



# MEETING MINUTES

## MEETING

Quality and Standards Committee

DATE: Friday 31 March 2017      TIME: 10.00 – 11.25  
VENUE: NCHSR, Faraday Wharf      CHAIRED BY: Colin Stewart  
(Meeting Room 1)  
MINUTE/ACTION      Martin McNeill  
TAKER:

## ATTENDEES

1. Colin Stewart (CS)	2. Prof John Binner (JB)	3. Clair Mowbray (CM)
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APOLOGIES: None

IN ATTENDANCE: Jackie Grubb (JG), Martin McNeill (MMcN), Alex Stephenson (AS) dial-in (Items 1 and 2 only)

TOPIC	WHO	WHEN
<p><b>1. Welcome and introductions</b></p> <p>AS told the meeting that, as Chair of the Search and Governance Committee, he had been asked by that Committee to attend the forthcoming meetings of the Audit, Finance and Resources, and Quality and Standards Committees to facilitate their consideration of their proposed terms of reference and membership. The Search and Governance Committee had made a number of recommendations to the Board: one of these was that, during the current, formative phase of the Corporation's life, committees should be used for governor training as well as for scrutiny of College performance, plans and policies.</p>		



AS said that he would be reporting to the Board on 12 April to give assurance that all committees had met at least once, with the appointed Committee Chair presiding, and had considered their membership and terms of reference.

## 2. Terms of reference

Governors agreed that the Committee should comprise up to five governors and that there was a need to recruit one more member immediately. This should be somebody with a knowledge of FE and/or apprenticeships, possibly from a high-quality private training provider or college in the East Midlands. The person appointed to this position should not be a direct competitor of the College, but needed to be able to travel easily to meetings in Birmingham or Doncaster. JG assured the Committee that she was actively developing relationships with local providers, such as Solihull College, but it was accepted that conflicts of interest might be difficult to manage if a local FE leader were to sit on this committee.

CM and JG answered governors' questions about the nature and purpose of link visits and the role of the Search and Governance Committee in relation to the annual Self-assessment Report (SAR). The Committee noted that link visits had been found at other colleges to be a valuable way of improving governors' understanding of how the college worked, without involving them in operational management.

In relation to the SAR, AS and JG explained that the Search and Governance Committee would focus on the evaluation of governance, taking into account each committee's view of its own effectiveness. In parallel, College management's view of the quality of the College's educational provision and of its management of resources would be reflected in team SARs which would be considered by the relevant committees – for educational provision, this would be the Quality and Standards Committee. The combined SAR would then be presented to the Board and, once approved, would form the basis of the College's improvement planning.

The Committee also noted that it was the College's intention to develop a dashboard to assist the Committee in monitoring performance once the College became operational.

Commenting that the Terms of Reference appeared very detailed, governors asked how they had been drafted. CM explained that



<p>they had been adapted from a number of examples that were considered as good practice. The Committee concluded that they should not be subjected to a major revision at this stage, and agreed to recommend them to the Board for approval, subject to the amendments recommended by the Search and Governance Committee and the following further amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The membership should comprise <u>up to</u> five governors;</li> <li>• The Principal, as well as attending all committee meetings, should be an alternate committee member, substituting for the CEO when the CEO was unable to attend;</li> <li>• The reference to student voice should be strengthened and a similar requirement introduced for the Committee also to hear the views of employers.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: Draft amendments to Terms of Reference for consideration by the Board (ACT 01)</b></p>	<p>JMs</p>	<p>31/03/17</p>
<p>Governors sought clarification on the use of the terms ‘governors’, ‘members’ and ‘Corporation’ and asked that these should be consistently used in all documents, so far as possible. They also asked for details of the committee structure and the current membership of committees to be circulated to all governors.</p>	<p>New Clerk</p>	<p>31/05/17</p>
<p><b>Action: Review corporate documents for consistency of wording and provide all governors with an explanation of the different terms used (ACT 02)</b></p>	<p>CM</p>	<p>12/04/17</p>
<p><b>Action: Provide details of committee membership to all members (ACT 03)</b></p> <p>AS left the meeting at this point.</p>		
<p><b>3. Update on Curriculum Development</b></p> <p>JG told the Committee that the Apprenticeship Standard for High Speed Rail and Infrastructure (HSRI) Higher Technician had passed through all stages of approval with only minor amendments and was now with ministers for final review. She expected to be informed of a positive outcome before Easter.</p> <p>The apprentices who would be starting their training with the College in September were all currently employed (although not all would necessarily have rail industry experience). To ensure that each apprentice received the right package of personalised</p>		



learning, each application was being carefully assessed and the make-up of the first cohort of apprentices should be known by the end of April. Initially, the College would only be delivering two of the specialisms, with a third specialism offered from January 2018 and the other three from September 2018.

Looking to September 2018 and beyond, the College expected to attract apprentices who had followed different pathways: A levels, level 3 diplomas, or relevant work experience. Some of them might have completed level 3 apprenticeships in the old framework; JG was in conversation with Solihull College and Leeds City College, both of which had been delivering rail engineering qualifications. A wide variation in knowledge and experience was to be expected, and it was possible that there would be some apprentices with no direct knowledge of the rail industry or of rail engineering.

Governors emphasised their commitment to an inclusive approach. This would require sophisticated assessment techniques, starting from the point of application, as well as systems to ensure that teaching and the curriculum were responsive to the needs of each individual learner. CM assured governors that applicants who were not considered suitable for the level 4 apprenticeship would be referred to other providers.

The Committee welcomed the proposed assessment plan, noting that, since the plan had been drafted, the Trailblazer Group had met on 23 March and agreed to add a 'merit' grade between 'pass' and 'distinction'. The Committee also noted that Highfield (the designated awarding body) had been asked to develop more robust grading criteria.

Turning to the second Apprenticeship Standard – that for Digital Information Manager – CM explained that this was at a much earlier stage. The current title might change as the standard was developed. JG confirmed that training would cover building information modelling (BIM) in three, four and five dimensions (3D, 4D and 5D). A BIM group had been set up, chaired by Ben Dunlop of Atkins and including an HS2 representative, to oversee the development of an appropriate curriculum. While the possibility of delivering training from September 2018 had not been ruled out, a more likely start date was January 2019.

The Committee was pleased to note that the College's application for inclusion on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers had been approved and congratulated all concerned; not all colleges had been equally successful. JG assured the Committee



<p>that the same standards had been applied to National Colleges as to all other providers.</p> <p>Asked whether the College was aware of any plans to establish a high-speed rail college in Wales, CM said that she had no information, but would make enquiries.</p> <p><b>Action: Find out what plans, if any, exist for a high-speed rail college in Wales (ACT 04)</b></p> <p><b>4. HNC</b></p> <p>CM explained that the alternative level 4 qualification was intended to provide a gateway to the rail industry for learners who were not sponsored by employers as apprentices. It involved a one-year full-time, learner-funded course leading to a qualification equivalent to a Higher National Certificate (HNC). Learning would take place 70 per cent in College, 30 per cent in the workplace, the latter taking the form of three month-long placements. Successful completion would enable progression into full-time employment, to a level 5 higher apprenticeship or to a level 5 qualification equivalent to a Higher National Diploma (HND).</p> <p>CM and JG stressed that these were new courses, for which the HNC and HND designations were not wholly appropriate. The combination of intensive learning and work placements was intended to put those completing the course successfully on a par with those who had completed a level 4 apprenticeship. The concept had been warmly welcomed, both by large employers in the sector, who were unable to meet more than one tenth of the demand for apprenticeships across levels 2, 3 and 4, and by smaller businesses looking to recruit trained staff with significant work experience.</p> <p>The College planned to introduce these courses from September 2018 and, following a procurement exercise, had chosen Sheffield Hallam University as its prospective validating partner. It was proposed that, at least initially, the College would be a franchisee of the University, using its own teaching materials (in which it would retain intellectual property rights) but with learners applying through and enrolling with the University. The University would account to the College for 85 per cent of the fees charged (expected to be £9,500 per student from 2018). These arrangements could be put in place by October 2017, allowing applications to be made as soon as the UCAS window opened.</p>	<p>CM</p>	<p>23/06/17</p>
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<p>At a later stage, the College could apply for its own UCAS registration, although in those circumstances the fees that it could charge would be somewhat lower – probably in the region of £6,000.</p> <p>Governors sought assurance that teaching materials were being prepared and curriculum leaders recruited. JG reported that two out of the three course outlines had now been drafted and externally reviewed, and three of the four curriculum leader posts appeared to be close to being filled.</p> <p>The Committee asked for a ‘route map’ to be prepared showing the pathways by which learners might access both the apprenticeship and the alternative level 4 course and the progression routes that each offered.</p> <p><b>Action: Prepare and circulate route map (ACT 05)</b></p> <p><b>5. Ofsted and QAA</b></p> <p>JG reminded the Committee that the College would be judged both by Ofsted (for the quality of provision of training to apprentices) and by QAA (for its HNC and HND equivalent courses). The two agencies currently had different approaches, Ofsted basing its judgements largely on data and lesson observations, while QAA required the College to undertake a self-evaluation which was then triangulated with views emerging from conversations with learners and the results of the National Student Survey. While QAA might be less judgemental, its policy of focusing on a different theme every year could present challenges. Both agencies took a keen interest in the views of students, staff and employers.</p> <p>JG drew the Committee’s attention to the serious consequences of a failure to satisfy either agency, but particularly Ofsted. She had experience of both inspectorates and was ready to provide training for governors to help them meet expectations and anticipate issues that might arise at inspection, including issues around safeguarding and the prevention of radicalisation (‘Prevent’).</p> <p>Governors asked to be kept up to date with developments in both regimes so that they would know what to expect. They recognised that, while it was important to satisfy Ofsted and QAA, there were other standards by which the College would be judged, including industry standards such as NSRs. CM told the Committee that an industry panel was being set up as part of the College’s quality assurance process. The Department for Education was also</p>	<p>CM</p>	<p>30/04/17</p>
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<p>developing success measures for National Colleges, which might incorporate data (for example, about leaver destinations or the outcomes of efforts to promote equality and diversity) not currently considered by Ofsted or QAA.</p> <p>In response to a question about equality and diversity, CM said that recruitment of female students was likely to be a challenge. The College was working with a variety of representative groups, such as Women into Construction, Women in Rail and Women in Engineering, and with specific targets such as a local all-girls school. CM referred to the work being done by Routes into Rail, of which she was a board member. Governors emphasised the importance of addressing prejudice that might exist among parents and within schools.</p> <p><b>6. Any other business</b></p> <p>CM advised the Committee that the FE Commissioner would be coming in to the College in May to improve his understanding of what National Colleges were and what they were planning to do. She did not expect there to be a need for any significant governor involvement.</p> <p>CM also reported that the West Midlands Combined Authority was in the process of establishing a productivity and skills commission. The College had been asked to join the commission’s technical group, alongside one other FE college and five of the region’s universities.</p> <p>Asked about progress on building, CM told the Committee that the Birmingham building was likely to be handed over in early August, slightly ahead of schedule, with the Doncaster building following a fortnight later. The specialist equipment that had been pledged was now being delivered, and the power cars should be in place by the end of June. Infrastructure requirements had been identified and were now being procured. CM advised Committee members that there would be a tour of the Doncaster site following the 12 April board meeting; it was suggested that a tour of the Birmingham site should also be arranged, possibly to follow the next meeting of this committee.</p> <p><b>Action: Arrange tour of Birmingham site (ACT 06)</b></p>	<p>CM</p>	<p>23/06/17</p>
<p><b>7. Date of next meeting</b> Friday 23 June 2017, 1430 – 16:30 hours.</p>		