

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION & STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD AT 4.30 PM ON 29 JUNE 2022

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

In attendance: Shelley Brown (Director of Curriculum and Performance), Andy Bailey (Head of Compliance and Governance), Lesley Morrey (Director of Student Engagement and Partnerships), Joy Smith (Deputy Clerk)

22.2.1 Election of Vice-Chair of the Committee

Andy explained that, following last year's one year arrangement to bring the Chair and Vice-Chair elections back to alternating years, the role of Vice-Chair is now due for re-election.

Alan Aston was proposed, seconded and, in the absence of any further nominations, was re-elected Vice-Chair of the Education and Standards Committee for a two year term.

22.2.2 Link Governor Feedback

Alan provided feedback on his meetings with Lesley Morrey, Denise Haney and Liz Wyman in relation to the 2 areas of his link governor role.

Safeguarding and Prevent:

The very sad student suicide had been a particular issue and the College's actions and provisions had been commended in the external reviews that had taken place. The review of college policies and procedures have led to a new Safeguarding and Prevent Policy, headline information on which will be presented by Lesley Morrey to the first Corporation meeting in the new academic year. The College's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy has also been refreshed and will come to the Corporation in October. This includes information on various initiatives to improve and enhance students' wellbeing and mental health and help them develop the resilience they need to move forward with their lives and careers. Alan referred to the new database for recording issues and the steps taken to provide better privacy for dealing with referrals. Gender identification and the challenges in dealing with this relating to changing facilities etc were also noted.

Careers Advice and Guidance:

Alan advised that Liz Wyman will deliver a presentation to a future Corporation meeting on how we measure our success against national standards and members were very pleased to note that we score very highly in this.

Members noted that Alan and David O'Neill have joined the North Staffs Careers Link Governor Hub which provides some useful information, events and networking opportunities.

Lesley Rollason advised that she had visited the College's Hair and Beauty Salon and had been pleased and impressed with two very articulate young students, although one had been less so which had made her ponder on the advice and guidance given to learners. She also would have liked an opportunity to provide feedback to the tutor which would have been useful for the College. Karen reported that there is a wide range in terms of ability and attitude who come into this area of our provision but from our point of view we are providing them with a positive course with English and maths in parallel and developing some transferrable skills. Shelley advised that the TAG process had led to some students coming in to College on a Level 2 course when they would have normally been Level 1. She explained that we are using some additional hours to develop new and additional skills for these learners and we are also very aware of the need to provide more work experience for the students to develop their wider skillset.

Lesley confirmed that she had really valued the experience and Shelley indicated that she would speak to the staff about the possibility of providing feedback to the tutors.

22.2.3 New Enhanced Ofsted Inspection Framework

Karen reported that Ofsted have tweaked their framework and this is now referred to as an "enhanced methodology" which is impacting on colleges but currently not 6th forms, schools or academies, although Ofsted have queried this with the DfE.

The new methodology has come about following the introduction of the new Skills & Post 16 Education Act 2022 and members particularly noted the intention that all colleges will be inspected between September 2022 and September 2025 in order to provide government with more timely grades and information on every provider.

Ofsted have been resourced to appoint additional staff to enable them to undertake the enhanced approach and a revised Inspection Handbook is anticipated.

Karen explained the implications of the new Act through which Ofsted are tasked with looking at the contribution a college makes to meeting skills needs. Existing principles will apply to the core of the inspection and will result in key grades with the skills findings included in a worded sub-judgement.

Karen advised that these larger inspection teams will probably result in 2 additional inspectors who will have the specific skills remit visiting NSCG. There will be a new approach to how a college is notified with a planning call specific to the skills element 5/6 days before the inspection, followed by the normal planning call regarding the rest of the inspection 2 days before.

One significant change is the option to have a second nominee, therefore, both Jason Lancaster and Shelley will be able to attend the inspectors' meetings and provide feedback and pass on key issues/messages.

Colleges will be expected to produce Skills Strategies or Skills Position Statements which Ofsted would wish to have sight of. The Skills inspector will meet initially with senior leaders and then spend the first couple of days in pre-arranged meetings which can be via phone/Zoom/Teams. Karen advised that there will be a specific meeting with Governors to discuss skills, in addition to the normal inspection meeting with Governors. It was confirmed that those involved will be fully briefed in advance.

Members noted the four areas making up stakeholder groups and Karen advised that Ofsted are conscious of colleges' positions if they fall under the area of a failing civic body. Karen stressed the good number of supporting groups with whom we have very positive relationships that we can draw from. Curriculum inspectors will also be exploring links with employers and wider stakeholder groups.

Karen added that we have a number of new Curriculum Managers and Curriculum Leaders in post and we have plans in place to ensure that all of our staff team are fully prepared for an Inspection.

The wording used in the worded sub-judgement was considered: *limited*, *reasonable* and *strong* contribution to meeting skills needs and Karen confirmed that we will be working hard to demonstrate that we fall into the strong contribution category.

Members considered the dilemma that it would, in theory, be possible to have a limited sub-judgement for skills, but Outstanding Governance and Management, although it was felt that this would be an unlikely scenario.

Francis referred to the last inspection meeting with Governors where they had been expected to know a lot of detailed information. He was concerned that Governors would need to be extremely well briefed. Karen confirmed that this is definitely part of our plans for the preparation for inspection. The fact that curriculum changes are usually as a response to skills shortages will be included and wider supporting information shared.

Shelley referred to the new QoER process which will require each area to provide their own Position Statement linking to skills agenda. In addition, areas will be asked to present their information to Governors which will be helpful for all concerned.

Karen advised that the focus will move going forward to revisiting what we do and aligning it to Ofsted's requirements. We will work hard with our staff to ensure that everyone is as well prepared as possible. We have a broad offer and expect to be able to hit the national skills agenda and also the more local priorities.

Karen was thanked for her very interesting update.

22.2.4 Curriculum Update June 2022

Shelley drew attention to the age and level profile of learners across both college sites. Members considered the headline predicted achievement data and Shelley referred to the number of fails, where the biggest contributors are A Levels and GCSEs, as would be anticipated. She added, however, that we are currently sitting at 88.9% overall achievement which compares very favourably with the position 3 years ago (during the last normal year) where we were sitting at this point on 88.3%. The reduced franchise provision will not provide the boost that we have previously seen but we do feel that this position is a strong one and we are pleased with this performance. Areas of concern are being addressed and teams will work hard to overcome any issues. Differences in performance at each site will be investigated and actions taken as appropriate. Shelley added that there are also some areas showing really Outstanding performance and against the national picture it is pleasing that our data is very strong in all areas.

Members noted the BTEC January exam results which reflected the first exams formally undertaken by these learners. Shelley confirmed that we were delighted with the results and members noted the breakdown of grades achieved. Shelley added that we have worked hard to make sure that those who have achieved a U or nearly pass have received additional support and have been offered a re-sit opportunity.

Shelley then gave an overview of some of the new initiatives introduced for summer 2022 with the Summer Work Platform, face to face results and course advice days, new arrangements for enrolments during the bank holiday week and plans around dealing with students who decide they wish to change their course. Shelley reminded members that the first 42 days is the critical period but the noticeable difference this year was that those who move later are faced with problems because of the timing of the pre-assessments and external exams. Therefore, it is vital that we ensure students are on the right programme early, and in reality week 3 or 4 should be a cut off, although this needs a flexible approach as so much does depend on the individual learner.

Members noted the new focus of the induction process and the professional development sessions in order to drive the skills based elements through the additional 34 hours of funded provision, along with the curriculum developments proposed going forward. Shelley advised that our part time adult offer is an area of challenge but it is becoming more evident that a part time more flexible learning model is popular for this age cohort.

Members recalled the previous discussions about the defunding of Level 3 qualifications and it was noted that the main impact is Early Years, where we will completely move to the T Level from September 2023 and L3 Engineering, where we are planning to move forward at a slower pace. Karen added that the opportunity to appeal against the defunding must be lodged by the awarding body and we have heard that in Engineering appeals have already been submitted which may result in some tweaks.

To date 150 qualifications have been defunded and we anticipate more in 2024-25.

Members noted the information relating to new approaches and initiatives with CPD sessions, open and welcome events, work experience, exam planning and exam inspections, enrichment across all areas and a recalibration of student expectations and behaviours, extra support for staff - particularly for those new in post - and sustainability and the green agenda.

Shelley was pleased to report that we are now anticipating achieving our target T Level numbers in all areas apart from Digital where there is a wider student choice impacting on those wanting to take the T Level pathway.

David asked about how the College will address the drop in adult education numbers and Shelley explained the new models we are offering with alternative modes of attendance and course types, along with a focus on engineering based/electrical courses which are currently a growth area. Francis agreed that a flexible approach around how people work is an attractive offer for this cohort along with the offer online courses which can fit around work etc. Members agreed that this does require a high level of motivation on the students' part.

Shelley was thanked for her very thorough presentation.

22.2.5 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jason Lancaster and Gavin Barker.

22.2.6 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest in any items in today's agenda.

22.2.7 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2022

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

22.2.8 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

22.2.9 Learner Data Report

Shelley drew members' attention to the Learner Data Report which had been provided in advance for them to consider and advised that the new reports from September will contain summary overarching headline information and the supporting data can be provided to back this up if required.

In addition a new QoER process is being devised to mirror the approach of an Ofsted report, providing key summaries backed up with appendices. Lesley Morrey advised that the Safeguarding and Prevent information

provided will also be streamlined. Some discussion took place about the level of information required by the Committee and Lesley Rollason confirmed that she is due to undertake a link visit with Gavin Barker which Shelley would join to discuss this further.

Particular areas from the Learner Data Report were raised as follows:

- HE Survey: it was confirmed that the development areas identified all relate to the provision we operate through Staffs University. The areas of strength identified all relate to the provision we deliver ourselves on site.
- Members questioned the statement regarding withdrawals linked to resignations in the apprenticeship table and Karen advised that this relates to apprentices resigning from their jobs and, therefore, they are unable to continue with their apprenticeships. She added that the high rates of withdrawal can be attributed to job movements, career choices and changes. In addition, the apprenticeships team are finding that students are going through the qualifications and then for some reason dropping out just before the EPA. This is currently under investigation.
- Lesley asked about the numbers involved in the HE table entitled Wolverhampton University Provision and Shelley explained that the sum total of 91 at the bottom relates to all of the franchised HE provision (including Staffs University).
- Francis advised that he found the summary of the QoERs document particularly helpful.
- Lesley Morrey reported that the number of EHCP learners this year has increased significantly and we expect a further increase going forward. We have also been surprised at the number of domestic violence reports that come through and the knock on effect that this has on the students and their achievements etc.
- Shelley added that there are some areas of attendance/punctuality which we will focus on and it was noted that the newly introduced pastoral system will help to target these issues.

Further discussion took place about the contents and format of future reports. Members acknowledged the very open and transparent nature of all the data sharing but it was felt that it should be more succinct going forward, identifying key issues and how these are being addressed.

22.2.10 Any Other Business

a. Next Year's Meetings

It was noted that the March meeting of the Committee will be arranged at Stafford. In addition, a presentation on work placements will be included next year.

22.2.11 Date and Time of Next Meeting

To be confirmed