

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**  
**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE**  
**CURRICULUM, SKILLS & STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE (CSS)**  
**held on 19 October 2023 at 09:30**  
**at Sparsholt College**

**PRESENT<sup>1</sup>** S Duckering (C); T Floyd (E) (Chair); J Milburn (P); N Moody; S Morgan (E).

In attendance: L Ashbridge, Director of Careers & Stakeholder Engagement  
F Chalk, External Board Reviewer (via videoconference to minute 170)  
S Grant, Deputy Principal  
S Hermiston, Director of Information & Funding (mins 163 to 166)  
D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education  
J Middleton, Head of Marketing (mins 163-170)  
A Robertson, Governance Co-ordinator  
A Rowley, Governor  
B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover College)  
M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt College)  
S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

**ATTENDANCE**

136. The Committee Chair welcomed A Rowley and F Chalk to the meeting as observers and L Ashbridge to her first meeting of the committee following her appointment as Director of Careers & Stakeholder Engagement.

**DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

137. There were no interests to be declared.

**MINUTES & MATTERS ARISING**

138. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2023 be confirmed as a correct record.

139. Industry Work Placements (IWP) (min 76/23): Further to previous discussions about maintaining the staffing ability to delivery work placements despite the delay to the launch of some T Level pathways, it was noted that the ESFA had confirmed a small amount of funding which would be used towards these costs.

140. Curriculum (mins 78 /23): The Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) reported that changes to the A Level offer at the Andover campus from 2023-24 had not had a negative impact on student enrolments.

141. T Levels (min 95/23): It was noted that two HE institutions offering land-based degrees had been successfully lobbied by a number of bodies to recognise T Level qualifications for entry to HE in order than FE students were not deterred from enrolling on T Levels; a decision was awaited from a third.

142. Artificial intelligence (AI) (min 124/23): It was confirmed that a session was being planned for the January Governors' Seminar on developments in AI and the strategic impact for

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<sup>1</sup> (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (C) = Co-opted; (St) = Student

teaching, learning and business support. The college was participating in working groups with land-based colleges and with the SE College Principals group.

143. The committee noted that the other resolutions of the committee had been implemented and that there were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

### **COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLAN**

144. The committee had received the report of the Head of Corporate Governance proposing the annual business plan for the committee, following consultation with the Committee Chair and members of the SLT.
145. The committee noted that the termly reporting on stakeholder engagement and meeting skills needs would cover the college's actions in relation to the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), as well as the process for the statutory review of how well the college meets skills needs.
146. It was also noted that the college was required by the Office for Students to submit a new HE Access & Participation Plan in spring/summer (deadline to be confirmed) and that this timeframe might require engagement with governors between scheduled meetings.
147. **Resolved** – that the committee's annual business plan be approved.

### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

148. The committee had received the report of the Director of Careers & Stakeholder Engagement providing an overview on key elements of stakeholder engagement, together with the published Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and information about the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) bid submission.
149. The Principal provided an update on the Ofsted inspection which had taken place earlier in the month and the provisional sub judgement as to how well the college meets local, regional and national skills needs. The outcome would be made public when the report was published.
150. The committee noted that the LSIP which had informed the development of the college's Annual Accountability Statement for 2023-24 had been published and included an outline action plan and roadmap. The Director of Careers & Stakeholder Engagement explained the priorities set out in the LSIP for developing ways of working between employers and providers to deliver a skills system that is more responsive and closely aligned to local labour market needs.
151. The committee noted the details of the LSIF submission to the DfE which had been developed with colleges across the EM3 region and colleges located in Surrey to deliver on priorities outlined in the LSIP and discussed the planned facilities at the college. Members sought assurance about the college's lead role in the LSIF and the ability of the partnership of colleges to deliver the plans and the Deputy Principal provided assurance based on the experience of the previous Skills Development Fund (SDF) project.
152. Responding to a member's question as to whether there were strategic risks associated with the core functions of Local Enterprise Partnerships transferring to Local Authorities from April 2024, the Principal and Deputy Principal provided an update on the changes in Hampshire and considerations in relation to the LSIP and LSIF.
153. The committee reviewed the update on operation of the Industry Curriculum Boards (ICBs) and the examples of good practice, noting that continuing progress on embedding

ICBs in curriculum planning. Members went on to discuss the occasional mismatch between the needs of a sector/employer and the requirements of the qualification set by the awarding body and the ways in which the college sought to address this if it did arise.

154. Members commended the broad and varied approach to employer engagement and noted a number of the examples in the report, including the progression of Foundation students on supported internships at the Andover campus to employment and the further development of skills for Foundation students at Sparsholt to meet the needs of future employers.

## **CURRICULUM**

### T Levels

155. The committee had received the progress report of the Vice Principals Curriculum on the implementation plans for delivering new T Levels.
156. The committee noted the successful launch from September of the Livestock Production occupational specialism at the Sparsholt campus and discussed the risks and mitigations of delays to the availability of other land-based occupational specialisms, early indications of recruitment for these from September 2024, and the timetable for defunding of technical qualifications. The Principal reported plans from City and Guilds to develop an equivalent offer to T Levels for 19+ learners (occupational technical qualifications-OTQs), noting however that the timescale for delivery was uncertain.
157. The committee noted the expansion of T Levels at the Andover campus with the launch of Onsite Construction and Education. It was noted that the Digital Design, Development and Production T Level had been postponed due to low enrolment numbers but a Digital T Level Foundation programme was in place alongside other T Level Foundation programmes (formerly known as Transition courses). Members also discussed with the Vice Principal the careful planning of access and progression pathways to enable students to be successful on the Foundation and main T Level programmes, and in their work experience placements, working with employers, schools and the community to shape the offer, facilities and curriculum delivery.
158. The committee noted the progress of the major capital projects underway to provide new facilities for T Level delivery and of the Specialist Equipment Allocation (SEA) expenditure.
159. The committee continued to be assured and to report to the Board that the considerations for preparing for T Levels were understood by management and continued to be addressed as a priority.

### Curriculum Deep Dives

160. The committee had received curriculum subject profiles for Business related subjects (Andover) and Animal Management (Sparsholt). The subject profiles set out the offer, where relevant, in the areas of 14-16, 16-19, specialist SEND, apprenticeships, 19+ funded provision, higher education, and adult and community (primarily full cost) provision. In addition, the subject profiles gave examples of key curriculum external stakeholders for each subject and how the employers informed the curriculum intent, together with specific activities which contributed to the steering and design of the curriculum, progression of students, and interactions with stakeholders through the Industry Curriculum Boards and within the curriculum delivery.

161. In relation to Andover, it was noted that the Business subjects profile did not include the Sparsholt Means Business offer to employers but that online business related courses available via the Innovation South Virtual Campus (ISVC) were being incorporated into college tutorial programmes as relevant. Members also discussed whether there was future potential for HE offers in business related subjects at Andover and the availability of training in the region for professional qualifications.
162. In relation to Animal Management, members noted the strengthening of progression paths and the strength of employer engagement in the curriculum and discussed employment opportunities in specific sectors.

### Curriculum Enrolments

163. The committee had received the annual report of the Director of Information & Funding on recruitment and enrolment trends across FE, Apprenticeships and HE in relation to the curriculum offer.
164. The Director of Information & Funding updated the committee on the submission of the ILR funding returns and the latest forecasts for student withdrawals, which were around normal expectations and did not raise any concerns about the student experience or support.
165. The committee commended the overall positive outcomes, noting a significant increase in FE enrolments and positive indicators in a challenging HE recruitment environment, and commended the work of College Group teams in supporting progression and recruitment activities.
166. Members considered the analysis in relation to areas of the curriculum and the college's strategic aims, seeking assurances about the curriculum plan, the sustainability of courses, and comparators with other FE and land-based colleges. Members also recognised the collaborative communication activities with local schools and discussed the impact of local demographics, as well as the latest trends in the HE sector and related capital investment.

### **MARKETING**

167. The committee had received the report of the Head of Marketing on progress with the marketing key strategic themes and the priorities for the operational plan for 2023-24 and key themes that the college was seeking to convey in its external messaging.
168. The Head of Marketing highlighted the performance of, and lessons learnt from, the 2023 campaigns and the priority themes and activities for the 2024 campaigns for University Centre Sparsholt, the Andover campus and the Sparsholt campus; giving a number of examples.
169. Members sought further context and discussed a number of points in relation to recruitment to specific areas of the curriculum and the reach of social media platforms to young people interested in the land-based sector.
170. The committee endorsed the marketing operational plan 2023-24 as supporting the delivery of the college's strategic plan.

### **HE ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION**

171. The committee had received the termly report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education on progress with delivery of the University Centre Sparsholt (UCS) Access and Participation Plan (APP).

172. The committee reviewed the progress made delivering the plan and the impact of actions to supporting current students and raising the aspirations of future students. It was noted that the award of bursaries and financial support enabled a more immediate impact on access, with outreach activities aimed at school children intended to widen participation in higher education in general in the long term.
173. The committee noted that there was good progress with 2023-24 enrolments exceeding the 2025 targets for five of the seven groups and discussed actions in relation to the other two measures. The committee also discussed the continuing rising trend in students with a declared disability (including learning disabilities and mental health conditions) and the resource implications to provide support for these students to succeed.
174. The Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education summarised the key developments required for the new APP and noted that the process would include engagement with governors.

### **HE OUTCOMES**

175. The committee had received the report of the Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education on the outcomes of the Graduate Survey for the 2020/21 cohort conducted by HESA.
176. The committee noted that the survey response rate was consistent with the previous year and above the national response rate, with 94% of graduates in employment or study (above the national average and the Office for Students (OfS) threshold). There had also been an increase in the proportion of respondents recognised under the classification of 'highly skills' employment but the OfS threshold for this measure remained a challenge for land-based providers because of the mismatch between the way the classification was defined and the graduate entry/early employment roles in land-based industry.
177. The committee reviewed the benchmark data and noted the progress and actions in relation to graduate outcomes.

### **HEALTHCHECK REPORT**

178. The committee had received and reviewed the most recent Healthcheck report (2023-06) and noted that progress on applications had been discussed under other agenda items.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

179. The Committee Chair noted that N Moody would be transferring to the Quality & Standards Committee from January 2024 and thanked him for his contribution to the work of the Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee during his time as a member.
180. The meeting ended at 12.30.

**Approved: Curriculum, Skills & Stakeholders Committee Meeting 22 February 2024**