

## CENTRAL SUSSEX CORPORATION

### Minutes of a meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee Held at 3.30 p.m. on Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008 in T11, Crawley Campus.

**Membership:** Martin Delbridge (Chair)\*, Clive Behagg, Andreia Moniz, Alan Morris, Anne Parkinson\*, Mark Read, Ramesh Shingadia\*, Charlotte Wright and Russell Strutt\*.

**Also present:** John Peel, Sue Dare, and Nick Whitley (Clerk) and for part of the meeting Maureen Kilminster.

\* = present

Martin Delbridge opened the meeting by welcoming Ramesh Shingadia to his first meeting of the Committee. All present introduced themselves.

#### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from Clive Behagg, Andreia Moniz, Alan Morris, Mark Read and Charlotte Wright and for lateness from Russell Strutt.

#### DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no interests to declare.

#### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF 21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY 2008

3. The minutes were signed as a correct record.

#### MATTERS ARISING

4. **Review of Merger/44:** The Clerk advised that he had not yet sent out the document to past Corporation Members, but would be doing so in the near future.

It was agreed to reorder the agenda slightly as the Principal was delayed at another meeting.

#### QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

5. Sue Dare introduced the report. She reminded the Committee of the background to the Self Assessment process and report (SAR) and the consequent development of Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) for Faculties and for the College as a whole. The actions in the plan were designed to address areas requiring improvement and to ensure every aspect of the College becoming outstanding.
6. The primary focus of the QIP was to address teaching and learning. The College was on track to carry out the planned number of lesson observations; however the grade profile to date was somewhat skewed, since the initial focus was on observing all teachers whose previous observed teaching grade had been a 3 (satisfactory) or a 4 (unsatisfactory).
7. It was suggested that a feedback mechanism should be built in to the process to enable the teachers to identify what value they had experienced from being observed.

8. Sue Dare stressed that the observation scheme was designed to hold a balance between Quality Assurance and developmental needs.
9. It was recognised that the previous role of the Committee lay with the Quality Assurance aspects of the scheme.
10. Sue Dare explained that common criteria for observing teaching across the College had been developed, building largely on the earlier Haywards Heath model; this model had proved effective in raising the quality of teaching and learning on the Haywards Heath campus. She gave an overview of the approach and offered to present the policy and procedures to the Committee for information at a future meeting. She also gave a brief explanation of how a teacher would differentiate lessons to suit the needs of students with different abilities or levels of knowledge. The difference between a good and an outstanding lesson tended to be reflected in how effective this differentiation was.
11. Every student was reviewed in February and their likely achievement forecast (although not necessarily by grade); a traffic light system was used to identify any at risk of failure. This ensured success rates (retention multiplied by achievement) could be forecast with confidence.
12. Sue Dare then drew attention to the actions targeting specific areas for improvement in the faculties.
13. Value added measures were well established in respect of A' Levels and were underpinned by extensive research. They were beginning to be introduced for some vocational (graded) qualifications; however there was not as yet a satisfactory, objective basis for determining the base-line from which to measure the added value. What was undisputable was that the process of setting target grades for each learner and ensuring they had aspirational grades to aim for had a significant positive effect on their performance. This was a very important tool to help the College meet its community mission. Using value added measures was a powerful way of ensuring the College helped youngsters to make the most of their opportunities, rather than being satisfied with the minimum achievement.
14. Sue Dare then drew attention to the actions to improve Work Based Learning; there was an inherent problem on four year programmes where apprentices had left near the beginning of the programme. While improvements could enhance the experience and likely success of those still on the programme, there was nothing that could be done to overcome the effect of the leavers on the success rates. There was every confidence that the programmes would be much stronger in the future.
15. There had been variable experience with partner providers; this was being addressed by much more robust quality assurance, following the establishment of a dedicated post.
16. It was noted that the improvements at Haywards Heath campus had levelled off, both in respect of absolute achievements and added value. Actions had been taken in a number of areas to address this and there was a strong teaching and learning group that met regularly on campus.
17. The final sections of the Quality Improvement Plan were focussed on ensuring that every learner gained the maximum benefit from being part of the merged College.
18. Sue Dare drew particular attention to the plans for very able and talented students; learners who fell into that category would be flagged up when they first joined the College and supported in developing their critical thinking skills. It was planned to support them in applying to members of the Russell Group of Universities.

19. From the beginning of the next academic year, a Wednesday afternoon slot would be provided for all 16-18 year olds, to have access to a wide range of activities to broaden their experience. The challenge was to make this effective for the smaller campuses, such as Burgess Hill as well as for Haywards Heath and Crawley.
20. **The Committee was very impressed with the effectiveness of the team of staff involved in reviewing the QIP and it was agreed that Sue Dare and Martin Delbridge would craft a paragraph for Spotlight to express the Committee's appreciation.**

### **NEETS (Not in Education, Employment or Training)**

21. Martin Delbridge explained to the Committee that he had requested this item because of some incidents reported under Health & Safety to the Corporation. The good news was that the College was becoming more successful at engaging with NEETs in the community; however this was also bringing some difficulties.
22. It was confirmed that the College was providing courses for some 30 NEETs this year; the report underlined the difficulties and challenges that this presented.
23. The Committee stressed its support for engaging in this area of work; however many of the problems that led to young people being in this category were wider than purely educational. It was suggested that the College should be looking to work with voluntary agencies in the community who were skilled at dealing with the wider problems within society.
24. Anne Parkinson advised that West Sussex County Council was looking for a multi-agency approach to address some of these wider issues, including the education/training needs. She hoped that the College would be interested in participating in a pilot of such an approach. There was a newly appointed NEETs Co-ordinator whom she would ask to contact the College.
25. This initiative was welcomed by the Executive.
26. **The report was received.**

### **ATTENDANCE, RETENTION AND STUDENT WITHDRAWALS**

27. Sue Dare introduced this item, pointing out that this was the routine monitoring information considered by the Committee at each of its meetings. She reminded the meeting that the targets for attendance by 16-18 year olds were slightly higher at the Haywards Heath campus (90%) than at Crawley and associated campuses (85%), largely because there had been a higher starting point at Haywards Heath.
28. Sue Dare drew attention to certain areas of the College where there were particular problems; she reassured the Committee that mechanisms were being put in place to mitigate these. There was a wider range of measures that could be invoked with the younger group of learners; it was more difficult with the adult learners who also tended to have more complex conflicts of responsibility, which could affect their ability to attend classes.
29. It was noted that the Access course at Haywards Heath was presenting a particular challenge; the profile of learners on that course had changed significantly over the last three years. It used to be chosen predominantly by more mature adults wanting to return to education. Although there were still some learners who fell into that category, many more were now drawn from the 19-25 age bracket, who had dipped out of education and were now coming back into the system. Such learners may also be affected by mental health problems. While support was available for the learner, the College recognised that it needed to put in

additional support mechanisms for the staff teaching on the course; this would be done for the coming year.

30. It was commented that, generally there was a significant increase/or increased awareness of mental health problems among young people; this was another example of the way that the College and its learners needed to participate in a multi-agency approach, to address the more general issues of the mental health of the learners while also meeting their educational needs.

Russell Strutt joined the meeting at 4.50 p.m.

31. It was noted that the College was now focussing on raising the success rate for key skills; a specialist manager had been appointed to ensure that success in this aspect of the curriculum was improved across the College as a whole.
32. The Withdrawal Report was reviewed and it was concluded that it was not needed in future.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY AND THE PROPOSED UNIVERSITY CENTRE**

33. Russell Strutt introduced this item, pointing out that he intended to give a presentation to the Corporation Away day in February, but time pressures had meant that it had to be deferred to this meeting.
34. He circulated a demographic map of Crawley and the surrounding areas showing the participation rates of young people in Higher Education. The rationale for the establishment of a University Centre in Crawley was summarised in the previously circulated paper. Essentially it boiled down to the need to raise the participation rate among the young people in Crawley (which the demographic map revealed to be very low, especially when compared to the immediate surrounding area) and to the needs of the business community.
35. There was a range of higher level employability skills needed by business, particularly in: leadership and management; construction; care; financial services; retail; logistics and distribution. The demand for this range of skills was assessed as 12,000 to 25,000 new jobs per year, with a further 30,000 replacement jobs.
36. There was considerable support locally for this initiative and a review had been commissioned from DTZ, a company that had previously worked for SEEDA on eight or nine initiatives in the region. The precise brief was not known, but it was understood generally the intention was to consider whether the demand was sufficient to sustain a University Centre and to recommend the most appropriate model. The Principal and the Chair of the Corporation had met with the consultants that afternoon; an initial recommendation that the consultants had stated that they would be making was that some space be included for start up enterprises.
37. A letter had been sent to the Rt. Hon. John Denham MP, by Michael Coughlin in his capacity as Chief Executive of Crawley Borough Council, co-signed by Russell Strutt, Jeremy Taylor of CADIA, and John Peel in his capacity as SEEDA Board Member. This letter had been sent in response to the Governments "A New University Challenge", in which proposals to create 20 new University Centres had been announced. A response had been received from Bill Rammell MP, pointing out that the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) would be considering how best to take the proposals forward, and which individual institutions would take part. Copies of the correspondence were circulated.
38. Some clarification was sought as to the value of the degree level education being proposed, given the concerns that young people and their families had about the burden of student loans and the perceived value of various degrees. A concern was also raised about the

Executive's capacity to manage this additional initiative, given all the other developments and pressures on time.

39. The Principal advised that, at present, he and Maureen Kilminster were the only people involved. All that was required at present was to participate in a consultation exercise. Provided that the feasibility study recommended that a separate University Centre (independent of the College) be established, the additional demands on the Executive would be manageable. Present plans were for Brighton University to lead and manage the development of a University Centre. The Principal undertook to bring to the Corporation's attention immediately any alternative proposal for its development that would involve the College more.
40. John Peel was asked whether he had any interest to declare, particularly since he had signed the joint letter in his capacity as a SEEDA Board Member. He advised the Committee that, as his interest in the success of a University Centre for Crawley was purely a personal ambition, there was no interest to declare. He would not disguise the strength of this ambition, and that he would work with any body to progress it, but he was not speaking on behalf of any other such organisation. He was delighted that Julian Crampton, the Vice Chancellor of Brighton University, would be taking the matter forward.
41. It was confirmed that the funding for students at a University Centre in Crawley would come via HEFCE, or from sponsorship. As far as the types of degree were concerned, they would be vocationally oriented. The Principal gave the example of a Foundation Degree that was being developed in conjunction with the Police, who were funding the course and proposing to carry out much of the tuition; the Police were keen to locate the course on the College campus.
42. Sue Dare drew attention to the underlying concept of the new Diplomas that were being developed; it was highly desirable that there should be an appropriate Degree for the learners to progress onto from a Diploma. She also reminded the Committee that the College was already a provider of Higher Education and received part of its funding from HEFCE.
43. The Principal was asked what the plans were, should HEFCE not be prepared to fund a new University Centre. He responded by stating that there was no alternative model; if there was to be no University Centre the College's existing higher level curriculum would require strengthening and broadening to address some of the identified curriculum needs.
44. The report was noted, with some reservation as to the College's management capacity to address the identified demands on the College.

#### **MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT – GREEN PAPER CONSULTATION**

45. The Principal introduced his paper. He stressed that, as yet, the implications for General Further Education (GFE) Colleges were not clear. He then took the meeting through his report.
46. The main thrust of the Government's policy was to focus the Further Education provision for both younger people and adults on the needs of the economy: for young people within a planned framework, and for adults on a demand led basis. There was a clear move (for adults) towards integrating employment and skills services.
47. What did appear clear was that, under the current proposals, the College would have to enter into dialogue each year with at least three new funding bodies and two Government Departments. What was not so clear was how leadership in West and Central Sussex would be exercised.

48. The Committee was advised that West Sussex County Council had undergone a major restructuring exercise and was currently working out how best to address these reforms.
49. It was suggested that the changes to the Government funding structure and approach may represent a challenge to developments at the Haywards Heath campus, in terms of the development of more vocational training, since its main funding source was being separated from the Government Department with primary responsibility for vocational and skills training.
50. Sue Dare commented that there was considerable Government emphasis on the development of the new Diplomas, with their strong focus on vocational studies and all campuses were likely to engage with these Diplomas.
51. A challenge for the Local Authority as it took over responsibility for the full time education and training of all 16-19 year olds would be the planning and funding of all institutions, whether they were directly responsible for them or not. It was noted that Elizabeth Funge was being seconded from the LSC to West Sussex County Council to assist with the transfer of this responsibility.
52. **The report was noted.**

#### **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

53. The Principal introduced the assessment which was carried out annually by the LSC on a "desk-top" basis. He advised that he was in dialogue with the LSC about some of the judgements; for example he considered that the College had demonstrated at least good leadership of its Train to Gain contract. While he understood that, from the LSC's perspective, the South East had not performed well enough in meeting its overall targets for Train to Gain, the College (on behalf of the consortium of 21 providers) had met its contractual targets.
54. He also had a concern about the identification of the Skills for Life provision mix as requiring improvement. The previous year the College had had a 90:10 provision mix (for which it had been commended) but had experienced poor success rates. The curriculum had been revised to enable adults to study on a modular basis. The success rates had improved significantly; however individual modules did not constitute national qualifications in their own right and the provision mix was consequently affected.
55. He had also challenged the singling out of young people short success rates as an area for improvement, given that the total number of young people involved was 42 learners and each of the courses was less than 4 weeks in length.
56. There was an acknowledgement that the improvement in Adult short success rates had been significant.
57. The remaining points were valid. He was now waiting for the LSC to respond.
58. **The report was noted.**

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

59. There being no other business, the meeting closed at 5.34 p.m.