## MEETING OF CURRICULUM AND STUDENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

**TIME/DATE 5.00pm, Tuesday 12th March 2019**

**VENUE Gateway Conference Room, Parson’s Walk, Wigan Campus**

Committee Members Frank Costello (Chair)

*Gai Murphy*

*Jenny Bullen*

Janet Minto

Andrea Ferguson

*Catherine Langstreth (Staff Governor)*

Anna Dawe

Rachael D’Arcy (Student Governor)

*Marie McGahey (Student Governor)*

Co-opted advisor *Jen Walters*

Clerk Robert Smith

Vice Principal, Curriculum *Claire Foreman*

Vice Principal, Corporate Services Louise Brown

Assistant Principal, IT, MIS and Dave Harrison

Sub-Contracting

Head of Quality Jim Parker

Head of Animal Management Kathryn Mackenzie

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| ***Italics denotes absence* MINUTES** |

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| **Item** | **The meeting opened at 5.00pm and was quorate with at least 3 members being present.** |
| **1**  **CSM/19/03/01** | **APOLOGIES AND CHAIR’S WELCOME**  Apologies were received from Gai Murphy, Jenny Bullen, Marie McGahey, Jen Walters and Claire Foreman.  The Chair welcomed the Head of Animal Management who would be making a presentation to the committee. |
| **2**  **CSM/19/03/02** | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  There were no declarations of interest. |
| **3**  **CSM/19/03/03** | **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27th NOVEMBER 2018**  The Clerk advised that an error relating to the attendance of Andrea Ferguson had been corrected on the formal copy of the minutes, which were approved as a correct record and authorised for signature by the Chair. |
| **4**  **CSM/19/03/04** | MATTERS ARISING The Principal advised members that previously reported issues relating to 16-18 apprenticeships funding had now been resolved. She explained that the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had agreed to provide funding for over-delivery, with the exception of £160K which was likely to be funded in May 2019. However, it was noted that the new allocation for 2019/20 would be capped, which would be challenging in terms of meeting expected demand. |
| **5**  **CSM/19/03/05** | **CURRICULUM PRESENTATION: ANIMAL MANAGEMENT**  The Head of Animal Management drew members’ attention to the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan for the Animal Management curriculum area. She highlighted key areas for improvement and provided a summary of in-year outcomes, which demonstrated progress in delivering those improvements. It was noted that overall attendance including Maths and English had improved from 86% to 90%, with adult attendance improving from 75% to 91%. It was also noted that retention had improved from 74% at the end of 2017/18 to 93% in-year. Course progression was also discussed and the Chair asked whether this was uniform across both the Wigan and the Leigh campuses. The Head of Animal Management responded that the provision at each site was different so it was difficult to draw clear comparisons but that there were clearly similar levels of enthusiasm for course progression at both.  Members were pleased to hear about the improvement activity taking place in the area, including significant improvements in curriculum review arrangements and the development of teaching and learning. It was noted that progress had been helped by improvements in staff stability. The Head of Animal Management also reported that the area had increased its focus on employer engagement and bringing curriculum-related employers into college to meet with students and to talk to them about their businesses. She added that this had also been helpful in terms of employers reinforcing the importance of Maths and English. It was noted that employers visiting the area had included the RSPCA and Guide Dogs for the Blind. It was also noted that students had been very pleased to meet with Sarah Roberts from Creature, a naturalist and author of “Somebody Swallowed Stanley”, a story about plastics in the ocean. The Head of Animal Management commented that this visit was particularly useful as it meant the mainly female group of students were able to meet with an exciting and interesting female role model.  Other activity taken place in the area was discussed, including a planned educational trip to China with 17 students. The Head of Animal Management commented that additional activity like this was helping to attract new students as it added variety and interest to the area’s courses.  Members discussed the areas for development identified for the area and noted that this included further improvements in Maths and English attendance and achievement. The Principal commented that Animal Management was one of the college’s newest areas of provision and there were considerable challenges as the activity relied upon securing external venues, such as farms. It was noted that this made decisions on growth of student numbers more difficult. The Principal also commented that it was also important to remain aware of likely employment opportunities when planning for growth in numbers. It was noted that these issues would also need to be considered in relation to the potential development of higher education course options.  The Principal commended the Head of Animal Management for the significant quality improvements in the area. Members thanked her for her presentation and recognised the positive progress being made. She left the meeting at 5.20pm. |
| **6**  **CSM/19/03/06** | **APPRENTICESHIPS EXTERNAL REVIEW**  The Principal reported that Marina Gaze Consulting had been engaged to carry out an external review of the college’s apprenticeships provision. She clarified that the college was already aware of key challenges relating to legacy issues but wanted an external view on the quality of provision for apprenticeships recruited in the previous 18 months since the last Ofsted inspection. It was noted that the review was focused on college processes, rather than judgments about college data. The Principal commented that a review of data at this time would be skewed by legacy issues which would continue to impact on overall performance for some time until earlier learners were completed.  Members discussed the review conclusions and were pleased to note that, whilst progress had been slow in some areas, the report concluded that the college now had in place the right processes, systems and people to be able to address challenges in apprenticeships provision. The Head of Quality commented that the review had been helpful in identifying those systems that had not yet fully embedded, despite training of staff in the use of those systems. He explained that it was useful in terms of correcting assumptions that things were correctly in place when further reinforcement activity was required. The Head of Quality also highlighted further improvement actions identified in the report, including the introduction of graded progress assessments to provide greater clarity about apprentices’ progress and likely outcomes, and the better identification of Additional Learning Support needs.  Members discussed progress in delivering improvements and acknowledged that things were now working well in terms of service industry apprenticeships, but further work was required to improve construction trades and engineering apprenticeships provision. The Principal commented that progress in relation to the latter had been hindered by recruitment challenges in these specialist sectors. However, members were pleased to note that these challenges had now been addressed and that skill shortages were less of a concern and reliance on agency staffing had reduced significantly.  The Chair commented that the review conclusions gave an overall positive picture, but it was clear that further action would be required. He asked whether the actions identified had now been formally included in the college’s improvement processes. The Head of Quality confirmed that this was the case and that the required actions were now in the Quality Improvement Plan.  The Principal reported that the college’s only remaining apprenticeship sub-contracting partner had had had its direct funding contract with the ESFA cancelled and that this had meant they were no longer able to complete the learners and that the college had now brought the related apprentices into the college as direct learners. It was acknowledged that this would cause further timely completion issues but that there would now be a likelihood of improved final outcomes. The Principal also reported that the college had made a successful bid to the Strategic College Improvement Fund, which would specifically be used to bring about improvements in the college’s apprenticeships provision. |
| **7**  **CSM/19/03/07** | **STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK REPORT**  The Head of Quality explained that his report provided an outline of stakeholder feedback in relation to adult and 16-18 learners, employers and apprentices, and higher education. He reported that, in the national FE Choices survey 2017/18, the college’s overall student satisfaction rates for adult and 16-18 learners were the highest in the Greater Manchester area. It was noted that this was the third consecutive year where this had been the case. It was also noted that these findings had been reinforced in the college’s own SPOC 1 survey about induction in which student satisfaction had also improved. The Head of Quality commented that this data was reliable as it was based on a total of 2,400 responses.  Members also discussed employer responses within the FE Choices survey and recognised that there had been a decline in overall satisfaction. However, it was also acknowledged that there had been a change in methodology for this survey compared to the previous year, which had seen employer satisfaction levels decline nationally. The Chair asked whether the college was clear about the issues concerning employers and how to address them to bring about further improvement. The Head of Quality confirmed this to be the case and that action plans were now in place to address the issues identified.  The Head of Quality outlined the feedback from students in relation to higher education provision within the external NSS Survey. He acknowledged that there had been a fall in satisfaction rates, but commented that the data may not be statistically reliable as only 90 students were eligible to take part in the survey and that the data was based on only 72 responses. The Chair again asked whether the college was clear about potential issues and how to address them. The Head of Quality confirmed that key issues had been identified, with appropriate action plans in place. |
| **8**  **CSM/19/03/08** | CURRICULUM REPORT  The Principal provided a brief summary of the Curriculum Report and highlighted attendance as a continuing challenge for both core provision and Maths and English. She stressed the importance of making expectations clear to students early in their courses and continually focusing on attendance and reinforcing its importance. Members recognised that attendance had improved significantly and acknowledged the Principal’s ambition to improve it further. They also recognised that the key areas for improvement of attendance were 16-18 provision and higher education. The Principal also reported that retention continued to improve.  Members discussed apprenticeships provision and were pleased to learn that attendance was improving. The Principal drew members’ attention to the ‘best case’ outcomes data within the report. Members commented that these rates were significantly better than the national averages for the outturn position at the end of 2017/18 but recognised that ‘best case’ outcomes were unlikely to be met and the college could only endeavour to deliver outcomes as close as possible to ‘best case’.  The Principal outlined new teaching and learning strategies, including the introduction of ungraded observations. She advised that staff had responded positively to these and were able to view them more as a genuine opportunity for supporting improvement and less as a mechanism for performance management. The Principal also outlined progress in securing work placements and members were pleased to learn that this was working well. The Principal highlighted activity relating to the Capital Development Fund (CDF) and confirmed that the target for the number of student work placements would be met, but that it was likely that the total duration targets would not be achieved. Members were pleased to learn that CDF funding for 2019/20 had already been approved and that this only applied to a small number of colleges across the sector. Members acknowledged that this was a good indication that work placement activity was operating effectively.  The Principal outlined the college’s student destinations data and commented that it was based on leavers from 2016 and the college has since improved the progression to HE and apprenticeships. Members recognised that this would mean that the data would refer to a period when quality assurance matters were more challenging and would not take account of more recent improvements.  Internal progression was discussed and the Chair commented that adults’ progression from Level 2 to level 3 appeared to have declined. The Principal explained that a reluctance to take out adult learning loans was a significant factor in the decline. She also highlighted a national reduction in the number of adults aiming to attend university as a significant factor in the progression of adult learners from Level 2 courses to Level 3 Access courses. However, members were pleased to learn that the percentage of 16-18 learners progressing from Level 2 to Level 3 had increased year-on-year from 64% to 74%. The Principal commented that she was particularly pleased with this outcome as it contained a high number of learners who had originally started as Level 1 students. Members recognised that this meant that these students had made very significant progress in terms of their overall academic achievements.  The Chair asked whether planned national changes to Maths and English provision would improve outcomes as reports across the sector indicated that students who had studied Level 2 Functional Skills would no longer be required to continue re-sitting exams until they were successful. The Principal responded that the college’s main focus at Level 2 would be on Maths and English GCSEs as the breadth of pass rates was greater across Grades 1 to 9, which meant the likelihood of failure was actually reduced compared to Level 2 Functional Skills where the achievement rates were nationally very low. |
| **9**  **CSM/19/03/09** | QUALITY & CURRICULUM KPI DASHBOARD  Members discussed the data within the Quality & Curriculum KPI Dashboard and acknowledged that all areas of performance had been covered under earlier agenda items. |
| **10**  **CSM/19/03/10** | **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES: MID-YEAR UPDATE**  Quality  The Principal reported that new approaches within the teaching and learning strategy were helping to create a culture of development and improvement. It was noted that this included the use of ungraded observations, new approaches to continuous professional development and improving definitions of what is good or outstanding teaching and learning. The Principal also referred to the external apprenticeships review discussed earlier in the meeting as a key focus for quality improvement.  Members discussed the college’s revised ESOL offering and noted that it better aligned to Greater Manchester priorities, with an improved focus on getting learners ready to secure employment. The Principal commented that these improvements had also resulted in a significant increase in ESOL learner numbers, including many from outside the Wigan Borough. The theme of transition into the world of work continued in relation to the college’s commitment to delivering on the Gatsby guidelines. The Principal confirmed that the college expected to meet at least four of the eight guidelines by the start of the 2019/20 academic year. Members also discussed the work of Fab Futures and recognised that its role continued to expand, which had helped significantly in improving employer engagement and delivering on the college’s Careers Strategy.  The Principal outlined the key actions required for further improvement, including joining the Maths Excellence Hub at Greater Manchester level, working to meet the remaining Gatsby guidelines and the implementation of a professional vocational programme for college staff.  Place  The Principal reported that the college’s commitment to its ambitions surrounding ‘Place’ had already delivered significant success. This included improved working with local partner schools, including the offer of vocational taster and careers guidance events. Members noted that these developments had drawn very positive responses from partner schools and significantly increased levels of engagement. The Principal commented that success in this area of activity was a significant factor in the college’s continuing increases in student numbers.  The Principal also reported that the college expected to utilise 100% of its Adult Education Budget (AEB) funding, despite its reduction in reliance upon sub-contracting. Members also discussed progress since the launch of the college’s distance learning provision and growth in higher level and degree apprenticeships since the introduction of the Apprenticeships Levy. The Chair commented that increases in higher level apprenticeships following introduction of the levy was likely to further decrease demand for traditional university courses. He asked whether the college had considered the challenges that may arise if universities decided to focus their own offer on higher level and degree apprenticeships in response to falling demand for traditional courses. The Principal responded that it was likely that some but not all universities would consider this approach and commented that universities’ staff structures and traditional academic approaches may not be well suited to the delivery of apprenticeships and that it remained to be seen how well they would adapt to this different market.  The Principal outlined key further actions in relation to the college’s ‘Place’ ambitions, including the launch of ‘Endeavour Awards to celebrate distance travelled, changes to curriculum provision to respond to the devolution of the AEB budget and an application to pilot T Level courses in skills priority areas. |
| **11**  **CSM/19/03/11** | **HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC UPDATE**  The Head of Quality explained that most of the report content had been covered under earlier discussions and summarised key areas of focus for higher education provision. This included delivering improvements on attendance, retention and growth in student numbers. He also confirmed that the college had secured a further extension of its Silver TEF Award under the Teaching Excellence Framework.  The Principal commented that challenges remained in terms of securing consistency in teaching and learning at higher education level and advised that work would continue to further develop college staff to be able to confidently teach at the right level for higher courses.  The Chair commended the Executive Team for its successful registration with the new Office for Students with no specific requirements stipulated within the registration. |
| **12**  **CSM/19/03/12** | **DRAFT CURRICULUM PLAN**  Members agreed that this report should be deferred until the next meeting of the committee. |
| **13**  **CSM/19/03/13** | **STUDENT DISCIPLINARY & SUSPENSION PROCEDURES**  The Principal highlighted proposed changes to the Student Disciplinary and Suspension Procedures and members commented that the changes were practical and appropriate.  **RESOLVED:**  That the proposed Student Disciplinary and Suspension Procedures be approved. |
| **14**  **CSM/19/03/14** | **LINK VISIT SCHEME**  The Clerk outlined the content of a proposed Link Visit Scheme. He explained that the document was intended to provide clarity about the purposes of link visits. Members discussed the new scheme and noted that it provided clear guidance on both the arrangements for link visits and the expectations of managers and governors during visits.  **RESOLVED:**  That the proposed Link Visit Scheme be approved. |
| **15**  **CSM/19/03/15** | ANY OTHER BUSINESS  There was no further business. |
| **16** | **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING:** 5.00pm Tuesday 18th June 2019 |
|  | **The meeting closed at 6.20pm** |