

Minutes of the Standards Committee workshop held on 24th September 2019 at 5pm

GOVERNORS PRESENT: Mary Mamik, Chair
Mark Williams
Andrew Cropley
Andrea Morrissey
Charles Heaton
Sean Lyons
Martin Rigley
Paul Frammingham
Neil McDonald

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Maxine Bagshaw, Clerk to the Corporation
Sue Martin, Interim Vice Principal C&Q
Diane Booth, Head of Quality and Standards
Louise Knott, Vice Principal
Philip Elliott, external trainer/facilitator (Education Improvement Consultant and practicing Ofsted inspector)

ACTION by whom	DATE by when

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Steve Sutton, Jane Hawksford and Jen Hope.

2 SAR TRAINING

Attendees should note that the draft SAR circulated was a very early draft version and would not normally be presented at such an early stage without data to inform it.

Philip Elliott was welcomed to the meeting and it was explained that he is a practicing Ofsted inspector who has been engaged to support Governors in terms of their understanding of the SAR process, and particularly their role in terms of independent scrutiny and challenge. He confirmed that, in the time available, his view is that the most useful way to spend the opportunity is to look at the draft SAR and consider exploratory questions that governors would want to ask. He confirmed that he was conscious that the sector now has a new framework and that the focus of this will be curriculum intent and impact, and that this has to be a key consideration for governors when looking at the SAR and the quality improvement plan (QIP) that is then developed.

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He advised that, in this session, he would adopt the role of an inspector so that everyone present could then see the types of questions asked and issues identified, as this would hopefully allow the college to be reflective in relation to the draft document prepared for this meeting.

In terms of the approach key matters noted were:

- The Board will need to critically assess and review the overall judgements on page 1 in terms of strengths and areas for improvement.
- Governors will need to look at the effectiveness of leadership and management, and part and parcel of this is the governance arrangements. He noted that the draft SAR gives an 'effective' judgement in relation to this and explained that it is important to test and be able to evidence this. Governors present explained the changes that have taken place in the period September 2018 to September 2019, particularly the improvement in the skill set of governors and how the whole Board and the senior team has changed. Philip Elliott indicated that he could see from the SAR that there have been positive financial impacts following the changes in governance; however, there is a need to explore other aspects of impact, particularly regarding curriculum and quality, to see if these can also be evidenced.
- He noted that there was a reference in the SAR to the college having a 'relevant' curriculum offer; he asked staff and governors to explain how they are assured in relation to this and the process for determining 'relevant'. Governors and staff confirmed that this comment was based upon a complete review of the curriculum, particularly the withdrawal of remote provision (specifically apprenticeships). It was explained that, historically, 60%-70% of provision was provided through partners and subcontracts. Everyone explained that the college had worked really hard to address this.
- Philip Elliott asked for further clarification in relation to the curriculum that is not apprenticeships. It was explained that the college has managed to retain the full breadth of provision despite challenging financial times. It was confirmed that the college purposely made the decision not to strip out areas to save money, and that this is very much considered as a strength. It was confirmed that the college is also moving more towards technical qualifications, which is aligned to sector developments. There are some areas of provision that have expanded in response to demand: the example given was Animal Care.
- Philip Elliott questioned and challenged whether performance was influential in terms of curriculum development. It was explained that this was a consideration in some areas, but that in the main it was not a determining factor.
- Philip Elliott then invited governors to summarise their view of the strengths of the college. Examples given were:
 - a) Facilities

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- b) The breadth of the course offering, which meets the needs of the community.
 - c) High education reputation. It was explained that the college has seen an increase in student numbers, excluding HE, over a 2-year period, despite the turbulence.
 - d) Staff resilience. It was explained that staff are resilient and loyal to the college, but three significant restructures led to the suspension of observations. As a product of this, many elements of staff support were removed. This had an unavoidable impact on teaching and learning and, consequently, results. In relation to this point, governors indicated that, whilst there was no concrete evidence to refer to, it was certainly the case that academic staff feel that the turbulence did have an impact in year and that staff had to work hard to mitigate and manage. An example given was the decision taken to reduce the number of hours provided for maths and English GCSE. This was a financially driven decision and may have impacted upon outcomes. A challenge from Philip Elliott was that governors will need to know specific data in relation to this, and to test the resilience of the curriculum.
- Philip Elliott invited governors to describe progression. It was confirmed that progression, if it includes the next level of the course and to employment, shows a good picture. It was reiterated that governors will be expected to know detailed data on this. Clarity was provided in terms of curriculum intent; this includes:
 - a) Learners' progression through the levels
 - b) Supporting learners into work
 - c) Doing the best that the college can for them.
 A challenge from Philip Elliott was that what he is not getting from the draft document is the impact, i.e. the numbers and the percentages. An example given was in relation to key strength 6: in his view this needs to be backed up by numbers and statistics. Also, in relation to key strength 7, governors will need to know exactly 'how many'. He expressed the view that, if the college does not state the statistics within the strengths paragraph, it will put the college on the back foot in terms of answering questions that will be inevitable.
 - Philip Elliott then made reference to the areas identified for improvement, and he made the observation that included within there is a reference to progression. He questioned whether it was appropriate to describe it as a strength and area for improvement. He expressed the view that it was important to clearly define where the strengths are if they are in specific areas only, so that there is clarity provided. It was confirmed that improvement progression targets exist, particularly to level 4, and that the college's strength in terms of progression lies mainly in community learning.
 - Philip Elliott questioned whether governors have KPIs which they

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monitor; it was confirmed that they do and that they are monitored at each Board and some Committee meetings in greater detail. Examples given were:

- a) Reducing the number of students outside of the catchment area (the locality agenda) and it was explained that the college has achieved this.
- b) Attendance
- c) Progress towards applied general qualifications
- d) Teaching and learning

It was explained that 17/18 was a particularly strong year for performance and that KPIs for 18/19 were based upon improvements on this. 18/19 has been a more challenging year and this will have meant that many KPIs were not achieved. Assurance was given that KPIs are regularly monitored but, in terms of curriculum and quality matters, it was acknowledged that governors' main focus for 18/19 was on apprenticeship provision, and a whole range of actions were taken to address the known issues.

- In terms of the overall judgements, Philip Elliott referred to the fact that apprenticeships is self-assessed as 'inadequate' and, because of this, the college will need to put forward a clear explanation as to the 'what, the when and the how'.
- In terms of 16-19 study programmes, Philip Elliott questioned whether there is evidence of managers being held to account. It was confirmed that, in 18/19, debate centred around attendance as, by and large, retention was okay. The Board confirmed that the focus for the year regarding attendance was on English and maths and the gaps seen between this and the vocational provision.
- Philip Elliott questioned whether Heads make achievement predictions throughout the year. It was confirmed that they do and that the college has five progress review points. The college undertakes an analysis of whether students are 'working at grade' rather than a predicted outcome for the year. It was confirmed that the May 2019 data dashboard shows likely achievement. A question to the Board was how aligned the college was in terms of the actual results: a review of this will allow the Board to assess how confident they can be in terms of the college's processes for predictions and accuracy. Overall predictions for overall achievement have not been presented to the Board.
- Governors and staff acknowledged that the results for maths and English GCSEs were much lower than they were hoping for, and it was acknowledged that Ofsted will challenge and question the strategy to reduce the number of hours provided for maths and English. A challenge to the Board was whether the college can now show good progress in relation to those students remaining, as this may be a mitigating factor.
- There is reference in the SAR to 'progress scores'; Philip Elliott asked for clarification as to what exactly this means. It was

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explained that this is the value added and is assessed on the basis of how students are working towards their aspirational targets. This is considered in terms of where students are at the five review points, and the college then assesses whether interventions are required. All felt that the college has good systems for monitoring in place, however, it is important to then show the actions and impacts following the reviews undertaken.

- A restated challenge to the Board was the importance of the accuracy of predictions and how governors know which areas are and aren't accurate. It was confirmed that two areas which were particularly accurate in terms of their predictions were Childcare and Technical qualifications.
- Philip Elliott asked whether the college has a KPI in relation to value added, and it was confirmed that it does.
- Line 7 under the heading 'areas for improvement' refers to the 'coaching model'; Philip Elliott asked for a further explanation on this. It was confirmed that there is a need to put some support in place for teachers to improve outcomes. This being the case, it will be important to show a CPD plan and a set of competencies attached to this. It was explained that this was to address the fact that teaching in some areas is not to aspirational grades.
- Philip Elliott expressed the view that a significant focus for Ofsted on their next visit will be to consider how curriculum meets local needs and priorities; this will include progression into employment. Governors indicated that there were a number of factors which contribute to decisions; these include:
 - a) The D2N2 LEP having eight priority sectors
 - b) Other colleges in the area being better able to serve on certain aspects. That being said, the college does focus on priorities, including:
 - 1) Robotics and automation
 - 2) Construction
 - 3) Digital
 - 4) Engineering
- A question and challenge from Philip Elliott was to understand the proportion of students who progress into employment for which they have been trained by the college.
- The workshop then went on to review and consider governance and their specific impact upon teaching and learning and on learners. Governors and staff expressed the view that in 18/19 there was a clear focus on solvency and that this did take up a significant amount of Board time. Governors worked hard to strengthen the role of the Standards Committee whilst the full Board focused on solvency. That being said, there is now an acknowledged need, as finances have stabilised, for the whole Board to focus on curriculum and quality. Philip Elliott agreed with this view and expressed an opinion that the focus for the Board now has to be curriculum and quality, and that Governors have to hold managers to account for performance. It was acknowledged by all that there is a need to shift the emphasis,

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and Philip Elliott indicated that this may require looking at governors', skills as they may need to be different. It was explained that additional governor recruitment has recently taken place, with a view to increasing FE/education experience on the Board.

- A challenge from Philip Elliott was to ensure that KPIs established are based upon an accurate starting position.
- The group then discussed the inspection framework, and it was acknowledged that inspectors tend to be more interested in performance rather than financial viability. Governors indicated that, as 18/19 was a period of significant change and turbulence, they were really hoping that Ofsted wouldn't inspect on the 18/19 position solely but would instead look at what the college is doing in 19/20, having dealt with some significant issues in the prior year.
- It was acknowledged that the college will need to be able to show that current learners are showing significant progress and that the college will need to present a compelling case that 19/20 will be an improved position. It is important not to focus solely on predictions as they are one part of the story of the learner journey. The Increase in the delivery of technical qualifications has led to a decline in student achievement due to external examinations making up a large part of the result.
- It was acknowledged by all that the next inspection will follow a particular process, including:
 - a) Where we are now
 - b) The position to be backed up with facts
 - c) Being open on where there are areas to improve
- Governors questioned the average delivery time for maths and English in the sector. It was explained that it is 3 hours per week for GCSE and 1.5 hours for functional skills. In 18/19, the college went down to 2 hours for GCSE from 4, and therefore went from above average to below. However, the position has now changed and the college is back at the national average delivery rate. Governors present confirmed that the decision to reduce the delivery hours was heavily discussed at Board and the risks were known, but that it was thought that the impact could be mitigated. Unfortunately, the college subsequently had to go through three rounds of restructure, which were not anticipated at the point that this decision was made. The observation was made that there is also a two-year trend of the starting points for students being lower than previous years. This means that each year the college has had a steeper hill to climb just to maintain its position.
- All agreed that the discussion with inspectors needs to be on progression and not outcomes. There needs to be a coherent narrative regarding predictions and their accuracy and what has/is being done to address any known issues. A challenge from Philip Elliott is that the SAR has got to be linked to measurable lines of traceability back to the data.

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- The Principal confirmed that there has been some investment made in relation to additional maths and English staff already this term. It was also noted that link governors for this year, where appropriate, now have sector-relevant experience for their link area.
- All agreed that it was important to be able to show what has been done to make the required steps forward.

Philip Elliott was thanked for his very informative session and, in relation to the draft document provided, it was agreed that governors would provide feedback comments to the Clerk outside the meeting. The focus needs to be on:

- a) What do we know?
- b) Why did we take certain actions?
- c) What was the impact?

It was agreed that comments would be provided to the Clerk by Tuesday 1st October 2019.

Governors all agreed that the session had been very useful in terms of phrases to challenge and also the need to be able to evidence any comments and assertions made.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

3

HE SED 2018/19

The Vice Principal presented this early draft of the document and explained that it was in a different format to the FE SAR: this is because it is expected by HEFCE and the OfS. There were a number of key matters brought to governors' attention;

- This is the very earliest that the college has ever produced this document, therefore it should be considered as a very early draft and a starting point for discussions only.
- The Quality Code has changed this year.
- The college is expecting/anticipating a QAA visit this year.
- QAA and Ofsted take a very different approach. QAA take a more 'professional conversation' approach.
- Only crossover areas between Ofsted and QAA are:
 - a) Apprenticeship provision
 - b) Safeguarding
- The college will receive more notice from QAA than Ofsted. Potentially the college will receive notification 6 weeks before a visit.

In terms of reviewing the SED, it was explained that governors will need to take a similar approach to that discussed earlier in relation to the SAR in terms of a) evidence & b) impact.

What governors and the college will need to look at are

- a) Clear strengths,

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- b) Areas that are below sector norms and need to be developed, and
- c) Areas for enhancement.

It was agreed that governors would be invited to provide feedback over the next two weeks, i.e. on or before the 8th October 2019. It was confirmed that the Clerk would email all governors outside of the meeting. Particular areas of focus for QAA will be:

- Access
- Admission process
- Value for money
- Contingency plans
- Progression/continuation

The Vice Principal confirmed that she would summarise the UK Quality Code which sets out the criteria to be considered. She will also share a copy of the college's current Access and Participation Plan.

In terms of general discussion, she explained that achievement is calculated differently for FE and HE. The HE survey results for 18/19 were particularly discussed and, whilst at sector benchmarks, they were a decline on the previous year with that year being an exceptional year.

In terms of the QAA process, they will want to see at least one governor. The Vice Principal expressed the view that it would be beneficial to have a HE link governor or a Standards Committee co-optee who has HE experience.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

4 **ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT 2018/19**

The Vice Principal presented her detailed report and indicated that a large part of the content had been covered in the governor training session last week. She indicated that the Committee has not yet seen the Safeguarding Development Plan for 19/20 and that this will be presented to the next meeting. She confirmed that there are a number of areas for focus/improvement for 19/20 and these include:

- Induction processes for agency members of staff
- Peer mentoring networks amongst students, for example LAC learners
- Working with Nottinghamshire County Council regarding LAC learners who reach the age of 18 and then 'drop off' the support systems.

As an overview she confirmed that the college was continuing to see a rise in the complexity of issues presented. On a positive note, she advised that the provision of transition information this year had improved in relation to vulnerable students. The college's work with agencies in this regard seems to have paid dividends. There has just been

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one student who attended this year with an unknown set of complex issues; this position is much reduced from the start of the 18/19 academic year.

AGREED: to note the content of the report provided.

5 **AOB**

There were no items of additional business.

6 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The Clerk confirmed that the next scheduled meeting was Wednesday 20th November 2019 at 5.30pm.

Meeting closed at 6.30pm.

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