

**CHELMSFORD COLLEGE  
QUALITY AND LEARNERS COMMITTEE  
23 February 2021 – 2.00 pm**

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**PRESENT:** Sarah Noble (Chair)  
Natalie Devaney (Student Governor)  
Susan Hughes  
Christian Norman  
Elaine Oddie  
Andy Sparks (Principal)  
Barbara Vohmann

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Amanda Montague (Chair Designate) – till 3.15 pm.  
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 – to minute 656)  
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 Principal and the Clerk attended the Meeting in person. All other attendees accessed the Meeting through MS Teams, in the light of the restrictions of Lockdown3.*

**690. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for Absence were received from Nedas Laurinavicius.

**691. 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. Andy Sparks also declared his interest as acting Chair and Director of ACER Limited (dormant).

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.

## **692. URGENT BUSINESS**

The VPFCS introduced an item of Urgent Business. The College is working on a bid to the Government's Capital Transformation Fund in order to update the following College facilities (category C assets):

- The Learning Resource Centres at both Moulsham Street and Princes Road
- Creating a more inviting space for IAG in Reception at Moulsham Street and release a classroom
- Divide the Administration Room and create more office space for Apprenticeship support

Overall cost of this work would be in the region of £1.5 million, which would include some matched funding up to 50% maximum. However, it is recognised that Colleges will struggle to meet a 50% target and therefore the work can be spread over three years.

In answer to Susan Hughes, the VPFCS indicated that the College will seek to keep the matched funding to as low a figure as possible.

The Principal commented that the ESFA have set a new benchmark for cash resources for Colleges, which will have an impact on match funding requirements for capital projects.

The Committee agreed that the College must reinvest in order to attract more students.

The Committee were pleased with this opportunity and gave their approval in principle, noting that the final bid requires Board Approval. The Audit Committee will be informed next week at their regular Meeting so all governors will have been told.

On the advice of the Clerk, it was noted that the Budget working group will be provided with the final Bid before 15 March for review and approval – 15 March is the date for submission. The final decision will not

be given till September this year following a second stage bid process. Any funding received would not have to be spent for two to three years hence.

The full Board will be updated on 26 March 2021.

The Committee gave their **APPROVAL** in principle to proceeding with this project.

### **693. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 3 NOVEMBER 2020**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 3 November 2020 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chair, when possible.

### **694. MATTERS ARISING**

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

The Committee noted that the Board had approved the College Self-Assessment Report 2019-20, the College Improvement Plan 2020-21, the Committee's Terms of Reference, the Annual Safeguarding Report 2019-20 and the Curriculum KPIs for 2020-21 at its Meeting on 4 December 2020 on the recommendation of this Committee.

The Board also confirmed at its December Meeting the appointment of Nedas Laurinavicius to the Board and to this Committee following email approval having been given by governors.

It was noted that two matters regarding achievement levels 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 in the hope that proposals could be considered at the next Meeting of the Committee.

**ACTION: Clerk**

### **695. REMOTE EDUCATION REVIEW**

The Deputy Principal **PRESENTED** a copy of the completed framework 'DfE - Review your Remote Education' to provide governors with an overview of College practices implemented to provide learners and apprentices with a remote and full educational experience during academic year 2020-21.

It is also a source of assurance for governors. It is not a mandatory document but has been produced by the DfE to support FE providers to identify strengths and areas for improvement in remote education provision and to point to resources to assist improvements in practice.

The framework has been completed by members of the Senior Management Team.

Identified areas for improvement:

- Routine contact with parents and carers to share information and expectations (Amber)
- Opportunity to engage in shared cross College enrichment is limited (Amber)
- Opportunity to engage in wider curriculum activity is variable (Amber)
- Software can only scan devices linked to the College network (Green)
- Teacher online learning expectations require updating (Green)
- Additional learner behaviour protocols required (Green)

These areas are considered AMBER and GREEN risks, as marked.

The Deputy Principal said that, whilst the document showed good compliance, the College is aware that there are curriculum delivery issues that do require attention to address inconsistency in practice within the College.

It was noted that, even with a return of students physically in College from March 8, there will still be a need for remote learning for the foreseeable future to maintain a COVID safe educational environment.

Direct contact with parents has been better in some curriculum areas than others and the intention is to widen the best practice that has been identified in certain areas of the College throughout the whole organisation.

There is not enough cross College enrichment (Harlow College is a good exemplar and the College is in contact with them regarding this) which needs to be addressed as students return.

Some curriculum areas do not provide wider activity for students and further development is required.

## Governor questions

The Principal felt that the document is perhaps a bit optimistic. The College is aware that variability exists across curriculum areas and this issue does not really come through in the document. This is partly due to the structure of the DfE document, which the Deputy Principal said is essentially process based and any measure of impact is missing from the document.

The College will address as a matter of routine those curriculum areas where remote education requires further improvement.

The Deputy Principal will ensure that impact of remote education is identified in the next update of this DfE framework from experience of actual delivery across the College.

The DTLQ reported that formal remote learning observations have started this week and will be rolled out further during this half term with a goal of 70+ observations being completed by the end of April. The DTLQ reported that the delay in observing remote online learning was at the request of the teachers' union. There will be an update at the next Committee Meeting.

### **ACTION: PP**

Christian Norman confirmed his experience of the document being process driven rather than impact driven with the result that the scoring does not always highlight where one area is performing better than others.

The Chair said that formal observations of remote education should address progress within intervention areas for 2020/21 against key drivers (attendance, retention, expected performance, etc) and it was agreed that a short update paper on observations will be presented to Board on 26 March.

The Chair also requested that attendance in the future be disaggregated between remote attendance and campus attendance.

### **ACTION: CW**

Simon Drane said that return on 8 March is vital as during this long lockdown, vocational students have suffered from a lack of practical teaching and learning.

Susan Hughes asked if there was sufficient access to practical resources when students return. Simon Drane reported that this is being planned now to ensure that practical learning can be most expeditiously catered for. During lockdown, lack of ability to deliver hands on practical instruction has disadvantaged many learners who had chosen to study practical subjects.

Alison Davies reported that, with regard to the intervention areas of Health and Social Care and Child Care, the engagement of learners in remote education was very positive. This is borne out by the results of recent Progress and Progression Review.

Nevertheless, work placement is a significant issue, but a speedy return to work placement is being planned once students are back to face to face learning and nurseries will accept learners.

She was therefore able to provide reassurance to the Committee relating to these two areas.

Simon Drane responded to a governor question saying that close liaison is in place with the awarding organisations, e.g. engineering, even though the consultation outcome on assessment for summer 2021 has not yet been agreed/announced – this is expected later this week.

The Committee **APPROVED** the completed framework document, noting the comments regarding inconsistency of practice across the college. It was felt to be a very helpful document giving assurance that the College has the processes in place to meet the challenges of remote education during the academic year 2020-21

## **696. COVID 19 UPDATES**

The Deputy Principal gave a verbal update on the fast changing situation regarding College provision during Lockdown3 and the COVID19 pandemic generally. She was assisted by Penny Petch, Mark Emerson and Marco Iciek.

### *Provision for vulnerable learners*

The DLDI reminded the Committee of the College's continuing commitment to these learners, which has been adapted due to Lockdown, e.g. student support, provision of mentors, continuous support, and the provision for students to attend College for help or a safe place to study., DLDI explained how these support services are working in practice.

Different models of support are provided for different groups of learners within vulnerable categories (covers LAC students, EHCP learners, At Risk learners).

### Learner Voice

Marco Iciek said it is imperative that the College is aware of student needs and issues during Lockdown3. A student survey was completed in early December about their first term's experiences with around 1200 students taking part. There were nine 9 questions with 87% of comments being positive.

It is intended to have a further student survey covering the second term of the year (virtually entirely in Lockdown3).

An on-line Learner Voice Meeting took place on 12 February 2021 when 30 learners attended plus 17 College staff and governors. Over forty questions were asked and there was excellent interaction.

Susan Hughes asked if there are any areas causing concern due to lower positive responses (78% lowest). Marco Iciek will look into this and report back to the Committee at the next Meeting: certainly, some students have concerns about how they will be assessed this year.

### **ACTION: MI**

The Chair asked at what point does the College look at student progression and their future destinations. Marco Iciek said that progression is kept under review in Progress and Progression Reviews held every six weeks, but students have not yet been asked about intended destination this year. Clearly, it is an area of concern for students in this difficult climate.

The Deputy Principal commented that a record numbers of students have applied to university for next year.

### Examinations and Assessment

The Deputy Principal said that there is no information yet available on GCSE or general technical qualification assessment for summer 2021. An announcement is expected from the DfE later this week, but it is likely to be primarily teacher assessment in both cases. For GCSEs, there might be some mini tests set internally and marked internally as an indicator towards appropriate grades. The practical element of vocational qualifications will be in line with Awarding Organisations' guidelines.

### Quality Assurance

Penny Petch informed the Committee that 40 observations of face to face learning took place during term 1 with 70% of teachers meeting the 5 Key Expectations.

A pilot of observations of remote learning was carried out during Term 1 and, following the announcement of Lockdown3, the teachers' union requested a delay in the observation of remote learning until after half term. The DTLQ has met with all academic managers to discuss way forward in approaching observations of remote learning.

Observations of remote learning have now started, after consultation with the UCU union, to ensure that it is a developmental process to reduce any anxiety that teachers may have.

The Chair asked about Digital specialist Advanced Practitioner and was advised that the College is working with Harlow College in partnership to develop this further.

Susan Hughes asked if and how governors can get involved in teaching observations given that Learning Walks are not possible. Penny said that it might be possible to see a pre-recorded teaching session.

**ACTION: PP**

Elaine Oddie asked how the College is going to be assessed on this area for the year. DTLQ reported that she was confident that all teachers will have been observed at least once by the end of April and EOY outcome will be not much different from what is normally achieved.

In answer to the Chair, it was confirmed that observations of all areas and especially practical vocational areas will resume once students return to campus next month. This will be alongside remote learning observations.

*Learner Recruitment 2021/22*

The DIS said that trends for next year are very positive with very successful recent Showcase Events having been held. There have been 1436 unique applications to 12 February compared to 1313 at the same point last year and higher than the year before, which was a record year.

In response to Amanda Montague, this reflects national trends and the DIS noted that there is a high demand for those areas which have had a high profile during the pandemic e.g. asked which ones – Health & Social Care and Uniformed Public Services.

Travel & tourism, on the other hand, has declined (question from Susan Hughes).

Barbara Vohmann asked if the College is able to accommodate increased enrolments (assuming applications turn into enrolments) especially in practical areas like construction trades. Simon Drane commented that this issue is being reviewed now to get the balance right, given the need for specialist equipment in the trade's areas and the balance of part time versus full time students.

There is a continuing need for specialist teachers (as confirmed by Simon Drane) particularly in carpentry and joinery and electrical. The new Construction centre at Princes Road will help with resource space but the College needs the right staff, both numbers and expertise.

### Emerging significant updates

The Deputy Principal confirmed that the College will reopen the campuses to students and apprentices on 8 March 2021, in line with the Government's lifting of restrictions. There will be extensive (voluntary) COVID19 testing for staff, learners and apprentices which is a huge job to organise and deliver.

It is expected that, in due course, students will carry out 'home tests' (twice weekly) and packs will be provided to them for these tests.

It is clearly challenging for staff to return into a 'new' regime having had another period of lockdown for so long and the provision of a safe environment for all those coming into College is paramount.

The Principal referred to the recently published FE White Paper and the whole Board will need to review the College's strategy in the light of this document. It is an Agenda item for the 26 March Board Meeting.

### **ACTION: Clerk**

The Committee **NOTED** these Reports on the current position and plans for re-opening.

### **697. LEARNER DESTINATIONS 2019/20**

The Director of Learner Development & Inclusion **PRESENTED** a detailed Analysis of the above for the information of the Committee.

The Report commented that it was a very difficult year for learners and their progression due to COVID 19 and this has resulted in some

significant shifts in destinations compared to past years, primarily fewer learners progressing into employment due to reduced opportunities.

As a consequence, the numbers of learners progressing to further and higher education have increased.

The data is based on 1565 out of about 2000 learners (78%) – lower than at this stage last year but still very good in the current climate and sufficient to be reliable. The process to get responses continues.

In response to the Principal, Marco Iciek confirmed that every effort will be made to increase the level of responses.

The Principal also said that the College needs to be proactive in promoting progression options to students. This needs to be reinforced with our Progression Fayre and opportunities available with a focus in our showcase events.

The Paper pointed out the headline points, the main one of which was that far more learners progressed to further and higher education compared to the previous year (up 10pp), largely offset by fewer students progressing into employment (down 11pp). It was notable that fewer learners were now NEETs (down 3pp from 6% to 3% – a reduction of 37 learners) and, even though a small total number, this was nevertheless pleasing.

The trend of applications for 2020/21 reinforces this change with higher numbers of those applications being from students progressing into further and higher education.

As in the past few years, the number of learners progressing to apprenticeships with the College continues to be disappointingly low, but this is likely to be causally linked with the severe effects on the business community of Lockdowns (especially Hospitality, Hair and Beauty, Engineering).

Overall, 94% of destinations were to further education or employment (total of 1461 students), an unchanged percentage from last year.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report.

## **698. SUB-CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS 2019-20**

The Director of Information Services **PRESENTED** this Report and reported that the College continues its agreement with Qube Learning to provide provision for the unemployed in conjunction with JobCentre Plus

(contract value £200K, in two £100K tranches), following **APPROVAL** by the Board in September 2020.

Unsurprisingly, delivery has been hampered by Lockdown3. Mark Emerson said that Qube remains confident that this volume will still be achieved for 2020/21, helped by the Lockdown being released in education.

There are no other sub-contracting arrangements proposed at this stage for 2020/21.

The Report provides details of monitoring of the provision for the information of the Committee and a summary of the achievement rates achieved by learners for 2019/20 – overall 89.2% (2018/19 90.8%) - which remains very good.

The Committee was reminded that the Internal Auditors carried out an assurance assignment on subcontracting controls which resulted in **strong** assurance being given. This audit is a contractual requirement by the ESFA.

The Report was **NOTED**.

## **699. 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 3 February 2021 is highlighted in RED in the Report.

The Deputy Principal said that good progress is being made against five of the six College priorities – Priority 4 has been identified as AMBER because of uncertainties regarding award of qualifications for 2020/21 (vocational and GCSEs).

There is a lot of curriculum development activity in relation to T Levels and the Institute of Technology bid with SEC (Priority 2).

The Principal felt that Priority 3 should be graded AMBER and not GREEN as it is currently only 50% complete and there are some concerns and issues as noted elsewhere in these minutes. This was **AGREED** with the Committee believing that a cautious approach is favoured.

The Committee discussed 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.

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

## **700. RISK REPORT AND KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Vice Principal (Finance & Corporate Services) and the Director of Information Services **PRESENTED** the updated (to October 2019) **College Risk Report** in respect of curriculum related issues, together with the related **Curriculum Dartboard**, which was **NOTED**.

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

- English & Maths – arrangements for calculated grades not announced by Government (NEW RISK)
- Hospitality and Catering and Hairdressing and Beauty – attendance and progress (both) and projected achievement rates at level 1 (H&C only)
- Long term PAM vacancy in Construction
- practical teaching in part time trades
- Curriculum leadership in Engineering

There are 9 AMBER and 7 GREEN risks, which are itemised on the Dartboard. The dartboard will be expanded at the next iteration. The FE Commissioners felt this Register devoted to curriculum items was very useful and helpful in monitoring the College's risks.

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

The Chair felt that the additional information being provided on curriculum risk is a lot more useful. Elaine Oddie agreed but would like further expansion of the numbers in each risk area to provide context. Christian Norman was also pleased with the information as it is a good illustrator of areas of variability.

The Director of Information Services reported on progress to date 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 are below target. Both areas have been impacted by functional skills as the number of students studying for functional skills make up the largest cohort.

However, it is hoped that these areas will improve throughout the rest of the year so that the final outturn will be closer to target.

Mark Emerson noted that there is a considerable challenge in meeting the target of teachers meeting 5KE in observations of lessons (currently 70% against 88% forecast). Lesson Observations are discussed earlier in these minutes.

The Committee **RECEIVED** the Report.

### **701. REMOTE EDUCATION OFFER 2020-21**

The Deputy Principal **PRESENTED** a paper for information of the Committee explaining the process for delivering remote education by the College this year. It picks up the elements regarding delivery noted in the COVID 19 supplement to the College curriculum plan produced in the summer term 2020. It has been published on the College website, in accordance with DfE instructions.

The Paper provides the context for remote education by the College including during various pandemic levels. It stresses that the College delivery reflects the same principles as education delivered face to face and discusses the IT tools and equipment used in delivery for all provision types, together with supporting and developing teaching staff in remote delivery methods.

The Paper covers each main provision area, delivery arrangements and expectations for students, alongside support for students (IT devices, connectivity, SEND needs, lack of suitable study environment).

The Committee **NOTED** the Paper.

### **702. IAS REPORT ON CURRICULUM PLANNING**

The Committee was provided, for information purposes, a copy of the recently issued Internal Audit Report on Curriculum Planning (COVID 19 supplement delivery and oversight) noting the assurance given by IAS is Strong (highest level). No recommendations were raised in the Report, but one value added point regarding consolidation of curriculum planning across the College (presently no central guide but there are documents in each department) was noted.

The Committee felt that it would be useful to know what evidence was examined by the internal auditors as the Report does not refer to any evidence used – the VPFCS agreed to pass on the brief as to what was examined and how the assurance level was arrived at.

### **ACTION: VPFCS**

This Report will be considered by the Audit Committee at their next Meeting on 2 March 2021 including the point above regarding evidence base.

The Report was **NOTED**.

## **703. 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 on 3 November 2020 and these are documented on a spread sheet by the Assistant Clerk.

These included:

- Showcase Events (8-10 February 2021)
- FE Commissioners' follow-up visit (November 2020)
- Learner Voice Meeting (12 February 2021)
- Football academy Open event with Billericay FC (3 February 2021)

Barbara Vohmann was very impressed with the Showcase Events – informative, comprehensive and very professionally presented. She felt this reflected well on the College.

The Chair also reported that she had attended an AoC/ETF webinar on the FE White Paper recently and had a one-to-one meeting yesterday on MS Teams with the Deputy Principal.

## **704. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Simon Drane reported that the College is in discussion with JTL for a partnership worth around £70K for plumbing tuition using one of the rooms in the new Construction Centre. JTL are leading on this initiative – it is likely to involve around 40 learners over a three-year programme and will include alternative energies. It was noted that Havering College and

South Essex College also offer such provision. There is a high demand in mid-Essex for such provision.

There were no other matters of Any Other Business.

**705. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Tuesday 11 May 2021 at 2 pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 4.30 pm.

Signed.....Date.....