

THE WINDSOR FOREST COLLEGES GROUP

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE QUALITY & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Thursday 25 April 2024 at 5.00pm (online via Zoom)

PRESENT: Tina Coates Chair

Jacob Clay Governor Nathan Garat Governor

Aaina Khan Student Governor FE

Rob Lewis Governor

Gillian May Group Principal & Chief Executive

Janet Robertson Governor

Jeremy Spooner Co-opted Governor

Signe Sutherland Governor Alison Wheatley Governor

Angela Wellings Chair of Corporation

APOLOGIES: Ksenija Pavlovska Student Governor Sixth Form

Antonia Spinks Co-opted Member of Q&C Committee

IN ATTENDANCE: Amanda Down Principal Sixth Form

Anne Entwistle Principal FE

Tracy Reeve Group Director of Governance

Karen Griffiths Group Vice Principal (VP) Quality & Apprenticeships Dan Fairbairn Group Director Digital, Marketing & Admissions

Roddy Peters Group Head of Digital Skills Laura Peters Associate Vice Principal FE

Simon Wright Asst Principal (AP) Curriculum & Quality Sixth Form (Strode's)

Zoe Lawrence External Governance Reviewer, Rockborn LLP

MINUTE No **ACTION**

WFCG Data Dashboard

In advance of the formal meeting the Governors were given a presentation of the new College Data Dashboard which covered 16-18 and 19+ learners by the Director Digital Marketing and Admissions (DF).

DF highlighted that the new format College Data Dashboard, which had been expedited by the recent Ofsted Inspection was simplified and easier to use. It provided a suite of reports - including attendance retention, and in-year destination data - pulling from Individualised Learner Records (ILR), Individual Learning Plans (ILP), ProAchieve and other external data sources. DF confirmed that although considerable progress had been made, the report writers were currently working on enhanced attendance reporting and a full suite of The team was also working on a data dashboard for WFCG Apprenticeship reports. governors and would be seeking input from governors on what they would want to be included. DF demonstrated the 'best-case' achievement and retention report which was available by college, by curriculum area, by ethnicity and other characteristics including EHCP learners. Governors sought, and were given, confirmation that the reports were fully live and updated as data was uploaded. The meeting commended the clear visibility of the separate data sets with accessibility to an individual student level through one main report. The meeting discussed the in-year destination report – previously this data was only available after students had finished their course. This in-year picture of intended destinations updated every 15 minutes and staff were using in tutorials. DF confirmed that current data showed that 88% of learners were intending on going to a positive destination at the current time.

Governors (SS) commended this work and agreed that the reporting format looked very user-friendly. SS asked SLT to think carefully about where the data reports would be used; she encouraged use in all management meetings. DF confirmed that this new Data Dashboard had been highlighted with all staff on a number of occasions and was immediately visible to

ACTION

MINUTE No

encourage access when staff landed on the college intranet page (the logo visibly wobbled to attract attention).

Governors (NG) commended the dashboard but sought further clarification around licencing costs, how sustainable the system was moving forward, and whether there was a cost challenge moving forward. DF confirmed that the college now had a server on site dedicated to this data rather than using Cloud solutions due to the scale across the four colleges so cost implications would not be a concern.

NG suggested that with minimal input required from humans there was a need for a robust data governance protocol to support it. If the Board were to use the data for decision making how would the Board get assurance that the data was correct. DF informed the meeting that there was a report status indicator built into the library to flag any queries or possible data issues with report owners.

NG also suggested that for future releases of the Data Dashboard it would be helpful to see trend data as well as spot data.

The meeting (RL) sought confirmation on whether reports could pull together dual elements of performance e.g. a cross-check with Achievement and Attendance. DF confirmed that in theory this would be possible; an example of this was a new report showing 'at risk' Learners which brought together a few elements or data.

The meeting NOTED the new Data Dashboard and COMMENDED the progress made in this area.

ACTION: Future Data Dashboard iteration to include trend data for governors information.

SLT

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received as shown above.

2. Notification of any other urgent business

There was no other business notified.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

No member declared a conflict of interest with the agenda. The Committee Chair registered her role as a Governor of West London University in relation to the HE Report (item 10 on the agenda).

4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2023

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 30 November 2023, having been previously sent to members, were agreed as a true record and would be taken as signed by the Chair.

All Members were agreed.

5. Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting Held on 30 November 2023

The Director of Governance presented a report which confirmed that all matters arising had been actioned or were not yet due for action but were on track for completion.

NOTED

6. Curriculum Risk Register (RR)

This item was presented by the Group Principal (GM). Members considered the curriculum risk register 2023/24 detailing the key strategic risks in relation to curriculum priorities. Members were reminded of the five strategic priorities for TWFCG, namely:

- i. Growth with a particular focus on 16-19 study programmes, adults, apprenticeships, and Higher Education.
- ii. Quality high quality, always, everywhere.
- iii. Personalised learning study programmes and learning experiences at all levels that are based on a starting point, clear aim and individual need.
- iv. Alliances to develop alliances to support students, employers and local communities.

v. Finance – Improve the financial health rating from 'RI' to 'GOOD' by FY25, improving the financial point score year on year

GM reminded the meeting that recent changes had been made to the format of the College Risk Register in response to previous challenge from Audit Committee members (as discussed at the Board meeting on 20 March). These modifications had now been applied to the Curriculum Risk Register including: Categorisation of Risks (Risks were now classified as either acute or chronic, providing a clearer perspective on their nature and urgency); Updated Control Measures and Success Metrics (the RAG rating system keeps control measures and success metrics up to date, ensuring ongoing relevance and effectiveness); Inclusion of a Target Risk Score (this score enhanced the current assessment of the strength of assurance, guiding strategic focus); Highlighting New Actions (All new actions undertaken to mitigate risks are marked in yellow, drawing attention to recent efforts and facilitating quick review). The Committee Chair (TC) sought, and was given, additional clarity on the difference between 'acute' and 'chronic' risks. The meeting considered the following risks in more detail:

Risk 1: Financial and Quality risk associated with the self-assessed RI grade for Langley College (Risk score now at 8 'green' reduced from 16 'amber'): Assurance around this risk had been secured after the recent strong Ofsted inspection. The risk around poor curriculum planning was also reduced after the work undertaken with the FE Commissioners Team which had identified some actions to take forward but not raised any serious issues.

Risk 2: Ongoing recruitment & retention of key staff/ Higher staffing costs/ Potential Trade Union action (Current risk score at 16 'amber'): The meeting was reminded of the ongoing issue with 'hard-to-fill' vacancies across the FE sector and TWFCG was struggling to deliver some courses due to a lack of specialist staff. There would be a Level 5 Apprenticeship in Education & Training introduced in September 2024 to encourage recruitment of industry specialists. The meeting was reminded of the need to maintain the staff costs as a percentage of income ratio below 70%; anecdotal evidence from other colleges supported this becoming more difficult.

Risk 3: Uncertainty and risks associated with emerging national curriculum reforms (*Current risk score of 12 'amber' after mitigation*). The meeting was assured that the college continued to keep a close watch on all aspects of curriculum reform and would be providing targeted IAG for learners in response. Reworked curriculum plans would be in place for September 2024 once delisted courses were confirmed. The college was now actively engaging with the plans for T level delivery.

Risk 4: Under recruitment leads to non-financially viable curriculum areas (*Current risk score* at 12 'amber'): GM highlighted that this key risk associated with 16-18 enrolment was being closely monitored and managed but remained a challenge. Group sizes had been reviewed in November 2023 to inform planning for 2024. GM reminded the meeting that the recent curriculum planning project – supported by the FE Commissioner Team – had not led to any substantive recommendations for change or action.

The updated Curriculum Risk Register was NOTED and RECEIVED.

7. Ofsted Inspection Report

• Draft Inspection Report

This item was presented by the VP Quality (KG) who had been the nominee during the inspection, aided by Anne Entwistle (Skills Nominee). The meeting considered the draft inspection report issued by Ofsted following the recent inspection of the College, 12-15 March 2024. KG confirmed that the report was as expected – if a little longer than many reports - and did not contain any surprises. The management team had fact-checked the report and it would be returned to Ofsted for their final checks before publication. The meeting commended the consistency achieved with Grade 2 for every aspect of the inspection. The 'strong' rating for the Skills Agenda was also applauded as this was unusual in recent FE College inspections. KG highlighted the detail within the report on the skills agenda which was surprising; it was also highlighted that governors had made a big contribution in this area. KG thanked the Governors for their input during the inspection and highlighted the positive comments about governance in the report. The meeting noted that the 'good' grade on Personal Development had been a focus for staff during the inspection with a big push from staff to demonstrate the wide range of activities and enrichment opportunities that learners

were involved in. The positive words in relation to 'Behaviour' were highlighted – including 'flourish' - these quotes would provide strong marketing lines for college literature.

The Safeguarding was strong especially from the student perspective, the report also referenced different learners. KG expressed her frustration at the comment in relation to all High Needs learners not receiving full Information and Guidance. The meeting agreed that the comments in relation to Safeguarding record keeping in HR were as gentle as could be expected and were a fair reflection.

The meeting considered the three Areas for Improvement in the report:

- i) Ensure all apprentices complete their training and achieve within the planned time.
- ii) Make sure teachers are trained in techniques to help students remember more of what they are taught over time.
- iii) Make sure students with high needs receive the advice they need to make more informed choices about their next steps.

KG confirmed that action (i) was already known and an ongoing area of focus for the Apprenticeship Team across the College. Actions (ii) and (iii) would be remedied immediately by better evidencing of current practice. KG informed the meeting that the second action point about improving students ability to remember was not mentioned at any time during the inspection but may have come from a student or staff survey response. SLT had decided not to push back on this point as if it was removed it might be replaced by something more problematic. KG confirmed that she would ensure that in future there was more evidence of pedagogical curiosity and activity.

Governors (JS) sought, and was given, assurance that the initial remedial action in relation to HR paperwork and Safeguarding had been completed. JS also sought additional assurance around any ongoing issues in relation to female learners and misogyny. KG confirmed that this was included in the Post Ofsted Action Plan but she assured the meeting that staff already responded to stop any potentially misogynistic behaviour by male learners. The meeting noted that the issue in relation to misogyny was raised at the end of the inspection week from a couple of comments in the learner survey data - in relation to 'catcalling' - and then a comment at the learner forum (thought to be the same students as responded via the survey). KG assured the meeting that the College had evidenced that it was responding swiftly to any potential misogyny. SLT were mindful that misogyny could now be seen as part of culture/ society and although the College did not have a particular issue it would be tackled via a cross-college 'Call it Out' campaign. Governors agreed that there was always more that could be done to mitigate this behaviour. Associate VP Further Education (LP) informed the meeting that additional training would be provided for staff to ensure that tutorials focussed on extra vigilance regarding misogyny. Thames Valley Police were also coming into College to talk to 110 male students; the police briefing and advice would be included in 2024/25 tutorials. The College counsellor was also targeting the female cohort to ensure that they were reporting any incidents as soon as they happened.

Ofsted Survey Outcomes

The survey data from staff, students, stakeholders, employers and parents was taken as read; Governors had no additional comments or questions.

Post Ofsted Action Plan

KG confirmed that she had drafted this action plan from comments received from Ofsted inspectors during the visit. She had now cross-checked any additional actions needed after the draft report had been received but there had been little or nothing to add. KG explained that some of the actions referred to 'Ofsted said' whilst others used 'We said'; this was where suggested actions or improvements had been noticed internally during the inspection.

KG confirmed that the Action Plan would be used as a living document, it would be shared with all staff once the final report was confirmed. The meeting considered the following aspects of the Action Plan in more detail:

- Safer recruitment: The most urgent action in relation to HR processes had now been completed (stage 1) and a letter had been sent to the lead Leadership & Management Inspector to confirm that the requisite action had taken place within one month.
- Cross-site collaboration for sharing of good practice should be normalised.

- Industry engagement: more to do in engaging industry in curriculum design.
- Sequencing of curriculum: not in the Ofsted report but useful to keep in the Action Plan.
- Inconsistent achievement: although progress had been made since merger this was hard to achieve across four sites. KG highlighted that this would be a necessity for the College to get to an Outstanding Ofsted grade.
- Stretch and challenge: not in the Ofsted report but there was an acceptance that the colleges could do more. The actions would include CPD for staff and cross-college peer reviews.
- Tracking of skills: needed to be more consistent across all four sites. KG asserted
 that as the Individualised Learning Plan (ILP) developed this would get easier to
 achieve consistency. Work was in hand to identify what the College was already
 doing with High Needs Students so that there was a clear record. There was also a
 need to ensure that the Sixth Form was keeping up with FE.
- Learning walks: the SLT had identified that these needed to be reviewed to move away from compliance and focus on pedagogical development.
- Wrap around welfare for adults was not in line with that offered to 16-18, according to Ofsted. Although the offering would need to be different the SLT would review whether it could be improved.
- IAG for High Needs Learners: signposting and tracking would be improved.
- Reports of normalised misogyny: as discussed earlier in the meeting.

The meeting discussed how progress against the Post-Ofsted Action Plan should be monitored and the Director of Governance (TR) confirmed that the remit should sit with the Board but with Quality & Curriculum Committee reviewing the detail as a standing report during 2024/25.

The Chair (TC) commended the fantastic outcome and thanked all staff for their input to the Ofsted process. TC sought advice on the confidentiality of the Ofsted Report and the Director of Governance (TR) confirmed that the details of the draft report were confidential until the report was finalised and published on the Ofsted website. KG confirmed that the publication date would be within 30 days and would probably be sooner as the College were not asking for many amendments.

The Chair of Governors (AW) thanked the SLT and KG and AE as nominees for such an excellent result and asked whether a press release had been drafted. The CEO/ Group Principal (GM) confirmed that she was meeting with the Group Director Marketing (DF) to discuss this on 26 April. AW asserted that although the six-page report did not give justice to the considerable input there were many positive phrases and judgements which could be used in wider publication. JS – with his media/ newspaper expertise – suggested adding in more detail to the press release as publications had now moved away from one-word Ofsted Grades.

The draft Ofsted Report was NOTED and RECEIVED.

The Post Ofsted Action Plan was APPROVED and would be taken to the Corporation for APPROVAL (17 May 2024).

ACTION:

- i) Inform all Governors when Ofsted report published and embargo lifted.
- ii) Post-Ofsted Action Plan to come to Quality & Curriculum Committee as a standing report during 2024/25.

8. **Strategic Map 2023-25**

The CEO (GM) presented an updated version of the WFCG Strategic Map which was now RAG rated to clearly demonstrate progress to date against this plan. Governors commended this new addition. GM confirmed that the RAG rated strategic map had been well received by Ofsted. The Director of Governance highlighted that all committees had now considered how well they continued to discharge their duty to monitor progress against their allocated Strategic Priorities. The Q&C Committee considered how well they had discharged their 'duty' to monitor progress against priorities 1 to 4. The Committee Chair opened the item for governors' comments and questions and the following points were raised:

TR

ACTION

<u>Priority 2</u>: This covered Ofsted and the Skills Statement but RL asked whether all the actions within the Post-Ofsted Action Plan were reflected.

ACTION: Check that the key actions within the Post Ofsted Action Plan were included somewhere in the Strategy Map.

GM

It was agreed that the objectives in relation to Apprenticeships would be reviewed once the ESFA funding audit was complete.

AW highlighted that the only 'red' rated target in Priority 2 was centred around curriculum staff being 100% qualified; AW questioned whether that was realistic and achievable. GM highlighted that this target was an example of what needed to be achieved for TWFCG to attain Outstanding Ofsted status.

ACTION: Review whether this target needed amendment.

GM

GM suggested that having competed Ofsted Inspection earlier than expected, it might be an opportunity for the SLT and Governors to review the Strategic Map and the priorities and push out the timeline further beyond 2025.

The RAG rated College Strategic Map was NOTED.

It was AGREED that Q&C Committee continued to be effective in their role of monitoring progress against Priorities 1-4.

ACTION: The meeting AGREED that it would be a good time to reset the Strategic Map for the start of 2024/25.

SLT to action over summer

9. Freedom of Speech Act (2024)

The meeting discussed a paper presented by Principal Sixth Form (AD) which outlined the implications for TWFCG of the new Freedom of Speech Act and the Office for Students (OfS) proposed Freedom of Speech Complaints' Scheme. AD highlighted that the new Freedom of Speech Act applied to all organisations regardless of membership to the OfS. All policies and procedures relating to visiting speakers, external lettings, complaints, admissions, and safer recruitment will need to adhere to the guidance set out in the Freedom of Speech Act and the Freedom of Speech Complaints' Scheme. All staff, student, governor and lettings activity, meetings, documents etc. whether on site or in the community would be covered by this legislation. The AoC had recommended that Student Unions at colleges should not be covered by this legislation and that the OfS should work in conjunction with the ESFA and Ofsted to monitor and address concerns and complaints relating to colleges. Under current proposals all commercial lettings would be covered, however the AoC had proposed that only visiting speakers invited in by colleges should be included within the scheme. The meeting noted that the OfS had proposed a Freedom of Speech Complaints' Scheme which was currently under consultation but would be open to anyone to refer to and use. Association of Colleges (AoC) were encouraging all FE Colleges to respond to the consultation to voice concerns; both AD and AW had responded on behalf of WFCG. meeting was assured that management would ensure that WFCG was meeting its duty relating to securing lawful freedom of speech for all under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Governors (RL) sought confirmation on whether this highlighted a training need for staff but AD confirmed that the SLT would wait until further clarity had been provided. Governors were assured that WFCG already had a Complaints Procedure and a Visiting Speaker Policy. An update would be brought to Q&C Committee as more details became available. The Committee Chair sought confirmation on where this would sit within the governance structure at WFCG and TR confirmed that at first sight it appeared to sit within Q&C Committee but this would be confirmed once further details were known.

NOTED

10. Academic Report: in-year performance

The meeting had discussed in-year performance during the Data Dashboard presentation at the start of the meeting which was all looking positive. AE highlighted that Ofsted had been complimentary around attendance but there was still work to do.

• <u>Apprenticeships:</u> The meeting agreed that the Apprenticeship Team had worked hard to achieve the Good Ofsted grading but were mindful that some inconsistencies were

still present. Governors were reminded that the ongoing ESFA Funding Audit (being undertaken by PWC) was proving exhausting and distracting for the Apprenticeship Team as it had been going on since October 2023. This was massively impacting the workload of the team.

KG highlighted the specific issue with the greenkeeping course at BCA which meant that a number of learners were past their end point date. As a result, there was now a temporary pause on new recruits and a new Skills Tutors had been appointed to clear the backlog. Ofsted had seen some of the other Apprenticeship Courses doing very well including Motor Vehicle and Plumbing, where the skills of staff and outcomes were very good. However, there was still a need to improve consistency. KG assured the meeting that she and the team had a very clear understanding of what was working and what was not working. A lot of work was being done to front load functional skills for Apprentices. There had also been discussions with the Business Development team to improve enrolment procedures e.g., around skills scans. Some new apprentices had oversold their prior skills so the course length was below their actual need and the funding was reduced. KG highlighted some exciting new developments soon to come onstream: two creative apprenticeships at Windsor and the college was in early talks with Microsoft.

GM assured the meeting that she had escalated her concerns around the protracted funding audit with the ESFA, as it was having a negative impact on the college. Link Governor for Apprenticeships (SS) asserted that the commitment from the team was strong but it would not be a 'quick-fix'; pedagogy to support Apprentices would be as important as for the 16-18 cohort. The Committee Chair (TC) asked whether the narrative on the Apprenticeship Risk Register properly reflected the issues being faced. TC also suggested that in order to ensure proper oversight a deep dive session should be put into the Quality & Curriculum Committee timetable in autumn 2024.

ACTION:

- i) Narrative of Apprenticeship Risk Register to be further reviewed.
- ii) Deep Dive into Apprenticeships to be timetabled for Quality & Curriculum Committee in autumn 2024.
- <u>Higher Education & Access to HE:</u> Principal Sixth Form (AD) presented the update report for HE which was largely taken as read. AD informed the meeting that good progress had been made towards the consolidation of university partners for the delivery of the college HE programme; the timeline was to finalise this for 2025/26. AD highlighted the work to resolve the contract issues around the partnership with Reading University: BCA currently was a franchised partner and Langley was now going onto the franchise model within one WFCG contract. AD confirmed that the new contract had to be in place for 1 August 2024. Fees would be going up to £7,900 for new students. An update would be brought to the next meeting of Q&C Committee.
- <u>Adult:</u> Current Adult enrolment was at 2582 adults versus 2725 at the end of the year 2022/23 but enrolment continued and it was expected the prior year figure would be exceeded. The College had delivered 99.1% of its Adult Education Budget (AEB) allocation. However, the performance against the GLA allocation was down. The Skills Network contract Community Learners in Southall had also performed better than in the prior year as income was higher and costs lower. AD highlighted the attendance figure of 85% which reflected the additional external barriers that adult learners faced. AD commended the performance of the HE Staff Team during the recent inspection as they had been 'well and truly grilled' by Ofsted. Work continued on consistency and support needs for adult learners.

The monitoring reports on in-year performance 2023/24 – 16-18, Higher Education, Adult and Apprenticeships were NOTED.

11. Applications Report 2024/25

The meeting noted the current applications report for 16-19 programmes at 15/04/24 which showed that the Group was 11% (408 learners) ahead of the same position in the prior year. The current 'growth' in applications by college was BCA 14% (+171), Langley 5% (+33), Strode's 5% (+64) and Windsor 19% (+140). The big increase at Windsor was predicated on the LSIF partnership work and the change of focus for this campus (to Screen Industries) in line with the strategy agreed by the Governors in July 2023. The meeting also noted the offers accepted by college which was running 3% ahead of the prior year – GM confirmed

KG/SS

TR

that the latest figure (at 22/04/24) showed that offers accepted were now 7% ahead of the prior year due to a lot of interview activity after the easter break.

The CEO reminded the meeting that the budget reforecast paper which had been considered at the March Board meeting did not include any growth in learner numbers for 2024/25. However, GM confirmed that if the conversion rate for these applications was as expected the lagged funding figure for 2025/26 – and possibly some exceptional in-year funding for 2024/25 - would continue the upward income trajectory for the college.

GM confirmed that the Admissions Team had made changes to the application process to improve attendance. A new Self-Serve booking system was proving popular and effective with better attendance at interview across BCA, Strode's and Windsor. The meeting noted that SLT were aiming for 2-3% growth compound for 2024/25.

The applications update was NOTED

12. Student Voice: Student Liaison Committee Feedback

The Director of Governance (TR) updated the committee on the Governor and Student Link meetings recently held across all four campuses. The meeting noted the formal notes from the meetings held at Langley and BCA in February 2024.

Governor Link visits were held at all four college campuses during January/ February 2024 as follows: Strode's – Kiran Virdee; Windsor – Jo Croft; BCA – Pippa Goodwin; and Langley – Nathan Garat. NG commended the very strong engagement that he had seen and the positive attitude from students at Langley.

TR reminded the meeting that verbal feedback from all four of these meetings was considered by Governors at the Corporation Meeting on 20 March 2024. TR assured the meeting that a written record of feedback and actions would be undertaken for all future Student Link meetings and brought to Quality & Curriculum Committee for information.

The update on Student Voice was NOTED.

13. AoC Report '100% Opportunity: the case for a tertiary system'.

The Director of Governance (TR) provided an overview of the Association of Colleges (AoC) Report '100% opportunity; the case for a tertiary education system' which had been published on 9 April 2024. The report sets out the AoC's view on both the changes any future government needs to make to the UK's post-16 education system and the specific high-level policies needed to support colleges to ensure that tertiary education was more **effective**, **efficient**, **and fair**, and met the needs of **100% of young people and adults**. The research from London Economics asserted that the apprenticeship levy was failing the youngest and most disadvantaged learners, and that under current estimates, the cost of higher education was predicted to rise exponentially, putting immense pressure on education budgets.

The AoC asserted that Colleges manage to deliver great outcomes, despite policies and systems which are not helpful ('siloed and fragmented'). The report highlights too much competition with other institutions where there could and should be more collaboration, and no prioritisation of investment. AoC believes that changing this would lead to clearer pathways for learners and employers and better outcomes for a wider range of people, places, and businesses. The recommendations also focus on policies which would 'allow colleges to fulfil their role in boosting our economy and society, by ensuring equitable access to education and improved outcomes for individuals and the economy alike'.

NOTED

14. Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The final meeting date for 2023/24 was noted as Wednesday 19 June 2024, 5.00pm (online via Zoom).

NOTED

15. Any Urgent Business

There was no urgent other business notified.

The meeting ended at 6.30 pm