

CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENTS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES PART 1

Date: 12th October 2023

Venue: Board Room, Poplar

Time: 5:30pm

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| **Chair** | | Marilyn Hawkins |
| **Corporation Members** | | Claire Baker, Paul Crossey (Co-opted), Ruth Gilbert, Gerry McDonald, Brijesh Patel, Rob Hull (Observer), Philida Schellekens, Sue Williams QPM |
| **Officers** | | Principal Redbridge & Epping: Narzny Khan  Principal Poplar & Hackney: Alison Arnaud  Principal Havering: Janet Smith  Interim Principal: Ian Fitzpatrick  Head of Governance – Havering: Cathy Horne |
| **Apologies** | | Sue Williams QPM |
| **Director of Governance** | | Elsa Wright |
| **Item No** | **Item of business** | |
| **PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS** | | |
|  | **Chair’s Welcome & Opening Remarks**  The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. | |
|  | **Apologies for Absence**  None. | |
|  | **Declaration of Interests**  There were no declarations of interest. | |
|  | **Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27th June 2023**  The minutes were **agreed** as drafted. | |
|  | **Matters Arising and Action Points from the Meeting**  There were no matters arising from the minutes that were not covered by the agenda.  The Director of Governance confirmed that the areas requiring work placements (item 1 on the action plan) would be brought to the November meeting. | |
| **ITEMS FOR CHALLENGE, MONITORING & REVIEW** | | |
|  | **Partnerships, Subcontracting and Employer Engagement Report**  The Principal and CEO reported on the performance of subcontracted, partnership and engagement activity for the academic year 2022/23.  Members were reminded that the college subcontracted 16-18 provision to Orthodox Jewish (OJ) Communities as part of a long-term relationship. Quality remained good, retention rates, at 99%, were above the national average of 93%. Achievement was predicted to be 96% once all results were processed, and A Level results were excellent. Overall achievement for the Adult Education Budget (AEB), subcontracting through seven partners, was predicted to be 85-86%. Retention rates were 91.5%, slightly above national average. For 2023/24, contracts had been issued for 16-18 to a value of £2.486m to four OJ schools. The contract with Access to Music would not be renewed. Contracts to a value of £200k had been issued to two AEB partners, Cano Training and the Skills Network. Members noted that subcontracting provision had been significantly reduced for 2023/24, down from 7% to 1% of the College’s total AEB budget, but was well managed with good controls in place, and low risk. A Member questioned the support in place for students at the OJ schools and was informed that responsibility was the same as any other student in NCC. Significant and sensitive work had been carried out around Safeguarding and Prevent. Members noted the controls in place including visits, interviews with students, and quality checks. | |
|  | **Annual Community Engagement Report**  Members were reminded that they had a duty to ensure the College had an effective strategy for engaging with a wide range of community stakeholders and understood the breadth of work and its impact. A relevant strategic objective for NCC was in place and evidence provided in the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) as well as the Accountability Statement, and Social Inclusion and E&D reports. Following discussion, the Board agreed with the Principal and CEO’s suggestion that a section of the SAR should address the broad range of stakeholder and community engagement across the College and that Community Engagement would be discussed in detail at the November meeting.  **ACTION: Community Engagement report to be included at the November meeting and Members to agree how impact will be monitored.** | |
|  | **Termly HE Report**  The Principal Hackney and Poplar gave a brief history of HE provision within NCC for the benefit of new Members and confirmed that its growth was a strategic ambition for the College. For 2022/23, 90% of completing learners achieved a qualification. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) run by the Office for Students (OfS) had rated the College as Requiring Improvement, however this was largely due to small numbers and non-university set up. The College had submitted an appeal, along with 52 other providers. Members noted that there was no direct financial implication but there was potential for reputational impact.  For 2023-24, there had been a slight increase in numbers with 72 learners continuing and 90 learners on new courses. Two courses, BA(Hons) Early Years Childcare & Education and HND Graphic Design, had closed. Bath Spa University London (BSUL) had moved into D Block at Hackney with the University Centre Director managed by both parties.  The Principal Hackney and Poplar described three strands of work going forward – the Bath Spa partnership; London Met defined initiatives; and NCC standalone provision. She confirmed that there were joint plans in place with Bath Spa and high ambition for the HE provision.  **ACTION: Further report to be brought to the December Corporation.** | |
|  | **Enrolment and Start of Term**  The Principal and CEO confirmed that the enrolment period had been successful and it was predicted that the College would exceed its funded allocation for 16-18 by more than 400 students, with the current projection standing at 9400 students. Adult enrolment was also good with 10,690 individual learning aims, compared to 9,500 at the same point in the previous year. ESOL demand was strong, accounting for 40% of adult enrolments. The full year target remained at 16,300. There were concerns for 2024/25 as adult funding was reducing.  Growth at Redbridge was significant, with learner numbers up by 20% on the previous year. This was due to improved quality, good relationships with local schools, and improved reputation. The College was now the first choice for many students in the area. Members noted that there were high numbers of Looked After Children (LAC) at Redbridge. Poplar, Atlee, Epping, Havering 6th Form, Rainham and the GFE had also recruited well.    At Hackney enrolments were down, reflecting local competition and decreasing numbers of 16-18 year olds in the area. The Local Authority were closing up to 11 schools due to low numbers of students so this was not a short-term problem. There had also been a radical overhaul of both the curriculum and the campus which had impacted on numbers with some provision moving to other campuses.  The beginning of term had been positive at all campuses in terms of behaviour with a calm and positive start to the year. There had been significant growth in Business, Science, ICT & Creative, and Construction and Engineering.  A Member questioned the process for potential students declaring criminal convictions and was informed that a question was asked during the enrolment process. Should a student choose to withhold the information and it was later discovered, the College could withdraw their place.  Another Member commented that the growth across the campuses was impressive, as was the mobilisation of that growth. | |
|  | **Interim End of Year Achievement Rates – Presentation**  The Principal Havering presented the interim Achievement Rates (AR) for 2022-23, commenting that NCC had a good trend of improving achievement, even throughout the unstable pandemic years. In contrast to the National Provider Rate (NR) of 83.3%, College AR had been sustained at just above 87% across 37,000 individual qualifications. For 16-18, NCC were 4.1 pp above NR, and for 19+ NCC were 1.9 pp above NR. In response to questioning, she confirmed that comparisons were made across campuses, as well as by curriculum area, to ensure consistency.  The Principals took Members through the headline data for each campus, identifying strong performances and areas for improvement. It was noted that there was a correlation between dips in performance and staffing shortages during the year. Rainham, in particular, had serious staffing issues which had now been resolved. Achievement at Redbridge and for ESOL provision across the Group was Outstanding. Key curriculum areas targeted for improvement were Construction and Engineering, with achievement at Rainham targeted for intervention in 2023-24. The Chair requested a deep dive into the issues around Construction, Engineering and the Rainham Campus at the next meeting.  Referring to the overall achievement rates by SSA, there were four amber areas which were slightly below NR, but no red areas. This was partly due to the way that the SSA areas were shown with some performance in Green rated areas slightly below NR. Members noted excellent performance in English and Maths GCSE, with the MIDES report, received that day, demonstrating performance at 10 pp above any other 16+ provider.  Emerging data for apprenticeships showed good improvement of 9.8 pp on 2021-22 with a current prediction of 63.1%, compared to a NR of 51.7%.  **ACTION:**   * **Agenda item for the next meeting to explore the issues around Construction, Engineering and the Rainham Campus.** | |
|  | **Emerging Themes**  The Principal Havering, confirmed that the full SAR would be brought in November once all achievements had been confirmed. The structure followed the Education Inspection Framework and was a key document for driving improvements. Overall, the College remained a Good provider with some curriculum areas having outstanding achievements. Areas identified in the 2021/22 SAR showed good improvement and would continue to be a focus for intervention. Provision in Construction and Engineering continued to have poor outcomes and was the key area highlighted for improvement in 2023/24, along with A Level provision. There had been progress around achievement rates at Ardleigh Green, particularly for Health Care and Early Years, but ongoing poor performance continued and would be a key theme. | |
|  | **QIP Report**  Members were informed by the Principal Havering that this was the final Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) report from the 2022/23 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and that any remaining areas would be taken forward into the QIP for 2023/24. She confirmed that there had been good progress in most of the areas targeted for action. Two areas remained Red – attendance, particularly for English and Maths GCSE, and slow progress in improving achievement for Construction and Engineering.  A Member challenged the management team on actions and impact around attendance. The Principal and CEO explained that there was a new attendance strategy with clearer roles and consistency. The focus was on the root causes of poor attendance. He pointed out that all non-attendance counted as absence, regardless of the reason. Referring to English and Maths attendance, the Principal Tower and Hackney explained that work had been carried out during induction to change failure mindsets and that the College was exploring the use of Kandinsky art with students and teachers. | |
|  | **Equality and Diversity Monitoring Report**  Presenting the report, the Principal Hackney and Poplar, confirmed that it was designed to provide assurance to Governors that no learner, staff member or stakeholder was disadvantaged by any defined characteristic. Additionally, that additional potential barriers arising from the pandemic were identified and addressed, and that opportunities to celebrate the diversity of the college community were embraced.  Members noted the actions identified in 2022/23 had resulted in improved outcomes for white males, female LAC learners and learners of black Caribbean heritage. The improvement for black Caribbean females was largely due to improvements in Health and Social Care which demonstrated that the issue may not have been EDI but as a direct result of curriculum issues.  The Principal Hackney and Poplar explained that the gap had been closed in relation to staff/student diversity. Responses to the LOOP survey had been positive. Improvements across the board could be demonstrated.  Four actions had been identified for 2023/24 in addition to the overall objectives and would be reported on through regular E&D reports.   1. A Member asked for adult achievement rates to be included in the 2023/24 report. It was noted that these were reported in the same way but did not have the same pastoral overview.   **ACTION POINT:**   * **Adult achievement rate to be included in the report for 2023/24.** | |
| **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS – SEE PART 2 MINUTES** | | |
| **12.** | **AOB**  There were no items of any other business. | |
| **13.** | **Date of Next Meeting**  28th November 2023 at 5.30 pm | |

*The meeting closed at 7.37 pm*