

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE
held on 3 NOVEMBER 2017

¹PRESENT Dr S Eden (C); Mr R Fawcett (E); Mr T Jackson (P); Mr S Morgan (E);
Mr S Ward (E).

In attendance: Ms J Chapman, Marketing Manager (minutes 101 to 111)
Mrs S Grant, Vice Principal – Corporate (to minute 107)
Mr M Simmons, Deputy Principal
Mr B Stokes, Head of Centre & 6th Form Academy, Andover College
Mrs S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES

84. Apologies were received from Miss C Duffy.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

85. There were no interests to be declared in matters to be discussed at this meeting.

MINUTES

86. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Leaver destinations (minute 41/17)

87. The Deputy Principal reported that the latest DfE destination information (2014) had just been published and that an update report would follow to the next meeting of the Committee.

Marketing (minute 43/17)

88. Asked whether it was possible to assess the impact of the new University Centre Sparsholt branding, the Deputy Principal reported that it was too early to assess any impact on future enrolments. After the initial communications activity, the launch of a new website pages had been later than envisaged because of the significant website restructure required. A new look to the website had now been launched and would continue to be developed.

ENROLMENT TRENDS

89. The Committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal on enrolment trends across Further Education (FE), Apprenticeships and Higher Education (HE) in relation to the curriculum offer. The report also provided a summary of progress against the Curriculum Plan which had been endorsed by the Committee in June 2017.

90. The Committee noted that overall FE enrolment numbers had declined, though some areas had a more buoyant trend. The Deputy Principal highlighted the analysis of

¹ (C) = Co-opted; (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (St) = Student

population change (demographics) in the 0-15, 16-18 and 19-25 age groups from 2014 to 2030 and explained that the College therefore needed to be realistic about the potential for achieving growth over the next three years.

91. Asked whether there were other factors influencing FE recruitment, the Deputy Principal explained that College management had reviewed its approach to liaison with schools in relation to Sparsholt College and had refocused marketing resources on these activities.
92. Members sought to understand the decline in enrolments in some areas of the land-based curriculum, questioning whether this was linked to national trends, whether it reflected different demands from industry sectors or whether there was any correlation with the quality of the curriculum offer.
93. The Deputy Principal explained that it was difficult to obtain quantitative FE data but that feedback from some other colleges suggested that there were fewer young people choosing outdoor industries and College management would continue to explore this. It might be possible to ask Landex to collect comparative data at national level. The Principal added that the land-based sector had more to do to demonstrate a career and reward pathway and that the National Land Based College (NLBC) would have a role in supporting individuals with CPD throughout their careers.
94. In terms of the quality of curriculum delivery, the Principal reported that the College's quality assurance processes had not indicated evidence of issues in relation to the quality or reputational concerns which would impact recruitment. The Deputy Principal noted that focus group activity from the previous year had indicated that the College had a high approval rate, even from individuals who had decided not to enrol or who had left.
95. The Committee discussed the needs of employers in terms of employability skills and the Principal confirmed that it was one of the strengths of the College to both deliver technical knowledge and to develop wider skills to prepare learners for work. The curriculum had been developed to provide opportunities for learners to develop work ready capability, for example with a new Animal Management Level 2 work related programme.
96. The Committee noted that the reputation of Andover College was now very positive with schools in Andover but that attracting learners from Wiltshire schools was increasingly difficult due to the growth of competition in Salisbury. Members discussed the analysis of learners' previous schools and the Deputy Principal explained that the learners enrolling from Winchester schools tended to be those who lived in Andover and that College management was engaging actively with other schools around the Andover area.
97. The Committee noted the trends for apprenticeships and the uncertain national context for 2017/18. Apprenticeship numbers had increased in land-based areas, such as horticulture and game and wildlife, which had seen a decline in FE numbers and this was a positive in terms of the needs of employers.
98. In HE, the Committee noted growth in first years and top-ups but a decline in progression of year 1 and year 2 learners, linked to widening participation, which would be reported in more detail to the Quality & Standards Committee.
99. Asked about the College's vision for growth when the demographic trends improved, the Deputy Principal explained that the College continued to look at the needs of employers and the preferences of future learners, repositioning and reformulating the curriculum offer. There were some constraints in relation to working with the available

qualifications but the College was also active in influencing future developments and lobbying trade bodies and government.

100. Members recognised the challenges which faced the College, particularly in relation to the land-based curriculum, and commended the work being undertaken by management. It was suggested that the enrolment trend analysis, and any comparative data available, would be of interest to the wider Board given its impact on the College's financial performance, perhaps at a Governors' Seminar. A Member suggested that the Board might also want to hear from an external speaker from the land-based sector.

APPRENTICESHIP REFORM

101. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal – Corporate providing an update on the implications of changes to apprenticeship funding, content and management arrangements.
102. The Vice Principal, Corporate gave a recap of the process by which reduced funding allocations for May – December 2017 had been issued by the ESFA and reported a further round of due diligence in September for allocations from January 2018. Apprenticeship starts had significantly declined nationwide and the market place had been suppressed by this and the fact that levy paying employers had two years in which to spend their monies.
103. Another key change was the introduction of apprenticeship standards and the College expected to be in a position of deliver up to five new standards within six months, one of which was currently being tested as part of the new Electrical offer.
104. The Vice Principal, Corporate reported that management was developing an apprenticeships marketing strategy, targeting certain groups of employers and linked to the development of new apprenticeship standards, in order to be well placed once the funding allocation had been confirmed.
105. The Vice Principal, Corporate also explained that the level of risk to the College of using subcontractors, although closely managed, was rising because of the difficulties which subcontractors were experiencing within the current market and that this had had a negative impact on some College success rate. Despite the actions being taken by the College and depending on developments, there could become a need for the College to consider whether it could afford to work with subcontractors given the potential financial and reputational risks involved.
106. The Principal confirmed that the 2017/18 budget assumed the same level of apprenticeship income as in the previous year and therefore the uncertainty of funding and of the market place represented a financial risk.
107. The Committee noted that progress was being made amongst a consortium of colleges to form an organisation which, as previously reported to the Board of Governors, would work to develop end-point assessment models and buy end-point assessment services from within the group.

MARKETING

108. The Committee had received the report of the Marketing Manager reviewing the impact of the College's marketing strategy on 2017 recruitment and setting out the approach of the strategy going forward.

109. The Committee noted that the Marketing team was working well under the new Marketing Manager, and continuing to benefit from the strategic input of the Marketing Consultant, to execute a high volume of quality promotions and communications across all channels to the College's audiences in the four quadrants. The emphasis in 2017/18 would again be on conversion and therefore an improved student journey from application to enrolment. There was also a need to give extra focus to the Apprenticeships offer and to University Centre Sparsholt, alongside a continued push to overcome the demographic dip affecting recruitment to Sparsholt FE courses in particular.
110. Key points during the discussion covered the importance and measurability of the success digital marketing versus activities such as open days, whether the locality of the College was a factor in promoting its courses (not significantly) and the approach to marketing business training and apprenticeships to employers.
111. The Committee noted that a full strategy was being finalised for submission to the SLT and would follow to the Committee for information.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

112. The Committee noted that some of the performance data for employer responsible learner recruitment (including apprenticeships) and business opportunities was not available at this point of the term in the most recent Healthcheck report (2017/07).

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN

113. The Committee had received the report of the Clerk outlining the planned business for the Committee during 2017/18.
114. The Vice Principal, Corporate proposed that, in addition to the reports from management listed in the plan, the Committee receive reports on apprenticeship marketing and on employer engagement and activity delivered through the ESF (European Social Fund) project.
115. Asked about the EM3 LEP's Strategic Economic Plan, the Principal explained that the LEP had been consulting on its Industrial Strategy and that this was due to be published in 2018.
116. **Resolved** – that the 2017/18 annual business plan be approved, with the addition of the two reports from the Vice Principal, Corporate.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

117. The Committee Chair noted that it was last Committee meeting which would be attended by R Fawcett and thanked him for his valuable contributions as a Member of the Committee.
118. The Deputy Principal recognised the role played by R Fawcett during his time as a governor to bringing the curriculum to the fore, noting the value of reviewing and presenting data in the areas covered by the Committee's remit.
119. R Fawcett thanked his colleagues and emphasised the importance to the College of the areas covered by the Committee.
120. The meeting ended at 12.30 pm.