

CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee Held at 5.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 8th December 2009 in T11, Crawley Campus.

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

Also present: John Peel, Suri Araniyasundaran, Adrian Dodwell, Maureen Kilminster and Nick Whitley (Clerk).

* = present

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Leslie Edwards, Anne Parkinson and Ramesh Shingadia and for lateness from Anahita Henry.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. Clive Behagg declared an interest as Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the University of Chichester.

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 6TH OCTOBER 2009

3. In paragraph 21, "success" was replaced by "achievement" and "91%" by "81%"; with those amendments the minutes were signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

4. **Unknown results/10:** It was noted that almost all results were now known and incorporated within the Self Assessment Report (SAR).
5. **Waiting List criteria/54:** It was confirmed that the Corporation had approved the waiting list criteria for Haywards Heath.
6. **Proposal for Oakmeeds Community College Post-16 provision/74:** The Principal advised that he had had further discussions with the head teacher of the school, who had accepted that the proposed implementation date for the project needed to be deferred for a year, to enable more detailed work on the proposals to be carried out, including the basis for its funding. This was likely to take a further six months at least.

REPORT OF BURGESS HILL AND HAYWARDS HEATH LOCAL COMMUNITY BOARD (LCB) MEETING

7. The Principal reported that the LCB had discussed the proposals for joint post sixteen provision with Oakmeeds: the Board had agreed with the other parties to the consultation that the start date for the joint development should be postponed to enable the necessary detailed planning to take place beforehand.
8. The major substance of the LCB discussions concerned the Self Assessment Report (SAR) for Haywards Heath campus; the main focus had been the AS and A2 Level programmes, and the added value scores. Detailed comments would be fed into the discussions on the SAR as relevant.

9. The LCB had also received a report about the recent successful Open Evening at the Haywards Heath campus.

SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR).

10. The Chair of the Committee introduced this item, advising that the Committee's task was to review the draft SAR, make any changes it thought necessary, and recommend its approval to the Corporation. In particular, it needed to establish whether the SAR was a good instrument for analysing and identifying how to enhance the College's provision; to test the robustness of the process followed in arriving at the report and to test whether the strengths and weaknesses appeared reasonable. In so doing, the Committee would be adding value within the process.
11. Maureen Kilminster then took the meeting through the report and the Committee tested it in some detail, including the rigour of the process followed; they were reassured of this.
12. The overall grades had been tested and remained as they had been when the OFSTED team had carried out the inspection last January; the College-wide trends continued to show improvement, as they had done consistently since the merger. There were three areas of outstanding provision.
13. There had been a drop in achievement rates for adults at Entry-Level and Level 1, from 93% down to 83%. This was mainly attributable to Skills for Life, where there had been a significant number of staff changes and staff absence, and critically the absence through illness of a key manager. As a result the Faculty had lost focus and a significant number of students had not been entered for the correct level of assessment/examination. The Faculty's results were still above the national average, but did not meet the College's expectations.
14. One of the learning points from this was the importance of succession planning. It was very difficult to sustain grade 1 performance; having robust cover arrangements at all levels was critical.
15. On the positive side, the feedback from the Skills for Life learners showed that they had enjoyed the courses they were following; the majority of them were continuing studying within the Faculty and would be taking the appropriate examinations during the current year. An action plan was already in place to address the issues and implementation had started from the beginning of the autumn term.
16. It was recognised that it was important to recognise overtly the contribution made by those staff who provided cover, and maintained the service to learners during difficult times.
17. It was noted that the feedback from students reported through the Framework for Excellence survey was below the national benchmark; this would need attention.
18. Maureen Kilminster took the meeting through the key improvements achieved since the OFSTED visit; of particular note were the improvements in retention rate for the specific Faculties identified by OFSTED. It was recognised that it was important to celebrate the areas of improvement as well as focussing on the need to do better.
19. It was noted that Technology had been assessed as good the previous year but was now only satisfactory; it was explained that there had been a deterioration in results for the 16-18 long courses and as such the Faculty could not be assessed as good.
20. It was also pointed out that, generally, the College was raising the standards by which it was judging itself; for example Haywards Heath campus was now comparing itself against the top 10 per cent of Colleges, not just the average; as a result the judgements were more

demanding. This was the direction the rest of the College would also be taking as it journeyed towards excellence.

21. It was noted that the grade for Science at Haywards Heath had dropped; essentially this was a reflection of the performance in Physics, which had had to cope with a new specification and new syllabus for its programmes. The College had approached the Examination Board for advice and had put an action plan in place for the current year, to redress the situation.
22. The grading for Health and Social Care had been affected by the underperformance of the BTEC Level 2. This again demonstrated the need for the College to learn how to manage succession planning and staff absence better.
23. The Principal drew attention to the overall improvement of the Crawley and Associated Campuses; these campuses were also entirely responsible for Work Based learning and Train to Gain, which were strengths of the College's overall provision.
24. It was pointed out that the quality of the staff had not been identified as a strength within the SAR, yet the improvements had resulted from excellent performance by the staff. The Principal responded that the constraints of the Common Inspection Framework, which drove the Self Assessment methodology, did not allow for this; the contribution made by members of staff was generally embedded within criteria that made no explicit reference to their quality. However, he recognised the validity of the comment and would work with Jenny Poore to see how a people measure could be introduced into future Self Assessment Reports.
25. It was noted that there was more work to do on student involvement; the Students Union had not proved effective enough and needed further impetus to galvanise the students' involvement.
26. Progress on the previous year's Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was reviewed; it was noted that some third of the actions had been fully implemented; another third had been partly achieved and the remainder was outstanding. It was confirmed that there was more to be done, which would be incorporated into the new QIP.
27. The grades for lesson observations were considered. It was confirmed that new and probationary teachers had been included within the graded observations for the first time, and this had resulted in a reduction in the percentage of good and outstanding lessons observed. It was considered that identifying a reduction in grades reflected well on the rigour of the process.
28. It was noted that the grade for Equality & Diversity was included as a contributory grade whereas in future (under OFSTED's new version of the Common Inspection framework) it would be treated as a limiting grade (in other words, a poor grade for Equality & Diversity would limit the College's overall grade to satisfactory at best).
29. The Principal advised that he considered the College's Capacity to Improve to be on the verge of a Grade 1; it was his view that the grade would be achieved once the new developmental scheme for teaching and learning was embedded across the College.
30. It was noted that no peer review exercise had been carried out for the current SAR; this would be reintroduced next year. One of the contributing factors was that the processing of achievement data had been somewhat slow. Members of staff were tired after the four major assessment exercises affecting the College and this had stretched their capacity to carry out routine tasks. It was a tribute to them that improvements in performance had continued notwithstanding the impact of OFSTED. Achievements would be processed earlier for the current year and a peer review of Leadership and Management and of the College data as a whole would be arranged.

31. The implications of the new Common Inspection Framework (CIF) for next year's SAR would be considered at the next Committee meeting. The focus of OFSTED was on the learner and the learner's experience. This reinforced the importance of managing the continuity of teaching and its quality. The risk factors for these would need to be assessed for every team, throughout the organisation, and addressed appropriately.
32. The additional responsibility for the students, that fell upon full-time/ established staff for cover arrangements where there were significant numbers of part-time/ sessional staff, was pointed out; it was generally the full-time staff who ensured continuity for the students' experience. The Principal acknowledged that there was a balance to be struck between budgetary flexibility and continuity for the students.
33. The Executive was congratulated on the way the SAR read; it gave a helpful context and came across as a coherent, rigorous document.
34. **It was agreed to recommend that the Corporation approve the Self Assessment Report for submission to the LSC.**

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

35. Adrian Dodwell introduced the report, drawing attention to the three main areas of focus for the College. There was a general increase in the level of additional support provided across the College, which gave a positive indication that learners' needs were being recognised and met.
36. The trend for the success rates of those receiving additional support was now flattening out, which was a healthy sign. The concept underlying the provision of additional support was that it should remove any disadvantage attributable to any minority groups, not that it should confer an advantage; success rates were now more or less in line with College averages and generally above the national average. Achievement rates were generally high.
37. The strength of the 14-16 provision and its positive impact on reducing NEETS (16-18 year olds not in employment, education or training) was noted.
38. Adrian Dodwell drew particular attention to the excellent performance of Foundation Learning; the College tended to serve a population of learners with even greater disabilities than other Colleges did. The Faculty's strength was reflected in the high success rates for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities.
39. It was noted that the table of ethnic profile of the College needed re-ordering. Generally the profile of the student body was representative of the local population; however there were some specific exceptions, such as Work Based Learning. The proportion of BME (black and minority ethnic) apprentices was only 5%; this represented a real challenge for the College.
40. Attention was drawn to the success of the College's Diversity Week for a second year running. The question was raised as to how success was measured. It was stated that it was difficult to measure the impact of the Diversity Week directly, but there appeared to be an overall enhancement to the culture and attitudes of tolerance towards difference within the College.
41. **It was agreed to recommend that the Corporation approve the Equality & Diversity Self Assessment Report.**

REVIEW OF THE FRANCHISE WITH THE BRIGHTON INSTITUTE OF MODERN MUSIC (BIMM)

42. The Clerk laid round a copy of the report.

43. Adrian Dodwell took the meeting through the review of the franchise between the College and BIMM for 2008/2009. It was noted that there had been 130 16-19 year-olds covered by the franchise agreement and that the College no longer funded adults under it.
44. He pointed out that the previous year there had been some concerns about the quality of the provision; however the steps taken year to address this appeared to be bearing fruit; the success rates for the learners were outstanding, being 16% above the national average.
45. The one area that needed attention was the proportion of learners achieving Merit or Distinction, which was lower than the norm; this would be taken up with the BIMM team in the New Year.
46. **It was agreed that the Committee should receive a further report in the New Year, together with a cycle for future monitoring of BIMM by the Committee, since it represented such a significant part of the College's provision for young people.**

ENROLMENT REPORT

47. The Committee reviewed the current year enrolments. The Principal advised that enrolment was strong across the board, with the exception of 16-18 apprenticeships. There were insufficient employers locally who were willing to take on apprentices in the current economic climate; the College was therefore looking to start them on programme led apprenticeships, whereby they would study full time at the College for the first period of their apprenticeship, during which time they would be taught employability skills as well as a College-based programme of studies in their chosen vocation.
48. It was recommended that local authorities be approached to help, not only as a potential employer, but as a "broker" for other employers.
49. **The report was received.**

OPEN EVENINGS

50. The Principal advised that there had been successful Open Evenings at both main campuses during the autumn. Attendance at Haywards Heath had been up by 10% and at Crawley by between 3% and 5%, which augured well for next year's enrolment.
51. It was confirmed that the College Leadership Team (CLT) monitored applications (including progress through interview to acceptance on a monthly basis. While it was too early to provide meaningful information on applications to the Committee, reports showing the profile would be provided to the spring and summer meetings.
52. **The report was received.**

ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION

53. The Clerk laid round the attendance and retention report, which Maureen Kilminster went through. She clarified the significance of the changes to the formulae for calculating retention introduced by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in the current year, outlined in the report.
54. It was noted that overall attendance rates were positive, with one or two specific instances requiring attention.
55. **The report was received.**

HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) STRATEGY

56. The Principal introduced the draft strategy. He advised the meeting that the draft had been circulated to neighbouring Universities for their comment. The University of Brighton, which was in partnership with the College to develop the University Centre Crawley, had recommended a significant number of changes; these related largely to the case for the proposed University Centre. The full text of the University's comments had been circulated to the Committee for their advice.
57. It was commented that the strategy as written presented a coherent analysis of the College's strategic approach to HE. However, there was already an over-emphasis on the University Centre. There could be no certainty that the proposals would be funded and it was important therefore that the College strategy would withstand scrutiny whether the centre was established or not. Adopting the recommendations from the University of Brighton would give an inappropriate focus to the strategy.
58. A number of other more detailed suggestions were made, which the Principal and Maureen Kilminster agreed to incorporate into the final version.
59. It was suggested that a 1 page summary would help Members of the Corporation to find their way through the strategy, which had been prepared in accordance with HEFCE's specification rather than to serve the needs of the "lay" reader.
60. It was noted that it may not be possible to complete the revisions to the strategy in time for it to be approved at the coming Corporation meeting. If that proved to be the case, it was resolved to recommend that the authority to "sign off" the final version for submission to HEFCE be delegated jointly to the Chair of Corporation and the Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES (REVIEW OF STUDENT ASSOCIATION SPEND AND ACTIVITIES)

61. It was noted that all Student Association expenditure was managed by the College's Finance Department within the context of the budget for enrichment; it was acknowledged that it would not be particularly helpful to prepare a separate statement for the Student Association. The majority of enrichment activities took place within individual Faculties and Areas of Study; the report provided presented only a sample of the full range of opportunities available to learners.
62. Some of the activities provided centrally were organised by the Students Association and some by the College team; there was generally a good take up of these but registers were not kept so it was difficult to provide evidence for an OFSTED inspection.
63. **The report was noted.**

TEACHING AND LEARNING

64. The Principal reminded the Committee of the previous discussions about the best way to support staff to develop and maintain outstanding teaching and learning throughout the College, taking account of OFSTED's criticisms of the College's lesson observation scheme. The report before the meeting contained the final version of the Teaching and Learning Observation and Development Policy, together with feedback from the consultation exercise that had been carried out during its formulation.
65. He confirmed that the new scheme would be implemented from the beginning of January 2010. He considered that it represented an appropriate balance between a developmental approach, enabling teachers to achieve continuous improvement of their performance, and a sharpened approach to maintain rigorous Quality Assurance. Every member of teaching staff

could expect to be observed formally once every two years. The new scheme would commence in January 2010, with a clean break from the previous scheme.

66. It was noted that OFSTED's approach to lesson observation schemes had also moved on and the approach being taken by the College appeared to match their new requirements well.

67. **The report was noted.**

UNIVERSITY CENTRE CRAWLEY

68. It was noted that the University Centre Steering Group was planning to launch the Centre in September 2010 on a full-cost basis, to ensure the support for and impetus to establish the Centre were not lost, notwithstanding the fact that all decisions by HEFCE on funding this initiative had been delayed until after the next Spending Review by the Government. The Tower Block would be used as the initial base for the Centre.

69. The questions of branding and the name of the Centre had not yet been resolved. There was also to be a further consultation exercise to establish what programmes employers actually wanted.

REVIEW OF ACADEMIC YEAR 2008/2009

70. This was deferred to the next meeting of the Committee.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

71. There being on other business, the meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.