

East Coast College

MINUTES of the meeting of the Curriculum Development Committee held at 2pm on 17th May 2023 Video Conference

Present:	Saul Humphrey (SH) Peter Lavender (PL) Ian Lomax (IL) Mike Dowdall (MD) Lisa George (LG) and Lewis Hanson.
In attendance:	Julia Bates (Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships) Wendy Stanger (Director of Governance) and Urmila Rasan (Deputy Chief Executive) for item 7.
W/23/05/1	Apologies and membership
Apologies – Malcolm Goodwin and Stuart Rimmer	
W/23/05/2	Declarations of Interest
<p>There were the following declarations of interest:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mike Dowdall as an employee of the LEP • Lisa George Ormiston Denes Academy Assistant Principal • Peter Lavender UEA Senior Research Fellow – fixed term contract • Saul Humphrey – Professor at Anglia Ruskin University and Construction East which was looking to encourage an HE construction offer in the East through Anglia Ruskin University. <p>It was agreed that these declarations didn't preclude full participation in the meeting.</p>	
W/23/05/3	To approve the Minutes of the meeting of the 31 January 2023 and any other matters raised previously not otherwise included in the Agenda
The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2023 were agreed as a true record.	
W/23/05/4	To Review Rolling Action Log
<p>The rolling log was reviewed and the RAG rating queried. The Director of Governance advised that green meant that the action was on target to meet the timeline set. These actions were those set by the Committee and was a mechanism for them to judge progress.</p> <p>Governors discussed the change of leadership at Norfolk County and how this could affect the proposed devolution deal.</p>	
W/23/05/5	Curriculum Development and Planning March Update
W/23/05/6	Curriculum Development and Planning May Update
W/23/05/7	Current Position Curriculum Planning
The updates were noted.	

Governors noted that the main risk was that the current curriculum plan didn't meet the financial plan and that there was a budget gap that needed addressing. There were in some areas constraints caused by government policy and funding rules in addressing this gap.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the landscape the College is working in is changing:

- The College's 16-18 numbers have declined for a number of years with a resultant reduction in the lagged funding received and a material change in income.
- Adult and HE numbers have reduced as people do not want to take on loans and are looking to work rather than study and employers are not looking to release staff for training.
- BBO and ETF contracts end December 2023 and are being replaced with annual bidding which is a risk to income and requires time and resources to bid.

This is all reflected in the finances and the funding pressure that the College and the majority of the sector is facing.

Governors challenged why the College was not recruiting to target. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the College's 16-18 numbers had been declining for three years with targets and contribution rates not met. This meant that resources were reduced. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships advised that the College needed to focus on recruiting to target this year and the report included the actions that were being taken.

The student governor raised that there were areas of the College that needed fixing to help with recruitment and retention. This included increasing the support for those with mental health issues, improving the tutorial programme and ensuring equipment was up to date. Governors discussed how improvement could be made within the constraints of resources. The Director of Governance advised that the Quality and Standards Committee had, had an update on student tutorial, enrichment activities and support provided as well as the on-course student survey which showed students knew where to go for support. The tutorial programme was being reviewed to help ensure it met all needs including apprentices. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships advised that from a curriculum sense there was a rich and comprehensive tutorial programme but agreed that it was not always presented well. Equipment in some areas still needed to be improved and updated but this was a constant balance against resources.

Governors discussed the competitive bidding market. The cost of bidding could favour those with a strong bid writing team rather than funding areas that were in most need. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that private training providers were able to bid at a lower rate than Colleges. The College needed to consider value for money before bidding as it was mainly high cost low margin work so volumes were needed. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships advised that the College's project work was highly regarded and have been successful in a market were not all could bid. This market was now more open and as a College we needed to decide the resources we put into bidding and what we would and just as importantly what we wouldn't bid for.

Governors discussed apprenticeships and their viability. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that some employers were looking to withdraw from apprenticeships as not affordable. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships advised that it was difficult to make apprenticeships viable in the current financial market with employers not able to afford to release staff for the apprenticeship and therefore looking to the

College to provide other shorter qualifications. The College needed to look at how it made apprenticeships cost viable whilst maintaining the quality of experience.

Governors discussed the opportunities of large projects such as Sizewell. They must not though be used to mask the underlying problems regarding recruitment and curriculum planning. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships commented that the College was working to make best use of the opportunity including developing the Lound Campus. The challenges were the volumes needed, the capacity the College had to grow provision, invest in the resources, and the staff and equipment needed within its budget. There was also the risk that the resources and facilities would not be needed after the projects were complete.

Governors commented that the Great Yarmouth redevelopment should include a commitment to training by the developers. It was noted that there was already a commitment to engage with the College's students during the development.

Governors noted that the Government's skills focus was involving employers as a Community College we also needed to consider our community and the education our young people and adults needed. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships advised that the College's Employer Partnership Strategy & Employer Engagement Toolkit 2023-26 included in the papers set out the College's approach and the employer groups were in place and meeting. Curriculum areas also had engagement with the employers that they worked with as part of their curriculum planning. The Committee Chair advised that he had attended a couple of the employer events and they worked well but attendance seemed to be mainly employer groups and there needed to be a focus on getting the right employers to attend. Consideration also needed to be given to how the College engaged with larger employers that had a base in the region but not its main management. The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships advised that employer engagement had commenced initially with those employers that had complained in order to understand and address their issues. It then moved to those that regularly engaged with the College and we now needed to look at those that aren't engaging with the College. She was also working with lots of business networks and groups to develop engagement and to share what the College can offer. The LSIP had struggled to engage with employers and there needed to be time given to develop all these links.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships presented the operational actions set out in the report which were:

Admissions and Marketing:

- Implement targeted marketing campaigns for courses with low numbers and focus on immediate recruitment efforts for all funding streams.
- Enhance outreach initiatives and develop tailored marketing strategies to raise awareness of part-time HE options among the affected demographic.
- Enhance the visibility and awareness of financial support mechanisms for part-time HE students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Develop strategies and initiatives to progress current students successfully, including additional marketing campaigns and personalised support.
- Proactively communicate with feeder schools, offer guidance to students without solutions, and manage waiting lists effectively.
- Revisit entry requirements with school's careers advisors to strike a balance between accessibility and motivation for GCSE attainment.

Adult skills growth:

- Implement the adult strategy project plan to grow adult skills provision.

Employer and stakeholder partnerships and provision Alignment:

- Strengthen partnerships with employers, schools, and feeder schools to better understand student needs and aspirations. providing additional support and resources to sectors affected by the pandemic, such as hospitality and hairdressing.
- Provide more opportunities for students and align provision with higher-level qualifications and our HE.

Financial Accessibility:

- Review and revise financial support mechanisms to illustrate that there are student support mechanisms for part-time HE more accessible for students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- Conduct thorough reviews of costings for different apprenticeship pathways and identify opportunities for financial viability.

Quality Improvement and Transition:

- Continue to address quality issues in apprenticeships, improve employer communications, and rebuild reputation through quality improvement plans and role changes.
- Ensure smooth transitions from full-time provision to apprenticeships to ensure students gain the skills they need quicker.

Staff Development and Support:

- Provide training and development for staff to effectively teach and support low-attaining and challenging groups of 16-18 students.

The Committee agreed that these actions were appropriate and made the following points:

- Anytime the College let an applicant walk away without an offer the College was letting the applicant and the community down
- Apprenticeship quality issues also needed to address the need to ensure apprentices felt part of the College and received the appropriate support
- School liaison was key to increasing 16-18 numbers and
- HE numbers may be being affected by the cost of living crisis and the support available needed to be clear to help increase participation.

The Committee agreed that the paper ‘Current Position Curriculum Planning’ should be shared with the Board and there needed to be a strong message given to the Board on the risks of the changing college landscape, including reduction in 16-18 numbers, competitive bidding and curriculum reforms.

W/23/05/8	Open Letter to Secretary of State - Impact of the government’s Level 3 qualification reforms
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The letter was endorsed and noted how powerful it was as from so many colleges and a similar letter should be sent on FE funding.

It was discussed how the local MPs and local Councils could be kept informed on the issues the reforms were causing the College. A letter had been sent to them in December from the CEO and Chair.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Strategic Partnerships advised that the Senior Leadership Team had held a recent workshop to review the effect of curriculum reform

W/23/05/9	Agenda Planning	
None		
W/23/05/10	Review of Meeting	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Confidential Items: None 2. Risk Management: Changing market College working in and bidding risk 3. Health and Safety: Mental Health concerns 4. Equality and Diversity: Needed to be throughout curriculum and future planning to ensure that all can access education and aren't excluded from our offer 5. Sustainability: Needed to be throughout curriculum and future planning. 6. Media: None. 		