

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2009 AT 5.30pm

PRESENT:

Marianne Howarth – Chair
Delroy Brown
Geoff Hall
Brian Hambidge
Carol Parkinson
Rick Heslop

IN ATTENDANCE:

Julie Ashton – Deputy Principal
Claire Kay – Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcomed and introduced Rick Heslop to his first meeting as an Associate Member of the Committee.

Members agreed to take the agenda items out of order to assist with the visitors to the committee. Items 8, 9, and 10 would be considered after item 5.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were noted from Alex Brown and Danuta Januszonok. Mick Newton had indicated to the Clerk that he may not be able to attend the meeting, members noted his apologies.

2. **DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL INTEREST IN AGENDA ITEMS**

There were no personal interests declared.

3. **MINUTES**

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2009 were approved and signed following the removal of Jonathan Oldham from the list of members present as JO's apologies were recorded.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

(6) Safeguarding Learners

Members were updated that the Corporation had approved the new standing committee at its meeting in March and members willing to serve on the committee were noted as Lucy Dadge, Ralph Tonge and Mick Newton. A meeting was planned for June/July and an update would be received by the Corporation in July.

Mike Motley, Sarah Jordan and Nick Whitehouse were welcomed to the meeting for the next four agenda items.

5. **FRAMEWORK FOR EXCELLENCE**

Members noted the report and the changes in the Framework for Excellence during 2009. The Committee received a presentation of the current data released by LSC on the indicators assigned to the Committee for monitoring. The most recent release had changed the overall PI for resource efficiency and within the PI for success rates, had changed the value added scoring. Members noted that discussions were ongoing with the LSC as to the accuracy of the data relating to value added.

The Committee discussed the robustness of the data and the outcomes compared to College based quality assurance processes, recognising that the scores were a good baseline but it was necessary to take account of issues around the learner views survey and data capture to maximise the College's potential with these external indicators.

Members noted the report and the three grades due to be published later in the year.

6. EMPLOYER RESPONSIVENESS

The Committee considered the information reported in relation to employer views, the amount of training being provided through Work Based Learning (WBL) and Train to Gain (T2G) and the respective success rates for these strands of provision.

Members commented on the in-house scoring of "outstanding" with respect to employer views and the disappointment with the canvassing undertaken by the LSC to inform the Framework for Excellence score. 90% of employers completed the in-house survey whereas only 33% were contacted by the LSC to inform the FfE score. Members requested MM explore the methodology of the LSC agents in contacting employers to ensure agents were consistent in their approach and consistent in their attempts to contact employers.

Members noted the work being undertaken to achieve the Training Quality Standard with the likely submission being moved to October 2009.

Members noted the 2008/09 target for a 10% increase in WBL provision had been achieved, with 85% of the target for Train to Gain achieved by the end of April 2009, which was in line with expectations. The allocation for 2009/10 funding for T2G remained under discussion with the LSC, however, it was expected that large amounts of growth in this area would be curtailed.

Members noted that both WBL and T2G success rates were increasing compared to last year. Members wished to congratulate staff involved in achieving the Overall and Timely Success Rates for WBL, which were significantly above the national average.

Members noted the report.

7. ANNUAL REPORT ON HIGHER EDUCATION

NW presented the Annual Report on Higher Education within the College. Members noted the following key points from the report:

- The requirement for a board approved HE Strategy to be submitted in January 2010;
- Nationally there was a lack of additional student numbers available from Hefce for growth funding;
- During 2010/11 some growth funding associated with innovation would be bid for;
- A review of the HE offer with respect to employer needs was underway;
- Cross course mapping was being undertaken ;
- Good feedback had been received from NTU on the Programme Standards and Quality Reports submitted by each HE award leader, areas of particularly good practice would be shared;
- The HE Conference was being run again this year to develop best practice internally and across other conurbation FE colleges;
- Several new courses were currently going through validation for 2009/10;
- Total income associated with HE was approximately £4m; £2.4m Hefce funding and £1.4m tuition fees.

Members noted the destination data summarised in the report and were pleased to note the increase in NCN students progressing to HEI's.

Members discussed the Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review due to be undertaken next year noting the approach taken in this process was developmental as well as judgemental, however, the review was important for the reputation of NCN and NTU as awarding body.

Members noted the report.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY AND SINGLE EQUALITY SCHEME

The Committee received an update on the consultation undertaken as part of the development of the new Equality and Diversity Policy and Single Equality Scheme. Although the response rate had been low the responses were generally positive with negative points concentrated around the length of the document, despite the design of the document into segments to assist with its readability.

Members noted the adoption of the Policy and Scheme was the beginning of the process to embed equality and diversity awareness throughout the College and to make it meaningful to all staff and students. Members considered how this would be achieved and welcomed the development of summary versions for different audiences and different uses. Members encouraged the inclusion of mandatory staff training using imaginative formats to embed the Policy and reinforce the culture of NCN.

Members discussed how the College would measure the success of the implementation of the Policy and recognised staff and student surveys would be used along with training records and improvements in statistics of grievances and disciplinaries around equality and diversity themes. The Committee also encouraged the move away from compliance with the legislation and more towards the celebration of student work on equality and sharing real examples of good practice around the College.

Members noted the report and agreed to include in the Committee's cycle of business an annual report on equality and diversity in December with an update report in June. The Committee passed the following resolution:

The Committee recommend the Equality and Diversity Policy and Single Equality Scheme to the Corporation for approval.

MM, NW and SJ withdrew from the meeting.

9. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Committee reviewed the report including the trend analysis and targets for success rates. The report demonstrated the stretching nature of the Quality Strategy agreed earlier in the year but provided evidence of the direction of travel achieved since 2005/06 which was very positive.

Members noted the actions being taken to address retention rates, advice and guidance and early intervention of student support to impact on success rates. Information was currently being gathered from a development group to support 14-19 providers who have been given notice to improve to help innovate and improve practices especially in A level provision. Despite the need for continuous improvement, the Committee noted the tension this placed with the widening participation agenda.

Members found the report very helpful and noted its contents.

10. LEARNER RESPONSIVENESS

The Committee reviewed the data on student disciplinarys and student complaints in the report. Members noted the impact on disciplinarys of the College's Promoting Acceptable Behaviour Policy demonstrating, the policy was effective. Members were pleased to note that Ofsted inspectors in College that week complimented the behaviour of students in difficult circumstances.

Members noted that student complaints overall had fallen with the main areas of complaint around fees and advice and guidance rather than teaching and learning. Members were pleased to see a drop in complaints from the School of Health and Social Care demonstrating the practices shared with the Committee in February were having a positive effect.

Members considered it would be helpful to quote complaint statistics compared to the overall student population to aid understanding of issues.

Members noted the report.

11. RISKS ASSIGNED TO THE COMMITTEE

The risks assigned to the Committee for monitoring in 2008/09 were reviewed by the Committee. An update was provided by management to demonstrate how these risks were being monitored.

Members noted the report. Members considered the risk of an adverse IQER assessment would have a high impact on the College, although the likelihood was low. Members considered this risk should be built into next year's register as preparations for the assessment are undertaken.

12. COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND DEPUTY PRINCIPALS OVERVIEW

Committee terms of reference

The Clerk presented the revised terms of reference for the Committee to take account of recent changes in particular Framework for Excellence, changes to the Instrument and Articles of Government with regard to the Quality Strategy and the role of the Committee in overseeing the Equality and Diversity Policy.

Members were supportive of the proposed changes however they did consider the learner experience was a fundamental part of the Committee role and should remain within the text outlining the role of the Committee. It was also considered an additional duty should be included to take account of the Committee's role in receiving any inspection report undertaken within the College. Members requested consideration to be given as to whether the Standards Committee had a role in developing or managing the new relationship with the City Council which was explored at the Governor Residential.

Following the agreement of the terms of reference the Clerk and Deputy Principal would develop a new cycle of business for the Committee to ensure effectiveness of the Committee in undertaking its specific duties.

The Committee recommend the revised terms of reference, subject to the changes noted above, to the Corporation for approval.

Deputy Principal Overview

The Deputy Principal updated members on the findings of the Ofsted inspection team who had visited the College on Monday 8 June as part of a conurbation wide review of Special Educational Needs and LLDD provision. The findings were to be included in a national report not expected until next summer. The verbal feedback from the inspection team found:

- A strong relationship with students

- Good multi-agency working
- Thorough ALS system
- Good learner choice
- Positive parental feedback
- Teaching and learning reflected the autumn Ofsted inspection of good.

The Deputy Principal outlined some key priorities to develop over the coming months which included a review of the advice and guidance given to students and a review of the learner journey, both to understand and address the overall attendance statistic of 83%. Members welcomed the three key messages from the Deputy Principal for staff in 2009/10:

- 81% success rates,
- high performing staff,
- high performing students.

Carol Parkinson withdrew from the meeting during this item (19.25)

13. CONFIDENTIALITY OF BUSINESS

There were no confidential items.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next scheduled meeting was provisionally scheduled for 10 November 2009. The Committee Chair, Deputy Chair and Associate Member submitted their early apologies for this date and it was considered necessary to look to alter the next meeting date.

The Chair closed the meeting at 19:40pm.

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____