

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE
held on 22 FEBRUARY 2018

¹PRESENT Mr T Jackson (P); Mr S Morgan (E); Mr A Neal (E); Mr S Ward (E).

In attendance: Ms J Chapman, Marketing Manager (minutes 21 to 26)
Mrs S Grant, Vice Principal – Corporate
Mr M Simmons, Deputy Principal
Mrs K Williams, Head of Faculty, Equine & Sport
Mrs S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from C Duffy and S Eden.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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

MINUTES

3. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2017 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Enrolments (minute 93/17)

4. The Principal reported that he had contacted Landex to propose the collection of comparative data on enrolments in land-based courses and that, while Landex supported the concept, it was not clear yet when such an exercise might be undertaken.

Committee business plan (minute 114/17)

5. The proposed report on apprenticeship marketing had been postponed due to the ongoing uncertainty nationally about apprenticeship funding and delivery.

FE LEARNER DESTINATIONS

6. The Committee had received the report of the Deputy Principal providing an analysis of destinations for student leavers from FE programmes based on research undertaken by the College and data published by the Department for Education (DfE).
7. The Deputy Principal reported that destinations had featured as a strength in the feedback from the Ofsted team, following the College's inspection on 1 and 2 February.
8. The Deputy Principal explained that the most recent DfE data, published in January 2018, was for the academic year 2014/15, enabling a comparison with the first year that the College had collected internal data. The DfE data indicated that 84% of those leavers covered by the data had gone on to what is classified as a positive destination.
9. The Committee noted that the DfE data was intended to provide comparable information on the success of colleges in helping their young people to take the qualification which

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

offered them the best opportunity to continue in education, employment or training. Unfortunately, the DfE data was only of limited relevance to the College as it covered only about a third of the College's leavers and very few land-based courses because City of Guilds qualifications were excluded.

10. The Deputy Principal explained that it was important for the College to understand the destinations outcomes for a wider selection of its learners than the DfE data alone and to be able to explain this because the DfE data was publically available and could be used by the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and other bodies.
11. From the College's survey activity, 93% of destinations from July 2017 were "known" and the majority of these were positive; a significant improvement on the previous year. Progression into employment or education was around 91-96% for most Faculties and showed the College was supporting students to achieve positive outcomes from their courses.
12. The Deputy Principal explained the College had been less successful in confirming destinations with adult leavers and therefore the data for these was less robust.
13. The Committee noted that management had made good progress in establishing a destinations baseline from which to base future analysis and that the next step was to use the internal data to understand the variability of positive outcomes across the different faculties.
14. The Committee welcomed the attention given by College management to the collection and analysis of learner destinations information in providing evidence to help assess employer need, support curriculum planning and demonstrate successful outcomes for learners.

APPRENTICESHIP REFORM

15. 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.
16. The Vice Principal highlighted the risks arising from the changes in apprenticeship funding noting that, in common with the college sector, the College had been awarded a significantly reduced non-levy Apprenticeship funding allocation for "apprenticeship starts" (January 2018 to July 2019). This was likely to lead to a reduction of c45% in apprenticeship delivery unless the College was successful in working with many more levy paying businesses or able to achieve additional non-levy funding during the year.
17. The Committee discussed the impact of managing to a restricted non-levy apprenticeship allocation over an 18-month period and the actions being taken by management to minimise the financial impact and to maintain apprenticeship delivery.
18. Members also emphasised the need to protect learners and the Vice Principal explained the actions taken by the College in terms of monitoring associates and the interventions used by the College in circumstances where the outcome for learners was at risk.
19. The Deputy Principal highlighted a further future potential risk to the take-up of apprenticeships from the introduction of T-Levels (technical qualifications) which would include 10 weeks of work placements.

20. The Committee noted that the continued planning for transition to Apprenticeship Standards from the former Apprenticeships Frameworks was reported to be developing well.

MARKETING

21. The Committee had received the report of the Marketing Manager updating on the delivery of the annual Marketing Plan 2017/18 and in-year Marketing Metrics.
22. The Marketing Manager reported good progress on actions within the Marketing Plan and an emphasis in the next few months on conversion and therefore an improved student journey from application to enrolment. This included a project benchmarking best practice at another college. Extra focus was also planned on the College's employer responsive offer (though not specifically non-levy funded apprenticeships), University Centre Sparsholt and a continued push to overcome the demographic dip affecting recruitment to Sparsholt FE courses in particular.
23. The Principal noted that a new Schools Liaison Co-ordinator had been appointed to this existing role and would lead focus group activity to assess stakeholder perceptions and continue the active schools programme.
24. The Committee Chair sought more information on the actions being taken to increase applications and the Marketing Manager explained the communication activity in relation to internal progression, as part of a range of IAG (Information Advice and Guidance) for students.
25. The Head of Faculty – Equine & Sport gave the example of them College supporting external progression for Sports students by introducing an Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in liaison with Portsmouth University. This helped students to progress to university and was a way of differentiating the College's FE Sports offer from that of other colleges.
26. Responding to a question about the Creative Hub at Andover College, the Deputy Principal reminded Members about the Digital Futures initiative which sought to highlight digital and technical employability skills across a range of courses and noted the forthcoming Women into Digital event being hosted at Andover College for Year 9 school pupils.

ESIF EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

27. The Committee had received the report of the Vice Principal – Corporate on the delivery of European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) funded employer engagement activities being overseen by the College in the EM3 LEP area.
28. The Committee noted that College management had found the ESIF projects a useful way to assist the local market to upgrade its skills and in establishing some strong partnerships with local businesses. A number of challenges had arisen in delivering the projects due to changing funding rules for adult provision, onerous and changing paperwork requirements and the colleges need to also service their own ESFA funding allocations and the College had needed to be adept at finding ways to ensure the contracts were delivered. This had included involving private subcontractors in the delivery of the projects. College staff had also gained a stronger understanding of the long incubation period that employers need between acknowledging their skills need and acting upon it.

29. The Vice Principal – Corporate explained the reasons behind two of the projects (Skills Support for the Workforce and Skills Support for Redundancy) performing well and the third (Information, Advice and Guidance) having less success to date. In the case of the Workforce and Redundancy projects, the colleges were seeking additional “growth funds” from the ESFA. There were discussions taking place between the LEP and the ESFA as to the interpretation of the funding rules, with the LEP supportive of the colleges.

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

30. The Committee had received the report of the Principal, Deputy Principal and Vice Principal – Corporate on the College’s response to government policy initiatives in relation to work placements, T-Levels and Institutes of Technology.

Work placements

31. The Committee noted that the College had been successful in bidding for work placement funding for 2018/19 of c£450k, to be confirmed in March, to facilitate the build-up of capacity and capability to deliver the substantive external work placements required for T Levels. The funding required the delivery placements in 2018/19 for a minimum number of students on Level 2 and Level 3 study programmes, to be confirmed in March.

[Addendum: Subsequent to the meeting, on 28 February, the College was informed that the funding allocation would be £354,500.]

32. The report set out the DfE principles and guidelines for the work placements and information about future funding, including termly monitoring reports to the ESFA and student/employer satisfaction surveys. It was noted that management was reviewing current work experience arrangements and the infrastructure around apprenticeship employer liaison activity to devise an infrastructure which met the new requirements.
33. The Committee discussed the potential safeguarding issues around providing learners with 45-60 working days (minimum of 315 hours) of work placement with an employer, noting that this exceeded the 3-week maximum limit currently in place where employer DBS checks were not required and that this was a matter of concern which required collective consideration by the sector. The Principal confirmed that he had raised the issue with the Landex Quality & Curriculum Group and was considering options.
34. Members also discussed the challenges and logistics of providing high quality work placements. It was noted that the funding of £250 per student was intended to include special education needs and travel costs for qualifying students.
35. The Deputy Principal explained that other challenges included finding sufficient numbers of employers to take part, the level of skills and independence of the students involved and fitting the 10 weeks around the curriculum and Maths and English GCSEs. However, the early funding provided some time to develop new systems and relationships.
36. Asked how the College could attract businesses to take part, the Vice Principal explained management were considering integrating this with the apprenticeships liaison work to focus on the employers’ needs and the opportunities for employers of connecting with students at an earlier state of their education.

T Levels

37. The Principal reported that the government had published an invitation to express an interest in delivering the initial T Levels in January but that management had concluded that none of the initial three T Level Pilot offers (Building Services Engineering, Education

and Digital Software) were a good fit with the College's provision. Landex had responded to the government's occupational route maps consultation on behalf of the sector to encourage the development of an improved land-based skills offer in the Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care map.

38. Members sought further clarity on the Digital Software T-Level and the Deputy Principal explained that the type of skills covered were different to the digital skills offered at Andover College and that there was a lack of expertise in this area generally in General FE.
39. The Deputy Principal suggested that there was a future risk that T Levels would segment the A Level market, rather than attracting new cohorts of students who would not otherwise have studied A Levels.

Institutes of Technology

40. The Committee noted that, since September 2017, the DfE had published two expression of interest requests and a subsequent invitation to tender for the new Institutes of Technology (IoT). Interest had been high with over 100 expressions of interest submitted covering all LEP areas.
41. The Principal reported that the College had been working with Brooklands College and the EM3 LEP to bring together a consortium of partners and develop an IoT expression of interest which was submitted to the DfE. The DfE then invited all organisations with submissions to compete for funding through a newly published tender exercise. This clarified a number of requirements which led to the College and its partners concluding that they would be unsuccessful in progressing the project further, as initially conceived. For example, the institutions were now clarified as requiring a separate and distinct identity from parent or partner institution and a clear physical identity/location.
42. The Principal reported that the Principal of Brooklands College had therefore written to the DfE (on behalf of the colleges and universities) to indicate that it would reconsider and submit a proposition in the next round. One consideration was whether multi-site locations would be deemed as suitable.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

43. The Committee noted the most recent Healthcheck report (2018/01) and that there were no matters relevant to its remit which had not been covered elsewhere in the meeting.

COMMITTEE CHAIR

44. The Committee Chair reported that this would be his last meeting of the Committee as Chair.
45. The Committee Members and SLT thanked the Chair for his contribution to the development the Committee since it was first constituted three years ago, noting the relevance of the matters covered to the College and the work of the Board.
46. The meeting ended at 12.05 pm.