

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
CURRICULUM, EMPLOYERS & MARKET REQUIREMENTS COMMITTEE
held on 21 OCTOBER 2021
via videoconference

PRESENT T Floyd (E) (Chair); J Milburn (P); S Morgan (E)

In attendance: J Chapman, Marketing Manager (from minute 172)
S Grant, Deputy Principal Corporate (except mins 143 to 147)
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (minutes 164-171)
C James, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education (minute 164-171)
R Price, Interim Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt College)
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover College)
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES

123. Apologies were received from S Duckering, N Moody and M Serridge. N Moody had provided some feedback which would be raised during discussions.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

124. S Morgan noted that his son had enrolled at the College from September 2021 on Level 3 Agriculture. The committee was satisfied that, given the remit of the committee, this was unlikely to result in a conflict of interest. If there was a conflict identified, S Morgan would be excluded from taking part in the related decision(s).

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

MINUTES

126. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

MATTERS ARISING

Level 3 qualifications (minute 92)

127. The committee noted that DfE's review of post-16 qualifications had set out several recommendations about the withdrawal of some Level 3 qualifications which were being challenged by the AOC. Further announcements were expected in November.

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

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN

129. The committee had received the report of the Clerk setting out the Committee's forward business plan for 2021-22.

130. The business plan followed a similar pattern to last year, with the addition of new proposed reporting linked to engagement with employers.

131. It was noted that the wider policy and funding changes emerging from the Skills for Jobs White Paper and linked to an increased role for employers would be likely to inform the development of future reporting to the committee.
132. **Resolved** – that the committee’s annual business plan for 2021-22 be approved.
133. Following publication of the revised AOC Code of Good Governance, the Clerk recommended that the changes proposed at the previous meeting to the committee’s terms of reference be confirmed, with the addition of a reference to College’s Sustainability Strategy priority in relation to the curriculum.
134. **Resolved** – that Board of Governors be recommended to approve the committee’s revised terms of reference.

STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT FUND

135. The Deputy Principal gave a presentation to the committee on the outcome of the EM3 colleges Skills Accelerator: Strategic Development Fund application, explaining that the overall bid had not been successful but was hoped to provide £50k funding and there remained a strong collaborative partnership in place with other colleges.
136. The key themes of the bid had been a research phase to better understand the needs of employers, the development of Levels 4 and 5 online materials, the extension of careers guidance on campus, provision of industry sabbaticals for members of teaching staff, and a new integrated employer engagement system.
137. If confirmed, the £50k funding would be used to support a number of industry sabbaticals in this academic year.
138. Responding to the Committee Chair’s question as to whether a commercially available customer relationship management (CRM) system would be an option, the Deputy Principal explained that various CRM systems had been investigated previously but that they were not well suited to the need for a better co-ordinated approach to employer engagement across the different education funding streams.
139. The committee noted that the timing of the next Skills Accelerator funding round had not yet been confirmed.

INDUSTRY CURRICULUM BOARDS

140. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principals Curriculum on the introduction of Industry Curriculum Boards and their impact on curriculum intent.
141. It was noted that Ofsted’s Education Inspection Framework (EIF) placed a greater emphasis on preparing learners for their next steps and the proactiveness of colleges in collaborating with industry to help share the futures of learners.
142. Thirteen Industry Curriculum Boards (six at Andover and seven at Sparsholt) had been formally established as a means of ensuring a co-constructed curriculum between the college and a range of employers. The boards’ role would include reviewing what was taught and how it was taught, helping to identify any gaps in curriculum content.
143. The committee noted that initially the engagement of employers has been positive, and, in many cases, the uptake had been encouraging. This would be further developed throughout the academic year.
144. The committee welcomed the introduction of the Industry Curriculum Boards to further support industry engagement with curriculum areas and noted that there was already

evidence of the impact of the boards on shaping the intent of the curriculum and, as a result, the future progression of learners. Examples discussed included feedback about the need for more advanced hand skills techniques in Level 1 Construction to support students on work experience and selection of a business management skills unit in Level 3 Arboriculture.

145. Responding to members' questions, the Vice Principal explained how the industry representatives were recruited, noting that a range of representatives were sought to ensure wide industry knowledge and identified via the staff's industry/employer links. These varied from single employers to representatives of national organisations.
146. Members also sought more information about the ability to vary the content of a qualification programme and the Vice Principals Curriculum explained the flexibility to change the sequencing of content and to select optional modules and include enhancement activities.
147. It was noted that an industry representative would be invited to attend the FE Curriculum area Self-Assessment Review to represent the industry curriculum board and to support and review curriculum intent.
148. The Principal emphasised that the College already had established mechanisms in place for employer engagement, and some outstanding practices, but the introduction of the boards was intended to ensure formal input from employers across the curriculum.
149. Responding to the Committee Chair's question about advising students about potential employment opportunities, the Deputy Principal noted that previous research undertaken on the local skills market had been shared with departments to help provide insights on career choices and that students were also encouraged to take additional skills units via the Innovation South Virtual Campus alongside their main qualification.
150. The committee agreed with the Principal's suggestion that governors be offered a 'Brief Bite' training session on Industry Curriculum Boards in December.
151. The Committee Chair noted that this would also respond to feedback from governors' annual self-assessment performance surveys seeking an increased understanding of employer engagement activities, as these continued to develop.

FUTURE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENTS

T-Levels

152. 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.
153. The Vice Principal highlighted key progress since the last meeting, including CPD for curriculum staff and engagement with local schools and employers. This included developing specific information about T Levels to share with employers so that employers understand their role and are aware of the skills levels of the students going on work placements.
154. The Principal confirmed that City & Guilds had been confirmed as the awarding body for the land-based T-Levels to be launched in 2023. Once City & Guilds had confirmed the T Level specifications, the college would work with employers and assess the resource and capital requirements.

155. The Principal also provided an update in relation to the T Level Capital Fund Bid, confirming that the College had submitted additional information about the space utilisation at Andover College and was awaiting a response.
156. Asked about staff recruitment for delivering T Levels, the Vice Principal confirmed that there was a current teaching skills gap in relation to the Health & Social Care T Level and that the College was discussing possible shared specialist staff resources with other providers. Identifying sufficient work placements in Health & Social Care had also been identified as a challenge, given the local demand.
157. The Deputy Principal confirmed that management would be able to report at the next committee meeting on early indicators of numbers of applicants to the T Level pathways.
158. 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.

Specialist Curriculum Offer

159. Having consulted the Chair of Governors and Committee Chair in advance of the meeting, the Principal reported an approach from Hampshire County Council (HCC) to ascertain whether the College would be able to extend its Foundation level provision for learners with more complex needs to provide an alternative progression route for 16/17-year-old school leavers.
160. The Principal explained that three Hampshire college had agreed to deliver specialist provision from 2022 and that HCC hoped to have a total of six providers by 2025. The proposal was for the College to enrol a cohort of 6-8 learners annually from 2023, with the provision of £550k of funding to prepare buildings, facilities and resources for the new learners' specialist needs. The £550k would be in addition to the per learner funding. HCC required a decision in principle by the end of October to ringfence the funding. The Chair of Governors was supportive, subject to the views of the committee.
161. The Principal had given the proposal careful consideration and made some enquires to better understand the nature of the learners' needs and the extent to which the College would be able to extend its curriculum delivery to support these. HCC had provided the assurance that the College would retain the right not to enrol learners where the College would not be able to deliver their EHCP plan. This would need to be a condition of the agreement.
162. The Principal also explained that early internal discussions suggested that the learners would access teaching and learning on both campuses, depending on the skills and facilities needed. It was likely that the new learners would require separate supervision and learning activities, although it might be possible for some integration with the existing Foundation offer and/or for some learners to progress to other qualifications.
163. **Resolved** – to report to the Board of Governors that, having been reassured about the mitigations which would be put in place to manage the potential risks of the College not being able to meet the learners' needs, the committee endorsed the proposal to introduce a complex needs offer from 2023, with £550k funding support from the HCC, as being in line with the College's educational mission.

CURRICULUM RECRUITMENT

164. The committee had received the annual report of the Director of Information and Funding on enrolment trends across Further Education, Apprenticeships and Higher Education. Corrections to dates in two of the data tables was noted.
165. The committee welcomed the increase in overall FE (on both campuses), HE and apprenticeship enrolments, although noting that the anticipated increase in first year full-time HE students had not been realised. 19+ full-time recruitment was similar to the previous year and it was anticipated that part-time recruitment would continue to increase in-year.
166. The committee considered the analysis in relation to College's curriculum offer and strategic aims, discussing the recruitment strengths and weaknesses. Additional information about the data was sought and discussed, including in relation to Equine FE and HE Agriculture.
167. The Committee Chair commended the College teams for the activities which supported the strong recruitment and for the recruitment and enrolment analysis.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION

168. The committee had received the termly report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education and Director of Information and Funding on progress with delivery of the Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020-21 to 2024-25.
169. The committee noted that good progress had been made to date on meeting the 2021/22 Access targets and the 2020/21 Success targets. However, the lack of progress and worsening of the Access target relating to POLAR4 Q1-Q2 males was concerning and the committee noted the actions set out in the report to address the issue. In discussion, the Vice Principal explained that the detailed analysis of the POLAR4 Q1-Q2 and the specific challenges. The challenge was to increase POLAR4 Q2 and this was particularly difficult given the percentage in the Hampshire population. The Vice Principal also reported that there was more data to be gathered in relation to students classified as BAME. The Vice Principal explained that the Office for Students (OfS) would expect that, as enrolments increased from target groups, the College should analyse the success of the sub-groups that exist within these and ensure that all students had an equal opportunity for success.
170. The ongoing challenge would be supporting HE students to attain their qualifications, with 75% of the HE cohort currently from APP target groups.
171. It was noted that the Monitoring Return for the 2019/20 APP was submitted in April 2021 and had been accepted by the OfS, with 'no issues to be raised'. The APP Impact report had been published on the website in accordance with OfS requirements. The first report and evaluation of the five-year Access & Participation Plan (APP) would be required to be submitted to the OfS in early Spring.

MARKETING STRATEGY

172. The committee had received the report of the Marketing Manager on the key marketing strategic themes and operations plan for 2021-22.
173. The Marketing Manager explained that the approach of the strategy was to attract applicants, convert applicants to become students, support students to understand

progression options and to maintain and enhance reputation. The actions planned were intended to enable the College to realise its growth ambitions.

174. The Deputy Principal highlighted the key proposed strategic themes which the College would be seeking to convey in its promotional activity and recruitment practices, and which informed the operations plan. A major change was the new focus on embedding the 'Sparsholt College Group' identity to emphasise the track record of success and the strengths which had been built up across the group and would support further growth of the College and positive outcomes for students.
175. In discussion, it was noted that the strategy would need to continue to promote the individual brand identities within the College Group to the relevant groups. For example, the website would be redeveloped to clarify the position of the College Group and its components parts.
176. Other actions discussed were the development of personalised employer communications and adoption of the latest marketing methods, including extending the College's use of video reels showing student experiences to new social media platforms and using a mix of organic and paid-for online advertising.
177. **Resolved** – that the 2021-22 marketing strategic themes and operations plan be approved as being in line with the College's strategic objectives.

CAREERS

178. The committee had received for information the latest DfE statutory guidance on provision of careers guidance.
179. The Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) confirmed that the Marketing Manager, Head of Careers and he had reviewed the updated guidance and were confident that the College's Careers Strategy and Careers Education, Information and Guidance Policy enabled the College to comply with the guidance.
180. The committee noted the assurance from College management and that any references in the published strategy and policy documents would be updated.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

181. The committee noted the most recent Healthcheck report (2021/07), and the Principal provided an update on the latest FE and HE applications data.
182. The Deputy Principal confirmed the new online key performance indicators dashboard was planned to launch before the end of term and it was noted that the availability of live data would be very valuable internally to support management activities, such as internal quality reviews.
183. The meeting ended at 11.45 am.