

CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee Held at 5.00 p.m. on Thursday, 9th October 2008 in T11, Crawley Campus.

Membership: Martin Delbridge (Chair)*, Clive Behagg, Alan Morris, Anne Parkinson, Mark Read*, Ramesh Shingadia*, James Rivière, and Russell Strutt*.

Also present: Sue Dare, Adrian Dodwell, Maureen Kilminster and Nick Whitley (Clerk) and, for part of the meeting, Alison Moore.

* = present

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Clive Behagg, Alan Morris and Anne Parkinson.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 24th JUNE 2008

3. The minutes were signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

4. There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

EVERY CHILD MATTERS AND CHILD PROTECTION AGENDA

5. The Committee received a detailed presentation from Alison Moore on the arrangements in place to promote the welfare and safety of our Under 18 year old students; a copy of the PowerPoint presentation is attached to these minutes.
6. It was clear that there was a strong commitment towards promoting the welfare of its learners throughout the College, with trained experts within the Learner Support Services, There was a particular responsibility for those who were more vulnerable, either because of their age or special needs they may have.
7. The College was shown to be well linked in to the wider support services; this had been confirmed by OFSTED when it carried out an area inspection of West Sussex County Council; however that inspection had found that communication to the College about its learners who were in the care of the Local Authority could be improved. This was both to identify who they were and to ensure their particular needs were known and supported. The success rates for children in care gave cause for concern; because they were often not identified and there was often no-one to liaise with, their particular needs could not be addressed as well as they should. Even Connexions did not necessarily know who they were. A national initiative, to create an online database as a quick way for a practitioner to find out who else was working with the same child or young person, was in development, but not yet available.
8. Alison Moore also informed the meeting about the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) that had been developed to ensure a consistency of approach by all agencies dealing with child protection issues; although College staff were unlikely ever to be required to take a lead role for a vulnerable child, they needed to be trained as they could be asked to participate in case conferences.

9. The Committee were then given an insight into the type of concerns dealt with by the College's support services as a matter of routine. The College team had been strengthened by the services of a Community Support Officer from the police force, who was working on the Crawley campus for part of the week; he had been given a staff Identity card and had already become involved with a number of aspects of student support, including Security.
10. Alison Moore was asked how the effectiveness of Student Support could be measured; she responded that it was not straightforward, particularly since the impact of her team was part of a much wider range of interaction with the students. One of the important feedback mechanisms was surveying student satisfaction, and there was also a link with success rates. Students were asked routinely to complete a specific quality feedback questionnaire for her team's services, and the College had been awarded MATRIX accreditation. She confirmed that attendance rates were another measure, and advised that the attendance rate had improved by 3 percentage points as a result of concerted action.
11. She was asked what single change she would make if she were given an unlimited budget; her response was that, to some extent, demand from students for general support would rise to whatever level of resource was offered; however, what she would like to do, would be to increase the amount of time available from the trained counsellors working for the College.
12. Sue Dare reminded the Committee of the Machinery of Government changes, whereby the responsibility for funding and planning the College's Under 19 work would transfer to the Local Authority; it remained to be seen whether this would give the College access to some of the extended services that schools could access on behalf of their students.
13. **It was agreed that it would be very useful if all Corporation Members received this presentation.**

Alison Moore left the meeting at 6 15 p.m.

REPORT ON ACHIEVEMENTS

14. The Clerk laid round the report on achievements of its 14-16 learners, which Adrian Dodwell went through in some detail. He drew the Committee's attention to the partial information for 2007/2008. The success rate was showing at 84%, but progression had only been recorded in a minority of cases. In reality, many of the young people had progressed to programmes within the College.
15. Adrian Dodwell confirmed that the students on these Link Courses tended to be young people who had difficulty following the full National Curriculum and spent one day a week in College; the exception was the Young Apprenticeship programme, where two days a week were spent in College. These Level 2 courses tended to attract more talented young people. The College was developing a number of the new diplomas in partnership with schools; however the schools considered that the Level 1 qualifications offered through the Link programmes run by the College were more appropriate for their pupils than the Level 1 diploma, mainly because the latter was so much more theoretical in nature.
16. Sue Dare then introduced the A' Level results; these had been scrutinised in detail by the Local Community Board (LCB).
17. Sue Dare stated that the College was pleased with the overall pass rate for A' Levels: they were well above the national average for Sixth Form Colleges both at AS and A2 level. The proportion of A and B grades had been maintained above the national average, however it had dipped below the previous year's rate. This was likely to have a negative impact on the value-added measures.

18. The College had put in place a more robust system for individual target-setting, whereby each student would be given a minimum grade target plus an aspirational grade to strive for; this would assist teachers to ensure that all students were stretched to achieve their full potential.
19. The Committee considered certain specific subjects that were showing a dip in results, and discussed the underlying reasons; however it was difficult to make a full evaluation of the results without the added value scores, which were not yet available.
20. A question for the Corporation to address was whether the level of entry qualifications for the more demanding A-Level subjects should be raised, to ensure that the proportion of A and B grades achieved reflected well an outstanding college. The Principal indicated that some of the teaching staff would argue in favour of doing so. Both the Principal and the Chair of the Committee stated, however, that they would be against such a development, which would undermine the inclusive ethos of the College and run counter to its mission.
21. It was also pointed out that a College should not be judged by its academic results alone, but by the wider quality of the student experience.
22. It was noted that the results shown for the Brighton Institute of Modern Music (BIMM) were partial; until all the results were available and the value-added scores known, it was not possible to judge whether the outcome was good or not. There were further achievements coming in for these students that had not yet been included in the records.
23. **It was agreed that, in future, detailed discussion of the A-level results should be taken at the LCB and a summary report of the LCB's findings presented to the Committee, to avoid duplication.**
24. The Work Based Learning (WBL) success rates were reviewed; they were extremely pleasing and showed significant improvement over previous years.
25. It was noted that the timely completion success rates were particularly pleasing; the College's results were significantly above the National Benchmarks for timely completion, in all categories of apprenticeship. The overall success rate for all apprenticeships was also above the national average, however this masked the one set of results that was broadly in line with the national average, namely the 16 – 18 apprenticeships. These were well above the national average for timely completion, however.
26. It was noted that the success rates were grouped by cohort; these cohorts included apprentices who may have left one, two or three years ago. The total number of students whose achievements were included in the table of results was about 200, out of a total number of apprentices of some 700.

ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

27. Sue Dare took the meeting through the reports; she highlighted the overall improvement in attendance. She drew attention to the slight drop in retention rates for the year, by 1%. At the last Committee meeting she had stated that it was not known whether this drop was because of more timely reporting of withdrawals or indicative of a real drop; unfortunately it had proved to be the latter. The figures should be seen in the context of the College having a high overall retention rate; it was expected that it would prove still to be above the national average when those figures became available.
28. Some aspects of the programmes delivered at Crawley and Associated Campuses, particularly the Level 2 courses, were continuing to present challenges. The relatively poor attendance and retention rates on the Access to Higher Education Course were highlighted; this represented a continuing trend and was attributable to the fact that the mature students on the course tended to have conflicting responsibilities arising from their life outside the

College. The Access course had been redesigned to run on 2 days only, in a more focussed way, to address this; the students had welcomed this change.

29. The good retention rate for key Skills (overall 80%) was also highlighted.

SELF ASSESSMENT PROGRESS AND INSPECTION PREPARATION

30. Sue Dare advised that the Self Assessment process was on track; she had spent the whole day in Panels reviewing 5 of the Faculties' initial judgements; Haywards Heath Campus had been reviewed the previous week.
31. A full draft Self Assessment report (SAR) would be prepared during November, for review at the next Committee meeting. The Principal advised that he wanted to convene a Review Panel for Leadership and management in November, along the lines of the peer review carried out for the 2007 SAR; all Members of the Committee would be invited to participate.
32. Sue Dare pointed out that the Inspectors would be in possession of last year's SAR; if they were due to inspect the College before the current year's SAR had been approved and loaded onto the Gateway, they would be given early sight of the draft in preparation.

LINK MEMBER SCHEME

33. The Chair of the Committee advised that the Burgess Hill and Haywards Heath LCB had reviewed the revised protocol and had approved it without amendment. He hoped that the Scheme and Protocol would now be adopted by Corporation Members for themselves.
34. **The revised Protocol for the Link Member Scheme was noted.**

CURRICULUM PLANNING FOR 2008/2009

35. The Principal introduced this item, drawing attention to the previously circulated report. There would ultimately be 14 vocational diplomas and they were being phased in over the period from now until 2013. The numbered Gateways represented the phasing of their development. He confirmed that the College was leading on several diplomas within Area C. As had been said earlier, schools were, in general, not interested in Level 1 of the diplomas, seeing it as too theoretical; the only Level 1 diploma that any school wished to engage with was in engineering, to be run at Sackville School in East Grinstead.
36. The government had not approved any diplomas to start in this area for September 2008; in the light of initial experience, this was beneficial. The approved schemes for West Sussex had only enrolled 30 learners across the county, 1 cohort in Worthing and another in Chichester. There was national concern about the low take-up of diplomas; however the schools in Area C were now showing significant interest in developing all but the Level 1. The roll-out plans for Area C were discussed.
37. The overall provision for 16-19 year-olds, included within the prospectus, was noted.
38. Maureen Kilminster circulated a report showing the College apprenticeship and Train to gain provision; she highlighted the range of qualifications that was being developed to meet employers' needs, particularly under the Train to Gain banner. Local employer needs and demand was being monitored regularly to ensure the curriculum broadened to respond to new markets.

FORMAL REPORT OF THE INTEGRATED QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (IQER)

39. Maureen Kilminster introduced the report, which was the formal report of the developmental review (part of the inspection regime for Higher Education (HE)) that had been reported orally

to the last meeting. She explained that there were three grades of recommendation; the reviewers had made no essential recommendations, the most negative grade. She confirmed that the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) had approved the Action Plan. The second stage, the summative review, would be carried out in June 2009; unlike the developmental report, it would be published. It would cover a wider range of Higher Education (HE) courses. The cycle of reviews (inspection) was four yearly.

40. The Committee expressed concern at yet another form of external inspection and oversight of the activity of the College, with all the attendant cost and disruption. Maureen Kilminster pointed out that she and Alan Hynes had been part of the team carrying out the review (for which they had undergone training); as a result the exercise had proved a useful learning exercise for the College.

FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE

41. Maureen Kilminster introduced the Employer Responsiveness report, which was an extensive analysis of a survey of employers carried out by the College. It revealed a year on year improvement in the College's responsiveness. She confirmed that the action points that had been identified were being addressed. The main areas for improvement that employers had commented upon related to communication: mainly asking for improvements to the feedback on their employees' progress.
42. The Committee was pleased to note that companies had commented on the positive impact of the training on their employees; Maureen Kilminster stated that work was continuing to identify impact measures for this.
43. Under the Framework for Excellence arrangements, The LSC would be carrying out a survey of those employers who had sent employees to be trained by the College; unfortunately the results would not be available in time to be included in the SAR.
44. Maureen Kilminster then introduced the results of a national survey of students in Higher Education (HE); the results for Central Sussex College revealed a 91% satisfaction level and placed the College seventh among Further Education Colleges providing HE courses. The Committee also reviewed the results of the College's own learner survey.
45. Sue Dare explained that this was used as part of a triangulation of how good the College really is. The three elements of the triangle were: success rates and attendance, teaching and learning, and students' views. It was not surprising that the areas of the College that had been graded 3 in last year's SAR were the ones with the below average scores. She pointed out that the individual faculties had deliberately not been identified by name; however all the Directors and the Inspection Preparation Group was in possession of the information. Detailed feedback was given to course teams and used in appraisal of individual teachers; this was not shared with senior managers.
46. The LSC would be carrying out an on-line survey of students' views; this would be used by them for the Framework for Excellence evaluation.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY REVIEW

47. The Principal introduced the report, which focussed on Equality & Diversity (E&D) from the learners' perspective. He stated that there were very few gender-related issues and therefore the report concentrated on race and disability, to assess whether there had been movement on the issues identified the previous year.
48. Section 1, which addressed Race Equality, showed a three year improving trend in success rates; once the full information was available for 2007/2008 the true current position could be assessed. Essentially the two main impact measures, access to learning and success were

both positive. One of the actions that had contributed especially was improved language support for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students.

49. The College took considerable care to ensure its prospectuses gave a positive image of E&D and that it complied well with the E&D standards for its web-site. The whole approach to recruitment and admission of students had been closely scrutinised, including by focus groups of students organised by the College's E&D Officer.
50. The second section focussed on disability; it was pleasing to see that the numbers and proportion of students declaring a disability had increased. The % of starts was in line with the national expectation that some 20% of students would have disabilities. It was also encouraging that the success rate for learners with disabilities was close to the College average. However, one area for concern was to ensure appropriate and effective progression opportunities for those learners.

UNIVERSITY CENTRE CRAWLEY PROGRESS REPORT

51. The Clerk circulated copies of the feasibility report.
52. The Principal highlighted key elements within the feasibility report, which had been commissioned by SEEDA (South East England Development Agency). These included the very high job growth and expansion of business in the area, and that the area was a strong performer in the knowledge economy – although it could do better still. It was hindered by the low skill level of the general workforce. The participation level in Higher Education (HE) in the Crawley area was markedly below the norm; very few young people from the area progressed into HE. This correlated with there being a low skills base as well.
53. He pointed out that the calculation of the latent demand and needs of business was estimated to equate to 2000 HE students per year – considerably higher than the 500 estimated by the Government for its initiative for 20 new University Centres. It would be necessary to establish that these were new students, and not displaced from other H E institutions.
54. CADIA (the Crawley and District Industrial Association) was carrying out further work to confirm the employer requirements and the University of Brighton was the lead organisation taking this forward. The University had submitted an expression of interest to HEFCE for the new University Centre initiative and were preparing a bid for submission in the spring.
55. The estimated cost in the feasibility study for refurbishing the Tower Block was £12m; this did not include the cost of buying the premises. Although the consultants had stated that they expected the LSC to donate the building, the Principal stated that he had stressed that the College would be selling the land and buildings and would require payment for them. The value of that sale would have to be added to the consultants' figures. It would still represent a very economical means of establishing a University Centre in Crawley. There was strong support for the proposition from SEEDA and the Regional LSC.
56. The Principal drew attention to the fact that the College's Senior Leadership Team was stretched with all the current and increasing external liaison and development initiatives, ranging from 14 – 19 planning, working with schools and the Local Authority, through Work Based Learning and skills training to the University Centre.
57. It was considered that there needed to be a Corporation discussion as to the way forward, particularly where the line should be drawn in terms of external engagement, or what additional resources should or could be provided to enable the Senior Team to fulfil its responsibilities effectively.

REVIEW OF ACADEMIC YEAR 2007/2008 AND ASSESSMENT OF CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE

58. Denise Redford was thanked for her work in drawing the review together.
59. The low attendance rate was noted with concern; however there were a number of Members of the Committee who had been unable to attend meetings because of other commitments, including Alan Morris who had been seconded abroad for almost the whole of the year. The attendance rate was therefore unavoidably low and the Chair thanked those members of the Committee who had managed to attend regularly.
60. **It was agreed that Members of the Committee should send the Clerk their completed forms, so that he could prepare a composite report for the next meeting of the Committee**

REVIEW OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

61. The following changes were proposed to the Terms of Reference:
 - To add:
 - 3.8 - "To monitor the Link Member Scheme"
 - 3.9 - "To review annually the Student's Association Activities"
 - To remove:
 - 3.14 - "Receive an Annual Report of the evaluation of the College's Employer Services against the A4B standards".
62. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.