Minutes of the Standards Committee Meeting
Innovation Centre (Southport College Campus) on Tuesday 5th December 2023 at 3pm

Present:	*Roderic Gillespie (Committee Chair) Mark Aberdein (Independent Governor) Michelle Brabner (Principal) Catherine Durr (Staff Governor) *Anita Holt (Associate Governor) *Kashfa Kalim (Independent Governor Susannah Porter (Independent Governor) Katy Robinson (Associate Governor)
In Attendance:	Paris Bonwick (Vice Principal Business Services) Mark Burrows (Deputy Principal) Lisa Farnhill (Clerk to the Governors) Vickie Hayes (Head of Learning Support and Inclusion (to item 8) Stephen Musa (Vice Principal Curriculum and Support)
Apologies:	PJ McGreggor (Student Governor) Elaine Small (Independent Governor)
Absent:	

*indicates attendance via videoconferencing facilities

Minute No.	Minutes	Action

S.24.24   ITEM 1: WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Committee Chair opened the meeting, welcoming everyone to the meeting of the Committee. Apologies for absence were detailed and accepted by the Committee with quoracy confirmed. New members and attendees were welcomed and formalities relating to the hybrid format clarified.

Item 1 – Accepted: Members accepted the apologies for members unable to attend.

S.24.25   ITEM 2: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Stading interests were noted, with no interests declared in relation to agenda items. The Clerk highlighted some staffing absence data had been included as an annex to the Quality of Education report. Members were advised this was to contextualise the outcomes for the department, with this having been redacted from the staff and student governor pack, and was included for information as opposed to discussion, however, should the Committee wish to discuss it, it should be done as a Part B without staff and students present.

Item 2 – Noted

S.24.26   **ITEM 3: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 26th SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Committee Vice Chair provided a detailed overview of the previous meeting, reminding members of the discussions and decisions made.

Members gave their approval for the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.

Item 3 - Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2023.

S.24.27   **ITEM 4: ACTIONS SUMMARY AND IMPACT STATEMENTS**

The Clerk summarised the report, confirming that the EDI objectives highlighted as outstanding had now been circulated and would be marked as complete once approved. Members were advised that staffing risks were highlighted within reports, however. Was marked as incomplete as the risk, including risk rating and movements were still not included in the risk report.

Members were given an update on progress relating to the overhaul of the Teaching and Learning Strategy and were advised there would be consultation ahead of review and approval.

All other actions were noted as complete or in progress, with members reminded about the ongoing request for foodbank donations, as well as having since received information about appeals for Christmas toys and gifts for families in need.

Item 4 - Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept the report.

S.24.28   **ITEM 5: CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

No items within the minutes or on the agenda were considered to be confidential, however, as mentioned when discussing declarations of interests, staff absence details have been redacted from the staff and student pack and should not be discussed in their presence.

Item 5 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to approve the minutes for publication, confirming they did not need any items on the agenda to be reviewed confidentially, with the exception of the annex to item 9.

S.24.29   **ITEM 6: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

Item 6.1: EDI Update
Asked to highlight issues.
The Head of Learning, Support and Inclusion drew attention of members to activities taken place and what learned. Key strengths and areas for improvement were outlined.

Members attention was drawn to gaps in achievement for some groups, with targets and monitoring in place to ensure support and oversight.

Members indicated there was clear evidence of a supportive and inclusive culture, which had been witnessed throughout recent link governor visits, highlighting this as

a strength of the organisation, commending the focus on mental health support for students and staff.

Item 6.1 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept and note the update provided.

S.24.30   **Item 6.2: EDI Policy**
The Committees attention was drawn to the updates, with the DPO thanked for supporting with the updated GDPR elements.

Members agreed to recommend the updated policy for approval.

Item 6.2 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept and recommend for approval the updated EDI policy.

S.24.31   **Item 6.3: EDI Strategy and Objectives**
The Head of Learning, Support and Inclusion confirmed the objectives were set for January 2024 to January 2028, linked to Southport Education Group's Strategic Intentions.

The objectives were outlined, with members commending the approach linking to the college's strategic plan, however, expressed concern that annual targets did not represent milestones to achieve the long-term objectives and demonstrate impact. It was suggested the annual targets should be directly linked to the long-term objectives and formulate the basis for reporting to the Committee. Members were assured this would be incorporated into the annual action plan, allowing for adaptation of the annual targets in line with trend data.

Members reiterated the strength of the supportive culture and confirmed their support of the objectives, agreeing to recommend them to the Corporation for approval, thanking the Head of Learning Support and Inclusion for her work.

Item 6.3 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to recommend for approval the strategy and long-term objectives.

S.24.32   **ITEM 7: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**
7.1: Student Engagement Strategy
The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support advised Members that feedback from the Committee and consultation with learners had resulted in a full overhaul of the strategy, resulting in engagement activity directly linked to reporting as overseen by the Committee, as well as targeted within the College KPI scorecard.

Members discussed return rates for surveys, noting the improvements and positive benchmarking data available from the new survey software.

Item 7.1 –Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the Strategy.

S.24.33   **7.2: Student Engagement Update**
The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the student survey results, with members asking for clarity around timetabling comments. Members were advised of the national issue relating to increased GCSE resits, with this having impacted overall timetabling in accommodating increased numbers of resit students, with some additional changes made following internal assessments of knowledge gaps using new diagnostics software.

Members interrogated the negative responses around assessments, with the Committee assured this was down to timing of the survey, being an induction survey with some students not yet fully aware of the assessment processes for the full two-years of their course, having not yet undertaken any, with evidence from surveys taken later in the year highlighting that this issue resolves itself once students have had the opportunity to take assessments.

Members indicated the RAG rating was useful for drawing attention to areas of concern, however, asked for clarity around the variation in colour coding, highlighting how a number of responses were rated as amber, with varying percentages, with it explained that 85% and above was green.

Members discussed at length the student comments relating to speaking to a progress tutor with concerns, with it explained this was considered a positive, with the tutorial programme, alongside the training and support given to the progress tutors allowing them to build strong relationships with students and signpost effectively to specific areas of support when needed.

The item concluded with members highlighting the importance of student feedback to influence their work, thanking the college staff for their work in gathering and analysing the information, adding that it evidenced high levels of student engagement and supported members understanding of areas of strength and for improvement, triangulated with their visits, feedback from other reports and the Ofsted inspection outcomes.

Item 7 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to note the update.*

S.24.34 **ITEM 8: RISKS RELATING TO STANDARDS**
The Deputy Principal highlighted key themes and updates, including intended changes following the Ofsted inspection.

Members agreed that staffing as a resource, and for budgetary implications, remained in the remit of the Resources Committee, however, suggested that the impact on quality and student experience meant it also impacted their work. It was agreed this should either be a split risk, or presented at both Committees, delegating the decision relating to splitting or dual presentation to the SLT. **SLT**

Members discussed the risk review process, and considered the benefits of a dual review, looking at the risks at the start of the meeting, and again at the end, to consider whether any of the reports reviewed supported any changes to the risk ratings. It was agreed this would be trialled for future meetings and should be presented for consideration of other committees at the Governance Committee meeting. **Gov Cttee**

Item 8 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to accept the update.*

S.24.35 **ITEM 9: QUALITY OF EDUCATION REPORT**

The Deputy Principal provided an overview of each element of the report, including a detailed overview of feedback from Ofsted as noted throughout the four day inspection.

Members noted that the governance feedback would be included in the presentation to Corporation.

Members were advised that the inspection team had considered the organisation to be complex, with the inspection timing and report length reflective of this.

The Deputy Principal highlighted areas of strength, indicating the SLT were pleased overall with the outcome, however, would focus the presentation on AFI to support the approval of the SAR and QIP.

The preparation for the inspection team's arrival was outlined, along with the inspection process, including the evidence collated and submitted ahead of the inspection, which summarised recent team restructures and actions to address known areas for improvement.

Members were advised of challenges during the inspection to demonstrate improvements, particularly around skills and apprenticeships, which were discussed at length. Members noted apprenticeship outcomes were above the national average, however, this was a low benchmark. Employer feedback relating to apprenticeship provision had been positive, and there had been nothing uncovered during the inspection, that had not already been reported on by the SLT and built into the plans to improve. Members were advised the timing of the inspection had prevented the impact of actions from being evident. This had resulted in a requires improvement judgement.

Challenges relating to the skills element were reviewed, with consideration given to a change in policy, noting the inspection team indicated there was no further evidence required that could change their judgement, resulting in the SLT shifting their focus to improving the apprenticeship position.

Members asked if there were any key learning points relating to skills and apprenticeships, questioning whether any local providers had received favourable outcomes from their inspections. Members discussed the difficulties in trying to replicate operating models in different contexts, with actions for improvement needing to reflect the community and learners as well as the college staff teams.

Members asked about progress in apprenticeships, acknowledging the pace of improvements had not been sufficient since the last inspection, not withstanding the impact of the Pandemic. Members were assured by the evidence of improvements seen by Ofsted, with a robust action plan, focusing on a specialised and supportive offer, which had been rationalised, new leadership team and staffing structure. Member were however advised the impact from the actions was not yet evident, and although all metrics demonstrated improvement in all areas, these were insufficient at this stage to change the grading. Members agreed close oversight was essential to ensure swift improvement or change of approach if impact is not evident. Members were given details of further structural changes, planned ahead of the inspection, with the inspection providing the ideal opportunity to position the role as instrumental in delivering on the improvements as outlined within the inspection report and SAR.

Members discussed the national apprenticeship landscape, issues with EPA's and the issues with the levy and incentives. Members noted the impact of the introduction of T Levels and potential for further reforms as a result of shifting governmental priorities, which may change again with a change in parliament.

Members were advised that behaviour, culture, feedback had all been positive, and were given a detailed account of feedback for all areas, accepting that the report would provide limited insight.

Members asked if the comment about engagement was an isolated issue, with it contextualised as something to improve further, rather than as an area for improvement, that would stretch to achieving outstanding.

Members commended the individualised approach to responding to feedback, particularly in relation to questioning, agreeing it was of fundamental importance. Members noted improvements were necessary in isolated areas, however, it remained a focus for excellence across the college, therefore would be included in the overarching QIP, with variation within departmental developmental action plans.

Details of feedback from surveys undertaken by Ofsted. Overall, these were positive, with Ofsted commending the rate of return. Members were provided with comments, including suggested improvements, concerns, and compliments, along with how the SLT were working to address these. Members asked if there had been any unexpected feedback, from any stakeholders or the inspectors, with it reiterated that all areas for improvement had been identified previously, however, the comments relating to tailoring courses to meet employer needs had not been anticipated. Members were advised of how the SLT had challenged this throughout the inspection, with evidence and positive employer feedback, as well as highlighting how the framework indicated a need to engage stakeholders in curriculum development, not just employers, however, had to concede that the inspectors were not satisfied with the evidence provided.

The item concluded with Members agreeing a continued focus on improving supported by a positive culture would achieve the demanding operational targets, asking the team to be proud of their achievements, endorsing the public celebration of the outcome once the report is published.

Item 9 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to accept the feedback and use this to support their review and consideration of the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan, as well as to support their analysis of follow up reports relating to outcomes and improvements.*

S.24.36   **ITEM 10: SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2022/23 AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2023/24**

The Deputy Principal was invited to summarise the key points, with members attention drawn to common themes including questioning, feedback and assessment. The process for oversight and implementation, including the more detailed departmental plans was outlined, with members commending the approach.

Members highlighted the link to earlier points around stakeholder engagement and triangulating and strengthening engagement from all stakeholders as part of a wider focus on stakeholder management and interaction, to promote continuous improvement and impact of actions.

Members were provided with details of the introduction of self-assessment for business support areas, with governors invited to attend the presentations that week.

The item concluded with a summary of the process for overseeing impact, with members thanking the Deputy Principal for the report, indicating how important the full Ofsted feedback would be for the Corporation in ensuring clarity of performance strengths and areas for improvement ahead of approving the SAR and QIP.

Item 10 - Resolved: *The Committee resolved to recommend the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan to the Corporation for approval.*

S.24.37   **ITEM 11: OfS De-Registration Update**
The Clerk confirmed the letter included had been sent to the Corporation Chair, who had expressed some concerns, asking the Committee to oversee the next steps.

The Deputy Principal was invited to outline assurances, with the position and timing for subsequent actions summarised.

Item 10 - Resolved: *The Committee resolved to note the update.*

S.24.38   **ITEM 12: ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD**

The Clerk confirmed the following required Board approval:

- EDI Policy
- EDI Strategy and Objectives
- Self-Assessment Report including Quality Improvement Plan

The Committee asked that the following was shared as essential information:
- Ofsted feedback presentation

The Clerk highlighted the presentation length exceeded the time allocated for committee feedback, with members asking this replaced the SEND training preceding the Corporation meeting, with the training deferred to the Strategy Event.

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Members noted that their recommendation in September had been to recommend the outcomes paper is presented to the Corporation as essential information, however, agreed this was now superseded by the self-assessment report, with the Clerk confirming an overview of the outcomes had been circulated to all members by email.

Item 12 - Resolved: *The Committee agreed to present the above to the Corporation.*

S.24.39   **ITEM 13: CLOSING COMMENTS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions.
The date of the next meeting was confirmed as March 5th 2024.

Mark Aberdein informed the Committee it would be his last meeting as a member of the Committee as he was retiring. Mark was thanked for his time and contributions throughout his term of office and wished well with his future plans.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm.