Minutes of the Standards Committee Meeting
Innovation Centre
Wednesday 25th September 2024 at 2.30pm

Present:

Michelle Brabner (Principal)
Catherine Durr (Staff Governor)
Roderic Gillespie (Committee Chair)
Elaine Small (Independent Governor)
Katy Robinson (Associate Governor)
Tracey Wood (Independent Governor)

In Attendance:

Mark Burrows (Deputy Principal and CEO)
Lisa Farnhill (Dir. Governance and Compliance)
Stephen Musa (VP Curriculum and Support)
Shaun Hindle (Dir. Curriculum for Apprenticeships)

Apologies:

Anita Holt (Associate Committee Member)
Kash Kalim (Independent Governor)
Kevin Burke (Independent Governor)

Absent:

Susannah Porter (Independent Governor)

Minute No.	Minutes	Action

S.25.01   **Item 1: Open And Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were detailed and approved with the meeting confirmed as quorate.
The Dir. Curriculum for Apprenticeships was welcomed to his first meeting of the Committee, with the Committee also given an update of additional responsibilities being undertaken by the Deputy Principal during a period of absence of a member of the management team, with the Committee asking for their well wishes to be passed on to the staff member.

Item 1 – Resolved: *Members accepted the apologies as provided above.*

S.25.02   **Item 2: Declarations Of Interest**
Standing interests were detailed and noted, with no declarations made in relation to items on the agenda.

Item 2 – Noted: *The Committee resolved to note the position.*

S.25.03   **Item 3: Appointment of a Committee Vice Chair**
The Dir Governance and Compliance confirmed that in line with the TOR and Corporation Standing Orders, the Committee was to appoint a Vice Chair, either in an active capacity, considered as succession planning or to remain as supportive role. Members noted that Kash Kalim, as the Committee Vice Chair in 2023/24 had agreed to continue. This self-nomination was approved by the Committee.

Members noted that due to the external commitments of the Committee Chair, there had been a number of occasions where the Committee Vice Chair had needed to actively support the Committee, either standing in as Chair, or Chairing the room if the Committee Chair had attended virtually, with it noted that the Vice Chair's new role may mean that they too may not be onsite as much as they had been previously, therefore this may need to be reviewed to ensure that there is onsite support in the event the Chair cannot be in attendance.

Item 3 – Approved: *The Committee approved appointment of Kashfa Kalim as Committee Vice Chair for 2024/25.*

S.25.04   **Item 4: Minutes of the Previous Meeting Held 18th June 2024**

The Dir. Governance and Compliance was thanked for the minutes which were approved as an accurate record of the meeting held.

The Chair reflected on the work undertaken in June, highlighting how the transparency and honesty along with the integrity of the data, had enabled the Committee to support and challenge effectively.

Item 4 - Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 20234

S.25.05   **Item 5: Matters Arising / Actions Summary**
The Dir. Governance and Compliance confirmed all actions had been completed, drawing attention to the detail within the report, inviting members to raise any further queries or request additional detail, with none raised, the report was noted and impact statements agreed.

Item 5 - Resolved: *The Committee resolved to accept the report and approved the impact statement summary.*

S.25.06   **ITEM 6: CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**
No items within the minutes or on the agenda were considered to be confidential.

Item 6 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to approve the minutes for publication. The Committee confirmed they did not need any items on the agenda to be reviewed confidentially without the presence of staff.*

S.25.07   **Item 7: Risks Relating to the Standards Committee**
Members discussed at length the benefits of reviewing and reflecting regularly on risks, commenting on how building this into the start and end of meetings, had improved the risk review process, however, proposed there were further improvements that could be made to more accurately reflect the cyclical nature of the risks reviewed at this Committee. The SLT was to give consideration to presenting the risks in a way that ensures the cyclical nature of risks is captured in the reporting, to support the Committee with focusing on the increasing and decreasing risks dependent on the position in the quality cycle. The Dir. Governance and Compliance informed the Committee a cross-committee working party would look at the risk management process and reporting, inviting members to alert her to their interest in being a part of the Group, confirming the Chair had already confirmed he would attend.

Members discussed the improvements in governor college connectivity and considered how best to capture the impact of this and use it to support the triangulation of data and risk mitigation and effective risk management.

The Dir. Governance indicated this reflected similar discussions in other Committee's, suggesting the review of the format of the risk register along with the new stakeholder engagement policy, which would be reported on annually, would provide assurance by bringing together evidence of the impact of governor engagement, triangulated with themes from engagement with other stakeholder groups.

Members considered whether a more holistic view of risks would present more opportunities, suggesting the current format didn't highlight the benefits of measured risks, or link closely enough to the college's risk appetite profile, to ensure risks in relation to lack of action were minimised and opportunities maximised, reflecting on the risk tolerance exercise undertaken within a previous strategy event.

It was clarified that the risk movements as now presented in the regular reporting did capture the cyclical nature of quality related risks linked to the quality cycle, with strides made to simplify reporting to focus on the key data and reduce repetition.

The Deputy Principal summarised the information presented on the risk register relevant to the Committee, confirming there had been no movement in the risk ratings, with details given of work to mitigate risks in relation to outcomes.

The risk relating to the impact of the Ofsted outcome was discussed at length, noting this was still listed as a high risk. Members were provided with details of changes to inspections in schools, which would be rolled out to colleges, however, had been delayed due to legal implications, with it explained college grading's impacted some funding streams. Members were advised that the presentation of inspection outcomes was now updated on the Ofsted website, with a scorecard on the opening page as opposed to initially only showing the single overall outcome, noting that for the SEG inspection, the first line is 'quality of education' which is 'good'. The Committee noted a range of assurances and evidence that indicated the inspection had not impacted on the reputation of the college, discussions covering the public perception and opinion of Ofsted, considered to have been tarnished by recent negative press.

Members asked about the wider impact of the grading, being advised a college needed to be rated as 'good' to lead LSIF and LSIP projects, which had been raised as an issue with the DfE, with it highlighted some grade 3 colleges excelled in the project areas. Members were assured by actions taken to mitigate this, through active participation in forums and groups that can initiate change and ensure college's voices are heard. Members were also advised it would also prevent access to the Salisbury Framework for NHS apprenticeship contracts, which negatively impacted the college's ability to meet local skills needs. Members proposed that although this remained a risk, suggested this was now more related to funding than reputation or quality, asking the SLT to consider rewording this at their next review.

Deputy Principal

Members asked how the incident in the town over the summer had affected staff, students and enrolment. A comprehensive overview of the measures put in place to support those in college during the summer, and for those returning in September was outlined. The Principal informed the Committee that 50% of students travel form outside of Southport to study at the college, with concern over the summer that the issues in the town may have affected their decision to continue with their intended enrolment. Members were assured that enrolment was above target, which indicated the college's reputation for being a safe and supportive environment, along with the positive handling of the situation by the community, had mitigated this risk. In response to a question about the ongoing risk and updates to the risk register to reflect this, it was agreed that this was captured within the existing safeguarding risk, with the College commended for their sensitive and comprehensive response, with experiences shared of the impact of the incident on other colleges and local schools.

A member asked about the impact of the Skills England report, with the Committee reassured that whilst they maintained an awareness of national priorities, their primary focus remained on meeting local needs through proactive engagement with local employers.

Members discussed funding and qualification reform, including the transfer of the ESFA responsibilities into the ESFA, and devolution. In response to questions about devolution, members were assured that the active involvement by the Senior Team in the relevant networks and meetings ensured the College had insight into potential developments and was able to ensure the impact on the sector and the college could be fully understood by decision makers ahead of changes being initiated. Members were assured that although they continued to scan the horizon for potential changes, the focus and energies of the team remained on current strategies and policies, and meeting the needs of learners and employers.

In concluding the Chair asked members to maintain an awareness of the key quality risks whilst receiving the reports to consider at the end if any data or mitigations may result in a recommendation for any ratings to change.

Item 7 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to review the risk rating s at the end of the meeting and recommended the risk relating to the reputational risk of the outcome of the Ofsted inspection is reviewed.*

S.25.08   **Item 8: Quality of Education Report incl. Outcomes and Targets**
The Deputy Principal thanked members for their support following the initial circulation of the high-level results.

A comprehensive presentation of outcomes was delivered to the Committee, with members advised this was to supplement the report and provide greater insight and focus on key data, with the following points discussed by members:

- Clarity in the variations in outcomes against predicted grades, including the areas and subjects impacted, reasons for variations and support measures to ensure more accuracy in future predictions for those areas
- Considered the impact of staffing issues on outcomes and predicted grades
- In reviewing the GCSE data, asked if there was any correlation between outcomes for students' main course and their GCSE outcomes, confirming this had been analysed with no link found
- Discussed national rise in re-sits, staffing challenges, class sizes and positive work to address staffing and timetabling early in the academic year. Commended positive impact of work to ensure attendance to re-sit classes is maximised in 2024/25
- Considered the financial and timetabling impact of the increased number of resit students, assured all students taught by a subject specialist
- Discussed wider challenges relating to attendance and impact of declining school attendance and steps to work with schools to understand the reasons and work together to improve it
- Discussed the impact of GCSE outcomes on students and their next step, with it confirmed it would not be a barrier to progression internally.
- Supported and endorsed the steps taken to engage MPs in discussions about the need to reconsider and reform this area of provision
- Positive T Level outcomes and successes in other non-regulated/non-published data outlined and discussed

- Commended the outcomes for apprenticeships when considered against predictions set at the start of the year and work done to remove out of funded learners
- Discussed the collaborative approach to working with employers and apprentices, endorsing the decision to act with integrity and step away from working with employers that cannot commit to engaging in the induction or ongoing support of the apprentice. Asked about ongoing management of the relationship and impact to date
- Considered the College's evidence base relating to ongoing apprenticeships improvements, which could be used in an inspection, noting the shift in approach form Ofsted, acknowledging and accepting where employers have impacted the lower outcomes for apprentices.
- Considered the benefits of the updated policies and procedures in providing clarity to employers and apprentices on expectations, noting an action to ensure the process for remedial action or ending a working relationship is documented in the employer handbook or procedure referenced in the handbook if held elsewhere.

Curr. Dir. Appren.

- Members highlighted the challenges in applicability of benchmarking data, reflected on the improved outcomes and potential impact on benchmarking data, noting the data included was benchmarked against 2023 outcomes, highlighting the impact of the north/south achievement gap when looking at national data
- Considered and discussed the 20% of provision that has non-published data, noting exceptional outcomes with 92.6% achievement and some of the highest grades nationally for Child Care T Level, highlighting that although not externally benchmarked and reviewed, is meeting the strategic aim of being at the heart of the community
- Members discussed areas of concern and areas that had excelled, proposing the data as percentages needed to be supplemented with student numbers to show proportionality

Deputy Principal

- Received an outline of the updated process for reviewing performance in areas and updated SAR process, including actions focusing on feedback to improve grades
- Discussed the impact of central funding decisions and staff issues on quality and staff retention, sharing ideas of how to use the devolved funding and similarities and differences between the devolved authorities approaches

Item 8 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept the update, confirming the targets as recommended for Board approval in June remained appropriate, recommending a high level overview of the results is presented to the Corproatio as essential information.

S.25.09   **Item 9: Strategic Improvement Plan Update (Progress Against QIP (final)**
A summary of areas achieved and those carried forward into the next improvement plan were outlined, with it clarified that this would be reviewed in detail at the Strategic Event in October.

Item 9 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to accept the update.

S.25.10   **Item 10: Apprenticeship Group Feedback**
The Deputy Principal, invited the Dir. Curriculum for Apprenticeships and members present to provide highlights form the meeting to the Committee.
Members were given a summary of the data shared with the group and assured by the work done to update policies and procedures, to ensure standardisation, accountability

and high expectations, focusing on effective communication and full engagement with employers and apprentices, using more regular and earlier performance reviews.

Members present indicated the group had been impressed with the pace of improvements, particularly in providing clarity to all parties, highlighting how there was a clear alignment to the college's values in the new documentation.
The Committee was advised of plans to focus on the improvements and celebrate the successes in apprenticeship week, with it expected the impact would be evident in all data at that point (January).

Item 10 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to accept the assurances of the Committee.*

S.25.11   **Item 11: Student Perspectives and Engagement:**
The Committee noted the student induction survey had been circulated, with analysis of the feedback to be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.
In response to a question about learning perspectives and engagement around resits, members were assured this featured in the survey, as well as being the subject of a themed focus group. Members were informed improvements in timetabling and the grouping and setting of students, along with management support for encouraging attendance had a positive impact on attendance data, with attendance 14% higher than at the same point in the previous year.

Members received an overview of enrolment data, which was positive, resulting in positive growth of 26% over 3 years, highlighting the area had not benefitted from the national increase in school leavers, with the local area having experienced a dip in the demographic.

Members were made aware that the positive behaviour policy as recommended for approval at the last meeting had been rolled out, focusing on 'correct before you connect' as part of the college's trauma informed approach.

Developments in enrichment were outlined, including the application to move the College radio onto DAB, to offer real life experience of broadcasting.

Item 11 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to accept the assurances provided by the report.*

S.25.12   **Item 12: Safeguarding Policy**
Item 12.1 Annual Safeguarding Report

The Vice Principal summarised the annual report, clarifying that this did not include any new information, and was presented to the Committee for their agreement that it provided sufficient assurances in the form of a high-level summary of the information reviewed throughout 2023/24, to be presented to the Corporation as essential information.
Item 12.1 – Resolved: *The Committee resolved to recommend the Corporation receive the report as assurance of the work undertaken by the Committee to oversee effective safeguarding arrangements in 23/24.*

Item 12.2: Policy for the Management of Allegations Against Staff
S.25.13   The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the changes, mainly relating to dates and job roles, confirming this policy outlined how the college deals with low level concerns and would be incorporated into the safeguarding policy in 25/26.

VP Curr. & Supp.

Item 12.2 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to recommend the Policy for the Management of Allegations Against staff to the Corporation for approval.

Item 13: Policies for Approval

S.25.14

13.1   Complaints Policy 24/25

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the changes, which included the removal of references to HE, with this a more streamlined policy as HE requirements added complexities and stages not required for FE.

Item 13.1 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to recommend the Complaints Policy 24/25 to the Corporation for approval.

S.25.15

13.2   Digital Strategy

Members were informed of how the draft had been supported by an associate Committee Member, advising of a cultural shift in the prioritisation of digital skills.

The Committee was informed that the strategy was only for one year, in recognition of the need to ascertain capability and training needs of staff and students, acknowledging this was an area of fast-paced changes, making a longer term strategy difficult to develop.

Members commended the approach, particularly the distinct separation between digital skills and IT resourcing, with members discussing the difference in skills needs and the stages staff and students were at on their journey to digital competence and the difference in confidence, with this providing a barrier for some. The Committee supported the intention to embed this into the teaching and Learning Strategy form 25/26 with an annual review. Members discussed the benefits of AI and technology, whilst acknowledging that great teaching and learning can also take place without technology, which can sometimes be a distraction, with the Committee advised of some excellent lessons observed when there had been an IT failure.

Deputy Principal

Points raised by email for a member unable to attend asked about the communication strategy for the policy were presented, with the Committee advised staff would be fully supported, with it rolled out through training, with clear consistent communication.

Item 13.2 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to approve the Digital Strategy 24/25.

S.25.16

13.3   Careers Policy

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the changes, which were minimal and mainly related to dates and job roles.

Item 13.3 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to recommend the Corporation approve the Careers Policy.

S.25.17

13.4   Admissions Policy

Following an overview of the changes by the Vice Principal Curriculum and Support, members commended the inclusive approach, with changes made to ensure those applying from specialist provision, where the available GCSE's were limited, had the opportunity to be enrolled through an evidence of ability approach. Members indicated this directly supported achievement of the strategic intentions to allow learners to fulfil their potential and being at the heart of the community.

A member asked about the employer aspect, suggesting the college may wish to review this to ensure they are recruiting with integrity, having the right to reject employers

where the college's standards cannot be met, with it agreed this would be added ahead of requesting approval.

Item 13.4 – Approved: The Committee resolved to recommend the Corporation approve the admissions policy subject to the recommended amendment being made.

S.25.18   **Item 14: Standing Item – Internal Audit Reports Relevant to the Committee**
The Committee noted that there had not been any in the reporting period.

 Item 14 – Noted

S.25.19   **Item 15: Committee Self-Assessment**
Following an overview from the Dir. Governance and Compliance, members discussed the proposed improvements, agreeing that the Terms of Reference should be amended to remove reference to 'termly reports on the departmental performance reviews' as this was covered within the QoE reporting provided by the Deputy Principal.

In considering how to improve the flow and timing of meetings, members agreed to trial moving round of agenda items, with the larger and longer QoE reporting towards the end, to reduce the risk of rushing other items, highlighting the importance of all aspects of their Terms of Reference, and intraarticular student voice, safeguarding, EDI and policies.

Item 15 – Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the improvement plan for the Committee, committing to undertaking the actions to maintain improvements in the oversight of quality and resolving to request the Corporation approve an amendment to the Terms of Reference to remove the outdated reference to departmental reviews.

DoG&C

S.25.20   **Item 16: OFS Update**
The Committee was advised that the college's request to voluntarily de-register had now been approved and actioned. Members were reminded that there had been an announcement to move Lifelong Learning Entitlement funding under the OfS, which had since been put on hold due to the announcement of the general election, and subsequent change in government. The Committee was advised that there had still not been an update in relation to this, with any further updates regarding the need to make an application to be re-registered to be shared when details became available.

Item 16 – Resolved: The Committee resolved to note the update.

S.25.21   **Item 17: Meeting Reflection**
Item 17.1: Reflecting on Risks
Members reiterated their earlier request for the wording of the Ofsted risk to be reviewed, and discussed the opportunity to review the format to ensure governors were assured by the actions and mitigations, and not distracted by the colour coding, noting some risks remained red despite mitigations due to external and uncontrollable factors.

Members discussed the incident in the town over summer, asking if this would be reflected in the risk register, with the Dir. Governance and Compliance advising of similar discussions within the Audit Committee. Details were outlined of their suggestions on where this could be reported, agreeing it would fit within the existing reporting structure through the standing item to Audit on incident reporting, having agreed it was adequately reflected in the safeguarding risk. A Committee member indicated this had been done at the time via email, and members considered the impact

on the safeguarding risk rating, and agreed that increased security measures, heightened awareness and mitigations put in place by the safeguarding and estates teams ensured that the risk was not any greater than it had been before summer, with the SLT assuring the Committee that this detail would be incorporated into their review and commentary at the next presentation of the register.

Members concluded that the information presented, including the updates to policies, which continued to put students at the heart of decisions, had satisfied the Committee that the risks were well managed and no further updates were needed.

S.25.22   **Item 17.2: Items To Be Reported to The Corporation**
The Committee agreed the key items for assurance and information needed to be the outcomes, and in particular the significant improvements to apprenticeships and work on engaging employers, and the challenges in staffing and resourcing the significant number of resit students.

Members were advised that the Corporation meeting was embedded into the Strategy Event, preventing the opportunity for a detailed committee update, however, would provide the opportunity for a high-level overview of outcomes and the strategic action plan to deliver further improvements in 24/25, with all other assurances carried forward to December.

The Dir of Governance summarised the resolutions and recommendations to be presented to the Corporation, advising only items for approval would be included in October, with all 'for information' items deferred to December.
October items:
- Complaints Policy 24/25 (for approval)
- Careers Policy (for approval)
- Admissions Policy (for approval)
- Policy for the Management of Allegations Against staff (for approval)
- ToR update approval

For information items deferred to December:
- Digital Strategy
- Complaints annual overview
- Safeguarding annual assurance report

S.25.23

Item 17: Closing Comments and Date Of Next Meeting

Members and attendees were thanked for their time and contributions.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Tuesday 26th November 2024 (at KGV).

The meeting ended at 5.03pm.