

External Relations Committee

Tue 07 February 2023, 18:30 - 20:00

Attendees

Board members

Tim Stockings (Chair), John Kirk (Interim Clerk), Moshir Rahman (Student Governor), Dave Vasse (Principal), Jamie Davies (Member), Maurine Lewin (Member), Marian Orafu (Member), James Gould (Member)

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies for Absence and Quoracy

Tim Stockings

None. The meeting was declared quorate

2. Declarations of Interest

Tim Stockings

None declared.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting 8 November 2022

Tim Stockings

Marian's presence had been omitted, since corrected. The minutes were declared a true and accurate record.

 [Minutes_External Relations Committee_081122.pdf](#)

4. Matters arising

Tim Stockings

There were none

5. Communication and Marketing

James Gould

Information

JG welcomed the significantly higher number of applications this year, and thanked the schools liaison team for their work.

Offers are only a little behind the level of last year at this stage, due to processing the volume and an improved interview structure where applicants will meet a member of the staff on their pathway.

Enrolment is on target for 1850. Any number above that figure may cause difficulties in finding room for everyone, especially with higher number of level 2 learners and A Level students.

Overall, the team has performed very well, though social media marketing has room for improvement

JD asked about if there was a breakdown of which A Level courses have proved the most popular at application stage. JG noted that offers are not conditional upon certain courses, so students may end up on different courses to those indicated in their application due to the marginal nature of some of our students.

DV noted the Strategic Plan will look closely at the capacity to grow A Level provision through recruiting excellent teachers, even if they are not always fully utilised, as this will underpin the long term stability of the college.

MO asked about challenges with social media marketing.

JG explained there were some staffing challenges which are now being addressed.

TS Welcomed this report, and thanked JG for explaining how variance and forecast outcomes were in line with expectations.

The committee welcomed the report.

 5. Communications and Marketing.pdf

6. 14-16 Direct Recruitment

James Gould

Recommendation Required

JG introduced the paper, noting that the contract with Waltham Forest Borough Council (WFBC) is soon due for review, and the council have indicated their preference for the college to recruit directly, due to pressure on their high needs funding. This would mean a proportion of funding for 14-16 provision coming direct from government, and though this is at a lower rate per student, any shortfall would be covered by the council.

This puts the college in a strong position as there are no other similar providers in the area.

JG proposed that the committee recommend this proposal to the Corporation

TS asked what risks might be associated with this proposal.

JG noted that there is confidence in the council negotiators at this stage as it is in the interests of both parties, though there is a risk to those negotiations.

The only other risk is that the provision would be inspected by Ofsted rather than Council, the at the last inspection by the Local Authority, provision was found to be excellent.

DV noted that any significant change to the recruitment policy would need careful consideration as there is reputational risk, as well as risk around accommodation. Overall, there are many positives to the proposal. The bulge in the 16 year-old population is ending, so higher post 16 learner numbers are not guaranteed. Finally, there is a risk associated with the possibility of the college becoming a 14-19 academy.

TS Asked about any risk to additional funding from the council in this proposal.

JG was comfortable with negotiating with the council as the initial agreement was extremely detailed and we have good lawyers in place who provided sound advice during the contract development. 2023-24 would act as a pilot year, with a small number of students recruited directly from other boroughs. This would open up the possibility of further expansion in 2024-25, and noted there may be issues with recruitment from other local authorities.

MO asked about governance arrangements if there was a transfer to academy status.

DV indicated that governance is broadly similar, though the governors become trustees, though this option is still a matter of years away.

JD asked about the likely timing of this change, and the numbers of student progression to the sixth form.

JG thought it unlikely to be in place for 2023-24, and noted that 85% of ALP students progress which is in line with the intention to provide a pipeline.

The committee agreed unanimously to recommend this proposal to the Corporation.

 6. 14-16 Direct Recruitment.pdf

7. Work Experience


James Gould

JG Introduced the work experience (WEX) dashboard. This is again largely in line with expectation, though many students will be going out in the next few weeks, which will significantly change the numbers. The WEX projects in college are more mixed, some pathways have excellent provision in place for all students, such as Digital. There needs to be more work in other pathways, such as Health and Science. Industry Placement - this is the last year of funding, but there is some broadening in the definition of an industrial placement, and there is little risk as there is no funding planned for next year.

TS suggested that there may be options for placements through the Drapers.

JG warmly welcomed this suggestion as it has a huge impact on student experience.

The committee received the Work Experience report

 7. Work Experience and Employer Links dashboard.pdf

8. KPI Update

JG introduced the KPIs, and noted lower numbers progressing to Russell Group Universities, due to lower numbers of high grades in vocational courses. The numbers progressing to university in general remain good. The introduction of the Next Steps programme has been devised to improve HE progression, especially to Russell Group universities.

Students' views on university seem to be changing, with more consideration of apprenticeships or directly to employment.

There are 180 students that have not applied for university so far.

The college UCAS application process is to be improved, especially for first year students, with programmes over the summer.

MR welcomed the advice and guidance, as someone looking to go to Cambridge or other top universities.

DV noted that A level students will be provided with a tutoring programme to connect with their peers, to challenge and support each other, with extra curricular activities to prepare a stronger personal application.


MO asked about numbers progressing to apprenticeships.

JG confirmed there are some students who were applying, but apprenticeship are not widely advertised and not on the government website. They are often found by word of mouth, WEX, etc., so collecting accurate data is difficult. However UCAS is considering adding apprenticeships to their offering in the future.

JD asked if GATSBY benchmarks were used, which JG confirmed.

DV noted that many apprenticeships come through employers who have come to know and appreciate the character and ethos of college and students, which is to be welcomed.

The committee received the KPI update.

 KPI table Feb 23.pdf

9. Skills Agenda Position Paper

James Gould

Information

JG This paper outlines where the college is placed in fulfilling the Local Skills Agenda, which will increase in importance as vocational courses move towards to T Levels, and is locally relevant as 80% of students stay in East London after leaving college.

The college is providing relevant courses to the GLA agenda, such as law, midwifery, nursing, etc, though there is more to do in asking stakeholders, such as Bart's etc what they require.

JG noted that this is a topic to be covered in the External Review of Governance.

JK noted that in recent inspection elsewhere, it was reported that Ofsted inspectors were keen to ensure governors had a good understanding of the requirements and implementation of the Skills Agenda, LSiPs.

JD noted that green skills is a priority for London, and asked if the college has courses which include green skills
JG confirmed that many courses do have green skills embedded in them, but there is a need to identify these skills and how best to ensure they are fully understood by students and stakeholders.

It was agreed there be an action for governors to be aware of London Skills Needs and Green Skills.

ML asked for a briefing paper for governors to better understand the issues.

DV noted that the Design Engineering & Construction course has much exposure to green challenges, and students are becoming more aware of this aspect of provision.

TS noted that the college offering in various courses in regard to green skills but could be better highlighted and signposted.

JK noted that he has experience in Environmental Management Systems to EN-ISO14001 standard, if this could assist with provision.

JD asked if the students understand the local skills agenda, and how it ties in the student experience, and their career progressions and options.

JG confirmed that this was an ongoing processes of educating students.

The Committee welcomed this paper and noted the action for governor training.

 8. Skills Agenda Position Paper.pdf

10. Update on Disciplinary Issues Accelerated Learning Pathway (Reserved)

Dave Vasse

Information

A report was received

11. Any Other Business

Tim Stockings

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tim Stockings

Monday 5th June 6.30pm