

Minutes of Growth and Engagement Committee

Date: 03 October 2023

Time: 4.30 pm

Location: Itchen College, S11

Present: Mr A Scott (Principal)
Mr T Grant (Chair)
Mr B Tyers
Mr D Batten

Virtual attendance: Mr B Jones

Apologies: Ms F McIntyre (Clerk)
Mrs D House
Mr M Jones
Mr C Whitfield
Mrs C Carpenter

In attendance: Mrs R Stratton
Ms J Brooke
Mr A Waters
Mrs D Finch
Mrs A Merrin (Minutes)

1. Apologies

1.1 Apologies noted as above

2. Declarations of interest

2.1 None

3. Minutes of the last meeting

3.1 Minutes to be agreed

4. Matters arising

4.1 None

5. 16-18 Matters

5.1 Paper provided to Governors showing an example of tutorial materials.

AW explained that Tutorial has been revamped to work on providing transparency.

At a recent PDM (Professional Development Meeting) for tutors it was pointed out

that materials need to be available for all staff, so these are now shared on the Google drive for everyone to access.

AW went over some of the slides;

- Presently 2nd year tutors are focussing on UCAS support, in terms of tutors understanding their role as well as students understanding theirs. There was a lot of work on UCAS in the summer term so we are also now delivering tutor materials on apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships, this is due to feedback received from tutors last year. Support for personal statements is also a focus as this was asked for by students, although now having arranged a workshop from Solent University, a low level attendance has signed up, but this may be due to the work being done in tutor.

There are materials and detailed step by step guides for completing UCAS as applications are growing, especially in terms of POLAR (POLAR is an acronym which stands for Participation of Local Areas), this tool can be used to find the area-based measure quintiles associated with a postcode. It can be used to identify places where young people are less likely to go to university. The 20% of areas with the lowest participation rates are designated as “quintile 1”, with the top 20% are “quintile 5”. Of our quintile 1, due to our postcode areas, we had 64% gain a place at university – the national average is 30%. All agreed it was an astounding success

- VESPA – this is looking at the growth mind-set, which with hard work and systems and practices comes success. VESPA is also built into our own systems on Pro-Monitor and assists in tracking a student’s progress. Tutors can run reports for students to build on in 1:1 discussions.

Committee looked at tutorial material for this week which include; student ambassadors (we have had 82 students sign up); materials prepared by a student on her dyslexia journey; the launch of Black History Month (which has also been built into lessons); information on accessing the pantry.

***Q** – There is a lot of information, is this updated on a weekly basis?*

***A** - Yes*

***Q** – Is it hard for students to know what to go to first or what to look at first? It is great to have choice and this all looks like a comprehensive and fantastic support.*

***A** - Everything goes into tutor materials so it is a one stop shop, it has limited the amount of student emails. Everything a student needs to know is promoted in tutor instead, it gives a more collegiate feel. We are able to promote ahead and remind about deadlines. Tutor materials are not always as big as this weeks and they build in 1:1 time as well. Messages on TV screens also reinforce tutor messages.*

BT advised that in his first year at Itchen he found tutor to be very bland, but now it is much more interactive, digestible and very informative.

5.2 Safeguarding paper provided to Governors outlining pastoral support for academic year 2022-2023 and update on this academic year so far. The report highlighted that this year is even busier than last year, with lots more information coming through from external services following enrolment. Sadly we are losing services as the NHS are withdrawing our wellbeing practitioner & MHST, we are currently looking at other ways we can plug that gap. We have signed up to Anna Freud Services, which is an online service where we can sign up students and then they take it over. We have produced leaflets on anxiety resources, counselling, and Mental Health support so students have resources they can access 24/7. We are trying to build up student resilience. We are going to put up all our resources onto our website so parents can also access information and help as well. Governors looked at the low level wellbeing support which is being supported by Sam Doyle; trying to get students into class, comforting students and that type of support, Support for Learning are also seeing a lot of this type of need. Regarding the loss of some of our NHS services, The Principal advised we will carry the cost to replace where we can.

Q – Are other colleges faced with same problem?

A - Tauntons have a full time practitioner, but they are facing the exact same extraction of services. After the email advising the cutting of these services everyone came back asking where they were supposed to access these services, all have a large numbers of students on lists.

The Principal advised he raised the issue with the City Council but they said these services were outside their control, they empathise but cannot help. When the local colleges come together next, The Principal will ask them to look at how we may be able to act as a combined group to share resources.

TG said it was important to recognise, from a governor perspective, they know the challenges put on the college and safeguarding and that support is high on the Governor agenda and is getting lots of attention. TG agreed we have to look at supplying support and building this into budgets.

Q - Whilst students are waiting on a list, what contact do we have with them?

A - DF touches base, refers them to the other online services etc., and advises them not to just wait but look at what else is out there. Also we have a wellbeing google classroom with resources for students, we just need to teach them to use it, and it dovetails well with tutor programme.

5.3 Paper provided to Governors on recruitment.

Enrolment to date very positive picture, key things to note;

- 200 students over allocation, not guaranteed additional funding this year, we have £1.1 million additional costs and may get half of that in year but we have not heard yet
- next year we will receive £1 million in funding
- large year 2 cohort
- More level 1 and 2 entry this year so proportions have increased
- GCSE resit has seen student increase of 36% in maths and 92% in English – that's 500 students doing GCSE maths & 300 doing English.

Governors want the efforts of MJ recognised, his assemblies and open events has meant that schools to the East of the city have provided lots of students, it is a really important role he has played.

Q - Are students coming here due to the type of courses offered e.g. Protective Services?

A - Yes that could be the case, although some others do provide these subjects too.

BJ wanted it noted that the college doesn't feel overcrowded and classes don't look overflowing, he doesn't want Governors to get the wrong impression.

BT said he feels college areas don't seem different nor do lessons but you can notice the additional students when in the canteen.

AS explained that we have retained lunchtime buses at a big cost and kept the Covid timetable, which means students that don't need to be on campus can get to/from college, alleviating some of the pressures on the college campus.

DB said he felt the college seemed busier than last year but not as bad as it has been in the past on the old timetable.

Q - How do you manage 500 students in maths?

A - We have 20 classes with 25 in each, with between 4/5 classes in every slot of the timetable, some p/t teachers have offered to cover more lessons. Although these are an increase we have chrome books and more resources so classes are well resourced.

Q - How is the sharing cross fertilisation happening?

A - We have a lead GCSE in maths & English to co-ordinate the curriculum, so joint curriculum plan for all classes. Also have a maths Curriculum Manager in place this year for more support to teachers.

Q - Will most do resits Nov/Dec?

A - Depends on what grade they come in with to when we put them in - is a grade 3 and after assessment we feel they could be ready then they will resit in Nov, grade 1/2 we will teach for a year.

5.4 Principal gave a verbal update on engagement activity:

- 22 assemblies booked (by Tuesday 3rd Oct we would have carried out 15). Of the remaining ones, all except for Fareham academy, will be delivered before our Open Events meaning we have been successful in visiting schools to encourage attendance at the forthcoming events. This includes all of our local providers.
- 15 careers events booked, all except Toynbee, Redbridge and Brookfield would have been covered by the time our Open Events come round. Invitations for careers events continue to come in to us.
- Current bookings for Open events are doing really well, 500 for Thursday evening and 300 for Saturday morning.
- Starting new interviews very shortly, hoping to build on trial at Brookfield where we interview at the schools.

5.5 Attendance is at 90.1% as of today, this time last year it was 89.8%. The least attended classes continue to be GCSE.

6. Adult Student and Community Matters

6.1 Governors were given an overview of the main activity since the last meeting and to data around the performance over the academic year.

Summer was a busy time with a wide range of activities both in college and across the county aimed at engaging families into meaningful activities. By supporting other providers, particularly those running play sessions for families with children on free school meals, we engage with parents who are part of our target group within adult education as well as increasing reputation with parents, young people and families and with our Partners. This was one of the key strategies for growth this year.

Youth workshops were extremely well attended and a pilot to see whether young people, particularly those at risk of becoming NEET would engage over the school holidays. Many of these young people came from Weston Secondary School and these workshops were part of a targeted approach for the school to try and support their students. These workshops are part of our on-going commitment to fund NEET activity now that the funding provided from HCC has ended. On the back of this SCC have agreed to fund another two workshops at Christmas.

Another initiative launched over the summer with Southampton job centre was Over 50's job clubs. We have been running these in other areas for some time but Southampton have a particularly large number of claimants in this age group. The course is based around the traditional themes of a job club, e.g. CV writing, confidence building and transferable skills. We have just finished the first three cohorts and already 12/56 learners have gone into employment. The job centre are saying that compared with other provision, this is an amazing result.

Governors were also shown data from the last academic year to demonstrate how much the department has grown. Some of the contracts are new so there was no comparison but each and every contract has grown in the last year. This gives us a total overall of just over 2500 learners (compared to just over 1220 in 2021-22).

ESOL project was also a success, aimed primarily at learners from the Ukraine, we supported learners for 16 hours per week for 6 weeks in Eastleigh, Winchester and Southampton. Delivery included improving learners' English skills but also supported with digital skills and employability. It wasn't all classroom learning, learners visited lots of different venues in and around Southampton to experience life in the city. 10% of these learners found employment by the end of the course and 60% of the remaining learners continue to learn with us in our community ESOL courses. This project supported our already growing ESOL provision and provided the opportunity to work with a large national organisation raising our profile on a wider scale. Palladium have won another ESOL contract and have already approached us to talk about partnership work.

Q - *Where do you get teachers to hold these programmes from?*

A – *Some are from our ESOL programme, others are new members of staff, and others existing staff. We have a large bank of tutors as we cover a wide geographical area, we opened ourselves up to a much bigger pathway going out to Hampshire.*

Q - *Has Ukrainian demand grown?*

A - Yes although the need is different now, this year focus has been more for those with no English skills compared to the first cohort where it was getting them into work and last year helping those with some English skills to improve.

Q – What are your future plans?

A – To keep doing what we are doing, keep expanding partnerships and contracts and making sure we chose those with the same ethos as us, and build on family learning (cooking, arts and crafts etc.). We are also now working with the Probation Service through Multiply, with learners that have lived experience of the justice system. This gives us another opportunity to showcase what we do, it is predominately maths related but lots of engagement activity.

Governors wanted noted the excellent report and passed their recognition to JB.

7. Staff Matters

7.1 Governors were shown a paper on staff attendance. Absence has dropped a little since this time last year, this may be due to less Covid related absences and self-isolating ending.

Q - Are you happy with attendance or do you think it should be better?

A - Overall feel it is ok, and has gone down a bit. In comparison to the national picture we are ok where we sit. When looking at individual instances it can be challenging. We have good processes for managing absences and they are fair to staff and the college. Most people don't like taking time off, and we support our staff but on the other hand there are concerns about some staff absence patterns, but then we don't challenge, we ask how can we support, are they struggling, how can we help, we try to make sure we understand individual causes. We also have wellbeing interviews we sometimes hold.

7.2 Governors looked at the data on staff changes. It was noted that quite a few had left, it was explained that we have a payroll clean up every year of casual staff that have not worked for us for some time and this makes an impact on data and we also had some that retired after many years' service here.

We track why staff leave and ask them to complete an exit interview questionnaire

Q - What comes back?

A – It is usually very specific to the individual, although a common comment is what a nice college it is and, how hard we work, although we are not always provided the resources we need from the sector. It was noted it is a shame when someone makes a comment on leaving but hasn't raised any issues until they are leaving.

We have had a good number of new staff join us, and we have managed to staff all teaching roles, although we are expecting two to leave at Christmas.

News teaching staff have a good induction programme to work through, and we are looking at our processes on induction when someone joins later in the year.

Q – Do Adult Ed tutors have the same induction?

A – We have a good number of casual claims staff and we are aware that induction needs are different for them. They have mentors for contractual paperwork and someone who supports them with delivery. A new support network of teaching triangles has recently started between community Maths tutors and the in college tutors to see if this helps.

Q - How many tutors do we have?

A – Approximately 50 on payroll but realistically use 15 on a regular basis.

Q - 13 staff left and 14 joined - have they hit the ground running?

A - They went from enrolment straight into teaching so it was a learning curve for those having come from secondary schools. But it is a good way to meet lots of staff in other areas and get a sense of what we are about as a college and community. The Principal is currently meeting with them all for 10 mins to see how they have found the settling in process - all positive feedback.

Q - Diversity – older teachers leaving, younger starting?

A – As a guide our teacher pay scale runs from 1-9, the majority were appointed to SCP 9. The age profile reaches from early 20's to 50 years old. Younger teachers may not feel as confident with A Level teaching and see it as more pressured and maybe more opportunity to develop in schools.

7.3 Not much has changed to the staff development plan since it was shown to the Committee in May 2023. We have weekly meetings for teaching staff (rotating the days each term to make it fair). They focus on tutor, curriculum, faculty time and teaching triangles.

7.4 Governors were presented with the staff survey results. The big picture is that staff are happy being here and there are no big changes from last year. One area for improvement was resources, and we are working hard to resolve these concerns. Communication is always a hard one to understand as nobody seems to elaborate – is there not enough, too much, is it just a departmental concern. The Deputy Principal will ask staff to expand and speak to her if they are willing. DB advised he had heard feedback that support staff feel teachers are communicated to more. The Deputy Principal will have an open door for anyone wanting to discuss any concerns. We also encourage staff to pass on feedback to the Staff Consultative Group members.

Q – There's a nice area in the college centre by the cafe, could this be used for staff events as a regular thing?

A – It is a nice idea but could potentially be opening up to ranting sessions if we hold things in a more social way, we do have Christmas and summer staff lunches. It was suggested that we could look at 'cake Friday' drop in sessions at break or something similar.

8. Health and Safety report

8.1 Nothing significant to note, it is a static picture. First Aid staff have been very busy, lots of training going on and we had a successful fire evacuation.

Q - Why do we know about fire evacuations beforehand?

A – The purpose is to get people used to leaving the buildings and it could trigger anxiety for some of our student cohort, especially those in Functional Skills.

Q – There is a growing concern from lithium batteries, how is the college mitigating this?

A - More of a future issue, we do not allow students to plug anything in.

Q – Does the staff policy says no charging of bikes or scooters?

A - No but storage is outside

9. Matters/issues raised by the staff consultative group

- 9.1 The group met last week and shared feedback from staff survey, fed back on the timetable, and asked for enrolment feedback. The wider staff body knew who to discuss issues with as the group representatives were announced at staff briefing.

10. To consider new and existing policies as required

- 10.1 No significant changes to the Safeguarding policy, mainly changing of acronyms, updating changes in staffing and updating links to external sources.

- 10.2 There were no major changes to the Prevent policy, apart from changes to staff, reporting lines and external referenced websites.

- 10.3 It was noted that the health & Safety policy did not need reviewing until 2024.

11. Impacts and actions

- 11.1 actions:

Safeguarding policy to be taken to Full Board for approval at next meeting.

Prevent policy to be taken to Full Board for approval at next meeting.

Impacts:

Staff survey has been very useful in seeking feedback and making improvements.

Valued input from JB, AW & DF

Issues with external support has risen cause for concern

12. AOB

- 12.1 We will be in full possession of the refurbished LRC on Monday 9 October 2023.