

B O S T O N C O L L E G E

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2015

1. PRESENT

Helen Wright (chair), Stephen Brown, Orla McMahon, Amanda Mosek and Chris Pett.

Also in attendance: Rowan Dalton (student governor nominee), Fiona Grady (Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality), Janet Hemmant (Clerk to the Corporation), Vicki Locke (Head of Quality) and Steve McCracken (Governor)

Attendance 71%.

Apologies for absence were received from Jayne Mitchell.

2. ACTION LOG

Members of the committee reviewed the action log and noted that when officially appointed as members of the Corporation the student governors would formally become members of the committee.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 23 SEPTEMBER 2015

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 23 September 2015 were reviewed and approved.

4. 2014-15 QUALIFICATION SUCCESS RATES

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality on success rates for 2014-15. The committee was reminded that A-Level and GCSE performance had been reviewed at the previous meeting in detail. Fiona Grady advised the committee that the presentation of data this time was different to previously with the format now being used the same as that being used by Ofsted. It was also noted that the methodology for calculation of success had been changed to match that for apprenticeships.

The headline performance data was noted to include everything and members were advised that the overall percentage would be depressed by the inclusion of Functional Skills. In many areas it was noted that sub-contractors contributed very positively to success rates. Their success rates in apprenticeships are markedly higher than the College's success rates in this area of work. Fiona advised the committee that the sub-contractor work could potentially be graded as outstanding. Fiona picked out for the committee the key features of the report and the committee agreed that it would like to see the A level high grade information presented with International learners split out as they would be by Ofsted. A point noted was that there was a mis-match between the DFE published Value Added data and the College's internally calculated data and work was underway to try to reconcile the differences.

Within the detailed information about success rates by individual Programme Areas it was noted that Construction was still a cause for concern as was the need to improve maths and English grades. Progress was being made with the delivery of maths and English but the volume meant that delivery was by a large group of staff which made standardisation difficult.

Orla McMahon queried the reduction in 24+ apprenticeship enrolments and the committee was advised that the College was particularly prioritising apprenticeships now. A discussion took place about other areas of the College which were receiving specific attention one of which was ESOL where achievement rates were good but more work was being done on retention.

It was noted that Louise Griffen was now managing the Construction area and had made a good start on the work there.

The committee noted that the Quality Improvement Plan would be presented at the next meeting and Construction would be specifically reviewed.

5. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2015-16

Members received a report from the Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality on Key Performance Indicators. The committee reviewed the information for 2015-16 and noted that a new KPI had been introduced about Looked After Young People. Fiona outlined the changes which had been made and a discussion took place about whether the measurement of performance of learners in receipt of free meals should be against the national averages rather than the gap between their performance and that of other learners. The committee felt that it was appropriate to measure the gap. It was noted that information on positive destinations would be available soon and would be reported to a future meeting of the committee.

The committee noted that there was not anything in the KPI's about the NSS survey. Fiona advised that that survey produced information very late but that the College could add its own HE survey to the KPI's and the committee agreed that this should be added.

6. START OF YEAR SURVEY 2015

Members received a report from Head of Quality on the start of the year survey and it was noted that the response rate this time had been much higher than previously. Members reviewed the information presented in the report and noted key issues.

Vicki Locke advised that the reduced percentage having started their individual learning journey probably related to the introduction of the VITAL tracking system and meant that not all learners had started their ILJ's at the time of the survey. The impact of this was discussed and it was confirmed that all were now on the system in the appropriate areas.

The committee discussed the disappointing results of the 'feeling safe' question. It was felt that this might actually have been affected by the concentration on ID badges which could be making learners feel more anxious despite the improved security it brought.

The committee felt that the number of comments about IT facilities were disappointing given the developments which had been made and the investment put into the facilities. Another issue which had been mentioned frequently was the lack of space which could be due to the number of learners being in for extra days due to the English and maths commitments. Pressure on accommodation has been significant this year particularly in the SIXTH block which has seen lots of students from other areas using the building because of the English and maths requirements.

7. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Vicki Locke updated the committee on a number of developments including progress on the J20 initiative and lesson observation outcomes. It was noted that a lot of work was being done with new teachers particularly through the Advanced Practitioners who were also doing a lot of work with individuals and teams following lesson observation outcomes. The committee was pleased to note that ILT had moved on significantly and was proving to be popular with much more use appearing in graded observations. Vicki reported that the introduction of VITAL was going well and it had been successfully introduced into four areas with intention to roll it out into more areas ready for 2016-17. It was felt that VITAL was helping with communications about learners and it was agreed that it would be helpful for the committee to have a demonstration of the software later in the year.

8. REVIEW OF APPRENTICESHIPS

Members received a copy of the consultant's report on apprenticeships and Fiona Grady reported on actions which had been taken in respect of the findings.

The committee was advised that diagnostic testing was now being done for all apprentices before they signed up. The College had also introduced block delivery of functional skills for apprentices. It was noted that there was still some work to be done with employers on their understanding of functional skills. It was felt that within the College communications about functional skills with the Programme areas has improved.

Fiona noted that the use of the e-track system was still proving challenging and had not been helped by a time delay at the outset with getting learners onto the system at the beginning of the year. The committee was advised that the working group looking at the managing of apprenticeships had been reconvened to look at issues which was particularly relevant, as Stephen Brown pointed out, given the government drive to increase the apprenticeship numbers.

Fiona advised that there was some positive signs in apprenticeships and that the numbers are going up.

9. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

After nomination the committee agreed that Stephen Brown should be Vice-Chair of the committee for the 2015-16 academic year.

10. COMMITTEE CONSTITUTION

The Clerk to the Corporation advised members that the committee constitution was in the process of being updated to include membership which reflected the inclusion of student governors.

11. NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would take place on 20 January 2016 and that other Corporation members would be invited to this meeting to review the self-assessment report. Helen Wright confirmed that she would not be present at the meeting and it was agreed that she and Stephen Brown could have a preview of the SAR information prior to the meeting.