Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 23rd September 2021 at 5.30 pm in SRC 301

Governors: Sam Beel (Staff Governor; Course Leader IT, Media and AAT), Phil Cook (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Vanessa Housley, Katy Ludgate (Staff Governor), Dot Smith (Chair), Anne Vickers and Mark White

Apologies: Gary Wright

Officials: Phil Blewitt (NETA Managing Director (MD)), Jason Faulkner (College Principal Redcar and Cleveland College), Lesley Graham (College Principal Stockton Riverside College), Phil Hastie (Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure), Ben Robinson (College Principal Bede), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation), Peter Wood (Interim Group Director of Quality) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

Sam Beel, Phil Cook and Mark White joined the meeting remotely via Teams.

SIC21/37   Agenda Item 1 – Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

Members **agreed** to reappoint Dot Smith as Chair and to appoint Vanessa Housley as Vice Chair of the committee.

Dot Smith and Vanessa Housley joined the meeting.

The Chair formally recorded thanks to Gary Wright for his work as Vice Chair. She also thanked the Chief Executive and Senior Management Team (SMT) for their focus on driving quality improvement over the last 20 months.

SIC21/38   Agenda Item 2 – Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 20 May 2021 had been circulated and were **approved** as an accurate record.

Members considered the actions arising from previous meetings. It was noted that the destinations would also be considered by the FE Corporation. Following a written report at the last meeting, the Chair had agreed to defer the Innovation Panel update to the November meeting. Members discussed the action regarding verbal updates on the use of the disciplinary process at Stockton Riverside College (SRC). [*After the meeting, the College Principal SRC confirmed that use of the disciplinary process had improved and comments on English and maths were now being consistently closed down. The Committee Chair therefore agreed that the action could be closed*]. Progress against actions was **noted.**

SIC21/39   **Agenda Item 3 – Update on Construction, Professional and Service Industries department**

The College Principal SRC had provided a report on quality improvements in the Construction, Professional and Service Industries (CPSI) department at SRC along with the Department Improvement Plan.

In Construction (CED), the impact of sustained improvements had been evidenced in improved achievement rates year on year from 2017-18, particularly for 16-18 [REDACTED]

In Service Industries, there were good outcomes for both 16-18 and 19+, with 19+ outcomes vastly improved. There had been an emphasis on support for students and strong teaching and learning. Achievement on 19+ Hairdressing courses had been impacted by COVID-19 over the last two years but had recently shown improvement.

Apprentice provision outcomes had been strong for the last three years for both overall and timely achievement and, although timely achievement had fallen in comparison to 2019-20, this was still 8% above national rates (NR). [REDACTED]

A member asked how the College Principal SRC would ensure accountability for delivery of the development plan, given the multiple lead managers for actions; the College Principal SRC confirmed that the Interim Head of Department was ultimately accountable. Twice monthly Quality Review meetings were held to ensure issues were swiftly addressed, with the overarching Department Improvement Plan monitored by the College Principal SRC through monthly one to ones with the interim HoD; there would also be additional scrutiny through the Performance Review (PR) process. The Chief Executive added that it was positive that Department Improvement Plans had been put in place so early in the year and that work was ongoing to identify individual members of staff accountable for actions.

[REDACTED]

Members **noted** the update and **requested** ongoing updates on the impact of the CPSI Department Improvement Plan.

SIC21/40   **Agenda Item 4 – Destinations**

The Interim Group Director of Quality had provided sustained destinations data for 2018-19 and 2019-20 in his previously circulated report. He highlighted that strong sustained destinations over recent years showed the impact of clear curriculum intent and effective curriculum implementation. Further work was currently being undertaken on this top-level destinations data to capture more visibility on detailed destinations.

In response to a member's question, college principals provided specific examples of the impact of destinations on curriculum design. The College Principal Redcar and Cleveland College (RCC) outlined how, in response to poor 19+ destinations data, the sports curriculum had been found to be biased towards fitness instructor elements, thus narrowing destinations, and so had been broadened to include more sports coaching elements but still allowing for learners to follow the instructor pathway in the future. The College Principal Bede explained that, because of the increased number of learners choosing apprenticeship

degrees, an initiative to improve learners' industry skills in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) sectors had been developed with input from employers and the National Horizons Centre and would be launched this autumn. The College Principal SRC outlined how Health and Social Care destinations data had led to consultation with an employer on curriculum content and the addition of a unit on wellbeing and mental health. The Managing Director NETA explained that, having looked at labour market information and the core competencies listed in job advertisements, metal inert gas (MIG) welding had been added to provision and NETA had invested in ten MIG welding kits, thus aligning the curriculum with industry requirements.

The Interim Group Director of Quality added that, during Business Planning / Performance Review (BP/PR), middle managers had been able to give strong examples of the impact of destinations data and employer engagement on curriculum development; he also commented that during a recent governor walkthrough a Film and TV teacher had demonstrated use of their own networks from previous employment to arrange student visits to Media City in Salford. A staff governor asked if the information provided by learners at the start of their courses on their ideal destination was subsequently tracked; the Interim Group Director of Quality explained that work was currently being undertaken on central collection of destinations data compared against career aspirations, though tutors would already have an awareness of this at course level.

A governor asked if destinations data was collated for cohorts such as Looked After Children (LAC) or those with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and if the cohort sizes would be statistically valid. The Interim Group Director of Quality agreed that this would be valuable and could possibly be tracked through Individual Learner Record (ILR) data; he added that Self Assessment Report (SAR) data tables already differentiated by such cohorts. The Interim Group Director of Quality **agreed** to consider the feasibility of this and update members at the next meeting.

Members **noted** the update.

Agenda Item 5 – Self Assessment Reports (SARs)

The Chair commented that staff had worked heroically to ensure that SARs were in place so early in the academic year; the Interim Group Director of Quality outlined current work on the data packs to ensure clarity and to highlight key strengths. He added that, by having SARs and Group Improvement Plans (GIPs) in place so early in the academic year, all staff would be clear on Areas for Improvement. The Chair commented that she, Fabienne Bailey and Vanessa Housley had attended several SAR validation panels and had loved being part of the very professional but emotional process, adding that the panels had brought out the best in staff at all levels and grades.

SIC21/41   **5.1 – College SARs**

College Principals were invited to give a brief summary of key areas for improvement followed by time for questions:

Bede
The College Principal Bede detailed the following areas for improvement:

[REDACTED]

A member asked how student participation and engagement in enrichment would be addressed, given the benefits to skills development and for evidence in applications. The College Principal Bede explained that access to the enrichment programme had been improved through video resources which could be watched at any time. In addition, the Student Council were also developing student-led enrichment activities and UniFrog was used to evidence learners' enrichment.

In response to a member's question, the College Principal Bede confirmed that engagement with enrichment activities was logged on ProMonitor and that it would be possible to pull out data for vulnerable students, such as LAC. The College Principal RCC, also strategic lead for High Needs, added that high needs learners were well supported through initiatives such as the Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) rooms and that their progress was closely monitored and tracked. A member also detailed research evidencing that debate was highly effective in producing higher value grades particularly in vulnerable groups. The College Principal Bede confirmed that debating was an element of particular courses and that last year a mock bar trial had taken place involving students from a wider range of subjects; he agreed to bring an update to the next meeting.

Members noted that not all of the Areas for Improvement identified in College SARs would be included in GIPs. It was **agreed** that College Principals provide the Clerk with details of those not included in GIPs, with an update on these to either the February Standards Improvement Committee meeting or the Strategic Conference.

A member asked why Bede students tended to stay close to home for university; the College Principal Bede outlined several possible reasons, including wanting to stay local as a safety net or for financial reasons such as keeping part-time jobs and reducing accommodation costs; the proximity of two Russell Group universities, Durham and Newcastle; and the popularity of Teesside University's courses. Another major factor was that students had less confidence and were less well travelled. A programme of universities visiting Bede as well as students going out to universities was in place to encourage students to apply to universities further away.

NETA
The Managing Director confirmed that Overall Effectiveness at NETA had been assessed as Good (Grade 2) and listed the following areas for improvement:
[REDACTED]

A member highlighted discussion in the SAR validation panel on the benefits of shared, intergenerational learning between apprentices and time-served delegates at NETA. The Managing Director NETA agreed that older delegates set the tone and were looked up to by apprentices as demonstrated in a video taken in the scaffolding area where older delegates could be seen mentoring younger learners.

A member asked for further detail on the first area for improvement in NETA's SAR: 'Improve learner recruitment diversity'. The Managing Director NETA highlighted that this referred to

the perennial issue of gender in the engineering sector, though it was pleasing seven female learners had enrolled on programmes at NETA this year, partly as a result of the E-girls initiative with schools pre-COVID. Further work on encouraging girls into engineering had been supported by the Innovation Panel and the involvement of the Director of the National Horizons Centre, also an Etc. governor. A member commented on research that had found that children as young as six screened themselves out of certain careers and it was noted that the Group Director of Marketing had been developing work with schools through a Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) funded project and would provide governors with an update at a future Corporation meeting. A member asked how the tutorial programme at NETA covered diversity and sexual harassment, given the gender imbalance; the Managing Director NETA agreed that, with only one female learner in some tutorial groups, this had been a key focus of induction and initial feedback from the Safeguarding Officer NETA indicated that female learners felt well supported by both peers and staff. The Managing Director NETA agreed to add more specifics to this area for improvement.

Redcar and Cleveland College (RCC)
The College Principal RCC emphasised how far the college had travelled since merger with positive improvements in student satisfaction, achievement rates and school and employer partnerships; the areas for improvement highlighted were:
[REDACTED]

The Chair asked a staff governor, also Course Leader IT, Media and AAT, whether she recognised RCC in the SAR; the staff governor agreed and in particular commented on how Progress Coaches alleviated some of the pressures on teaching and learning staff, allowing them more time to develop and share good practice. Delivery of pastoral tutorials by dedicated pastoral staff was also working well and there was a positive feel in the college. In response to a member's question, the Course Leader IT, Media and AAT explained that [REDACTED] there were still some pockets for improvement, including consistency in teaching and learning, attendance at English and maths and mapping the curriculum in some areas to local needs. The Interim Group Director of Quality added that SMT had been working with a consultant on the effects of attendance on achievement rates, with the negative impact of attendance below 90% clearly evidenced.

Stockton Riverside College (SRC)
The College Principal SRC confirmed that SRC had been graded Good overall and identified the following areas for improvement:
[REDACTED]

A member asked whether learners were not aware of local risks or unable to articulate them. The College Principal SRC explained that learners were aware of Prevent but that they were unable to link their knowledge to local risks. The College Principal Bede agreed and added that learners often did not understand adults' terminology, for example county lines, and would use different language; adults needed to be more cognisant of this when framing questions. In response to a member's question, the College Principal SRC explained that Ofsted inspectors would adapt the terminology when asking learners about Prevent and local risks to aid understanding and added that the Group was using the same strategy in ten-minute takeovers. The Interim Group Director of Quality added that high quality

resources on local risks had been developed, with the focus now on their effective delivery. The College Principal RCC highlighted that marketing had redesigned the suite of Safeguarding posters which had improved their impact and that, as a mandatory tutorial topic during induction, learners would be able to talk about safeguarding early on in their studies.

In response to a member's question, the Interim Group Director of Quality explained that the first learner survey would take place in November but that, as part of lanyard checks, learner voice questions focused on whether learners had settled in to college; as a follow up, learners would be asked if they knew who to contact if they felt unsafe, enabling managers to assess the impact of tutorials. The College Principal Bede stressed the importance of continually revisiting Safeguarding through ten-minute takeovers.

In response to a member's question, a staff governor confirmed that SRC was recognisable in its SAR; English and maths achievement data had been good and tutors were using, for example, meta-cognition in teaching and learning. She added that there had already been improvements in attendance with the measures put in place.

Members **noted** the College Self Assessment Reports.

SIC21/42   **5.2 – Group SAR**

The Interim Group Director of Quality confirmed that the Group SAR had been validated on 15 September and that minor amendments were being made to the draft document brought to this committee to take account of feedback from the validation panel, with the final version brought to Corporation in October. He outlined areas for improvement: [REDACTED]

A member commented that the SAR reflected the fact that the Group had both high expectations for its own performance and high aspirations for learners; it also demonstrated staff's ability to be self-critical and, therefore, the strength of leadership and management. The Interim Group Director of Quality confirmed that work on the SARs was ongoing and, for example, ethnicity and diversity data would be added; the Group was working towards Perfect Day on 8 October.

Members **agreed** to recommend approval of the Group SAR to the FE Corporation.

SIC21/43   **Agenda Item 6 – Group Improvement Plans**

The Interim Group Director of Quality explained that the Group Improvement Plans (GIPs) for 2020-21 had now been closed down, with their impact summarised in the previously circulated report; four GIPs were proposed for 2021-22. The GIPs for Apprenticeships, Value added and high grades and Teaching and learning had been circulated with the meeting papers; the Missed Learning GIP was not yet complete but would support learners who had missed elements of learning and personal development and include a section on resilience and mental health. The work would be supported by funding received through the College Collaboration Fund (CCF) and there would also be a section on work experience and links with employers. He added that the GIPs would be added to and updated through the year

and that there would be a GIP on Teaching and Learning every academic year as this was fundamental to the Group's work.

A member commented that the 2021-22 GIPs focused on the right areas and that the 2020-21 GIPs had made a positive impact. The Chair confirmed that the GIPs would be reviewed in greater detail at the next Standards Improvement Committee meeting and the Interim Group Director of Quality added that the format had been changed to make progress clearer.

Members **agreed** to recommend the Group Improvement Plans for 2021-22 to the FE Corporation.

SIC21/44   **Agenda Item 7 – Teaching and Training Walkthroughs**

The Chair confirmed that Gary Wright, Fabienne Bailey and Rob Mitchell had already undertaken Teaching and Training Walkthroughs this academic year and that their feedback confirmed that the walkthroughs had been inspiring, helping to develop positive relationships and increase governor engagement; they had also accurately reflected what was reported to governors at meetings.

The Chief Executive stressed the importance of encouraging all governors to take part in walkthroughs and that governors should feel able to discuss any areas for improvement with senior managers or college principals. Vanessa Housley confirmed that she had walkthroughs scheduled at Bede and SRC on 28 and 29 September, respectively. Members discussed the importance of written evidence of the support and challenge from these walkthroughs and the Clerk agreed to develop a suitable format for written feedback.

Members **noted** the verbal update.

SIC21/45   **Agenda Item 8 – Committee Performance, Membership and Terms of Reference**

The Clerk confirmed that there were no proposed changes to committee membership, given that the committee was well resourced and that members had the appropriate range of skills; recruitment activity for a co-opted Higher Education student representative was underway. Committee performance in 2020-21 had been reviewed against its terms of reference and she noted learner participation in work experience and industry placements had not been considered during the year, primarily due to the impact of COVID-19, and this had been noted on the cycle of business for consideration in 2021-22. Amendments to the terms of reference had been proposed to ensure the committee focused on quality improvement, specifically, moving responsibility for careers and wider student welfare issues to the FE Corporation.

The Chair noted that this review of the year was effectively the committee's SAR and asked if members recognised the committee's work and any areas for improvement. Both the Chief Executive and the Interim Group Director of Quality agreed that the committee had covered its terms of reference over the year and had provided a robust level of enquiry, with a balance of support and challenge, and had focused on the right things. Having attended every meeting over the previous three years, the Corporation Chair also agreed on the strength of the committee, which provided rigorous and detailed scrutiny, under the

committee chair's superb leadership. In response to a member's request, the Clerk agreed to liaise with the Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships to determine governors' oversight of work experience through the Corporation and its committees.

Members **agreed**:

i)   that no changes to the committee's membership were required;
ii)   that the committee's performance in 2020-21 against its terms of reference had been effective;
iii) to recommend the amended terms of reference to the FE Corporation.

SIC21/46   Agenda Item 9 – Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

SIC21/47   Agenda Item 10 - Approval of Documents for Public Inspection

It was **agreed** that the agenda and supporting documents of the current meeting be made available for public inspection with the exception of the reports for Agenda Items 3, 4, 5 and 6 which were considered commercial in confidence. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

SIC21/48   Agenda Item 11 – Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 18 November 2021 at 5.30 pm on Teams

SIC21/49   Agenda Item 12 – Key Themes

The following key themes were identified:

- Update on Construction, Professional and Service Industries department, including actions taken to bring about sustained improvement
- Strong sustained positive destinations for 2019-20 noted, with examples shared of the impact of destinations on curriculum design
- Review of College and Group Self Assessment Reports, including presentations by college principals, with approval of the Group Self Assessment Report recommended to the FE Corporation
- Impact of 2020-21 Group Improvement Plans (GIPs) reviewed and the four key themes for 2021-22 GIPs considered – high grades and value added; apprenticeships; teaching and learning; missed learning
- Feedback on governor involvement in teaching and training walkthroughs; system for formalising reporting to be developed
- Committee performance 2020-21 reviewed against terms of reference; recruitment activity for a Higher Education co-optee underway with no other changes to membership required; amended terms of reference recommended to the FE Corporation

(*The meeting ended at 7.20 pm*)

Approved at a meeting held on 18 November 2021