

## **Further Education Corporation**

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### **Approved Minutes**

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Further Education Corporation held at the Thurrock Campus on Monday 18 January 2016 at 4.50 pm.

Present: Mrs G Williams (Vice-Chairman - in the Chair)  
Ms S Bridle  
Mr B Brooks  
Ms O Buck  
Mrs S Carr  
Dr R Gray  
Mr T Knight  
Mr R Launder  
Dr G Ocen  
Ms A O'Donoghue CBE  
Mr R Patterson (till 5.10 pm)  
Mr T Thompson  
Ms M West

In Attendance: Mr A McGarel (Deputy Principal & Chief Executive)  
Ms D Brown (Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality)  
Ms K Mulvey (Director of Teaching & Learning)  
Mr M Twitchett (Assistant Principal, Learning & Standards)  
Mr R I Millea (Clerk to the Corporation)  
Mrs S Mack (Assistant Clerk to the Corporation)

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D O'Halloran (Chairman), Mr S Burrell, Mr T Thompson, Ms A Clarke and Ms L Rieffel.

(N.B. Ms A Clarke attended the Meeting (covering the SAR and the QAA Review) immediately prior to this Meeting, between 2.30 and 4.30 pm)

Mrs W Barnes (Vice Principal, Student Support) was present during the SAR Meeting between 2.30 and 4.30 pm.

### **2. Urgent Business**

a. *This was deemed to be a Confidential Item and a separate minute has been prepared and is attached to these minutes.*

b. Jungle Cats Nursery

The Board had been notified last week of the intention of the College to close the Jungle Cats Nursery operated by the College and the end of this academic year.

A number of Members expressed concern about this decision, whilst recognising it is an operational matter, and felt it was something on which the Board should consider.

The Principal and Chief Executive explained that there were a number of reasons behind the decision, the principal one being the need for more teaching space at the Southend Campus. In addition, she mentioned:

- There is no nursery at either of the College's other two campuses
- Most FE Colleges no longer operate nurseries although it was common some years ago
- The SLT had considered the effect of the closure on staff/students who use the nursery for their children but noted it has an external clientele as well
- It is not an issue of quality as the nursery is very well run
- The nursery covers its direct costs but makes no contribution to overheads
- Staff are paid a living wage
- Financial assistance will still be available for those parents who qualify in using another local provider
- The College has looked at helping the nursery set up as an independent organisation but the finances are not viable for that
- Parents have been given six months' notice
- Students have placements in the nursery

The College has entered into a Consultation and due to the number of potential redundancies an HR1 form has been submitted to the Insolvency Service.

A Member asked for the number of staff/students affected by the closure and this information will be provided to the Board.

**ACTION: Wendy Barnes**

In the light of the above, the Board **NOTED** the decision taken, with regret.

### **3. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 7 December 2015**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 7 December 2015 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chair of the Meeting.

### **4. College Self-Assessment Report 2014-15 (Paper FEC.16.01)**

The Principal and Chief Executive and the Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality presented the College Self-Assessment Report for 2014-15 for consideration by the Board.

*The Board had met immediately preceding this formal meeting to validate the draft College Self-Assessment Report for 2014-15 in detail and also to receive a presentation on the forthcoming QAA HE Review.*

The Board was reminded of the process by which the SAR is produced and that it is compiled in 'Ofsted' style. It has been reviewed by Graeme Blench, Vice Principal, from East Durham College and by Janet Mercer, the Ofsted Inspector who is supporting us in improvement to provide an external perspective on the document. They have both given feedback on the report, some of which has been incorporated into this final version presented to Governors but some is still to be done, eg. Executive Summary suggested by HMI. The external challenge is to give assurance to Governors on the robustness of the Report and the conclusions drawn therein.

The Report includes the data relating to Learner Performance 2014-15 which was provided to the Board (Paper FEC.15.30(b)) at its December Meeting. The Board was informed that some amendments were made to the December data, which reduced the headline success rate by 0.5%.

The Board noted that the National Averages used in the Report are for 2013/14 and the NAs for 2014/15 will not be available until March 2016. It is expected they will show reductions from 2013/14 due to the inclusion of Maths & English success rates in Colleges, which is known to be poor in many cases.

The Board wished to be given this information when released so that further context can be given to our results last year, but they noted that the areas which did badly compared to the previous year cannot attribute that slippage to purely Maths & English. There were other important reasons.

Governors were assured that all the key weaknesses and action points are reflected in the Quality Improvement Plan (next item on the agenda).

The College has again self-assessed as Grade 3 – Requires Improvement. It was noted that an Ofsted Improvement Visit is to take place on 28 January and the outcome will be reported to the Curriculum & Quality Committee on 29 February and the full Board in March.

This overall grading is primarily driven by the reduction in the overall headline success rate from 79.9% in 2013/14 to 75.3% in 2014/15. Although 19+ success improved by 1.3 pp, to a figure slightly above the NA benchmark, success rates for 16-18 declined from 78.9% to 71.9%, a drop of 7pp, and well below the NA benchmark of 84.7%.

The fall can be largely attributed to Maths & English delivery and it is noted that the NA benchmark is a year out of date and when the figures for 2014/15 are available in March 2016, it is expected that the NA benchmark will be lower, reflecting the national effect of poor Maths & English performance, which is a continuing significant challenge to all Colleges.

The SAR concludes that the overall effectiveness of the College provision **requires improvement** because:

- Too many curriculum areas where leadership and management did not adequately support learners
- Learner outcomes too low
- Too much Teaching, Learning and Assessment still requires improvement, lack of planning and lack of challenge of learners in some areas
- Too much teacher-led activity slowing learner progress in developing thinking skills and deepening their understanding of the subject matter
- Unsatisfactory attendance and punctuality, particularly in English and Maths
- English & Maths poor in too many areas
- Weak embedding of E&D in lessons
- Insufficient work experience placements available for all 16-18 students

The Board **APPROVED** the College Self-Assessment Report 2014-15, subject to amendments noted during the SAR Validation meeting preceding this meeting being included therein. A final copy of the Report will be made available to the Board with the minor amendments included.

**ACTION: DENISE BROWN**

The Board noted that the Report in its present form will be part of the material considered during the Ofsted improvement Visit on 28 January (a draft having already been provided to the HMI).

The Board were cognisant of the fact that, should the College receive a Requires Improvement judgement (Grade 3) by Ofsted at the next inspection due in late 2016, this would lead to intervention by the FE Commissioner.

## **5. Quality Improvement Plan 2015-16 (Paper FEC.16.02)**

The Board had approved the QIP 2015-16 in principle at its Meeting on 7 December 2015, with the caveat that it may need amending pursuant to finalising the SAR and including a number of comments made by the Curriculum & Quality Committee on 9 November.

The updated QIP was tabled for discussion and approval.

The Key College Themes for the year were identified in the Report:

- Further improve the quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment particularly in Construction, Engineering and A Levels
- Maths & English improvement at all levels
- Improve outcomes for all students particularly at Level 1 and Level 2
- Improve Retention, Punctuality and Attendance in all areas of the College
- Improve Assessment for Learning and Feedback to students (tracking and monitoring)
- Increase numbers of students undertaking external work experience and develop students' personal social wellbeing and behaviour
- Improve the capacity and capability of middle managers

The QIP has been produced to address the key weaknesses from the SAR. Governors challenged the lack of milestones in the plan to enable them to monitor progress against the actions. It was agreed where possible milestones would be inserted.

The QIP will be monitored by Curriculum & Quality Committee and will be reported to the main Board.

Governors asked questions about the actions being taken to improve Work Placement opportunities. This is a continuing challenge and a real struggle to meet the objectives. A dedicated Work Placement Team has been appointed to help make every effort to meet the target for this year. Clear actions have been identified to meet this target.

The Improvement HMI recommended we put in some Actions outlining how we will support new managers and improve the capability of existing managers. This will be included in the QIP.

The Senior Leadership Team believe the QIP properly and thoroughly addresses the issues highlighted in the 2014-15 SAR with a view to enabling the College to progress to Grade 2 at the next Ofsted inspection at the end of this calendar year.

The Board **APPROVED** the Quality Improvement Plan 2015-16, subject to the agreed changes identified by the Ofsted Inspector and the Board, and charged the Curriculum & Quality Committee with monitoring progress against it.

**6. Academic Performance Targets 2015-16 (Paper 16.03)**

The Board approved these targets in principle at its Meeting in December 2015, subject to additional targets being felt necessary following completion of the SAR 2014-15. Accordingly, two new targets have been amended in connection with High Needs Learners 16-18 and Adults.

A revised set of Targets was circulated by the Principal & Chief Executive.

Noted that Achievement 2014/15 replaces the old category of Success Rates  
Noted that NAs are not 2014/15 but 2013/14 and 2014/15 figures will be available in March 2016. It is confidently expected that 2014/15 Maths & English NAs will be lower than the previous year and the others may well do also.

The Board **APPROVED** the Academic KPIs for 2015-16, with the proviso that all targets except for HE be revisited when the 2014/15 NAs are available.

**ACTION: DENISE BROWN**

**7. Basildon Project – Landowners’ Agreement (Paper FEC.16.04)**

*This was deemed to be a Confidential Item and a separate minute has been prepared and is attached to these minutes.*

**10. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 21 March 2016 at Thurrock at 6.00 pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 5.50 pm.

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