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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE

Held on Wednesday 7th June 2023 at 6.00pm in Skills Park and via MS Teams

Present: Angela Cross-Durrant (Chair), Julie Kapsalis (CEO / Principal), Nick Vaughan-Barratt.

In Attendance: Andy Cowan (Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality), Dario Stevens (Deputy Principal Planning & Information), Nicki Adams (Director of HE), Amy Norris (Head of Student Wellbeing), Susanne Wicks (Head of Governance).

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| 28.22 | Apologies for Absence |
| | Apologies for absence were received from Lynn Reddick and Felicity Fletcher. |
| 29.22 | Declarations of Interest |
| | The CEO/Principal declared that she is an unremunerated Director of Nescot Enterprises Ltd. (NEL). |
| 30.22 | Minutes of the previous meeting and Matters Arising |
| a | The Committee approved the minutes of the HE Sub-Committee meeting held on 8 th February 2023. |
| b | Matters Arising <u>HE Sub-Committee</u> : The Director of HE agreed that the decision to absorb HE matters into the work of this Committee was appropriate given the contraction of the provision and cessation of partnerships which had required additional scrutiny |
| c | The Committee approved the minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting held on 1 st March 2023. |
| d | Matters Arising The Chair noted that this would be the last meeting for the Deputy Principal Planning & Information and formally thanked him for his hard work and contribution to the work of this Committee. On behalf of all present, she wished him well for the future. |
| 31.22 | Higher Education Matters |
| | The Director of HE presented her report and matters discussed are set out below. <u>Office for Students (OfS) Matters</u> The Director of HE pointed to the Access and Participation progress update appended to her report and highlighted the substantial impact of the cessation of partnerships, particularly on BAME targets. She also pointed to the positive data regarding the ' <i>increase the number of students who declare a disability</i> ' aim, which for new starts is above target. In addition, students with a disability are achieving better than their peers which would indicate that the intervention and support in place has had a positive effect. |

Approved Minutes

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| | <p>The Director of HE advised that the data relating to the gap in attainment between BAME and White students is being better manipulated in order to manage its complexity, such as where a student may fall into more than one category.</p> <p><u>Student Engagement</u></p> <p>The Director of HE advised that all indicators show a positive distance travelled, even those few that remain below the sector benchmark. Course-specific plans will address individual feedback.</p> <p><u>Student outcomes</u></p> <p>Noting the drop in HE application numbers compared to this time last year, the Director of HE reminded the Committee of the national context which reflects this picture. She set out some of the promotion and marketing underway including an extensive school campaign and mailshots. In addition the CEO/Principal and Chair of the Corporation will be hosting a lunch and site tour for 13 Headteachers from local Primary, Secondary and Independent schools on Friday 9th June 2023.</p> <p><u>Quality Assurance and External Feedback</u></p> <p>Governors welcomed the positive feedback received from external examiners and noted that the Director of HE would provide further details of future reviews, in which they would be invited to participate.</p> <p><u>Teaching & Learning</u></p> <p>The Director of HE advised that she received a letter from Robert Halfon, MP about the HE mental health debate, which actually extends beyond HE.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Director of HE for her report.</p> |
| 32.22 | Safeguarding and Learner Voice Update |
| a | <p><u>Safeguarding</u></p> <p>The Head of Student Wellbeing gave a detailed introduction to her report and welcomed comments and questions. Matters discussed are set out below.</p> <p>The Head of Student Wellbeing advised that the notable increase in safeguarding referrals is wholly positive, and reflects the increased conversation around mental health, particularly in adolescents, the spotlight on low-level concerns as set out in the September 2022 KCSIE guidance, and the move to CPOMS software, which is much more user-friendly than the previous system used. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality added that staff are encouraged to make referrals where they have concerns, and the quality of data and reporting is much improved.</p> <p>The Committee asked the Head of Student Wellbeing to pass on their thanks to the Team for their hard work, resilience and positivity. The Head of Student Wellbeing commended her team's solution focussed and positive approach but acknowledged that the work can be complex and challenging, and outlined her plan to introduce external supervision in the next academic year.</p> |

Approved Minutes

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| | <p>At the request of NVB, the Head of Student Wellbeing described a typical day for the team. She advised that each Wellbeing Coach might have up to six 1:1 sessions with students per day, and will write up the notes after each meeting. In addition, drop-ins must be managed. NVB asked how long a student typically waits for an appointment with a Wellbeing Coach, and the Head of Student Wellbeing advised that they are normally seen a couple of days after referral. However, it can be more challenging when trying to meet students with low attendance or engagement.</p> <p>The CEO/Principal added her thanks to the Team, describing the culture of trust they have created, which means that students feel safe to speak to them. The Head of Student Wellbeing advised that this is achieved through a whole-College approach, through which students are made aware of the support available to them, and staff communicate well with the Team and feel able to raise concerns.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that he met with a member of staff earlier this week about Mental Health First Aid for staff, and ways in which those who are trained can discreetly identify as such, perhaps via a small pin on their lanyard.</p> <p>The Head of Student Wellbeing explained that the Professional Boundaries training was delivered to staff working with the 14-16 cohort who have some very complex needs, and was very well received. She noted the need for staff to appropriately manage contact from students outside of College hours, but also for students to be empowered to be independent and self-reliant.</p> <p>The Head of Student Wellbeing advised that the enrolment period last year was very pressured, as so much information was received from schools, and described the steps she has taken to manage the process more efficiently this year.</p> <p>The Head of Student Wellbeing gave further details of the content of the training offered by Everyone's Invited to take place during CPD week, and undertook to invite Committee members.</p> <p>The Committee thanked the Head of Student Wellbeing for her informative report.</p> |
| b | <p><u>Learner Voice</u></p> <p>The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality presented a verbal update, with information provided by the Director of Personal Development, Behaviour and Welfare. Details are set out below.</p> <p>In Term 2, the Student Voice focussed on teaching, learning and assessment and asked students the two questions detailed below. Heads of Department and Directors of Faculty responded directly at course level.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How is the teaching, learning and assessment on your course? 2. What is going well, what could be improved? <p>Multiple Focus Groups have been held, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up on where you feel safe |

Approved Minutes

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGBT with Citizens Advice • Young carers • Barriers to completing work experience. <p>Positive responses to the Ofsted question “<i>where do you feel safe?</i>” have increased although that may be partially due to the lighter evenings.</p> <p>The CEO/Principal advised that the new Strategic Plan includes a target to engage learners in the improvement of teaching and learning through Student Voice, student reps and, hopefully, a Student President.</p> <p>The Chair asked if a different set of questions is posed to Year 1 and Year 2 students, and suggested that there should be, and that student reps be consulted on what questions should be asked. She also referred to feedback given in 2021 about the introduction of a Maths Club and asked if there had been any progress. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality confirmed that there is a Maths Club, as well as extra Maths workshop in place.</p> <p>Report received.</p> |
| c | <p><u>Complaints and Compliments</u></p> <p>The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality introduced the report and set out the headline data for 1st August 2022 to 31st January 2023. He advised that the Complaints Policy was reviewed in March 2023, and whilst the College welcomes feedback, including complaints, some further detail was added around how vexatious complaints and those with no substance would be handled.</p> <p>With regard to the analysis provided, the Chair asked if there were any recurring themes identified. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that Communication and Staff Behaviour account for 55% of complaints made. He confirmed that any serious complaints about a staff member would be referred immediately to HR. The Chair suggested it may be useful to compare this data with student feedback to identify any common themes.</p> <p>Report received.</p> |
| 33.22 | Key Performance Indicators |
| | <p>The Deputy Principal Planning & Information presented his report and welcomed comments and questions.</p> <p>He highlighted the 3% decline in attendance rates for FE learners this year and the consequential fall in retention rates and explained that the only discernible factors are the rail strikes, the increase in English and Maths functional classes and the number of students experiencing mental illness, including anxiety. The Committee noted that this correlates with the information provided earlier by the Head of Student Wellbeing. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality added that there are some areas of low retention in Level 3 and reassured Governors that he and colleagues are working on strategies to address it.</p> |

Approved Minutes

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| | <p>With regard to Apprenticeships, the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that he meets regularly with the Head of Apprenticeships and she is confident that the achievement rates will exceed national averages. He also explained that approximately 50 students will be removed from the data as they are significantly past their end-date.</p> <p>The Chair asked if there has been any analysis of the reasons for low attendance in vocational learning, and the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality responded that expectations for students must be explicitly set out early in the academic year, and robustly and consistently implemented, although acknowledged that the pandemic impacted negatively on many students, particularly in terms of reduced social engagement during their formative years.</p> |
| 34.22 | Student Applications |
| | <p>The Deputy Principal Planning & Information introduced his report and welcomed comments and questions.</p> <p>The Committee noted that, following a peak earlier in the year, the applications for 16-18 places are now level with those made last year. Internal applications have increased, whilst external applications have decreased despite increased school liaison and higher attendance at open events.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal Planning & Information advised that work is underway to improve the content of school liaison activity, to make it more engaging and interactive, and including equipment such as VR headsets which will interest potential students. He added that when the Admissions, School Liaison, Marketing and Sales Teams are brought together it should facilitate improvements in this area, particularly once the new Director of Customer Engagement has been appointed.</p> <p>The CEO/Principal advised that she was working with the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality to look at travel to learn routes and how students can be supported to travel to Nescot from areas that are not well served by public transport. She also emphasised the need for improved networking with representatives from local schools, some of whom have limited knowledge of what Nescot can offer. The forthcoming lunch with Headteachers will be part of that and further events will be arranged.</p> |
| 35.22 | Curriculum Plan 2023-24 |
| | <p>The Deputy Principal Planning & Information introduced his report and welcomed comments and questions.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal Planning & Information acknowledged that the curriculum planning numbers are quite stretching but reassured the Committee that HoCs were robustly challenged by the Curriculum Panel, comprising members of ELT, and were required to set out the strategies they will employ to achieve the numbers. He also flagged that there are six additional groups and eight new courses for FE, and two new courses for HE and explained that if the recruitment numbers are not achieved, the course or group can be removed, resulting in a cost saving.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal Planning & Information summarised the main changes in the curriculum and highlighted that 23-24 will be the first pilot year for T-Levels in</p> |

Approved Minutes

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| | <p>Nursing, Childcare and Digital Support, applicants for which will be those students who might otherwise be considering A Levels. He warned that numbers are likely be small initially, with few internal students, but it is important to get the courses in place and generate some interest and momentum.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal Planning & Information reported that the part-time provision will be reduced from 60 to 30 courses and gave some details of planned targeted recruitment, which will include direct marketing to care homes across Surrey. He also advised that the Assistant Principal responsible for Adult Learning will review the London market, particularly the increasing demand for English & Maths, Digital Skills and ESOL.</p> <p>The Chair commented that the process was very thorough, targeted and impressive.</p> |
| 36.22 | Equality & Diversity Update |
| | <p>The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality gave a verbal update. He advised that the EDI Group met last week, co-chaired by himself and the Assistant Principal HR & OD. He set out the plan to review the EDI Strategy, which would be approved by the end of the autumn term, and to review the E&D Policy in the light of the revised Equality Objectives, to be agreed by the Group.</p> <p>The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality reported that an accessibility tour of the campus was carried out alongside two staff members who are wheelchair users, which was very useful. There are plans to provide a version of the interactive site map for those with impaired mobility and the EDI Group have also suggested creating an audio guide to assist those with impaired vision.</p> <p>The Chair suggested that a charity may be able to assist the College with providing one, or occasionally more, wheelchairs for use on site.</p> |
| 37.22 | Governance |
| | <p>a <u>Review of the Committee Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>The Chair suggested that some external validation of the SAR in future would be beneficial. The CEO/Principal suggested a reciprocal arrangement with a local college. It was also agreed that Governors' scrutiny of the SAR should be conducted via an additional meeting rather than in one of the three meetings of this Committee.</p> <p>The Committee recommended the revised terms of reference to the Corporation for approval.</p> |
| | <p>b <u>Review of the Committee Annual Cycle of Business</u></p> <p>Subject to the inclusion of the following items, the annual cycle of business was approved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Review of the delivery of the Customer Engagement Strategy (summer term). • Teaching & Learning Observations (regular monitoring item). |
| 38.22 | Any Other Business |

Approved Minutes

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| | a | <p>The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that he and the four newly appointed Assistant Principals have started work on the teaching, learning and assessment quality cycle for next academic year, in readiness for September 2023. He gave details of the process and the Chair challenged the approach of using the categories in the Ofsted Inspection Framework, given how frequently it changes. She encouraged the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality to consider first and foremost what works well for the College and its students, and how excellence in teaching and learning can best be achieved and demonstrated. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality welcomed the point, but noted that the Ofsted Framework and recent report is a good basis for the quality cycle initially, and will develop beyond that as colleagues consider the detail.</p> <p>The CEO/Principal agreed that the first consideration is always the learners but the College must be prepared for the next Ofsted inspection. She described the benefits of the Director of HE also being an Ofsted inspector, and outlined her intention for another staff member to train as an inspector. In addition, Nescot would continue to engage with all sector regulators, to benefit from best practice and ideas.</p> |
| | b | <p>NVB advised that he attended the recent performance of 'Bombshell' which he described as astonishingly good, ambitious and complex. He also gave some feedback on a showcase that took place in a London venue, which the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality undertook to relay to colleagues in the department.</p> |
| 39.22 | Confidential Items | |
| | No items were deemed confidential. | |
| 40.22 | Date and Time of the Next Meeting | |
| | Wednesday 15 th November 2023 at 4.30 pm | |

The meeting closed at 8 pm

Decisions:

The Committee approved:

- The minutes of the HE Sub-Committee meeting held on 8th February 2023.
- The minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting held on 1st March 2023.
- The Annual Cycle of Business 2023-24.
- The revised terms of reference, which would be presented to the Corporation for approval.

Actions:

- The Director of HE to provide further details of future external reviews to the Head of Governance, to share with Governors who would be invited to participate.
- Head of Student Wellbeing to pass on Governors' thanks to her Team for their hard work, resilience and positivity.

Approved Minutes

- The Head of Student Wellbeing to invite Committee members to the training facilitated by Everyone's Invited, during CPD Week.
- The CEO/Principal to investigate how best to conduct external validation of the SAR, which could be via a reciprocal agreement with another college.
- The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality to relay feedback on the recent Performing Arts showcase to colleagues in the department