the concerns about the drop in applications last year and she circulated a document which looked at the years from 2010-11 at NULC, against the key competitors, showing the market share along with the past 3 years which show the effect of the demographic decline.

Members considered our numbers compared to other providers and noted the particular decline in numbers and allocations of other providers eg Stoke on Trent College which have declined significantly.

Members noted that in 2010-11 we had 30% of the market share and we have grown this to 42% over recent years.

Karen reported that as a group we are c180 down in full time 16-18 learners this academic year. We think that Stafford has achieved target, and the reduction at NULC is largely due to demographics.

Members went on to consider the Stafford picture and noted that in 2010-11 Stafford and NULC were similar in size. Stafford dropped to around 30% latterly and Karen confirmed that we are confident that there is more scope for future growth at Stafford.

Members noted the size of some of the school sixth forms and also discussed the impact of South Cheshire's latest recruitment strategy where they have offered incentives such as free transport to students. Karen advised that we are currently looking at increasing the geographical area where we publish information about the College.

Karen reminded the meeting that this information presents a flavour of the situation, based on the number of students who were in the institution the previous year, not taken from the census.

Members noted that there has been a national decline in 16-18 full time students of around 3% this year.

It was agreed that the Committee should receive a market share report at the same time next year.

#### **17.5.7 NSCG Learner Data Report**

Carol drew members' attention to her latest Learner Data Report and highlighted items of particular note.

Members considered the tabled paper which showed the joint performance historically for both sites, against the national headline rate, and the merged forecast going forward. Members agreed that this is a useful graph for inclusion in the future but it was also agreed to change the colours from red and green.

Members noted the very high retention data by curriculum area but also noted the decline in student numbers in the majority of areas.

Regarding attendance, Carol advised that we now have credible attendance report following the move to the new software, following some issues with the system which we have now ironed out.

Members noted that following the planned programme of changes, we have the whole Pro-suite of software across the Group and, although we expect this to perform well, there have been teething problems and some complications. Karen advised that we will still be able to access frozen historical data providing credible comparison information.

Carol advised that TLARs commenced in October and have taken place at both sites. Members noted the contents of the executive summaries attached. Both observations were very positive reflecting the work of the strong teams.

Regarding value added members were very pleased to note the fabulous progress made in terms of value added and achievement data and Karen advised that this position is due to the extensive work carried out over the years.

Members were pleased and impressed to note the various methods employed by the College to gather the level of information we have from our students. One issue picked up related to a lack of knowledge of work experience and work activity for A Level students and steps are now being taken to address that. Carol was pleased to report that the results of the merged Student Survey Part 1 were mainly very positive. Lesley added that at Stafford the students are playing a very active part in Student Board meetings and on the whole Stafford students are very positive about the merger and the work

being carried out to make improvements. Some issues relating to enrolment and induction were identified and we will look at these going forward.

Lesley Morrey took members through the Safeguarding and Prevent reports for both sites and drew attention to number of learners identified in each category. Members noted the huge amount of work that can be involved for the staff working with these vulnerable students. Lesley added that Lynsey Shearsmith and Denise Haney are working across both sites and thanked them for their hard work in supporting the Stafford team to bring them to the current position. Members noted that the more sophisticated approach now taken at Stafford in identifying Safeguarding cases has led to a reduction in the number reported. Some discussion took place about the classification of "Looked After Child", "Child In Care" and LAC as a category of abuse. Lesley agreed to clarify this. LM

Members considered the numbers of students in receipt of financial support at each site and the number of withdrawals. Lesley reported that for ALS we have 82 learners and 69 at Stafford, which is a higher proportion of the overall cohort. Exam support required at Stafford is also disproportionate in terms of the cohort size and Denise and Lesley are looking in detail at this.

Members noted the spread of students with EHCPs across curriculum areas at both sites and Lesley advised on the level of work in terms of administering, monitoring, reviewing and generally supporting these students.

Members noted the volume of learners involved in English and maths at NULC and Stafford and Carol stressed the importance of having a strong team of staff to work with a cohort which presents the most significant challenge in FE currently. Karen advised on the national picture in terms of numbers and passes and members noted the difficulties involved and also the cost implications to the College. Francis added that it has been proven that if these students fail a second or third time, it is highly likely that this will continue and the current system seems to be reinforcing failure rather than finding a way for them to succeed.

Members noted last year's disappointing performance at NULC and the significant efforts to try to maximise success and attendance both in class and at exams. A large number of students were obtaining D grades and consideration took place regarding possible new approaches which could be taken with students working at this level to try and move some towards a C grade.

At Stafford last year's performance was poor with the provision housed within curriculum areas, however, this is now back in one department. Carol advised that there are lots of different new approaches being employed to make these classes more engaging for the students.

It was noted that information on work based provision will be presented at the next meeting.

Staff development has been ongoing at both sites with a training day at each site in October which focussed on particular areas of need identified.

Members noted the fantastic achievements of students at both sites in musical, performance, sporting and skills areas. In addition, early successes in terms of results were noted.

Regarding the introduction of the new T levels, Carol advised that early discussions are now underway to facilitate this. The inclusion of work placements is a significant challenge and we will need to work hard to try to get employers on board, some of whom will have little capacity to take on a student because of the required supervision etc. Lesley Morrey advised that she and John Prescott are currently working on a bid to secure some transitional funding to roll this out. It was noted that there is a lack of detail published about these qualifications and that the original date is slipping, with the pilot being put back to 2018-19.

Carol reported that we now have 8 Teaching & Learning Coaches working across both sites supporting new staff or staff who need additional help following observations or have asked for support and best practice ideas.

Members noted the directly funded HE qualifications offered by the College and the two new areas in Graphics and Photography. Karen added that we are looking toward the higher apprenticeship pathways for growth, working with local employers to increase this provision.

#### **17.5.8 Feedback from Members' Attendance at AoC Events**

Lesley Rollason advised that there has been a significant review of the AoC and the regional structure has been changed. There is a new Area Director for the East and West Midlands. Many governance events are now being held in Nottingham which may be problematic. It was agreed that Lesley will offer either Stafford or NULC as a venue to the AoC.

#### **17.5.9 Any Other Business**

a. 2016-17 Delivery Plan

It was noted that the 2016-17 Delivery Plan complete with outcomes will be posted to the cloud within the next few days.

b. Menu of Corporation Activities

The Menu of Activities is on the cloud and Lesley Rollason urged members to select any events they would like to join, particularly the Learning Walks which provide a very useful insight for Committee members. John Prescott agreed to circulate the Menu to Committee members by email.

c. Data Protection Legislation

David referred to the new data protection legislation from April 2018 and the implications for FE institutions, as the implications for business are significant. John advised that he will be attending an AoC event providing advice to colleges on this in January 2018.

#### **17.5.10 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

19 March 2018 at 4.30 pm at Stafford College