

Present: Rubia Amin, Emma Bridges, Sean Devlin, Alex Gwinn, Sheena Payne-Lunn, Wendy Pickess, Cathy Scott-Burt and Ed Senior.

In Attendance: Ruth Scotson (Deputy Principal), Jo Payne (PA to the Principal/Clerk to the Local Governing Body)

1. Appointment of Chair: Sean Devlin was unanimously appointed Chair for the academic year.

2. Apologies: None.

3. Standing Items

- (i) No declarations of interest were received.
- (ii) No items were identified as confidential.
- (iii) No urgent business was identified.

4. Minutes

(i) Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee: 13th May 2020

The minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting were **confirmed** as a correct record. An update was received on the action points arising from the minutes.

5. Management & Strategic

(i) Principal's Update

The Principal presented his report highlighting the following:

- In total there were 10 students who had been confirmed as having COVID. Two were reported this week but had not been in College since before half-term so no action was required to trace proximity contacts. The Principal had spoken to all affected by a confirmed case, including proximity contacts, and followed up to check that they remained well;
- Conversations and feedback with the local health protection team continued to be positive. The Principal requested that they review the College risk assessment and they had provided comments which were intended to be helpful rather than critical of the College's approach. The risk assessment would be reviewed and updated to incorporate their comments as appropriate;
- The circuit break week was an opportunity not to be missed given other circumstances including a member of staff with a confirmed case which required 11 other staff to isolate. With the majority of the IT Support team needing to isolate, it meant that the College might not have been able to operate effectively and safely given the reliance on IT Support oversight of the card readers to access the building etc;
- The circuit break provided time for senior leaders to develop the emergency timetable and for MIS staff to implement the changes over the half-term break. It also provided the opportunity to review the risk assessments of all teaching and support departments and implement changes as needed. Measures to ensure that 2 metre distance would be maintained in all communal spaces where students were not otherwise registered were put into place e.g. Cafeteria and Hall;

- The ESFA subsequently made clear that any period of closure should not take place unless this was the documented advice given by them or the local health protection team;
- The Principal remained committed to keeping the College open to provide face-to-face education for students whilst mitigating the risk as much as possible. With an increasing national and local infection rate, other confirmed cases were inevitable but confidence in being able to trace contacts effectively was the priority and would be assisted by the new timetable;
- The emergency timetable had been in operation for two days and, so far, the impact was that College seemed quiet and calm with capacity hugely reduced. Students were remaining 2 metres apart in all communal areas with students remaining in classrooms at break and lunch. Whilst this was not an ideal situation for staff or students, it was having the desired impact;
- Parental feedback about the actions taken and the circuit break week were overwhelmingly positive. Some had asked if there was more the College could do about increasing capacity on public transport and the College had written to the county council in this respect;
- Student numbers were significantly increased although not all had reached the six week point to meet funding criteria. Nevertheless, the increase in recruitment in spite of the challenges faced was credit to the work of the marketing and high school liaison teams. It was possible that the funded number would be 100 above this year's funded number which would equate to approximately £500,000 additional funding next academic year;
- The minor gamble taken in giving full-time teachers time for enrichment and support as a means of improving outcomes and mitigating workload, seemed more affordable on a long-term basis if levels of recruitment could be maintained or increased;
- The ESFA 16-19 funded numbers were noted and indicate that a number of institutions in the county were operating with a very small sixth form.

In response to questions it was noted that:

- There had been an increase in the size of the year 11 cohort, but the College had increased its market share both in terms of those who chose to study in the county and the percentage of the year 11 cohort who enrolled at the College;
- Whilst students could choose to wear face masks in classrooms or may be asked to if a member of staff had an underlying medical condition, this would not be made compulsory unless government advice changed. In terms of identifying proximity contacts, wearing a face mask would not negate the need to isolate if identified and ventilation in classrooms was more significant. The Principal intended to reissue guidance on face masks to include the message that students could voluntarily choose to wear these in lessons.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and thanked the Principal and all his colleagues for their efforts over the first half-term.

(ii) COVID Recovery – Monitoring Teaching, Learning and Assessment

The Clerk explained that the draft documents which were considered by the Local Governing Body would continue to be reviewed by governors over the course of the year. It seemed sensible for the Curriculum and Quality Committee to have oversight of the document relating to teaching, learning and assessment and for Finance and Resources to lead on the recovery document given the focus on finance, premises and health and safety.

The Deputy Principal outlined the updates which included the focus of the recent training day on remote/blended learning and identifying students for catch up.

The Committee **noted** the updates and commented that measures appeared acceptable and appropriate.

(iii) Strategic Development Plan

The Principal explained that the MAT's Executive Principal requested that the College adopt a strategic planning document similar to that used by Hereford Sixth Form College to ensure a consistent approach. The plan incorporated the College's Mission Statement and Strategic Aims to which changes were proposed. The plan also included assumptions that would enable governors to challenge and support senior leaders and inform governors of priorities.

The Committee **agreed to recommend** for approval the Strategic Development Plan including proposed changes to the Mission Statement, Strategic Aims to the Local Governing Body.

6. **Quality Assurance**

(i) Quality Assurance

The Chair invited the Deputy Principal to present her report and she highlighted the following:

- It was unusual not to be reporting on outcomes or the achievement of high grades in the absence of externally validated results;
- The results published on results day were nowhere near in line with the College's three-year average;
- A summary of the centre assessment grade queries was considered with there being 35 in total. Four appeals were submitted to the exam board on the basis of administrative error with all of these being upheld;
- Retention and attendance up to February half-term were reported. At the end of this period, flooding had impacted on attendance;
- Subject Improvement Reviews would focus on a smaller number of subjects where concerns remained. This would allow senior leaders more time to focus on the areas of most concern;
- Monitoring students from an economically disadvantaged background would continue and subject areas were identifying these students to enable support and intervention. Students classed as economically disadvantaged were those in receipt of free school meals at any point in the six years prior or looked after children;
- In relation to teaching and learning during lockdown, it was not always live lessons that students valued the most with many preferring some live content followed by an activity and then discussion. The student governor reported that videos created for Biology on difficult content that she could refer back to was really useful;
- Rather than subjects being graded, there would be a process of sharing of good practice through reviewing quality improvement plans in other subject areas

The Committee scrutinised the details within the report and in response to questions the Deputy Principal advised that:

- The on course retention was 87.3% but the overall College retention figure was 95.4%;
- There appeared to be an issue with retention on long level 3 courses and this would be further investigated;
- In terms of ALPs scores to be improved that would make the biggest difference to the overall College score, Biology and Sociology were the most significant due to the size of the cohorts in these subjects;
- The new subject leader for Biology had asked to be made Head of Department given her accountability for results demonstrating the approach she had taken to improving outcomes. Liaison with the Biology department at Hereford Sixth Form College was ongoing. Options for observing good practice from other institutions for Sociology were also being followed up.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and thanked the Deputy Principal for her report.

(ii) Quality and Development Plan

The Committee considered the updated Quality and Development Plan. The Deputy Principal reported that:

- Those at risk of underperforming would continue to be monitored and continuing to embed mindset strategies was important and valued by staff;
- A teaching and learning focus on closing the gap and use of low stakes testing to identify what support was needed would assist with catch up.

The Principal advised that:

- Good progress had been made with increasing opportunities for workshops and/or enrichment with a record 579 attending a workshop session in one week. Whilst workshops would continue under the emergency timetable, they would either need to take place online, be small enough to enable 2 metre physical distancing to be maintained or include students only from the same class bubble;
- A MAT Accountant was now in post with a responsibility to manage the finance team at College and provide SLT with the input and information they need;
- Two central MAT IT positions had been filled which was a positive development. Jisc would undertake an audit to identify where improvements were needed to increase resilience;
- The Principal intends to make arrangements to visit and meet local Headteachers, but the ability to do this was somewhat restricted at present. The Senior Leader for Teaching and Learning had assumed responsibility for high school liaison and had already forged good links with some of the local schools;
- The Senior Leader for Student Wellbeing had continued use her enthusiasm to bring about new initiatives and to adapt to online and remote support for students;
- The work in Student Services had been completed thanks to the work of the Premises team. The Premises team had worked tirelessly to implement COVID security measures and to adapt to the changing requirements.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and thanked the Principal and Deputy Principal for their updates.

7. **Governance**

The Clerk presented her report and noted that:

- The overall attendance figure of 81.7% was a slight improvement on the previous year which was perhaps a result of summer term meetings being held remotely. This was below the FE benchmark attendance figure of 83.9%;
- Only one committee meeting had been longer than 2 hours, although only marginally so;
- It was pleasing that governors had been able to maintain their support of College through link visits in spite of restrictions faced by closure and COVID through virtual meetings or reviewing virtual events;
- The SFCA was delivering a programme of training webinars available to governors. The Clerk would join all sessions and feedback on any pertinent points and would be pleased to register any governors interested in joining particular sessions;
- Governors who had yet to return annual declarations were reminded to do so. The importance of signing these even when returned electronically was emphasised;

- The format for conducting annual appraisals worked well, although a revised format for this year might be needed if the conference could not proceed in person as a consequence of COVID restrictions;
- Phil Douce was nearing the end of his first term as an external governor and had confirmed that he would be willing to stand for a further term. The Clerk noted that Phil was an active governor in terms of his contribution to meetings and willingness to visit and support the College;
- The deadline for student governor nominees had passed and one nomination was received from year one student, Lucy Wilson.

In response to questions the following were noted:

- If remote attendance at meetings was something that would continue to be beneficial to governors, even once COVID restrictions were lifted, the College would ensure that this would be actioned. Whilst the benefits of meeting in person were noted, if it assisted governors who travelled some distance and had work commitments, this would be continued. The Clerk stated that assuming governors could continue to be effective in monitoring and challenging then there was no reason why this could not continue;
- The Committee felt that 11 link visits through the course of the year remained a realistic target, particularly if these could include remote meetings or review of virtual events.

The Committee **noted** the information provided. There was some discussion about the targets to be set this year and the Committee agreed to propose a more challenging attendance target in line with the national benchmark particularly given the ability to attend remotely. The Committee proposed to **recommend** the following targets for 2020-21:

	Criteria	Target 2020-21
1	Governor attendance at LGB & C'ttee meetings	84% attendance
2	Governor attendance at training sessions	80% attendance
3	Number of papers tabled at meetings	5% of papers at meetings
4	Number of planned policy reviews completed	90% of reviews carried out
5	Duration of (i) Local Governing Body meetings (ii) Committee meetings	90% 3 hours long or less 90% 2 hours long or less
6	Governor replies to self-assessment questionnaires	90% replied
7	Link Governor visits	11 per annum
8	Scrutiny of Subject Quality Improvement Plans	4 per annum

Further to consideration the Committee agreed to:

- **recommend** the re-appointment of Phil Douce as an external governor and member of the Finance & Resources Committee for a further four year term;

- **recommend** the appointment of Lucy Wilson as student governor for a four year period or until she ceased to be a College student, whichever was sooner.

8. Policy Reviews

(i) ILT Strategy Policy

The Principal outlined the minor changes proposed to the ILT Strategy Policy. Reference was made to the School Cloud system which was used for the recent Parents' Evening and received positive feedback from parents and enabled parents who might otherwise have been unable to attend to have a conversation with teachers. This was supported by a parent governor who had virtually attended the parents' evening.

The Principal also referred to the new Digital Learning Co-ordinator who had already delivered training to staff, prepared training resources for staff and students and had ambitious plans going forward.

The Committee noted the information provided and **approved** the ILT Strategy Policy with the minor amendments proposed.

(ii) Curriculum and Programmes of Study Policy

The Principal outlined the minor changes proposed to the Curriculum and Programmes of Study Policy which was **approved** as proposed.

(iii) Student Conduct Policy

The Principal advised that the proposed changes to the policy were intended to enable senior staff to deal with non-compliance with COVID safety measures without this immediately being escalated to a disciplinary matter. A student would be sent home in the first instance. If they subsequently failed to offer satisfactory assurances that they would comply with safety measures, the matter would then be deemed a disciplinary one.

The Clerk explained that it was also proposed to amend the Student Exclusion Appeal Panel terms of reference to state that a member of the Local Governing Body, excluding parent, staff or student governors, could sit on an appeal panel. This currently stated that it would be a member of Finance and Resources which was placing quite an imposition on a small number of governors.

The Student Conduct Policy was **approved** with the minor amendments proposed.

(iv) Quality Assurance Policy

The Deputy Principal outlined the proposed changes to the Quality Assurance Policy to reflect arrangements for this year including 'deep dive' activities.

The Quality Assurance Policy was **approved** with the minor amendments proposed.

9. Closing Standing Items

(i) Risk Management:

The Principal presented the updated Risk Register which was unchanged to the version considered by the Local Governing Body in September.

The Committee **noted** the information provided and no additional risk management issues were identified.

(ii) Impact: The monitoring and scrutiny of the College’s approach to COVID security and recovery would continue to have an impact to ensure that all measures would mitigate any risk to staff, students and the wider community.

(iii) Any Urgent Business: No urgent matters were raised.

(iv) Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 3rd February 2021

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked senior staff and all those involved in introducing and overseeing the COVID safety measures and for responding promptly and appropriately to any confirmed cases.

The meeting finished at 6.41pm.

Signed:.....
Sean Devlin (Chair)

Date:.....

CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE: ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 4th NOVEMBER 2020

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
C&Q/04.11.20/6(i)	Report back of reason for lower retention on long level 3 courses.	RJS	03.02.21	

ACTION POINTS CARRIED FORWARD

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
C&Q/05.02.20/4(ii)	Review arrangements and thresholds for attendance alerts to parents to ensure these are satisfactory.	EYS/RJS	13.05.20	

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
C&Q/13.05.20/4(i)	Plans for reopening to be shared with the Finance & Resources Committee.	EYS	20.05.20	✓
C&Q/13.05.20/4(i)	Thank staff on behalf of governors' for their efforts and hard work in difficult circumstances.	EYS	ASAP	✓