

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE**  
**held on 27 May 2021**  
**via videoconference**

**PRESENT** S Duckering (C); T Floyd (E) (Chair); J Milburn (P); N Moody (E); S Morgan (E),  
M Serridge (C) (to minute 111)

In attendance: J Baker, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt)  
J Chapman, Marketing Manager (minutes 103-112)  
S Grant, Deputy Principal  
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (minutes 79 to 85)  
C James, Assistant Principal HE (to minute 85)  
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)  
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

**APOLOGIES**

67. Apologies were received from O Wilson.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

68. There were no interests to be declared in matters to be discussed at this meeting.

**MINUTES**

69. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**MATTERS ARISING**

Industry work placements (minute 4)

70. The Deputy Principal provided a progress report on industry work placements, noting that the forthcoming submission to the ESFA would be in line with the previous forecast and confirmation that funding would not be withdrawn.

71. There were no other matters arising not covered by items on the agenda.

**CURRICULUM PLAN**

72. The committee had received the updated 3 Year Curriculum plan which had been further developed from the plan approved in February in light of the curriculum contribution analysis. This included proposed changes to the Sports and Outdoor Education FE curriculum at Sparsholt and the Music FE curriculum at Andover, and that no HNC (HE) provision would run at Andover in 2021/22.

73. The Vice Principal (Andover) reported that, where relevant, the changes had been subject to a staff consultation through the ICE committee and feedback taken into account in the final plans.

74. Members discussed with SLT members the impact of the changes on the relevance of the overall curriculum offer and provision of appropriate progression pathways to students and potential opportunities for partnerships with universities to benefit from access to facilities and technology.
75. The committee noted that the changes to the FE provision at Sparsholt and Andover would enable the College to make improved efficiencies without adversely affecting its ability to meet the needs of students and employers.
76. The committee noted the planned developments to the HE curriculum in the next three years and discussed the measures being taken to support Agriculture applications.
77. The committee also noted that there were a number of external FE and HE sector policy and funding developments linked to the FE White Paper 'Skills for Jobs' which could require further adaptation of the plan to continue to meet the needs of students and industry.
78. **Resolved** – that the scope and ambition of the revised 3 Year Curriculum Plan were fit for purpose to deliver the College's strategic ambitions, particularly in relation to student progression, future employability, professional development of the employed and to meeting the needs of employers.

#### **HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION**

79. The committee had received the termly report of the Dean of Higher Education and Director of Funding & Information on progress with delivery of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-21 to 2024-25.
80. The committee noted that there had been good progress against the access, success and progression targets and to demonstrating the impact of the investment. However, more work was required to identify why POLAR4 Q1&Q2 males were not making applications to study at University Centre Sparsholt and to consider what additional actions were needed to address this. Some of the activities planned with schools during 2020/21 had been disrupted by the pandemic.
81. It was noted that there was a HE sector wide challenge to increase access and maintain attainment, particularly when the sector (though not University Centre Sparsholt) had come under criticism for perceived grade inflation. Universities had similar APP targets and were competing to attract potential students.
82. A co-opted member explained his experience that the biggest motivational impact on school pupils was engaging with role models who were at college/university and could inspire pupils with the capability to progress to higher education their own journeys. This was more likely to be effective in a group situation.
83. The committee asked that future APP monitoring reports include a glossary of performance measures to explain the terminology and that the data tables were accompanied by an explanation of percentage figures.
84. The Dean of Higher Education reported that an internal audit of compliance with APP requirements was due to be presented at the Audit Committee meeting in June and was expected to provide substantial assurance.
85. The committee also noted the intention to analyse students declaring disabilities into subsets to further support their specific needs, including provision of mental health mentoring, and that a breakdown of the data would be provided in future reports. For

example, 39% of the new intake in 2020/21 had declared a learning difficulty or disability and the percentage was similar for 2021/22 applicants. A high proportion of these related to mental health and UCS had invested in more staff resources to support the students to achieve and progress.

## T LEVELS

86. The committee had received the progress report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) on the implementation plan for delivering T Levels routes from September 2022 at Andover College – Construction, Digital, Accountancy, Health and Science.
87. The Vice Principal highlighted collaboration with existing T Level providers which would support an effective transition and minimise the risks associated with the implementation of a new programme with different teaching pedagogy. In addition, industry forums would be launched by the College in June to raise awareness of T Levels with employers and, along with the College's existing engagement with employers, help to ensure opportunities existed for learners to undertake industry placements.
88. In relation to the work planned to raise awareness of T levels with secondary schools, it was noted that there was a lack of knowledge in the Hampshire school system and colleges could assist by briefing school senior teams and staff.
89. The committee discussed the entry level requirements for T Levels and the Vice Principal explained that the College's entry level requirements had not yet been set but would be likely to require maths and English GCSEs Grade 4+. There could be some variation in entry requirements for different T Levels. It was noted that achieving maths and English GCSEs (Grade 4+) was also a requirement of the T Level qualification.
90. The committee also discussed the higher education progression routes for students undertaking T Levels and how responsive universities would be to offering places based on T Level qualifications in place of A levels. It was noted that universities had several, sometimes conflicting, drivers for measuring their success, including league performance tables, market demand and access and participation targets, and the sector was facing some uncertainty over the new few years.
91. The Deputy Principal confirmed that University Centre Sparsholt would welcome applications from students with T Level qualifications.
92. The Principal noted the government's ongoing review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below, which focused on which groups of qualifications would be funded alongside A levels and T Levels, and explained considerations about future technical qualifications at Sparsholt College. Once the awarding bodies had confirmed plans, the College would communicate to employers via its industry boards.
93. The committee noted that the outcome of the T Level bid to expand the Technology & Future Skills Centre was expected in July.
94. Responding to the Committee Chair's question about the financial viability of the T Level offer and the minimum cohort for a course, the Vice Principal confirmed that the initial minimum cohort for each T Level would be 14 students and that the College was in a good position to recruit at least that number given the interest in the subjects selected and the teaching teams in place.

95. The committee noted the progress summarised in the monitoring report and that the necessary preparations for delivery of T Levels were understood by management and continued to be addressed as a priority.

## **EMPLOYERS**

96. The committee had received the report of Deputy Principal on the Skills Development Fund employer application and policy context.
97. The Deputy Principal outlined employer engagement offer priorities covered by an application submitted to the DfE for a Strategic Development Fund Pilot in partnership with the Enterprise M3 colleges and LEP, explaining the challenges which had arisen in seeking unsuccessfully with potential employer representative partners to establish a Skills Improvement Plan for the EM3 area. As a result of this, the Deputy Principal noted that the application was unlikely to succeed but would enable access to funds to further develop collaboration.
98. The Deputy Principal also highlighted the wider government agenda context in relation to the Levelling Up agenda, the remit of LEPs, changes to funding policy and the evolution of employer representative groups
99. The committee noted that the criteria set in recent bidding rounds put the EM3 area and the College at a disadvantage, presented a risk in relation to potential employer collaboration opportunities and to investment in the College's estate and infrastructure, and that the Deputy Principal had written to the ESFA to explain the strategic impact on the College and its partners. This had been supported by other local colleges and it was hoped would influence future policy decisions.
100. A co-opted member recognised the challenges highlighted and suggested that the College would need to develop positive and creative solutions to working with/alongside the Levelling Up agenda.
101. The Committee Chair sought clarification as to whether the Level 4 and 5 provision in the bid would be within the remit of the DfE or Office for Students and the Deputy Principal confirmed that this was a Level 4 and 5 FE offer, not degree programmes.
102. The committee noted the report and agreed the importance of monitoring and responding to the policy and funding developments.

## **CAREERS**

103. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) (SLT Careers Lead) on the Matrix accreditation and review of Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy (CEIAG).
104. The committee noted the positive feedback from the Matrix assessor and that the re-accreditation validated the considerable and continuing efforts being made by all levels of the organisation to ensure the very best outcomes for the future employability of the College's learners.
105. The CEIAG Policy had been updated to set out how the College planned to maintain and expand a flexible and proactive CEIAG service across all areas and to meet Ofsted's expectations in relation to the College's careers programme and supporting progression. The revised policy now included cross references to the Gatsby benchmarks throughout and new sections on the roles of the Industry Placements team and Curriculum teams so that all College Group stakeholders understood their role in the CEIAG service.

106. The Vice Principal (Sparsholt) confirmed the College was meeting 7 out of 8 of the benchmarks and was confident that there were actions in place to fully meet all the benchmarks going forward.
107. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve the revised Careers Education, information, Advice and Guidance Policy.

## **MARKETING**

108. The committee had received the report of the Marketing Manager on progress with the Marketing Strategy 2020/21.
109. The committee noted that applications across every strategic quadrant were above the previous year's levels and above demographic uplifts. The focus in the coming months would be converting the applicants to enrolled students in September through using blended events and maintaining regular communications. The marketing strategy would be evolved for 2021/22 to capture the learnings from this year, continue to focus on student outcomes and include further developments in relation to T Levels and adult learners.
110. The committee discussed support for the new HE agriculture offer, the factors behind the increase in applicants at Andover College and progress with reaching out to military families in the local area.
111. A member provided positive feedback about communications from the college with Year 11 GCSE pupils, noting the concerns among this age group about their next steps given the impact of the pandemic and the value of supportive communications.
112. The committee welcomed the good progress in delivering the marketing objectives and the upward trend in applications.

## **HEALTHCHECK REPORT**

113. The committee noted the most recent Healthcheck report (2021/04) and discussed a number of the performance measures, including in relation to student outcomes and staff headcount.

## **COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

114. The committee had received the report of the Clerk to the Corporation which provided information to inform the Committee's annual review of its performance and terms of reference.
115. The committee noted that, given its existing focus on employers and skills market requirements, it was well placed to respond to the strategic and performance oversight demands of the FE 'Skills for Jobs' White Paper reforms. These would inform the 2021/22 business plan which would be presented to the committee at its November meeting.
116. The Clerk had reviewed the terms of reference in light of the draft revised AOC Colleges Code of Good Governance and proposed a number of updates, noting that these would be finalised once the final version of the revised code was published.
117. A member commented on the need to embed environmental sustainability in the College's activities and the Principal noted that the overall sustainability strategy would be presented to the Board of Governors and suggested that future curriculum plans include a section to highlight areas relevant to environmental sustainability.

118. The committee discussed with the SLT members present the level of challenge which the committee had given reports, the impact of holding meetings online during the pandemic, and the future membership of the committee, such as in relation to employer-related bodies. It was noted that report writers had sought to provide more concise reports and shorter oral introductions at the meeting to enable more impactful discussions. A new report format was being introduced for future meetings with key governance discussion points for input highlighted and this was welcomed. It was also noted that the committee had a role in highlighting to the Board of Governors, through its minutes, risks to the organisation identified within the reports and discussion.
119. The committee noted that the development of T Levels and the impact on enrolments was a key area for it to monitor in the future, although it was reassured by the preparations in train and the selection of subject areas for the first T Levels to be delivered.
120. The committee was satisfied with its overall operation, membership, attendance and clerking.
121. **Resolved** – that the Board of Governors be recommended to approve to revised terms of reference of the committee, subject to final review by the Clerk to the Corporation when the revised Code of Good Governance was published.
122. The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.