

Further Education Corporation

Approved Minutes

Minutes of a Meeting of the Further Education Corporation held at the Basildon Campus (Room E107/8) on Monday 6 October 2014 at 6.15 pm.

Present:

- Mr R Launder (Chairman)
- Mr D O'Halloran (Vice-Chairman)
- Ms O Buck
- Mr S Burrell
- Mrs S Carr
- Dr R Gray
- Mr Y Goolamali
- Mr R Hughes
- Mr T Knight
- Ms E Mead
- Mr B Morris
- Mr B Neagus
- Ms A O'Donoghue CBE
- Mr Paramjit Singh Narang
- Mr R Patterson
- Ms E Reeve
- Mr T Thompson
- Mrs G Williams

In Attendance:

- Mr A McGarel (Deputy Principal & Chief Executive)
- Ms D Brown (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality)
- Mrs W Barnes (Assistant Principal, Student Support)
- Ms C Anson-Higgs (Vice Principal, Business Development)
- Mr S Smith (Vice Principal, Corporate Resources)
- Mr R I Millea FCA (Clerk to the Corporation)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Ms R Hawkrige and Ms M West.

2. Urgent Business

There were no items of Urgent Business.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 7 July 2014

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 7 July 2014 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising

The Clerk to the Corporation reported that the Students' Union Constitution is in the process of being updated, including clarification of the description of the role of the Sabbatical Officer, and this will come to the Corporation in December for consideration.

5. Strategic Developments in South Essex (Paper FEC.14.21)

This was deemed to be a Confidential Item under the Instrument & Articles and a separate minute has been prepared in connection with this item and is attached to these minutes.

6. Audit & Risk Matters (Paper FEC.14.22)

On the recommendation of the Audit & Risk Committee, the Board **APPROVED** the Internal Audit Annual Report 2013-14, wherein the Internal Audit Service provided an unqualified opinion on the College's systems and controls during that year. This stated that South Essex College:

- Has adequate and effective risk management processes
- Has adequate and effective control processes
- Has adequate and effective governance processes

in order to manage its achievement of the College's objectives.

Further detail is in the minutes of the Committee (agenda item 11).

The Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee and the Clerk updated the Board regarding internal audit provision for the current academic year. The decisions of the Committee are outlined in the Confidential Minute of the Committee, attached at agenda item 11. It is based upon the Assurance Mapping approach, which the Board has previously discussed, and involves also the Curriculum & Quality Committee in the areas within its purview.

The Board **APPROVED** the Internal Audit Strategy 2014-15 as recommended by the Audit & Risk Committee.

7. Quality & Curriculum Matters (Paper FEC.14.23)

The Principal and Chief Executive and the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality presented a number of reports on Quality Matters, all of which had been discussed at the Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting on 22 September. They updated reports (a) and (d) below with most recent available data (to 26 September).

(a) Learner Numbers 2014-15

The Committee **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the report on enrolments thus far for the current year.

Following discussion of the trends, the Committee **APPROVED** the actions to meet or exceed the enrolment targets. In particular, the enrolment position and the course offering at Basildon will be closely examined to try and boost numbers. The Board was also advised that measures were in place to address any significant student drop out during the first six week period of this new academic year.

Overall, 16-18 in College enrolments are up by 4.4% across the College to 5,878 at present, which represents 91.4% of the College target of 7,068 set by the EFA. The remaining numbers will be delivered by College partners. Compared to last year at this stage, it was noted that in College learner numbers at Basildon have declined by 11.2%, Southend numbers are fairly constant and Thurrock numbers have increased by 33.9%, reflecting the opening of the new campus facilities this month.

There is confidence that the target will be met, along with our partners.

Total 19+ recruitment (2 599 across all campuses) has risen 18.5% compared to the same date last year, with Thurrock seeing a 71.2 rise (282 students), Southend up 21.6% but, again, Basildon substantially down (by 14.8% or 108 students).

There is also confidence that the funding allocation will be met on 19+ recruitment.

With the opening of the new Thurrock Campus, it is expected the numbers will rise further next year as word about the Thurrock experience spreads.

However, it was noted that a significant proportion of 19+ recruitment takes place throughout the year and the goal for the College is utilisation of the SFA allocation for these learners, not a target number of students.

Of these 2 599 learners, 250 have applied for a 24+ Advanced Learning Loan.

Members requested that the use of collaborative partners be on a selective basis, so that quality of their provision can be assured. SLT members confirmed that all partners go through a rigorous procurement process, which focuses on quality of provision.

(b) Performance Targets 2014-15

On the recommendation of the Curriculum & Quality Committee, the Board **APPROVED** the targets proposed for 2014/15. All are set above the latest National Averages (2012/13).

The majority of the academic targets were achieved for 2013/14, except for the College attendance target, subject to all results being finalised. All of the KPIs in place showed improvement with the key academic measures at or very close to national benchmarks. The 2014-15 targets are considered realistic but with fair challenge. The High Grade targets are to be revised once the results profile for 2013-14 is finalised.

Members noted that the College overall success rate has exceeded the target by 1.5 pp and represents an increase of 2.6pp over last year, although about 1pp below the National Average.

The College A/AS level results were disappointing, in fact declining from last year. Attendance improved by 2.6pp but fell short by 3.3% of the target of 90%. Retention exceed target by 0.4%, which is an increase of 4.1% on 2012/13.

Last year's performance against targets was **NOTED**.

(c) Quality Improvement Plan 2014/15

The Board had approved the Quality Improvement Plan for 2013-14 in October 2013 and it has been monitored during the year by the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

This paper provides final feedback against the Plan and outlines proposals for 2014-15.

The Paper was considered in detail by the Curriculum & Quality Committee at its meeting on 22 September and is presented to the Board by the Principal & Chief Executive. The Committee recommends approval of the KPI. The attached unapproved minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee give more detail of their scrutiny and are attached as part of agenda item 11.

A member asked whether all students yet have an effective on-line ILP: this is being audited and the Board will be informed once this audit has been completed. Members were extremely concerned that only 60% of staff had an appraisal within the deadline set last year. This is not acceptable and cultural change is required here amongst staff and managers.

The Curriculum & Quality Committee will monitor the QIP for 2014-15 regularly throughout the year. They will give particular scrutiny to the identified curriculum areas where there are concerns and targets are not being met – Engineering and Construction, Science, A Levels, Level 1 provision and English and Maths.

The Board **DISCUSSED** achievement of the Plan for 2013-14 and **APPROVED** the Plan for 2014-15.

(d) Initial Learner Performance 2013-14

The Board received a preliminary report on Learner Performance for 2013/14 from the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality and the Head of College Information Services, noting that many results have now been received. The deadline for results submission is the end of October.

The Board will receive a final Report on Learner Performance for last year at its next Meeting in December.

Generally, the outcomes were improved over last year on most programmes and on Apprenticeships. However, the GCE A Level and AS Level were below the national averages by 1.7pp and 6.5pp respectively - both groups had declined from 2012/13 by 2.5pp and 3.3pp respectively.

The results for A Level Maths and Science were poor, even taking into account national trends, but some other subjects had improved. General Studies was weak and this subject has now been discontinued.

Progression from AS to A2 is weak (only about 50%) and it is possible our provision is too widely dispersed amongst a relatively small overall cohort (around 250 students).

The Board was reminded that AS Levels will be abolished after this year and two year A Levels will be restored.

16-18 Long Level 3 Diplomas are up 7.6pp on a much larger cohort – they have now reached the National Average. Adults on these Diplomas have risen substantially and are now 2.1pp above the NA.

High Grades were greatly improved on 16-18 students and maintained at a high level at 19+.

Apprenticeship success is 4.3pp up on last year, 2.3% higher than NA and 1.3% above the College target. Advanced Apprenticeships are 7.4% higher than last year and level 2 Apprenticeships are 2.7% higher.

HE programmes achievement is 1pp above last year and appeals in process might lead to this rising further.

Some Level 1 provision has been poor and there were some poor achievements from some of our partners, which has been removed this year. The curriculum model is not fit for purpose and is being reviewed at the present time.

The Board was disappointed with the A/AS Level performance but noted that, in the context of the whole College, this is a relatively small cohort compared to overall 16-18 provision, where the results have considerably improved.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report, especially that most aspects of performance have risen over last year. This is most encouraging.

8. Staff Issues (Paper FEC.14.24)

The Board **RECEIVED** a Report from the Deputy Principal & Chief Executive on the restructuring of College Management, Pay recommendations for 2014/15 and potential industrial action by certain staff.

Members **NOTED** the new management structure charts.

The Board considered a proposal not to make a 1% pay award to all staff but to cap a 1% cost of living increase so that it only applies to staff currently receiving up to £29,727 per annum, which excludes all managers. In addition, incremental payments based on a range of performance measures will be made to those staff who have made real progress meeting College targets. Salaries will be adjusted as from 1 August 2014. Members noted that this should be used to reward excellent performance which did occur last year as evidenced by the improved results in some areas.

There is sufficient allowance in the College Budget for 2014/15 to cover a 1% rise in pay for those earning under £29,727 and appropriate incremental payments to reward good performance.

The Board noted that all unions, except for UCU, have accepted national negotiations. UCU have called strike action for 14 October based on a previous ballot. This ballot is being contested at law by the Association of Colleges. The College will make relevant plans to cope with this proposed action with the objective of keeping the College open for students. Staff who strike will have pay deducted. Finally, given UCU's dispute over pay, the planned cost of living increase for union members (academic staff) will be withheld until this national dispute is resolved. Board members noted that the proposed College pay increase, as described, above is in line with the AoC national offer.

It was confirmed that substantially there are no differences between standard rates of pay for staff at equivalent levels between the three campuses, but there are some incremental anomalies, which are being worked through.

The Board **NOTED** the management restructure and the potential industrial action and **APPROVED** the pay recommendations.

9. Finance Matters (Paper FEC.14.25)

(a) Performance Targets

The Board **APPROVED** College targets (finance and staff) on the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee for the 2014/15 year. These targets continue to reflect the objectives in the Strategic Plan 2013/16.

(b) College Finances

The Board **NOTED** the financial outturn of the College for the year ended 31 July 2014 and the Investments Report for the year, which had been reported and scrutinised by the Policy & Resources Committee at its recent meeting.

10. Annual Review of Confidential Papers (Paper FEC.14.26)

The Clerk presented his Report on the above topic, following the principles which the Board had approved last year.

The Board **APPROVED** the Report.

11. Minutes of Committee Meetings (Paper FEC.14.27)

The Board **RECEIVED** copies of unapproved minutes of Committee Meetings held since the last Board Meeting in July, together with a verbal report on the business of the Remuneration and Search & Governance Committees held early today.

The Clerk provided a verbal report on the Meeting of the Search & Governance Committee earlier today and asked Members to return Members' Self-Evaluation forms, Governor Self-Assessment Forms and Chairman's Appraisal Forms as quickly as possible as these processes are to be completed by the time of the next Board Meeting in December.

The Board was informed to send the Chairman's Appraisal Forms to the Vice-Chairman, who is co-ordinating the process.

12. Corporation Matters (Paper FEC.14.28)

- a. The Board **APPROVED** revised Scheme of Delegation and College Standing Orders, following the annual review having been undertaken by the Clerk.
- b. The Board **DISCUSSED** the schedule of Governor Links. It was agreed that the Principal & Chief Executive would review the current links in the light of those curriculum areas, which have underperformed, to ensure governor focus is given to those areas. Members did ask that they be given at least two weeks' notice of curriculum review meetings so that they can plan their attendance.
- c. The Board noted that all Committees had reviewed their Terms of Reference and the Board **APPROVED** the revised Terms arising from those reviews for Policy & Resources and Curriculum & Quality Committees. Amended Terms for the remaining Committees will be submitted for approval at the December Board Meeting.
- d. Board Members were sent a copy of a recent publication from the Department of Business, Innovation & Skills entitled College Governance: A Guide.

13. Forthcoming Events (Paper FEC.14.29)

The Board **NOTED** the contents of the paper prepared by the Clerk.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 8 December 2014 at the Southend Campus at 6.00 pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 8.20 pm.

Signed.....Dated.....