

MEETING MINUTES

MEETING QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

DATE: 23rd June 2017 TIME: 14.30 – 16.10

VENUE: Meeting Room,
Faraday Wharf,
Birmingham CHAIRED BY: Colin Stewart

MINUTE/ACTION TAKER: Sally Brook Shanahan,
Clerk to the Corporation
& Legal Officer

ATTENDEES

1. Colin Stewart (CS)	2. Jon Binner (JB)	3. Clair Mowbray (CM)
APOLOGIES: None		
IN ATTENDANCE: Alex Stephenson, Board Vice-Chair (AS), Neil Brayshaw, Director of Technical Training (NB) and Sally Brook Shanahan (SBS)		

TOPIC	WHO	WHEN
1. Welcome and introductions CS welcomed NB to his first meeting of the Committee. NB outlined his experience, focussing on Construction and Engineering in the FE and HE sectors. Committee Members and attendees introduced themselves to NB.		
2. Declarations of Interests None beyond those already included in the Register of Interests.		
3. Minutes of the meeting of the Quality & Standards Committee held on 31st March 2017 The minutes of the meeting held on 31 st March 2017 were agreed and signed by the Committee Chair as a true record.		

4. Actions Log from the meeting of the Quality & Standards Committee held on 31st March 2017

- (i) ACT02 – Meeting held on 31st March 2017 – Minute 2, Page 3 of 7 – Terms of Reference.

The update that confirmed the terminology to be used to ensure consistency across all College documentation was noted. It was agreed the Action can be closed.

- (ii) ACT03 – Meeting held on 31st March 2017 – Minute 2, Page 3 of 7 – Terms of Reference.

CM confirmed she had taken forward the Action to find a Board recruit with FE experience. The FE Commissioner is putting forward a list of potential recruits including for co-opted Committee membership.

- (iii) ACT04 – Meeting held on 31st March 2017 – Minute 3, Page 5 of 7 -Update on Curriculum Development.

CM confirmed there were currently no plans for a High Speed Rail College in Wales. CM noted the Level 6 provision offered by the High Speed Institute at Leeds and reported she was in dialogue about the potential for it and NCHSR to work together.

- (iv) ACT06 – Meeting held on 31st March 2017 – Minute 6, Page 7 of 7 - Any Other Business

In response to the request to arrange a tour of the new buildings, CM said there was an open invitation for Members to visit now a dedicated Facilities Manager was in post.

5. Further Education Commissioner’s Report

The FE Commissioner, Richard Atkins, visited the College’s Birmingham campus on 17th May 2017. CM explained that the FE Commissioner’s role sits within the Department for Education and that he reports directly to the Secretary of State for Education. Usually he is reviewing colleges with problems but, in this case, he visited in order to learn more about National Colleges of which NCHSR is the largest of the five.

On his visit, the FE Commissioner was accompanied by Julie Tolley, and Phil Fryer, curriculum and finance specialists respectively, and met with CM, the Chair and members of staff.

The visit had been positive with none of the recommendations arising out of it coming as a surprise. This included the comment about Members' skills sets which was already being addressed. Positive feedback had been received about the management structure comprising the Chief Executive and two Directors, one of which was focussed on the curriculum. The FE Commissioner had also observed how the College was embedding quality from Day 1 and that there was potential for a broader remit in the future incorporating transport and infrastructure. Overall the feedback was that NCHSR was setting the tone for the National Colleges and that it had also been the subject of positive comment from the Department for Education.

JB congratulated CM on the positive outcome from the visit. He observed that getting specific staff on board was mentioned more than once and asked whether the budget is available to do this. CM said there was a budgetary constraint but alternative ways to attract and recruit people to the College were being looked at. In addition, the Staff Risk and how it was being addressed had also been the subject of discussion at the Audit Committee. In response to an enquiry from JB, CM referred to the on-going conversations with the University of Birmingham and Sheffield Hallam University that she said would determine whether there was anything more he could do to assist. In addition, different routes to access potential expertise were being explored, including currently via the networks of HS2 Limited generally, and via Rhomberg Sersa and Tarmac Bogle in relation to slab track in particular. CS observed the benefits of having a portfolio of lecturers available to the College. CM outlined the initial plan to have two permanent teaching staff in addition to the portfolio, noting that it may be necessary to have an interim solution utilising university colleagues. CS suggested industry track specialists may also be available to the College. CM confirmed advertisements were ready to be published in the industry press along with approaches to agencies and talks with contacts to access specialist lecturers. She also strongly advocated Board members should use their networks to assist, noting that the College was flexible about the basis on which such services were provided.

A discussion followed about the assistance that Committee members may be able to provide in which potential issues around visas for non-UK nationals were raised. CM felt these were not insurmountable, with NB observing one alternative would be their input being provided remotely.

<p>CM said the track programme was currently under development and it would be very helpful to have members' input. CS agreed to assist. (ACT 07).</p> <p>CS said it would be helpful for Members to have a diagram showing how the College will be staffed. CM referred to the next agenda item that included much of this information and said she would also share the organisation chart (ACT 08).</p>	<p>CS</p> <p>CM</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>20.11.17</p>
<p>6. Curriculum Development</p> <p>Members received the paper that provided detailed information about Curriculum developments including an Education work stream update, End Point Assessment and Provision maps.</p> <p>Members noted the Standard for the High Speed Rail & Infrastructure apprenticeship, which was mapped to professional bodies, had been published and that the End Point Assessment submitted to the Department for Education. The matter of wider recognition of the qualification was discussed at length and in particular the fact that the Institution of Civil Engineers ("ICE") had not. The reasons cited for not recognising it were cited as being because it was too rail orientated and there was no mandatory qualification attached to the apprenticeship. ICE also indicated the relevant standard was Level 3 or Level 5. CM said she thought the qualification will eventually be recognised with the assistance of the Institute for Apprenticeships ("IfA") with which the College was in continued dialogue as it developed provision at Levels 5, 6 & 7, and into which wider package the Level 4 programme would fit.</p> <p>JB said a former President of ICE was a colleague at the University of Birmingham and so he offered to explore the matter with the named individual and feedback to CM (ACT 09).</p> <p>An update and discussion followed about the Trailblazers Group including how to maximise progression opportunities from Level 4 to Levels 5, 6 & 7.</p> <p>CM provided an update on the development of Higher National Certificate ("HNC") and Higher National Diploma ("HND"). Following the decision of the College's Senior Management Team to seek to offer the HNC equivalent from September 2017, Sheffield Hallam University ("SHU") and Highfield, the awarding body, have been contacted to check on feasibility with both in agreement that it was potentially possible with some caveats. Members were informed that</p>	<p>JB</p>	<p>asap</p>

the “HNC” qualification was the copyright of Pearson (the UK’s largest awarding organisation) which has meant the College’s Level 4 course needs to have a different name. Higher Technical Certificate (“HTC”) and Higher Technical Diploma were noted as being the names that will be used instead.

CM reported on the course developments that were underway. The HTC was progressing at a faster pace than anticipated with SHU having already confirmed they were content for the College to run a pilot from September 2017. The final element of the approval process was a site visit, scheduled to take place on 20th July 2017, after which approval should be given. On that basis course materials are being developed for the pilot, currently planned to take place at the Doncaster campus with a cohort of 20 learners and for the development of the Higher Technical Diploma to be brought forward to 2018 to offer a progression opportunity for learners on the HTC course. Turning to Continuing Professional Development (“CPD”) CM confirmed the Curriculum Development Manager for CPD was now in post. Members noted the detailed timetable of actions in place including the identification of the “core” offering, a review of the current research reports into skills demand in the rail industry, reviews of the current FE and private sector provision of Rail CPD (nationally) and the identification of any gaps with six short courses currently in development to start in September 2017.

In reply to a question from CS, CM confirmed the HTC will be a full time programme which learners can fund by applying for a student loan. CS asked about the availability of accommodation for learners studying on the programme and CM referred to the agreements in place with other learning providers including Aston University in Birmingham and the discussions on-going in Doncaster about the establishment of a student village. CM said that her expectation was that by its third year of operation the College will have its own accommodation coming on line that will enable the learner experience to be more akin to that of a university.

AS enquired about Quality Systems, which he said he had not seen in the meeting materials, and emphasised the importance of them being in place during learners’ training. CM acknowledged they were not specifically included but confirmed that they were a component in the core part of the College’s programmes.

Attention turned to learner workstreams in respect of which CM referred to the provision maps (on pages 49 onwards of

the paper) that showed the total offer. CS said he would like the provision maps to be clear about when learners are in College and when they return to their employer. CM explained the reality was that it is not a one size fits all model and outlined the difficulty to map this in the situation where the College needs to be agile and responsive to different learners, some of who come in with prior knowledge. CM pointed out that some employers wanted their apprentices to have block release whereas others preferred day release as well as the incorporation of virtual reality (“VR”) and the VR platform within programmes. JB said he could understand the logic but the vast majority of employers will pick up a flyer and expect to have this information. CM referred to the prospectus which explained the options she had outlined and invites them to come and talk about the detail.

CS enquired about staffing arrangements. NB explained that learners from different courses will be learning together. In the course of the discussion that followed CM pointed out the College was already in conversation with over 70 companies. With CM’s confirmation that companies were signing up, members acknowledged that this was not indicative of a significant problem in “the industry”. CM noted that as the College was not currently active and it was a challenge to get companies to engage, unless they are involved with HS2. CM. However, one thousand people had expressed their interest in the HTC for 2018/19 and it will be easier to demonstrate the provision once it is being delivered.

In response to a question from JB about progression opportunities from the HTC, CM confirmed the College will help learners to find a Level 5 apprenticeship via its matching service that will offer a talent pool from which employers can recruit.

CM emphasised the delivery method options had been shaped with employer companies and that the 12 week block release was flexible depending on learners’ prior knowledge. Thereafter modules would be delivered flexibly where an apprentice goes into a workplace whilst students on the HTC remain in College save for three blocks of one month each in industry providing 120 credits. CS said he remained concerned that some employers may be unclear that a day release option is on offer and so recommended this is clarified.

<p>7. Draft Quality Strategy</p> <p>Members received the Draft Quality Strategy that focussed on embedding quality into all provision. A discussion followed about the timing for its approval in which CM confirmed this was planned for the Corporation’s meeting on 24th July 2017.</p> <p>In the course of a discussion about the draft text, it was agreed that the words “Review Audit” will be added after the words “Quality Improvement” in the final bullet point on page 3 of the draft Strategy.</p> <p>JB was invited to make any further comments by 26th June 2017 (ACT10).</p>	<p>JB</p>	<p>26.6.17</p>
<p>8. Learner Numbers Update</p> <p>A handout was distributed that showed the up to date recruitment statistics. It confirmed a target of 65 learners at each of the Birmingham and Doncaster campuses over the year. Learners were being recruited for both apprenticeships and the HTs, with the potential for 26 HS2 apprentices being recruited, with parts of their provision being subcontracted, as appropriate. In addition it was reported East Midlands Trains is also looking for a long term educational partnership with the College.</p> <p>On 17th July 2017, main works contracts will be awarded for HS2 after which time the College will find out the learner numbers that are to be committed. Discussion followed about these numbers in the course of which CM noted that in Year 1 they will be determined by employers with courses running provided the cohort sizes are viable. In September 2018, the target is 1000 learners across both campuses of whom the aim is that one-third will be female. In order to achieve that number, the College has participated in the recent “Women in Engineering” week and is engaging proactively in other engagement events.</p> <p>CM confirmed the report will be presented to the Corporation at its next meeting (ACT11).</p>	<p>CM</p>	<p>24.7.17</p>
<p>9. Feedback on the Employers’ Event held on 14th June 2017</p> <p>CM reported the event had been a success with 78 people attending. It had presented an opportunity for the College to talk about what it will be delivering in addition to including a presentation from HS2.</p>		

<p>A total of 21 surgeries for companies had also been run in both Birmingham and Doncaster since the Committee's last meeting.</p> <p>In response to a question from JB, CM confirmed the College had established links in to "Women in Engineering" groups.</p>		
<p>10. Committee Members' Training</p> <p>This subject of curriculum, quality and standards related training had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Search & Governance Committee. This agenda item presented an opportunity for members to add any further items beyond Ofsted and QAA that had already been suggested. JB said it would be useful for members to learn more about FE generally and the variety and range of provision offered by the sector and where the College fits in. NB pointed out how different the College is from the "usual" FE College where most provision is directed towards 16-18 year olds on Level 1-3 programmes with a lesser offer of programmes at Level 4 and above. CS endorsed this approach to develop members' knowledge, particularly focussing on the quality ethos and how the College will achieve quality and the feedback mechanisms to contribute to this, including a Members' Link Scheme.</p>		
<p>11. Committee Terms of Reference</p> <p>Members received the updated draft of the Committee's terms of reference and agreed that they should be recommended to the Corporation for approval at its next meeting (ACT12).</p>	SBS	24.7.17
<p>12. Any other business</p> <p>(i) JB reported the video film of the four interns from Birmingham University who had been placed at the College was almost complete. Members enjoyed a screening. In response to a question about future internships, CM reported that the College will have a total of four interns during 2017/18 and in addition expected to employ three apprentices.</p> <p>(ii) CS said he will be away for the month of October and so tendered his apologies for the Board meeting, Away Day and the official launches.</p>		
<p>13. Date and time of the next meeting</p> <p>It was agreed the Committee Chair will send suggested dates to SBS so she can fix the date.</p>	CS/SBS	asap

Signed

Date