

GOVERNING BODY

QUALITY AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday, 24th March 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 Ms Lesley Kirby, non-Governor member
In attendance:	Ms Gabrielle Flint, Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) Ms Janet Croney, Learning Director (Faculty of Creative & Cultural Studies) <i>[Items 1 to 4]</i> Mr Paul Coveney, Clerk to the Governing Body & College Secretary
Apologies:	Mr Sebastian Scotney Ms Judith Potter, Vice Principal (Finance & Corporate Services) Ms Louise Ellis, Director of Quality & Assessment

Before opening the meeting, the Chair welcomed Janet Croney, and all present introduced themselves briefly.

Part I: Non-Confidential Items

1. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting on 4th November 2010 were, with a minor amendment to correct a typing error, approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2. MATTERS ARISING

- There were none that were not covered on the agenda.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

As Headteacher of Richmond Park Academy, Lesley Kirby declared an interest in item 4. The Committee decided that, as this was an information item only, there was no reason for her to withdraw during its consideration.

4. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENTS

The Learning Director (Faculty of Creative & Cultural Studies) reported that she had the lead College responsibility for 14 – 19 provision: as such, she was a member of the LBRuT Curriculum Development Group (CDG), which normally met once per term but which had recently held an extraordinary meeting to review sixth form provision within the borough.

The Committee noted that LBRuT was unique among London boroughs in having no sixth forms in its schools: all LBRuT children were guaranteed a place at RuTC for their sixth form education. However, it was the policy of the newly elected council majority to provide sixth form education in secondary schools in the borough, which were five LBRuT schools and three academies.

The CDG had considered that the earliest feasible date for the introduction of school sixth form provision was September 2013, which was also the date on which (in accordance with the Education & Skills Act 2008) the participation age would be raised to 17.

The Committee asked what were the implications for the College, to which the Principal replied that it provided contextual information: 16-18 provision in the borough would be undergoing considerable structural change over the next few years, which would have direct consequences for RuTC and possible indirect consequences for the College itself. She tabled a LBRuT email she had received that day which said that the borough consultation on school sixth form provision would open the following Monday: there was uncertainty as to the immediate future, which implied that 16-18 provision (already small in the College) was unlikely to be a strategic focus in that period.

The Committee noted that there was less impact on the College's 14-16 provision, which was already being withdrawn back to schools (who saw a need to retain the funding). Principal

The Committee requested that it should be updated as and when there was any significant development in the local 16 – 18 provision.

The Committee noted the report on developments on sixth forms in schools.

5. **CLASS OBSERVATIONS BY COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Clerk reported that he had that day agreed with the PA to the Vice Principals that all Governors would be asked to state their availability for the early part of next term. The plan was that Governors would be hosted by a Learning Director, who would ensure that they saw a cross-section of College provision during the visit, which would end with a de-brief by the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality).

Clerk

The Committee noted the class observation update.

6. **CURRICULUM STRATEGY**

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that this was work in progress: the College had commissioned market research to compare its curriculum offer with those of other colleges and, following interviews with staff, learners and stakeholders, report on curriculum offer and fee policy options to improve differentiation and targeted marketing opportunities. The research included asking learners how the College compared with other providers. The consultants (RCU) would present their findings to the Governing Body on 31st march 2011.

The Committee asked whether the College was satisfied with the quality of the research on which the consultants' recommendations would be based, to which the Principal replied that, within the limitations of the budget, the College was satisfied. Early feedback from RCU showed good statistical information on the demography of the College's learner market, with some indications as to how the College could flex its offer and mode of delivery to achieve better pricing.

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that the College was developing the use and marketing of learner events both as fundraisers, and as enrolment leads: several were planned for Adult Learners Week (w/c 14th May 2011), and she would report back to the next meeting.

GF

The Committee asked how the College approached marketing these learner events, to which the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) replied that it was looking at new channels to be explored: the College was planning to recruit a Business Development Manager to develop these channels, and a Facilities & Events Manager to support the quality of the events themselves.

The Committee asked whether the College used its school (primary and secondary) contacts to market to parents, to which the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) replied that it did, but that this was not generally a rapid route to enrolments: taking time to identify what was really required was more successful than simply promoting existing offers.

The Committee noted the Curriculum Strategy progress report.

7. **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Committee noted that several of the actions were planned for completion by April 2011, and asked for an indication as to whether these were likely to be achieved on schedule. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that most of the actions in question were concerned with academic improvement: she had met the academic managers to review the implications for the curriculum model, which was now being documented for the forthcoming prospectus. There were limitations imposed by the College information systems, but these should not threaten the target dates. The Principal added that the Equality & Diversity training would be completed during Adult Learners Week, which was actually in May rather than April, but the Committee noted that the College had already made good progress in this respect.

The Committee noted the report on the Quality Improvement Plan.

8. **LEARNER FEEDBACK**

The Committee noted that the report set out a detailed statement of the learner feedback received, which was a good start to the monitoring process. However, from a governance point of view, what would be more helpful would be a summary which set out the management view of:

- What feedback was important,
- What conclusions could be drawn from it,
- What the action plan was in response to the feedback, and
- How the actions related to the strategic plan and the curriculum strategy.

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) replied that producing a single consolidated feedback report had been the first step, but there were difficulties in assessing the significance of some feedback items: learner input varied considerably by type of learner and area of provision. It was also noted that much of the feedback concentrated on College facilities, rather than quality of provision. However, the College recognised the need to embed feedback management into its operations: feedback should not be seen as the property of the Quality Department, and complaints needed to be seen as opportunities to improve, rather than as criticism of members of staff. The Principal added that there were some systemic issues: providing and maintaining high quality in catering, curriculum IT and toilets across two sites provided challenges to the College and its management.

GF

The Committee noted that the report would provide a useful appendix to a more analytical report, which it hoped to see for its next meeting. It further observed that such analysis would enable progress to be assessed over time.

The Committee noted the learner feedback report.

9. HE INSPECTION

This item related to the Integrated Quality & Enhancement Review (IQER): a self assessment based review of the quality of its HE provision.

The Committee noted that in 2010/11 the College had c. 40 HE learners on two courses: Post Graduate Certificate in Education (validated by Westminster University), and Foundation Degree in IT for e-Business (validated by Kingston University).

The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that all FE colleges with HE provision were being inspected, at the instigation of the Quality Assurance Association for Higher Education (QAA), to assess whether they were meeting HE standards of teaching for Level 4 and Level 5 qualifications. In view of the scale of its provision, the College was going through the less onerous of two possible processes. However, the Committee noted that the demands placed on the time and commitment of the senior academic management had been considerable, and the Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) confirmed that this had had an adverse impact on progress relating to other items on this agenda.

The Committee considered two tabled papers: the College self evaluation report and the associated Student Written Submission. It noted that it was difficult to compare the College's HE provision with that of a university: there were differences in funding, and the College's staff CPD was related more to employment outcomes than to academic research. The courses were different in their purpose: the PGCE served an institutional purpose in providing professional training for College staff and potential staff, while the IT for e-Business served a local need for enterprise and provided a further step on the overall College progression offer.

The Committee asked what expectations the College had as the result of the inspection. The Vice Principal (Curriculum & Quality) replied that the self assessment report had been well received, the learner feedback was positive (they valued the practical advice and guidance, and were not particularly looking for a research type environment) and the College complied fully with the Westminster and Kingston University regulations.

The Committee noted that, despite the burden of this inspection, the College believed it was strategically important to maintain its ability to deliver HE provision in the future, for example to offer vocational training to learners failing to obtain university places.

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

10. RISK MANAGEMENT

The Committee asked how the assessment of exposure was made, and whether it was purely subjective. The Principal replied that it was a collective review by the SMT, which include the three Executive members and the Tier 3 managers of the College.

The Committee noted that risk 2 (Learner Client Groups) was not likely to be a "quick fix", but the College was working hard to make progress in this area. The oversight of risk 3 (Digital Solutions and Delivery) was shared with the Finance & Resources Committee: it was hoped that the Likelihood could be reduced once the College was able to exploit the new IT infrastructure by deploying improved delivery software and methods.

The Committee noted the risk management report.

11. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

The meeting ended at 7:58 pm

CHAIR