

## CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

### Minutes of a meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee Held at 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> October 2009 in T11, Crawley Campus.

**Membership:** Clive Behagg (Chair)\*, Leslie Edwards\*, Laura Howes, Anne Parkinson, Mark Read\*, Ramesh Shingadia, and Russell Strutt\*.

**Also present:** John Peel, Sue Dare, Adrian Dodwell, Maureen Kilminster and Nick Whitley (Clerk).

\* = present

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Anne Parkinson and Ramesh Shingadia.

#### DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. Clive Behagg declared an interest in respect of items 4 (i) and 12, as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Chichester.

#### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 25<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2009

3. The minutes were signed as a correct record.

#### MATTERS ARISING

4. **Attendance Report layout/24:** It was noted that a copy of the attendance report including the requested additional column was being tabled. It was not possible to identify the precise number of separate learners involved, as each learner was included on a number of separate registers; the aggregate number of possible attendance marks and the corresponding number of actual attendance marks had therefore been used.
5. **Proposed University Centre:** The Committee was advised that the University Centre Crawley proposals had been included in the short-list of six of the 23 submissions to set up new University Centres. A letter from the Regional Consultant to the Vice Chancellor of the University of Brighton was tabled. In it he explained that the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) had no money to fund the new Centres before the next government spending round (2011-2014) and that no further work to develop the business case should be carried out before then. It was concluded that there would be merit in asking each of the College's partner institution to allocate a small number of their places for the use of the College to grow its Higher Education (HE) provision in the meantime. It was, however, acknowledged that University places were currently at a premium, and elsewhere in the country Universities were withdrawing from partnership arrangements.
6. **Framework for Excellence (FfE)/53:** Sue Dare advised the Committee that a new round of student surveys was beginning. A number of actions had been put in place to prepare for this, in the light of the previous year's experience. Although there were differences in the methodology and timing of the FfE survey compared with the College's own survey of learners (which was carried out later in the year), the underlying messages were the same. It was suggested that for "customer" surveys to be used effectively, they should be carried out on a continuous rolling sample basis, so that the messages could be responded to quickly. The College's challenge on the calculation and interpretation of success rates had not been satisfactorily resolved, but the affected FfE grade was not being published. The aggregate results had been published at a national level; a Radio 4 Analysis Programme had been

broadcast drawing on them, taking a (negative) theme that young people were being allowed to study whatever they wanted regardless of whether there were enough jobs for them to progress to, instead of being guided towards qualifications with employment potential. As far as employer surveys were concerned, the College would not be party to the national FfE arrangements, because it had gained TQS accreditation. This meant that it would automatically be graded outstanding in employer responsiveness.

## **SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT PROGRESS**

7. Sue Dare confirmed that the Self Assessment process was proceeding according to plan. All the course teams had carried out their reviews during June and July and the outcomes had been carried forward into the Faculties/Curriculum Areas. The internal scrutiny panels were scheduled to meet over the coming three weeks to test and challenge grades as necessary (down or up).
8. The College was using the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) questions that were used in the inspection, for the sake of continuity; however, next year the College would need to adopt the new Framework that OFSTED introduced at the beginning of the academic year.
9. **It was agreed that the differences would be reviewed at the next Committee meeting.**
10. Sue Dare advised that there were some 2000 results that were not yet known, or had not yet been recorded. This was a significant number and until these were known, the College-wide success rates could not be determined. It was therefore not known whether the targets would be met or not.
11. The picture was complicated by the transfer of a significant number of NVQ qualifications from Further Education (FE) funded to Work Based Learning (WBL) funded. These were qualifications that learners had started in previous years, when it had been correct to include them within the FE funded provision. It was not possible to change the prior year funding type, but they had to be recorded under WBL currently. Thus they were recorded as starting a qualification but not completing it successfully. This would depress the overall success rates.
12. The Executive agreed to prepare a manual adjustment to the figures for the Committee's benefit and use in the SAR; however it may not be possible to do this for the externally published data.
13. **The report was noted.**

## **ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION**

14. Sue Dare laid round the revised table referred to under Matters Arising; the attendance figures for 2008/2009 were reviewed. The attendance of full-time learners met target, but that of part-time learners, mainly adult, was below target, so that overall attendance was 1% below target, at 84%.
15. It was more difficult to raise part-time attendance because of the range of external factors affecting it; however a more focussed approach had been introduced in the current year. For example, one of the issues affecting many Skills for Life learners was childcare; the time-table for their courses had been adjusted this year to start at 9.30 a.m. rather than 9.00 a.m.
16. Foundation Learning had a lower than average attendance rate; however this was primarily due to the higher incidence of sickness. The learners had an extremely strong commitment to attending if they were physically well enough to.
17. It was confirmed that the attendance figures were used routinely. An overall Faculty or College-level picture could mask unusually bad or good patterns of attendance; where

individual courses revealed abnormal patterns of attendance, these were investigated and appropriate actions taken.

18. Retention remained higher than average for the sector. Generally within the sector there was a strong correlation between retention and achievement; however for Central Sussex College the link was closer between attendance and achievement. This was confirmed anecdotally by Leslie Edwards, from his experience.
19. It was noted that a focus on raising attendance for Construction would have the greatest impact on the College averages.
20. **The report was noted.**

### **REPORT ON ACHIEVEMENTS**

21. It was noted that the achievement rate had risen from 72% to 73% since the report had been despatched; however it needed to rise to 91% to reach target. Until the missing 2000 outcomes were known, it was not possible to assess whether the College was on track or not. The transfer of NVQs from FE-funded to WBL affected the achievement rate as well as the retention rate, and would therefore also need a manual adjustment. The Self Assessment Report, which would be considered at the next Committee meeting, would give a clearer picture.
22. The WBL achievement rate, which had not been included in the table of results, currently stood at 65%; there were still a number of results that were being chased up on an individual learner level. There was still one month before the relevant claim period would close. The Train to Gain rate was similar.
23. The Committee asked that the different years, shown for comparison on the table of achievements, be colour coded to make reading the table easier.

### **DEVELOPMENT PLAN TARGETS**

24. Sue Dare introduced the report, pointing out that the table summarised the position to date. For example, the Success Rate for Key Skills had not yet been included.
25. She advised that the College was reasonably pleased with the progress against targets, notwithstanding some gaps in information. The post-inspection dip in results, which many Colleges experienced in their inspection year, did not seem significant for Central Sussex College.
26. The record of teaching observations included observations of teachers in training for the first time. As had been predicted, this had resulted in a lowering of the overall percentage of good and better grades; this in turn had a disproportionate impact on the Crawley and Associated campuses (CAC). The main reason for this related to the vocational curriculum, because of the need to ensure the College had staff with up to date industrial experience. These staff were often new to the teaching profession and had to be trained "on the job".

**NB** 45 of the 275 CAC observees were on a teacher training programme at the College. Their profile of grades was lower than the average (53% were judged to be Good or better). If their grades are removed the Good or better is 79% for the remainder. This is higher than the 76% overall and 1% less than the previous year's 80% for the college.

27. It was somewhat disappointing that there was little improvement in the percentage of outstanding teaching observations; that may be due (at least in part) to the focus on raising the standards of those teachers who were satisfactory (or inadequate).
28. Training had now been started to ensure that all teaching staff were aware of what constituted excellence in teaching.

29. **The report was noted.**

#### **LEARNER SATISFACTION SURVEYS**

30. Sue Dare introduced the report, which addressed both details from the FfE learner survey and the College's own survey. She drew attention to the different charts that had been included, pointing out that the charts comparing the two surveys had been drawn from answers to similar, but not identical questions.
31. The results, though not identical, showed a good fit in respect of the areas of concern for the College. Learners considered that the College could improve its responsiveness; this was in line with the feedback from previous surveys. The Committee was advised that the College's Learner Involvement Strategy had been developed to address this issue; however it was clear that there was some way to go in embedding it throughout the organisation. Analysis of the College's survey suggested that some Faculties were good at involving learners, but others less so. Steps were being taken to raise the level of responsiveness across the board.
32. It was noted that the FfE survey had a prescribed format to sample all types of learners; fewer learners were involved in total than in the College's survey. The latter was also carried out later in the year. The fact that the FfE survey was carried out during the first half of the year may explain in part why the College scored relatively poorly on advice about progression opportunities following the end of the course.
33. It was suggested that there was scope to introduce progression advice and guidance earlier in the year, in addition to the end of course support currently provided; this could help improve the responses to the external survey. It was evident that the FfE survey would in future have a very significant impact on the College's reputation, and as such should be taken very seriously.
34. Leslie Edwards commented that he and other students had found the FfE survey frustrating to complete; it was not user friendly.
35. The importance of feeding back the results of the surveys to the learners was stressed. It was recognised that some of the information would not be available until after the students who had completed the surveys had left the College; nevertheless it was important to let the subsequent year's students know what was said and what was done about it, so that they would consider the survey a worthwhile exercise.
36. It was confirmed that the data was used to inform management, and also to inform the SAR.
37. **The report was noted.**

#### **LESSON OBSERVATION SCHEME DEVELOPMENTS**

38. The Principal gave a progress report on the developments to the lesson observation scheme since the last Committee meeting. He reminded the Committee that the OFSTED inspectors had considered that the College's observation scheme did not give an accurate picture of the quality of teaching experienced by learners. Since then, the scheme had been thoroughly reviewed to resolve how to move forward.
39. One of the main concerns was that, while teaching across the College was generally good, with almost no teaching that was less than satisfactory, it was not moving into outstanding. This was particularly noticeable at Haywards Heath, where teaching and learning had remained at a strong Grade 2 (Good) for at least 3 years, and in Skills for Life, which was also showing no movement beyond a strong Grade 2.

40. Merely assessing the standard of teaching, while it may prevent any deterioration, was not enabling staff to improve. It was therefore judged necessary to separate the Quality Assurance (QA) side of the observation scheme from the developmental needs. As far as the latter was concerned, it was essential that staff were aware of what outstanding teaching looked like, and that they received high quality evaluative feedback that would indicate how they could improve. This was difficult to achieve within the QA framework.
41. The QA approach would be re-modelled towards the OFSTED framework, designed to sample the learners' experience. It would be carried out on an unannounced basis, within specified windows of time. It was likely that there would be a further drop in grades initially as the College teaching staff adjusted to the new approach.
42. The planned approach appeared to be in line with the way OFSTED inspections were developing. At a Sussex College's inspection this term the inspection team was asking for the College's evidence that it was giving evaluative feedback to its teachers to move them to excellence.
43. It was noted that a parallel initiative being introduced was a learner feedback survey for teachers. The Unions had expressed concern about this; however a lot of individual lecturers had been pleased, because many students were expressing praise for their teachers. There were some uncomfortable messages for some individuals; in general these were messages that those individuals had needed to hear.
44. The final form of the scheme would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.
45. It was confirmed that the learner feedback survey would be tied into the Learner Involvement strategy. It was stressed that the students must be informed of the outcomes from the survey, to ensure they continued to treat it seriously. It was also pointed out that teachers should not wait for the formal survey before seeking their learner's views and involvement.
46. **The report was received.**

#### **CURRICULUM PLANNING FOR 2009/2010 ENROLMENTS**

47. The Principal introduced the report, advising that there had been no need to make any significant changes to the curriculum as a result of the volume or pattern of enrolments. There had been some small adjustments, primarily to the demand-led curriculum. As had been reported to the Resources Committee, enrolment targets were being met, apart from 16-18 year old apprenticeships. LSC officers had advised that the latter category was presenting a problem nationally, essentially because of the lack of employment opportunities.
48. There were now some 1200 students studying at Haywards Heath, which represented a significant increase; there was giving rise to pressure on space, particularly the social space. In September the Local Authority had challenged the College over the September Guarantee (the Government's commitment that, by the end of September, an offer of a place in learning would be made to all young people completing compulsory education that summer).
49. The Local Community Board (LCB) had set up a Task and Finish Group to consider how to manage this in the light of the increasing pressure on places, particularly at Haywards Heath; that Group had proposed a series of criteria for managing waiting lists for over-subscribed places. This had been considered by the LCB the previous evening.

A copy of the proposals was laid round.

50. The Principal advised the meeting that the criteria for selecting applicants had been discussed with Brighton Colleges and with BHASVIC in particular. The criteria followed by that College

were similar to those being proposed for Central Sussex College and it had been agreed by the two Colleges to share information about applicants, to help manage the process.

51. The Principal confirmed that the criteria had been subjected to an equality impact assessment, to ensure there were no unintended negative consequences.
52. It was noted that, despite initial concerns that the College would have to turn away applicants, it had not proved necessary for the current year's intake. The Principal advised that he was confident that the initial priority category would not be oversubscribed, and therefore did not require any sub-division.
53. It was recognised that care would be needed in communicating the criteria, to avoid any misunderstandings by prospective learners or their parents. It was stressed that the College's first priority must be to the local area of Mid-Sussex, where the schools did not have sixth forms; Haywards Heath College had originally been set up to serve those needs.
54. The Executive was asked to make some minor adjustments to the wording of the protocol to reflect the discussion; subject to those amendments **it was agreed to recommend that the Corporation approve the waiting list criteria.**

#### **INTEGRATED QUALITY AND ENHANCEMENT REVIEW (IQER)**

55. Maureen Kilminster advised the meeting that the formal report of the recent IQER (the equivalent for the College's Higher Education (HE) provision of an OFSTED inspection) had now been published. It was a really good report, recognising a number of good practice points, as well as some points for improvement.
56. Since the College had received the draft report the College had prepared an action plan to address the points raised; this had now been approved by the IQER reviewer and incorporated into the published report.
57. Clive Behagg commented that, as a reviewer himself, he could confirm that this was a really good report: the College had done very well.
58. **The report was noted.**

#### **TRAINING QUALITY STANDARD (TQS)**

59. Maureen Kilminster reminded the meeting that the College had been assessed in July; the accreditation panel had met in September and awarded the College TQS accreditation. The assessment model was based on EFQM, a hard-scoring process. The assessors had recognised that the College had a long history (both as Central Sussex College and Crawley College before that) of providing training to employers and had initiated significant improvements over the last three years.
60. There were a number of points for improvement; some of the College's measurement systems needed developing. One important aspect was to improve the way the College captured a record of its positive impact on the employers' business. Central to that was the College's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, which was being rolled out across the College.
61. **The report was noted.**

#### **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY REVIEW**

62. Adrian Dodwell introduced the report of the preparations for the College's Diversity Week. This was building on the success of similar events last year.

63. It was noted that the OFSTED inspectors had raised the importance of Equality and Diversity within the new inspection framework; it was now regarded as a limiting grade so that Leadership and Management could not be graded as good or outstanding if Equality and Diversity was inadequate – or even merely satisfactory.
64. The tutorial programme was being adjusted to ensure that the themes raised during the Diversity Week were reinforced during the rest of the year.
65. It was confirmed that the reason for holding Diversity Week on two separate occasions, one at Crawley and one at Sixth Form Haywards Heath, was because of the scale of the event and the resources required.
66. **The report was received.**

#### **PROPOSAL FOR OAKMEEDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE POST 16 PROVISION**

67. The Principal introduced the report, which built on proposals first considered in late 2007. From a strategic perspective, there was strong evidence that Burgess Hill needed dedicated Post-16 provision and the paper addressed this principal. There was a need to develop the associated financial and curriculum models in much more detail and this would require further work. In the meantime the required consultation exercise was now under way. This had already led to requests for further information and work to be done.
68. The curriculum would be focussed on vocational education and training needs, based on the school's specialist Business & Enterprise status. The initial offer was likely to be for 20 to 30 learners, building up to some 80 in total.
69. This should be seen as the first test of an area partnership model, to address the growing education and training needs of the local population. It was also looking towards the Raising of the Compulsory Participation Age (ROCPA) scheduled for 2013. Haywards Heath campus was already full and there was a need to consider the future for the College's vocational centre at Burgess Hill once the lease came to an end in 2014. One option might be to develop a replacement centre within the Oakmeeds grounds.
70. Further work was needed on the financing of the undertaking, its branding, the staffing arrangements and the curriculum to be offered; in the meantime the Principal was asking for support to continue developing the proposals, in the light of the College's strategic direction and mission and the local community's needs.
71. The Committee was informed that the school had started delivering the ICT diploma to a cohort of its 14-16 pupils; there would be some 20 of these who would be looking for progression within the diploma at the end of this year.
72. **The report was noted.**
73. **It was agreed to recommend that the Corporation support the development in principle, from a strategic perspective.**
74. **It was agreed to ask the Corporation to refer the proposal to the Governance & Search Committee, to consider whether a Joint Committee with the Governing Body of Oakmeeds Community College should be set up to oversee the governance arrangements for this development.**

## **HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT**

75. Maureen Kilminster reminded the Committee that the Corporation had to submit its Higher Education Strategy by 11th January next year, in the form prescribed by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). This needed to address all the College's HE, whether funded directly or indirectly, or not funded at all. Now that the University Centre Crawley had been short-listed for potential support, the strategy could be developed to incorporate the growth the College wanted and needed.
76. A consultation exercise would begin shortly, with a view to presenting a draft strategy to the next Committee meeting, for adoption by the Corporation at its December meeting.
77. **The report was received.**

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

78. It was noted that the attendance had been below target.
79. It was agreed that all members of the Committee should submit completed forms to the clerk to enable the results to be aggregated and passed to the Governance & Search Committee.

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

80. **The Committee agreed to recommend that its Terms of Reference be updated to reflect changes in the sector (such as the replacement of the Action for Business accreditation by TQS).**
81. **It was also agreed that the references to monitoring the quality of services to employers be strengthened, to mirror those to learners.**

## **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

82. Clive Behagg thanked Sue Dare on behalf of the Committee for her support and input, and wished her well in her new post as Principal of Northbrook College.
83. There being on other business, the meeting closed at 6.40p.m.