

# HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## STANDARDS COMMITTEE

### Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 12 February 2013

Membership: \* Riccardo Abela  
\* Chris Christofides (Chair)  
\* Colin Hindmarch  
\* Mike Thorne

*\*denotes present*

In attendance D Sheridan, Clerk to the Corporation  
R Lucas, Deputy Clerk to the Corporation  
P Marsh, Vice-Principal  
P Dady, Head of Academy  
B Bryden, Assistant Vice-Principal

#### **428 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Mike Stokes, Assistant Vice-Principal.

#### **429 Declarations of Interest**

Mike Thorne declared an interest in agenda item 435 – Annual Monitoring Report on the Delivery of HE.

#### **430 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2012 were agreed as a correct and accurate record.

#### **431 Matters arising from the minutes**

Matters Arising (minute 419.1 refers)

Mike Thorne reported that the action to contact Essex County Council regarding the College's success is on-going.

#### **432 Comparative Data on FE / Tertiary College Performance**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Principal on the comparative data on FE / tertiary college performance.

The Principal explained that the Department for Education has changed the scoring system for vocational qualifications used in the national league tables. The new scoring system places Harlow College 3<sup>rd</sup> out of 312 colleges nationally and 1<sup>st</sup> locally. It is believed that if the system had not changed, it would be likely that the College would have been ranked 1<sup>st</sup> nationally. The new scoring system has benefited sixth form colleges and colleges that predominantly offer A Levels.

Governors noted, however, that the value of vocational qualifications has not been reduced for entry to university, therefore students are not affected.

The Principal reported that despite being 3<sup>rd</sup> nationally, as we were last year, the College is getting significantly better and it is envisaged this will continue this year and in 2013/14.

The Committee noted the paper.

#### **433 Framework for Excellence Learner Views Survey 2011/12**

The Committee received and considered the tabled report of P Marsh, Vice-Principal on the Framework for Excellence Learner Views Survey for 2011/12.

It was reported that the overall satisfaction had slightly increased, with a score of 8.1 (out of 10). This is the highest the College has achieved to date. This places the College around the median for colleges nationally, however as differing numbers of students complete the survey, it is not easy to compare like-for-like.

In total 1,048 out of a possible 4,927 students completed the survey. The highest number of respondents were in the 16 – 18 year category.

It was acknowledged that the timing of the survey could have affected the responses to the last 2 questions (that is help in the first few weeks and prior information), however these still scored strongly.

The results of this survey broadly equate to the findings from the College's own internal student satisfaction questionnaire.

A full analysis and breakdown of the results has not yet been completed as national results are not yet available for comparison. However the College acknowledges that there is still a lot of work to be done on student satisfaction and surveys in general.

The Committee noted the paper.

#### **434 Harlow College Dashboard**

The Committee received and considered the report of the P Marsh on the Harlow College Dashboard. An updated version of the dashboard was circulated at the meeting and Governors noted that it provides details on all learner-focus delivery teams.

81% of learning observations have been classed as outstanding or good for the year to date. As Ofsted require teaching to be outstanding, the College would still be classed as good. The Principal reported that staff time and effort is focused on improving results for students.

Internal and external audit figures provide a level of assurance on, and how much care and attention is taken over, quality systems within teams. Scores range from 1 to 3, with 3 being high risk. This system helps to determine

where interventions and efforts should be placed.

It was noted that the data coloured red show information below College averages, not national averages.

The Committee noted the paper.

#### **435 Annual Monitoring Report on the Delivery of HE 2011/12**

The Committee received and considered the report of P Marsh, Vice-Principal and P Dady, Head of Academy on the Annual Monitoring Report on the Delivery of HE 2011/12.

Governors' attention was brought to the action plan at the back of the paper and it was noted that a number of improvements have been made over the last year.

Target 1 – each module is now evaluated and helps to form a clearer picture of student satisfaction. The overall scores are showing an upward trend.

Target 2 – student progress is tracked and considerable improvements have been made to courses. There is good team working amongst staff and regular meetings are held to monitor students' progress. Interviews are being introduced for potential students. Extra skills building classes are being delivered that are open to all students, but particularly targeted at those who most need them.

Target 3 – the National Student Survey (NSS) will be conducted in a controlled way. Students will be briefed on the survey and where the wording is ambiguous, this will be explained. M Thorne highlighted that it is vital to get as many students as possible to complete the survey and confirmed that an incentive could be offered.

Target 4 – opportunities for staff to keep up to date on their subject knowledge are constantly explored. This will remain on the action plan as staff development will be continuous.

Target 5 – accuracy of assessment is crucial. Assessment goes through a rigorous process and a staff mentoring system has been introduced. External assessors have confirmed that marking for the 1<sup>st</sup> semester has been broadly accurate.

The Committee noted the paper.

#### **436 APEX Partnership**

The Committee received and considered the report of B Bryden, Assistant Vice-Principal on the APEX Partnership. There are currently 11 partners in the partnership, however Writtle College will be leaving to run their own contract.

The focus of the partnership has moved away from apprenticeships to the adult skills budget. This year approximately 63% of the work and funding

will be for adult skills budget work (compared to approximately 30% last year) with 27% for 16 – 18 apprenticeships. The adult skills budget funding is predominantly for short courses.

Performance monitoring is a key aspect for the APEX support team and the College's MIS team. Everyone in each partner organisation is involved in the process of quality assurance. Records are checked for accuracy, and there are checks on the observations of learning, health and safety and safeguarding procedures. Actions are followed up, emerging issues are considered and an action plan is agreed. This is a highly labour intensive process. A dashboard will be produced for the partnership to help this quality assurance process.

An update was given on the partners and what and where they deliver.

It is likely that funding to the partnership will reduce in future years. With this in mind, the Committee asked for 6 monthly reports to be presented to the Standards Committee.

The Committee noted the paper.

#### **437 Complaints and Compliments 2012/13**

The Committee received and considered the report of P Marsh on complaints and compliments received for the year to date. P Marsh gave the Committee an overview of the College's complaints procedure.

9 complaints have been received, 5 of which have been upheld in part or in full. A discussion was held around these 5 complaints.

It was highlighted that the College receives a relatively low number of formal complaints, due to issues being dealt with within teams at an early stage.

11 compliments have been received and they were noted.

The Committee noted the paper.

#### **438 Any other business**

There were no items of any other business.

#### **439 Dates of future meetings**

Summer Term	Tuesday 11 June 2013	08.30am
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