



## BRIGHTON HOVE & SUSSEX SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE QUALITY AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2023 AT 6.00 P.M.

#### IN ROOM 20 MAIN BUILDING

Present: Raphaella Badua (Governor – Student), William Baldwin (Governor/Principal), Gillian Hampden-Thompson (Governor and Chair of Q & C Committee), Katy Hiles (Parent Governor) Kathryn MacVarish (Governor – Teaching Staff), Daniel Osorio (Parent Governor), Ava Peevers (Governor – Student), Chris Piper (Governor), Jackie Punter (co-opted Teaching Staff Member and Digital Director, Sally Udeen (Teaching Staff co-opted Committee member), Andrew Wright (Governor)

In attendance: Sandra Prail (Chair of Governors), Alison Cousens (Assistant Principal – Student Services), James Moncrieff (Deputy Principal), Jess Jung (Head of Faculty – observer), Beatrice Hadley-Farnsworth, Mia Harrison (incoming student Governors/ observers), Melissa Drayson (Cover Clerk),

The meeting was quorate.

***NOTE: FOR EASE OF REFERENCE QUESTIONS (AND RESPONSES) AND COMMENTS FROM GOVERNORS HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN BOLD ITALICS***

#### SECTION 1: ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

##### 1.1 Apologies and Welcomes

Apologies were received from Jo Redfern and Sandra Prail.

Sally Udeen (Teaching Staff co-opted Committee Member) and Katy Hiles and Daniel Osorio (new Parent Governors) were welcomed to the meeting. Melissa Drayson was also welcomed as cover Clerk for the meeting.

Round table introductions were made.

The Chair took the opportunity to note that it was Raphaella Badua's and Ava Peevers' last meeting as Student Governors, and to thank them for their excellent work in strengthening the student voice. Both were offered references based on their work as student governors.

It was also noted that this would be Gillian Hampden-Thompson's last meeting as Committee Chair. Chris Piper and Andrew Wright had agreed to take over as co-Chairs of the Committee. Full thanks and goodbyes would be made at the Corporation meeting at the end of March.

##### 1.2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022

The minutes were considered and approved by the Committee and the Chair authorised to sign them at the next opportunity. **ACTION: Chair**

##### 1.3 Matters Arising

The contents of the actions schedule were considered and updates were provided where necessary in respect of on-going and completed actions. It was noted that Jo Redfern would not be able to provide the report on the Careers due to her absence.

##### 1.4 Declaration of Interests - None declared.

## 1.5 Principal's Update – Summer Term 2022

William Baldwin reported the following updates and key headlines to Governors as summarised below:

- The College was pleased with the positive Ofsted outcome. The process had been challenging, but it was gratifying that the inspection team had understood and endorsed the College approach to quality and the student experience.
- SLT had held a strategy day in early January at which the draft 2023-24 budget had been considered. This indicated a potential financial shortfall. There were few areas where savings could be found, and a restructure would not be required. However, areas of efficiency had been identified, including increasing maximum class sizes and staff utilisation. This would enable the college to accommodate an additional 130 students, 30 of which would be funded during 2023-24, and 130 the following year. Any increase in class sizes would need to be sensitive to the differential needs of different courses, and any potential impact on quality and outcomes. The Principal was committed to leading a review of staff workload.
- The draft budget would be presented to the Resources Committee for further consideration. This would include a notional sum for a staff pay award, but it was too early to gain certainty over this figure. Governors were made aware that the current year's pay award was still yet to be confirmed, and that lobbying and industrial action regarding FE funding was ongoing.
- The Principal had written an article for the AOC on FE Funding, to tie into the day of lobbying.
- The current year's financial position was being tightly monitored in the light of increasing pay and non-pay costs. Management accounts would be brought to the Resources Committee for scrutiny.
- The government had announced the final outcomes of its qualifications reform. This removal of qualifications would be more widescale than originally thought. No funding would be available for any qualifications that would overlap with A Levels or T Levels. The impact on the college was being reviewed and would be reported back.
- Recruitment of an Assistant Principal (Digital and Communications) was underway. The position had attracted a strong field of candidates.
- Governors were reminded that the College had been an early adopter of the new Accountability Agreement and that this was now part of the Conditions of Funding.
- The Principal had attended the Beacon Awards where BHASVIC, in collaboration with FESussex, had won the award for education for sustainable development. This was a significant achievement for a Sixth Form College.

There were no further questions and comments that would not be picked up under the other agenda items.

Thanks were recorded to William Baldwin for his report.

## 1.6 Termly Update - Student Governor Perspectives

The Student Governors gave the following update to Governors based on feedback gained from Students via the Student Union and BHASVIC Forum.

### *SU/Ambassador Activity*

- Applications for student governor roles were strong and all roles were set to be filled. Hustings would be organised to encourage better engagement from the student body, and interest in student ambassador activity.
- A bake Sale for Turkey and Syria had raised £200.
- A vigil had been held for Brianna Ghey
- The SU was working with Citizens UK to undertake a student transport survey in March, with the aim of improving access for all students to travel where they needed to be. A forum had been held the previous week, at which the Head of Brighton and Hove buses had been very supportive.
- A Culture Day was taking place on 17<sup>th</sup> March, including stands and a fashion show for students to showcase aspects of their cultures.

### *Student Wellbeing*

- A therapy dog visit had been very well received.
- Anxiety workshops had been run by flourish mentors. Some students had assumed that there were only for female, non-binary and trans students so the need for workshops for male students had been identified.

### *A2 - Application process and support in the autumn term with next steps after BHASVIC*

- Students on the UCAS pathway but who were not applying for immediate entry into university had expressed the view that UCAS tutor sessions were not as relevant to them, and this was deterring some from attending tutorials. The Deputy Principal explained that former students who had deferred their entry into university had appreciated the value of the UCAS tutorial sessions when they had applied following after leaving college.

### *A2 - Mock exams week and confidence/perception on course completion/summer exams*

- The three-hour exam preparation lessons had been accepted by students when they understood their purpose and value.
- Some students had asked if Mock exams could be arranged in real exam conditions. Management responded that this would be the need to cancel two-weeks' worth of lessons for both year groups, due to the limited availability of large venues.

### *A1 - Skills Week thoughts*

- There had been little student feedback following the launch of Skills Week, which was interpreted as a positive sign and endorsement by students of the new experience they will receive in the coming summer term.

### *Other feedback*

- There had been some concern from students about the teachers' strike, as this was so close to A Level exams. Most course content had been completed but the question was raised whether online resources might be made available to students. The Principal clarified that staff strikes would not lead to gaps in course delivery, and the impact on students would be minimal. In response to questions it was confirmed that the strike timetable would rotate, so the impact would not be on specific groups. It would not be possible for management to insist that teachers provided resources, but there was confidence that teachers would address any detrimental impact.
- A request was made for second year students to be able to access online personal development day resources that had been provided to first years.
- The new absence system was causing some confusion. A request was made for follow up emails to be sent out.

In response to questions about the current atmosphere, the Student Governors confirmed that, although there was increased anxiety relating to the forthcoming exams, the atmosphere was supportive and purposeful. Some students were still unsure what to expect from exams as they did TAGs for GCSEs.

Governors and management asked for their thanks to be recorded to the Student Governors, The Student Union and Student Governors had made an amazing contribution in the last year, and had significantly moved forward the agenda for social action. By working with sixth forms across the city, the students were starting to be major agents for change.

## **SECTION 2: CURRICULUM AND GUIDANCE ITEM**

Papers were presented by the Deputy Principal, James Moncrieff, who highlighted the key points and also answered Governors' questions, including those received prior to the Meeting. Governors commented on the clear and concise front sheets.

## 2.1 Ofsted Report

Governors noted that Ofsted reports were now very concise. The Deputy Principal gave his reflections on the process and outcomes.

- It was a relief that the pressure of an impending inspection was now alleviated.
- The outcome gave reassurance about the staff team's readiness for a tough process. Staff had pulled together and delivered key messages well.
- Credit was given to those areas that had been selected for a deep dive, although there was confidence that the inspectors could have visited any department and the outcomes would have been the same.

Governors asked for reflections on the new enhanced inspection framework relating to meeting local skills needs. BHASVIC was only the second Sixth Form College to be inspected under the new framework. The college was well placed, having already completed the Stakeholder Engagement, Accountability Agreement and the Board Review of Meeting Local Skills Needs. However, the college self-assessment of Reasonable had been conservative, and this had been upheld. It was felt, however, that the college was close to a judgement of Strong. The one area for development was employer engagement within the design of the curriculum across all courses, although this would be difficult to evidence with some curriculum areas. It was also felt that there should have been closer connection between the inspection of personal development with that of skills. The Corporation's decision to combine the careers link governor and skills link governor roles was evidence of this link.

It was noted that similarly sized sixth form providers which had converted to academy status were not subject to the enhanced inspection. This was considered unfair given the additional logistical burden imposed on non-academy Sixth Form Colleges. The college had provided feedback to Ofsted and the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) had picked up the issue and was making representations to seek to address this. Governors agreed that applying a vocational and training provider approach to academic provision was disproportionate and supported management in challenging this.

The Committee gave a vote of thanks and congratulations to SLT and the whole staff team for the outstanding outcome. Governors felt that they had been very well prepared for their interviews.

## 2.2 College Development Plan – Spring Update including Engagement Strategy

The contents of the paper were taken as read and the following points were recorded, including responses to Governors questions, some of which had been received via the Q & C Teams posts.

### a) Quality of Education

There was further discussion about class sizes. The Principal explained that the current cap was 22, and that the class size average was 19. The plan was to increase the cap to 23. This still compared favourably with other colleges, where the class size cap was as high as 28. The impact on staff morale and workload was questioned. Staff governors responded that the main concern was less about the numbers in the class, but the additional marking load and how to accommodate it at a time when teachers felt that they were already working at full capacity. The Principal stated that SLT was committed to exploring options and processes that would help to mitigate any additional burdens on teachers.

Students had expressed concern about the impact of larger classes on the student experience, as well as possible Health and Safety implications, especially in practical courses. The Deputy Principal stated that it would be a complicated and demanding piece of work to get it right, and a strong message would be sent to students and staff that it would not lead to a detrimental experience.

Student Governors asked what the impact on student common and study spaces would be. It was considered that the college was in a better position with the Elms Building, but that more space was still needed. It would not, however, be possible to replace the portacabins unless the college was able to grow and increase its income. The college had urged DfE to establish a separate bidding process for capital funding for study space.

Governors asked for an update on the future development of T Levels. Management responded that T Level delivery was still not viable at the college due to shortage of space, although the local authority was keen for the college to run them. The position was being kept under review.

The government's announcement regarding post 16 qualifications would lead to the deletion of a large number of applied general vocational qualifications. The impact of this on the college curriculum was in the process of being assessed and would be reported back to governors. Many students who wished to study more than one BTEC in order to keep their options open, would be affected. The SFCA was lobbying on the issue.

**ACTION – Updated position statement on DfE Reforms and Curriculum Offer, including timelines and implications for different functions, to be brought to the Committee at its next meeting (JAM)**

**a. Behaviour and Attitudes**

Governors had raised an advance question regarding how well attendance levels compared to similar institutions. Management responded that a discussion had been held at a recent meeting of S7 Principals and it appeared to be a shared pattern. There had also been a recent BBC article showing that, across all education sectors, attendance had not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. The college figures were not a major cause for concern, and action being taken by the new Head of Guidance was beginning to have an impact.

**c. Personal Development**

Governors requested an update on the provision of counselling support. Access to counselling had been kept open, and the college was providing assessments. There was not the capacity, however, to deliver counselling sessions in house, so students were being referred out. The Safeguarding Governor confirmed that the service was in a much better place, with stronger triage and a fairer allocation of support. A Mental Health specialist with experience in navigating external services had been appointed, and was having a positive impact. Referrals had increased as students approached exams.

It was noted that the shortage and underfunding of counselling and mental health services was a national issue.

The college was also undertaking more proactive, preventative work on student wellbeing. The Safeguarding governor reported that he was leading on a student coaching project aimed at helping students through their studies.

The Committee requested KPIs from all teams, and it was agreed that these would be added to the next report. **ACTION (JAM)**

**d. Leadership and Management**

In response to governors' questions, it was reported that there was no change to the college's position on academisation but would be raised at the next Governors' Strategy Session. This would normally take place in March, but would be postponed this year until the new Chair and Co-Chairs were in post.

**2.3 EDI SARAP (incl EDIMS and HR aspects and reflecting governance impact/Board diversity)**

Governors were reminded that the Spring EDI report was brought to provide assurance and to meet the college's responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty. It was noted that the report had been developed and improved to provide a cross-college picture and, for the first time, included governor EDIMs.

Tribute was paid to the work of individual staff (Wilhelmenia Etoga Ngonu and Jess Jung) in terms of promoting EDI with both the student body and across the staff group.

Other headlines were:

- A challenge for the EDI Steering Group was collating consistent data across all sections. A decision had therefore been made to use census categories. This would require some adjustments as data was currently calibrated to the ESFA categories, but this would be resolved over the forthcoming year.
- A training session for governors was proposed ahead of the next Corporation meeting. Governors asked if staff undertook regular EDI training. It was confirmed that EDI was covered at every September Inset. It was also a key focus at the Managers' Away Day

- Teacher training would be geared towards empowering staff to identify, undertaken action research and address negative trends in their areas. An intersectional approach would be encouraged.
- It was noted that the HR Team would be establishing methods to widen staff recruitment.
- Accreditation of College of Sanctuary about to be awarded after three years of development. This would reflect the college's status as a beacon of best practice in its delivery of ESOL and support for refugee students.

Governors raised a question about the societal issue of a declining trend in the number of male students coming into FE and HE, and the college's responsibility in terms of addressing the gap. It was considered that this was a particular issue with working class boys, and there was an overlap with the college's work on social mobility and contextual offers. It was noted that the college was performing well against national benchmarks in terms of representation of male students on A Level course, and UCAS applications.

The Committee considered where EDI sat best in terms of governance oversight. It was agreed that, as a cross-college issue, it could be reported straight to the Corporation. It was also suggested that Jess and Wilhelmina should be asked to provide a ten-minute presentation to a future Quality and Curriculum Committee meeting.

#### **ACTIONS:**

**The Chair of CQC would speak to the Chair of Corporation about future reporting of EDI directly to the Corporation.**

**The report was recommended to Corporation FOR APPROVAL.**

#### **2.4 Social Mobility Strategy and Action Plan**

The Deputy Principal reported that the Action Plan had been brought to the Committee following the presentation of the Strategy to the previous meeting. It was agreed that progress would be reported in future through the College Development Plan report.

Governors noted and welcomed progress in this area. It was suggested that it might have its own SARAP, so that governors might attend review meetings. This would be considered further and reported back.

#### **2.5 Skills Link Governor – Termly Report (Careers) – Jo Redfern**

The report was not taken due to the absence of the Skills Link Governor.

#### **2.8 Risk Register (or Assurance)**

James Moncrieff summarised the paper for the Committee and highlighted the Cyber risk. An advance question had been raised about the risk rating relating to BTEC provision. It was explained that BTECs constituted 10% of college provision, so potentially posed a significant financial risk.

The risk report was NOTED.

### **SECTION 3: CONSENT AGENDA**

The following items were taken as read and endorsed where necessary, subject to the questions included in the items and recorded below.

#### **Policies and other Documents**

##### **3.1 Student Charges Policy**

**It was AGREED that the Student Charges Policy would be recommended to the Corporation for approval.**

##### **3.2 Governor SARAP Validation Feedback – Noted**

**SECTION 4: OTHER ITEMS**

**4.1 Any Other Business**

No items of other business had been raised.

**4.2 Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

**SECTION 5: CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

It was agreed that staff and student governors would remain in the meeting for these items.

**THE MINUTES HAVE BEEN SEPARATELY RECORDED IN CONFIDENTIAL (PINK) MINUTES** – refer separate confidential record.

The meeting closed at 20:00

Chair.....

Date.....