

BRIGHTON HOVE & SUSSEX SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE QUALITY AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE HELD ON THURSDAY 26th MAY 2016 AT 6.00 P.M. IN ROOM 413, COPPER BUILDING

Present: Stephen Berry, Lucy Aditi, Alison Cousens, Hannah Duffy, Peter Freeman, Lindi Galloway (Chair), Dearbhaile Hunt, Lynn O'Meara, Chris Thomson

In attendance: Shirley Brookes-Mills, James Moncrieff, Louise Pennington

QC15/27 Apologies and Welcomes

Apologies: Kerry Doyle.

Stephen Berry was also absent.

Welcomes: Hannah Duffy, Dearbhaile Hunt and Lynn O'Meara

QC15/28 Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd March 2016

The minutes were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the following typographical corrections:

QC15/20 b) first bullet point, line 3 "poredictions" should read "predictions".
Fourth bullet point, line 3 "expereince" should read "experience"

ACTION: Louise Pennington

The typographical errors in the Guidance report on page 11 of the meeting papers were also recorded.

QC15/29 Matters Arising

The Committee noted the items which had been completed and made the following additional comments:

- Item QC15/20 Student Progress in year re linear A Levels: Shirley Brookes-Mills confirmed that a report would be given to Governor in the Autumn Term which would include examination results and results from internal exams and comparisons with predicted grades. **ACTION: Shirley Brookes-Mills**
- QC15/22 College Charter – James Moncrieff reported that having completed some research, he had not yet found any requirement specifying that Colleges should produce a Charter, but it was agreed to continue producing this anyway.
- Reserved QC15/11 Trends in Applications – etc – The Committee was advised that SMT would be bringing the Admissions Policy directly to the July Corporation meeting for agreement, as it had not yet been finalised by SMT. **ACTION: Shirley Brookes-Mills**

At this point Dearbhaile Hunt joined the meeting.

QC15/30 Declaration of Interest

None.

QC15/31 Termly Updates on Quality/Curriculum and Guidance Issues

a) Vice-Principal

The Committee noted the activities within the Quality and Curriculum areas reported within Shirley Brookes-Mills' report. She highlighted some key areas within her report:

- There may be an impact on next year's applications as a result of having to reject approximately 200 priority applications this year, following a significant increase in overall applications, above the College's maximum intake (2,750 compared to 2,623 this year).

- The difficulty recruiting teaching staff at certain levels in the light of increasing Student numbers, was discussed, noting that this mainly reflected the impact of buying a home in Brighton and Hove for anyone moving to the area, along with competition from other Sussex Colleges. It was noted that SMT was investigating options to alleviate the situation.
- Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) has tightened up access arrangements which has increased Teachers' workload. There continues to be limited information transferred from schools in respect of those students with specific needs which causes difficulties for the College. Progression of Students from Year 1 to Year 2 with the implementation of internal examination arrangements (for linear courses) has also increased workloads with new programmes of study, management of new internal examinations etc. SMT will be monitoring this to ensure that there is adequate staffing at all levels. In light of the increasing workloads, it is intended that further staff evaluation will need to take place and where necessary appropriate adjustments may be needed for next year, including the possibility of holding internal examinations earlier in the year.

b) Assistant Principal

The Committee thanked James Moncrieff for his report on Guidance matters. The following additional comments were recorded:

- Page 11 typographical errors: first line "grades", should read "graded"; second paragraph, second line, insert "been" between "have" and "highly"; fifth paragraph, delete "know".; eighth paragraph, second line, replace "and" with "as".
- Regarding the pressure upon the College's in-house counselling services, the free on-line service offered by "E-Motion" to young people in Brighton and Hove was discussed and it was noted that although the College promoted the service, and it is taken up by some students, it has a limited interest as Students' prefer a "face to face" counselling service. Student Governors mentioned that they were not aware of the online service and James reassured them that it was promoted as part of induction but primarily students who might benefit from the service are signposted to it by tutors and counselling staff.
- Thanks were recorded to James Moncrieff and his new Guidance Team for their work over the year, including the additional work arising from increases in student numbers and safeguarding cases, the new programmes of study, internal examinations etc, since the formation of the new Guidance structure this year.

c) Student Governors

Hannah Duffy and Dearbhaile Hunt gave their first Report to Governors advising that the new SU Executive was now established and that they were making plans for various events including the Leavers' Party for A2 Students.

QC15/32 Destinations Report

James Moncrieff presented the Report to the Committee and also made reference to the full report circulated via e mail prior to the meeting, to all Committee Members. The following points were recorded:

- It was noted that Ofsted's data dashboard which planned to provide comparative information for Colleges will be discontinued. No further information regarding the Department for Education's destination analysis has been received since 2014 which suggests that destinations may no longer be used as an accountability measure, with consequential reliance upon results. S7 Member Colleges were approached to considered whether to establish S7 destination benchmarking information but several member colleges felt that, due to the more challenging and disadvantaged nature of their cohorts, the benchmarking would simply highlight less successful performance for them compared to other member colleges; the proposal was therefore rejected.

- The Committee was advised that the College would analyse the accuracy of BHASVIC predicted grades. Nationally, 53% of the predicted grades are inaccurate by 2 grade levels or more; BHASVIC predictions are likely to be very significantly more accurate than this and telling universities this in student references will support our students' success at application. James Moncrieff is exploring an accreditation scheme for predicted grades with the SFCA and UCAS. Bill Watkins, new chair of the SFCA is very keen on the idea and directly involved.
- Attention was drawn to 2015 Student cohort key outcome 9 on page 14 which recorded that the higher rate of male students entering HE compared to female students, significantly contrasted to the national trend. Further investigation of the reasons for this was being made by SMT.
- The Committee also noted the significant number of Students opting for a gap year which also affected the College's destinations data. This has also generated an increase in the support needed for ex-Students, seeking assistance for their HE options.
- In response to a question from the Committee, James Moncrieff explained that it was not unexpected that some students who had enrolled at BHASVIC, opted to return to their School sixth forms, noting that Guidance staff experience shows that these students generally benefit from either returning to the familiar surroundings and support available at their previous school or transferring from an A Level programme at BHASVIC to a vocational programme at a local GFE. Chris Thomson reported that he was carrying out partnership work with the local authority and sixth form providers to establish a protocol for ensuring impartial careers advice is given to students within the city on their choice of sixth form. It was reported that further work would be done by SMT to examine whether the numbers of new students leaving in the Autumn Term could be reduced, with a report being presented to Governors in the Autumn Term 2016. **ACTION: James Moncrieff (with contribution from Chris Thomson).**
- The Committee also queried whether SMT was able to produce information to assist Governors in understanding the performance of Students from deprived backgrounds and comparisons with other Students. James Moncrieff advised that to date the College only had deprivation information for one year, although he was able to report that on the whole those Students were not progressing to University at the same levels as mainstream Students. James Moncrieff agreed to investigate whether it was feasible to seek comparative benchmarking information from other Colleges. **ACTION: James Moncrieff**

QC15/33 Student Numbers and College Strategy

Chris Thomson presented the Report to the Committee, the contents of which were noted and the following matters recorded:

- The College trialled extended hours this year on one day per week and this does not seem to have affected application numbers going forward. However the Unions have raised concerns from its members regarding the extension beyond 5.00 p.m. which may pose difficulties if the College's timetable is extended as a means to enrol more Students. Longer days may also deter Students from further afield.
- Appendix D summarised the timescales for decision making regarding Student numbers' strategy, including the key decisions required and the issues to be resolved e.g. to academisation, international students etc. Ideally the decision regarding this strategy should be made by Christmas 2017.
- The F & GP Committee will be reviewing and making recommendations regarding the College's future Property Strategy, at its next meeting in June.
- The Committee suggested that it would be useful if the risks could be summarised to assist the Governors' decision making, including the risk arising from the uncertainty regarding Central Sussex closure of its A Level provision at Haywards Heath College. **ACTION: Chris Thomson**

COMMENTS ON ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS (page 28 of the meeting papers) 7.1,7.2,7.3

- **7.1 Understand thoroughly the implications of maintaining student numbers (as per option 4.2 – maintain student numbers at 2016/2017 level), engaging external consultancy to this purpose, if need be, by October 2016:** The Committee recognised that should the Student numbers remain static, with the associated impact on income, and the effects of inflation would have an influence on the College's financial position and it would be essential to manage this accordingly. It was agreed that the option for recruiting International Students should continue to be explored (noting that the Corporation had previously resolved to proceed with International Student recruitment – refer Strategic Plan and December 2014

Corporation Minutes (and F & GP/Q & C Committees' recommendations) taking into account the financial and regulatory issues, spread of risk, combined with the potential impact on local Students and notwithstanding the issues should the College opt to academise. The Committee also noted the suggestion that there may be a possibility of working with the local Universities should the College decide to proceed with the recruitment of International Students. At the same time, it was agreed that impact upon existing local Students regarding the various support functions would also have to be taken into account, combined with ensuring that quality was sustained.

- **7.2 Commission a master-planning exercise if, and as soon as, an outcome justifying this from 7.1 emerged.**
- **7.3 Assist Governors with reaching a decision on whether or not to academise and without that, whether or not to admit international students. Accomplish this as early as possible.**

In conclusion, broadly endorsing SMT's recommendations 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3, and taking into account the various points made above including the academisation option, it was resolved that the decision regarding the recruitment of International Students, should be deferred until the matter has also been considered by the Finance & General Purposes Committee at its June 2016 Meeting. **ACTION: Chris Thomson**

QC15/34 Committee Annual Self-Assessment and Review of TOR

The Committee considered the various questions and the existing Terms of Reference and resolved to recommend to Corporation that the TOR remain unchanged. It was also agreed that only one Q & C Committee meeting would be needed in the Autumn Term 2016, but that this could be increased to two if agreed with the Committee Chair and SMT. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

QC15/35 Any Other Business

Peter Freeman gave a summary of the Area Based Review (ABR) outcomes to date (full details e mailed to all Governors), noting the following:

- Recommendations were agreed at the Steering Group last week, which included the recommendation that BHASVIC should continue as an independent SFC, whilst also exploring the academisation option together with collaborative workings with Varndean College.
- Regarding the conversion to an academy, the College would have to submit a formal application for the transitional grant (up to £50,000) by the 16th July deadline, to the Department for Education which would meet some of the costs of investigating conversion e.g. legal costs; the College would be required to contribution 25% of the costs at this point. It was noted that should Colleges decided not to then convert, the grant would have to be repaid. Currently the SFCA is liaising with the DfE/Treasury to see whether it would be possible to defer the deadline.
- Various uncertainties remain including the issue regarding the fact that SFCs which convert would be required to meet the VAT costs on new buildings (BHASVIC's Copper building, with VAT cost of £1M).
- The next step would involve preparing a tender document for agreement at Corporation.
- The Committee was reminded that the Sussex ABR was part of the first wave of the process and that many Colleges were still to go through the process, providing uncertainty for the SFC sector going forward. Of the 18 SFCs involved in the SFC process to date, only 2 have resolve to remain independent (Bexhill and Varndean); the other 16 are either merging or exploring academisation. However it is clear that the SFC sector will have fewer Colleges post the ABR review with the SFCA therefore representing fewer SFCs. In this regard, the SFCA has invited other post-16 institutions to join the Association in order to strengthen its position and that of its members.

There was no other business.

QC15/36 Date of Next Meeting

To be advised.

QC15/37 Reserved Business

Refer Reserved Business Agenda.

CHAIR.....

DATE.....

DRAFT