

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION & STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2019 AT 4.30 PM IN T019/20 AT NEWCASTLE COLLEGE

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

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

19.1.1 HE at NSCG

Liz Wyman, Head of Learning Resources & Guidance, introduced her presentation.

Members recalled the previous SURF agreement with Staffordshire University which changed with the lifting of the cap for HE. This resulted in a lot of students going straight to Staffs University and our own numbers consequently dropping. As a result, the College successfully bid for its own students and this cohort has now grown and is forecast to grow further.

Liz advised that we are delighted that we have recently been successful in our application for registration with the Office for Students and she added that many colleges and universities are still not registered.

Liz explained the implications of increasing our HE work and how the staff have to adapt, upskill and retrain, the additional requirements in terms of meetings, QAA, awards and assessment boards. Every successful HE student's course at the College culminates in a Graduation Ceremony each year at the Performing Arts Centre and members viewed some brief video footage of last year's event. Liz confirmed that invitations to this year's event on 4 July will be shared nearer to the time.

Jeremy Pert joined the meeting at this stage.

Consideration was given to Governor responsibilities as part of the new agreement with the Office for Students which cover the accurate and correct management of data and quality and ensuring that appropriate monitoring is undertaken against a list of criteria set out by the Office.

Members noted the courses that we are currently running at both sites, and those we are offering as new courses for next year along with the breakdown in numbers. All of our HE courses are linked to industry with the majority of students on part time programmes being employed and funded through their employer, and those on full time programmes working with industry, undertaking live briefs. Members noted the mix of students currently enrolled along with some of their backgrounds, many of whom would never have gone to university unless they had this opportunity to progress within the College.

Members noted the destinations of the students last year into top up courses in the final year at various universities, progressing into education etc.

It was clarified that the decision was taken to expand our own HE offer as a result of changing markets and the wish to provide something for those students who need another year but who are not quite ready to go on to University. We were losing market share because of the demise of SURF and we have been able to offer students the opportunity to progress with us in an environment that suits them. Many students are ready at the end of their programme to go on to university to undertake a final year.

In addition, we are committed to the work focus which is a different angle from the traditional degree and we offer work experience, live briefs etc, thus providing high level training associated with a real career.

Karen advised that there are growth opportunities in our higher level apprenticeships and we will investigate areas where this would be viable, although HE is now very competitive and many universities are active in this market.

Liz confirmed that we are currently the only college in Staffordshire on the OfS register.

Members noted that there is a significant cost for registration with the OfS. Some discussion took place about the value in specialising in our core FE provision versus spreading our provision across FE and HE. The latest information regarding the number of universities facing financial problems was discussed and members noted that HE is a very competitive market, however, after discussion it was agreed that there is great value in what we do at the level we are aiming at.

Liz confirmed that she had attended a briefing lately where lesson observations had been discussed which have never been carried out in universities however this is something which is well embedded in what we do in College. Liz felt that we are very well placed in terms of quality assurance of our provision.

Regarding the increased emphasis by OfS on Governor responsibilities, it was agreed that a framework will be produced to identify areas of responsibility, what we have in place to meet those and what, if anything, is required additionally. John will produce this and bring it back through the next cycle of meetings. Lesley confirmed that she will bring this matter to the Board's attention at the next meeting and advise that further details will follow.

Liz was thanked for her presentation and left the meeting at this stage.

19.1.2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Lynsey Shearsmith.

19.1.3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

19.1.4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 December 2018

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

19.1.5 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

19.1.6 **NSCG Learner Data Report**

Carol reminded members that the Learner Data Report now looks at information for the whole Group, broken down by site where necessary.

Members noted the latest retention information which remains high at just below 95%, with A Level Year 1 retention being particularly strong.

16-18 and 19+ attendance is also strong and members noted that only a few areas are below 90%, with some very strong performance across both sites. Where there are problems with FT and PT attendance, Carol confirmed that the teams involved are working to address these.

Members considered the latest observation grades and Carol confirmed that we will be looking at the impact of the new split Grade 2 at the end of the year. Discussion took place regarding the issues faced by the College to recruit particularly in Electrical Installation, and Carol advised on the enhancement package we offer in order to attract candidates of the right calibre.

Carol drew attention to the Executive Summaries from the latest TLARs and members also considered the Learning Walks and Student Survey results, noting that interpretation of the questions in the Survey can be a key factor.

Lesley took members through the Safeguarding and Prevent section of the Report. Members noted the numbers in the Child in Need of Service/Protection category and Vulnerable Adults for 2017-18 compared to this year's figures to date and Lesley explained the actions required by the College in order to meet the needs of these students. She advised that bullying is a new focus for Ofsted currently and we intend to add in a section to show where we deem bullying has taken place to demonstrate that we are monitoring this and taking action where necessary.

Members noted that many students in care or care leavers come to College with very challenging issues and Lesley provided an explanation about those who we have lost to date this year through managed withdrawals.

Members considered the different types of Additional Learning Support provided and the numbers of students involved. Members also noted the growth at Stafford in the numbers of students with EHCPs and Lesley confirmed that we have to be extremely careful about how we manage these to ensure we can provide the level of support they require.

Lesley pointed out that the College had no involvement whatsoever in the recent Children's Services Ofsted inspection which had an extremely poor outcome. The College is, however, being involved going forward as part of the solution.

Maths and English learner numbers were considered and members noted the challenges associated with managing such a significant cohort, particularly when it comes to examinations.

Members noted that earlier in the month c2600 students had taken mock GCSEs, with 88% attendance. Carol confirmed that the new streaming approach is working better than putting all abilities together and added that the team are trying new approaches all the time in order to make improvements and engage these learners.

Discussion took place regarding the latest Work Based Learning information. The key area of concern is the L3 16-18 attendance and Carol confirmed that we are looking at initial advice and guidance in order to ensure that the right programme has been chosen. Members noted the progress information and the amount of monitoring undertaken by the Work Based Learning team to ensure that these students achieve within their timeframe.

The significant challenge in finding 45 days' industry placement for students required by the Work Placement and Capacity and Delivery Fund was considered and Carol advised that the target increases next year, providing even further challenge for the College.

Carol was thanked for her Report.

19.1.7 **Self-Assessment Report, 2017**

Carol confirmed that the annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) is for our own use providing a comprehensive picture of the current status, followed up by an action plan and delivery plan.

Members noted that it would be particularly important in an Ofsted Inspection although we would share Position Papers with Inspectors rather than the full SAR.

Carol advised that we have considered last year's position, actions taken and the impact of those actions, and the latest data, in order to arrive at the current status.

Members considered the impact of the new framework and discussion took place regarding the "Outstanding" judgement arrived at, noting that we are also acknowledging that there are areas where we can improve. The quality and appropriateness of the curriculum are the key factors that we need to consider and it was agreed that everything the College does is geared around the learners and their needs, therefore, the "Outstanding" grade is appropriate.

Members noted that the SAR is a working document which may, once the qualification achievement rates have been published, be tweaked but fundamentally there will be no major changes.

Subject to this, the SAR was approved and will be signposted for the Corporation to view online.

19.1.8 **Feedback from Members' Attendance at AoC Events**

There was no feedback.

19.1.9 **Any Other Business**

There were no items of other business.

19.1.10 **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

24 June 2019 at 4.30 pm at Newcastle College