

GOVERNING BODY

QUALITY AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 28th June 2011 at 6:15 pm at Parkshot, Richmond

Present:	Ms Sally Field (Chair) Ms Christina Conroy OBE, Principal and Chief Executive Mr Alberto Esguevillas Lete Dr Michael Sevitt Mr Sebastian Scotney Ms Lesley Kirby, non-Governor member
In attendance:	Ms Gabrielle Flint, Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) Ms Judith Potter, Vice Principal (Finance & Corporate Services) Mr Paul Coveney, Clerk to the Governing Body & College Secretary
Apologies:	Ms Louise Ellis, Director of Quality & Assessment

Part I: Non-Confidential Items

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 24th March 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING

Item 6: the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) made a verbal report on learner events during Adult Learners' Week in the week commencing 16th May 2011. There had been a number of events, planned as part of a pilot, which had been used to explore the extent to which events could raise the profile of the College, raise funds, attract learners to enrol on courses, and provide learner enrichment in line with common inspection framework requirements. The events had included a prize giving for Ceramics, a Jazz "Head to Head", a Classical Music concert, a Business Enterprise event and a Fun Run planned for July 2nd. They had demonstrated potential for attracting ASL enrolments, and attendees (both learners and staff) had given very positive feedback. Although the events were deemed a success, there were a number of learning points for the College:

- Events needed to be well planned and promoted over a longer period of time in order to achieve their potential for learner numbers and income.
- Additional resource was required to ensure information was displayed in an accurate and timely manner both before and after the event. Additional staffing is planned for web activities.
- Marketing methods had been reliant on the web. The College needed to find ways of attracting new learners, in addition to repeat learners, by promoting through more channels and networks.
- There could not be complete reliance on volunteers to run events: there needed to be a link to a curriculum area and its staff in order to ensure effective resource management and professionalism. Volunteers need to be recruited and trained as an additional resource.
- Events could provide income generating opportunities, but the College needed to be appropriately resourced to exploit this potential. In addition to clear responsibilities for staff and volunteers, facilities such as the bar required organisation so that the college provided good customer service and did not lose an income opportunity.
- Different pay rates might need to be used as current teaching pay rates might not adequately meet the expectations of the business and entertainment sectors that events fell into, which might make it difficult for the college to attract appropriate speakers etc. Revisions to the existing College Pay policy would need to be considered.

The College had appointed a Facilities and Events Officer and was working on an annual plan of events that have a link to different faculties so that staffing and management requirements are spread evenly between faculties. A cost and income budget would be used to ensure that events represented effective use of resources.

The College was also engaging with the Portcullis Trust, in order to develop complementary strategies and market messages.

The Committee noted the verbal report on College events during Adult Learners Week.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none.

4. **CLASS OBSERVATIONS BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Clerk reported that two Committee members (Sally Field and Mike Sevitt) had attended a programme during Adult Learners week, as had other Governors: Toyin Allen, Amanda Rowlatt, David Sidonio, Geoff Varrall, and Tim Woolmer.

The Committee asked what Governor feedback the College had received, to which the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) replied that she had de-briefed all the visits. In general, Governors had been impressed by the skills and abilities of many learners, the demands of the FE curriculum delivery, and the skills of tutors, as well as those helping supported Learning students. The Committee considered that such programmes provided valuable training for Governors, and requested the Clerk to circulate those Governors who had not yet attended to ask for their availability early in the Autumn term 2011/12.

Clerk

The Committee noted the class observation update.

5. **CURRICULUM STRATEGY**

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) advised the Committee that the main message from the previously distributed papers was the impact that changes in SFA funding regulations had had, and would continue to have, on the College's curriculum. The benefit of the new freedoms and flexibility had been more than discounted by the reduction in the numbers of funded qualifications. This had been exacerbated by the removal of funded qualifications in-year: the College had not been able to draw down funding for courses which, at the start of the year, had been funded. Further changes would take place in the coming years: who would be funded; what would be funded; and the level at which it would be funded. For example, in 2011/12, the funding per head would be 11% lower than in 2010/11: the College would need to increase the number of learners on a course to generate the required funding, with consequent risks to retention and achievement levels.

The Committee noted that the current and continuing volatility in the funding environment represented the biggest strategic challenge to the College and its FE provision.

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that the College was taking steps to mitigate the funding reductions. By way of example, the move towards College Devised Employer Provision (designed to contribute to an enterprise agenda for local SME's, self employed and unemployed people) had generated extra funding in 2010/11 for courses that were currently unfunded rather than FE, and the College was bidding for an SFA grant to develop a new suite of such FE qualifications for 2011/12 and beyond.

The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) reported that the College had been able to do some funding modelling on the 2011/12 curriculum using better reporting services on the Corero REMS system: the details of this were included with the curriculum strategy paper, and they indicated that planned provision exceeded that planned for 2010/11 as more qualifications are now available. However this presumed that all courses would run with a minimum of 10 participants which would indicate a shortfall as a result of course closures. However, there was a limit to the number of possible outcomes that could be modelled, especially when change happened so regularly and so rapidly. IT and foundation learning programmes using accredited units of qualifications and a new employer offer that offers short adult funded courses rather than NVQs were also being developed to mitigate any shortfall in recruitment.

The Committee noted that the College had developed its prospectus earlier than in previous years, but that it must be difficult for the College to be sure which courses in the prospectus would actually run.

The Vice Principal (Curriculum and Quality) reported that, unlike the ASL curriculum, the FE ALR offer was not based on repeatable courses: the College had to show progression, and

funding would be increasingly dependent on outcomes and especially progression to employment. Training providers tended to have closer links to employers and would find this an advantage. This could create additional competition for RACC.

In addition, the 'new flexibilities' in funding are being extended to training providers from August 1st. This means that they can use their funding to offer classroom based learning which has traditionally been the remit of colleges (although these organisations have had access to this funding since 2000). From 2012/12 funded outcomes will include progression to FE or HE which is where colleges have an advantage.

The Committee found the report interesting and thought-provoking.

The Committee noted the Curriculum Strategy progress report.

6. **LEARNER FEEDBACK**

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that, with improved learner feedback mechanisms now in place, the College had appointed a Learner Information and Services Manager, and was also conducting a review of all front-line services, in consultation with all the front-line staff. The future use and exploitation of learner feedback would be a significant factor in this review. The Committee requested a report on the review at its next meeting.

Clerk

The Committee asked what was meant by "the development of retail outlets". The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) explained that this referred to building on the current Clifden shop (staffed by Supported Learning students) to open physical and virtual sales channels for learners to market their artefacts, as well as using an e-shop to develop buying and selling skills.

The Committee noted the learner feedback report.

7. **HE PROVISION**

The Committee noted the previously distributed paper showing the Executive Summary from the IQER report, following the inspection, which had taken place during Adult Learners Week. The report showed that the quality of the College's HE provision was high, with examples of particular good practice, and only a small number of low-level recommendations. This was a good result for the College, and the Committee expressed its congratulations to those who had been involved in the inspection.

GF

The Committee noted the Integrated Quality Enhancement Review of Higher Education provision.

8. **EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE AWARDS**

The Committee noted that the College had decided not to apply for the liP standard at present, especially in view of resource constraints, and considered that this appeared a sensible decision.

The Principal reported that the College had a new HR Officer, and that HR was working well, but that another year was needed for processes to become embedded: a complete liP reassessment would require considerable time and effort, and it was not clear what the real value would be.

The Committee noted the external quality assurance report.

9. **RISK MANAGEMENT**

The College Secretary reported that there had been an Internal Audit Service review of the College's risk management arrangements. The review had been positive, but there had been one medium level recommendation, which the College had accepted. The effect would be that, for 2011/12, the format of the risk register would be simplified, with a greater focus on a reduced number of measurable performance indicators: actions would be specifically targeted at improving the PI's, and there would be the ability to add new risks in-year when necessary.

The Committee noted the risk management report.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Committee considered a previously distributed paper related to the LBRuT Sixth Forms Forum. Headteachers remained concerned at the level of funding available for sixth form provision. Two academies were considering some provision in 2012/13, but other schools were unlikely to be ready before 2013/14. Premises remained a big issue: schools were reluctant to reduce their 11- 16 intake in order to accommodate a sixth form. The Committee

noted that this issue would have little impact on the College.

The meeting ended at 7:30 pm

Following the meeting, the Chair noted that this had been the last meeting of 2010/11. She expressed her thanks to the other members for their contributions to the business of the Committee, and to the College staff. In particular, she thanked the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) for her assiduous service as Lead Executive for the Committee.

CHAIR