

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

Thursday 20th March 2014 at 6pm at NWHC - Seminar Room - Nuneaton Campus

Present: Mrs S Beckett, Dr P Cashian (Chair), Mr C Garnham, Dr P Lavender, Mr D Rattigan and Dr Walsh.

In attendance: Mrs R Marshall (Clerk), Mr Shelton (AP - LSD) and Mr A Thomas (Interim AP - Engineering).

Members agreed that the agenda item 2.1 would be dealt with at the start of the meeting.

2. Learning Teaching and Assessment

2.1 Briefing from the Interim Director for Engineering

Mr Thomas introduced himself and provided the following information about the Engineering Curriculum Area:

- i. The scope of his responsibility, the provision delivered within the Engineering Area and the progression routes which were available.
- ii. Current retention and success rates with comparisons against previous years.
- iii. Confidence that the Area had an understanding of where its students were and that they would achieve as expected.
- iv. A summary of the Areas strengths.
- v. In terms of the challenges identified, the biggest challenges related to:
 - the unavailability of staffing resource to meet demand;
 - the age, state and unavailability of equipment and the lack of an equipment and maintenance strategy;
 - an over-reliance on agency staff and a significant turnover of staff;
 - low staff morale.

Members discussed the availability of capital monies and working with employers to assist in the overcoming of identified challenges, particularly in respect of equipment issues.

- vi. Strengths and challenges relating to equality and diversity.
- vii. Issues in respect of functional skills delivery and student attendance.

Members raised the following matters:

- i. What was the reason that apprenticeships were not being offered in the electrical area?

Mr Shelton explained that this was due to quality issues within the Area and a drop in success rates. Whilst the decision had been difficult to make, it had been agreed that changes within the provision were required and challenges in this Area were still ongoing.

- ii. There were some low numbers indicated in some areas of the provision. Were the courses therefore viable?

Mr Thomas confirmed that these were not stand-alone groups and therefore they

were viable.

- iii. Whether South Leicestershire College had an engineering capability to support NWHC's provision and delivery?

Mr Shelton confirmed that the engineering curriculums of both Colleges had been mapped and that there was a need to look at available resources and how they should be used.

- iv. Whether the significant challenges identified could be overcome?

Mr Thomas stated that the challenges could be overcome in time and Mr Shelton highlighted that the support being offered to the Area and how recruitment was taking place, were both being reviewed. There was however, significant work to be done.

- v. What were the timescales for improvement?

Mr Thomas stated that he was hopeful that the Area would be graded as 'Good' at the end of this academic year and that he had confidence the Area was starting to move into a more sustainable future.

Members discussed the situation in some depth. They expressed concerns that with the Area being of significant strategic importance to the College and the biggest area of potential growth, the situation was critical. Members asked what could be done to assist the situation. Mr Thomas confirmed that staff and equipment were the fundamental issues.

Members agreed that in light of the strategic importance of the Area, that the whole Corporation should be appraised of the situation by way of a report setting out the current position, risks (including reputational), actions, timescales and how the Corporation might support the Executive in addressing the issues raised. Members asked Mr Shelton to raise this matter with the Executive as soon as possible to enable a report to be presented at the next Corporation meeting. **ACTION 22 MS.**

It was also agreed that the need for consideration of capital investment in the Area should form part of the College's medium term financial plan.

1. Routine and Standing Items

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mrs Plant and Mrs Penrose.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

1.3 The Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of a meeting held on 16th January 2014 were agreed to be a correct record of that meeting. (Proposer: Mrs Beckett; seconder: Mr Garnham).

Schedule of Actions

See the attached schedule.

- i. Action 8 - Mrs Marshall was asked to ascertain a date as to when Members might be asked to 'test' the new dashboard.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

Dr Cashian highlighted a number of matters which had been discussed at the Committee Chairs' meeting:

- i. the work by the Committees in considering risk more holistically and in support of

the Audit Committee;

- ii. the work undertaken by the Search and Governance and Learning and Quality Committees on providing guidance for link visits.

2. Learning Teaching and Assessment

2.2 Verbal Update

i. Recruitment

Mr Shelton provided the following update on current recruitment numbers:

- i. Numbers of 16-18 learners were above allocation by 29 and funding was therefore secure.
- ii. 16-18 part time learner numbers were 360 below allocation. The difference in the number compared to 2012-2013 was because the College had been able to offer a significant number of short induction programmes which counted toward part-time numbers. Due to the changes brought about the new study programmes, this was no longer possible.

In answer to a question from Members, Mr Shelton confirmed that there would be no impact as a consequence of this drop in part-time learners, as the College was judged on its full-time numbers.

- iii. 16-18 apprentice numbers were up 67 learners from the same time as last year and there was confidence that the allocation would be exceeded and that significant 'in-roads' would be made into the additional allocation.
- iv. There was confidence that the Adult Skills Budget allocation would be achieved with delivery from College staff.

ii Retention

Mr Shelton explained that retention figures were currently showing a 1.18% decrease for the same point in time as last year and that the College had a 2% leeway to match the position it achieved at the end of 2012-2013.

In answer to Members' questions, Mr Shelton explained that there were no significant issues or problem areas. Although a considerable amount of work had been and was being, undertaken in all areas and support was being provided continually, the achievement of retention objectives had been graded as an 'Amber' risk.

iii. Value Added

Mr Shelton outlined the work currently being undertaken in respect of the College's school's provision offer and the aspects of value added which related to it. During discussion, Members asked about the value added position in respect of vocational learning. Mr Shelton explained that there were a number of concerns in this area and that the College was still not performing as well as had been hoped, but that the picture was an improving one and a number of stretch targets had been put into place.

iv. Equality and Diversity

Mr Shelton informed Members that an equality and diversity day had been scheduled for 2nd May 2014 when staff training, awareness raising and development activities would be delivered by an external facilitator. There had been a number of positive examples of the embedding of equality and diversity witnessed during teaching observations, although there had also been a number of 'missed opportunities' observed.

Mr Garnham shared some aspects of discussion that had taken place during his recent equality and diversity link visit and the need to view equality and diversity as the golden thread running through everything. There were obviously some areas of good practice and

these needed to be shared through peer development groups.

v. **Observations**

Mr Shelton highlighted the following observation data:

- i. 88% of observations undertaken were good or better;
- ii. Of 134 observations undertaken recently, 31 were graded as 'Outstanding', 82 were 'Good' and 15 'Required Improvement'. None were graded as 'Inadequate'.

2.3 **Student Voice Discussion**

Dr Cashian introduced the paper, explaining that the Corporation at its Autumn Conference identified the need to consider the further engagement of learners and staff in the Learning and Quality Committee. This need was included as an action within the Corporation's Quality Improvement Plan for which the Learning and Quality Committee was responsible. The paper helpfully set out a number of suggestions.

During discussion, Members raised the following matters:

- i. Currently the Student Union was not fully representative of the College Student Voice.
- ii. That the Student Parliament, which Members had been observing, was impressive particularly in terms of attendance and the matters discussed.
- iii. That staff were very good at the roles they undertook in terms of student voice, however it was clear that this was currently at the 'consultation' level on the 'ladder of engagement' model which had been presented with the paper and that the next step would require a significant undertaking and challenge.

Members discussed this issue in some depth, noting that College students only attended College for a comparatively short period, that the College was good at listening to students and that Ofsted viewed the student voice as a critical aspect of inspection.

- iv. There was a need to ensure students from the curriculum areas which Members were briefed on during Committee meetings should be asked to attend.
- v. That it would be possible to:
 - co-opt students to the Committee;
 - students, possibly those undertaking management qualifications, could be invited to observe relevant committee meetings, (potentially the Learning and Quality and Audit Committees);
 - more student presentations to Corporation should be encouraged.

Following discussion, it was agreed that Management should be asked how this might be achieved. **ACTION 23 MS**

(Dr Walsh and Mr Rattigan left the meeting at 8pm - still quorate).

2.4 **Feedback on Internal Quality Inspection: Work Based Learning**

Mr Shelton described the recent internal quality inspection of the work based learning provision which had taken place and then highlighted the following matters:

- i. the inspection had provided a very thorough and honest assessment;
- ii. it was clear that some areas were 'Outstanding' whilst others required improvement;
- iii. the overall message was the need for consistency;
- iv. a substantial quantity of feedback had been received from students and employers;
- v. that the quality of observations had been moderated with external partners, particularly employers;

- vi. that the inspection report, which would include clear recommendations, was due to be submitted to the Executive

Dr Cashian confirmed that he had been invited to attend one of the feedback sessions, which had been very informative. It had also been interesting to see how Corporation approved policies were actually developed and implemented. The inspection had paid close attention to detail and that it was about a quality enhancement process and not just an identification of the gaps. It was clear that Mr Warren and his team had done a thorough but fair job during the inspection.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:

- i. The observations, whilst being judgemental, were also conducted so that they were developmental.
- ii. Whether employers should receive feedback on the outcomes of the inspection?

Mr Shelton agreed that a way to provide feedback to employers should be found and that employers should also be involved in the improvements.

2.5 College Quality Improvement Plan 2013-2014

Mr Shelton introduced the paper which set out the progress being undertaken in respect of quality improvement actions identified following the whole College self-assessment.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

2.6 Curriculum Planning for 2014-2015

Mr Shelton introduced the paper which presented the curriculum planning proposals for 2014-2015 and explained the challenges that were being faced to meet the study programme guidelines and the requirements for English and Maths GCSE to be offered as a funding condition.

Members discussed issues in respect of work placements and volunteering and the proposals to deliver these opportunities and challenges to be overcome.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

3. Governance

3.1 College Risk Report

Mrs Marshall introduced the paper which presented the whole College high risks and identified the two risks which related to the Committee's terms of reference, namely failure to reach 16-18 recruitment numbers and attendance and retention targets. Both these risks had been addressed in Mr Shelton's earlier update.

Following discussion, Members received the paper.

3.2 Risk Report Review

Mrs Marshall introduced the paper, highlighted the single risk for which the Committee was responsible for and asked Members to consider the risk and review mitigating actions, the status of the current risk assessment and score and determine whether there were any additional risks to be considered.

Members confirmed that they were content with the mitigating actions currently being undertaken.

3.2 Corporation Quality Improvement Plan 2013-2014

Mrs Marshall introduced the paper which set out the Corporation's agreed Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), highlighted the three actions that the Committee was responsible for and asked Members to consider how the actions should be progressed.

Following discussion, it was agreed that Mrs Marshall would record all relevant areas of progress in the QIP progress record form.

4. Other Matters

4.1 Meeting Summary Review

Dr Cashian highlighted the following matters:

- i. The useful and interesting briefing received from Mr Thomas on the Engineering Curriculum Area and the discussion that had resulted. Although Members were aware of ongoing difficulties within the Area, the presentation had more clearly identified these difficulties and their impact on the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment. Mr Thomas' appointment had been excellent and evidence had been provided which demonstrated that improvements within the Area were progressing. It was however, essential that the awareness of the whole Corporation was raised in line with the Committee's awareness. Therefore a report on the position, for presentation to the Corporation at its meeting on 10th April 2014, was required.
- ii. The discussion on developing a more effective way for the Corporation to engage with students and ensure that the Student Voice was heard and acted upon, proved to be helpful with a number of suggestions being identified, to be further considered and progressed by the Executive.
- iii. Having heard about the thoroughness and robustness of the IQI process, Members were reassured that the exercise had been of value and would identify a number of improvement and development opportunities. Members also noted that the culture in place within the College which had enabled the inspection to be undertaken was not always in place in other educational institutions.

4.2 Release of Papers

Members agreed that all papers should be released with the exception of:

- i. Agenda item 2.3 - College Quality Improvement Plan as it was considered to be commercially sensitive;
- ii. Agenda item 3.3 - Curriculum Planning as the information contained within it was planned for publication in advance of the publication of papers.

4.3 Date of the Next Meeting

Members agreed that the date and time of the next meeting would be Thursday 12th June 2014 at 6pm at a venue to be determined.

The meeting ended 8.45pm

Signed: Date:

Schedule of Actions - Learning and Quality Committee - 20th March 2014

Meeting Date	Action No.	Minute Reference	Action	By Whom	By When	Action Status
11.4.13 / 6.6.13	8.	6ii. / 6ii	Arrangements to be made to 'test' the dashboard with Corporation Members.	AP(LSD)/ Chair SQP	18.7.13	Ongoing To be made once development is ready
21.11.13	16.	2.5	Consideration as involvement of the Student Voice within the Committee and what information relating to Student Voice to be received by the Committee.	Committee	20.3.14	Complete Discussion held on 20 th March 2014
16.1.14	18.	3.1	Update of the Risk Report.	Clerk	20.3.14	Complete
16.1.14	19.	3.2	Update of the Quality Improvement Plan.	Clerk	20.3.14	Complete
16.1.14	20.	3.3	Search and Governance Committee to be asked to include a link with E-Services	Search & Governance Committee Chair	23.1.14	Complete Link agreed by S&G Committee and first visit undertaken
16.1.14	21	3.3	Amendment of the Link Report	Clerk	31.1.14	Completed Report amended and circulated to Members and staff for use
20.3.14	22.	2.1	Corporation to receive a report on the Engineering Area setting out the current position, risks (including reputational), actions, timescales and what the Corporation should be asked to do.	AP - LSD	10.4.14	

Meeting Date	Action No.	Minute Reference	Action	By Whom	By When	Action Status
20.3.14	23.	2.4	Management to be asked how suggestions made by the Committee as to how to develop engagement with students, should be taken forward.	AP - LSD	12.6.14	