Minutes of the Learning & Quality Committee Meeting held at 2pm on 10 November 2021

Present: Prue Amner (chair), Mark Cooper, Tim Mason & Mike Stoneman

Apologies: None

In Attendance:
Simon Barrable	Principal
Frances Mullen	Deputy Principal, Student Services (Minute 12)
Graham Morley	Interim CEO
Paola Schweitzer	Director of Governance

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M i n u t e s

1 – Standing Items

001   Attendance and Participation

The Chair welcomed everyone to the City of Portsmouth College's first Learning & Quality Committee meeting. Participants introduced themselves.

Graham stated it was his seventh day at the College following a two week handover. He observed that the College's processes were effective, but not joined up meaning that it was difficult for the senior team to do their job effectively and to provide the required data to governors. By way of example, he noted there were currently three data systems and two quality processes. This was the understandable result of 'firefighting' at former Highbury College over the last two years, followed by the merger. During his tenure he would seek to enhance connectivity within the College and create a foundation prior to the appointment of a permanent CEO, ensuring data was a tool that could be used effectively by governors and staff. He had confidence in the College's self-assessment process but noted that the Self-Assessment Report to be considered by Corporation in December would not be perfect. Further time and effort could be invested in it prior to it being uploaded onto the ESFA portal at the end of January, but he did not believe this would have any further impact on the learners. Instead, he believed the focus should be on agreeing a Quality Improvement Plan and robust monitoring processes. The Chair thanked Graham for this useful introduction and governors stated they did not wish to create additional work for staff and would prefer shorter meeting papers, drawing on existing management reports.

002   Declarations of Interest

Mark worked at the University of Portsmouth with responsibility for working with local colleges on higher education provision. Mike worked at Portsmouth City Council which commissioned provision from the College.

003   Minutes

The minutes of the Highbury College Learning & Quality Committee meeting on 16 June 2021 were **Agreed** as a correct record. Members **Noted** the Minutes of the Portsmouth College Curriculum & Student Committee on 15 June 2021.

004   Matters Arising

Governors **Noted** that the Highbury College matters arising had been completed.

Governors discussed several matters arising from the Portsmouth College minutes:
- Portsmouth College's Tier 4 licence could not be transferred to the merged College meaning no full-year international students could be recruited (50 students recruited prior to merger could complete their studies). The College was working with agencies to promote termly/semester courses.
- The College was looking to reintroduce tutorial sessions in 2022. This was particularly important given the emphasis in the Education Inspection Framework.
- The College had successfully bid under the Expansion Fund (Post 16 Capacity Fund) and work was underway to change the scope of the project in the light of the merger. There would be further discussions at the Estates Committee the following week, with an update to Corporation in December.
- Destination data would be reported to the Committee at the following meeting as collection was not yet completed.
- All Governors' Targets had been signed off at the final Corporation meeting.
- Three key policies had been agreed for the City of Portsmouth College prior merger: Safeguarding, Health & Safety and Learner Financial Support.

One governor noted that the Curriculum & Student Committee received a student report and wondered if the same could be done at the City of Portsmouth College. Paola noted that student voice was a standing agenda item and agreed to explore the possibility of a student report. Governors believed that the Committee would benefit from having a student governor member and were encouraged that work was underway to ensure student governor representation on the full Board.

Matters for Decision/Discussion

005   Learning & Quality Risk Register

Simon presented paper 0041/21/L&Q setting out the learning & quality risk register. Key learning and quality risks as at 01 November 2021, were:
- Student recruitment and so risks to funding
- Rapid recruitment and so risks to the learner experience

- Failure to meet external quality standards, particularly Ofsted
- Failure to adequately safeguard learner.

Simon noted that numbers were slightly down, with the exception of apprenticeships. There had been some challenges concerning trades but the College was now fully staffed. Teaching staff were working hard to minimise the impact of staff absence due to Covid on students but it was an ongoing issue. An update would be brought to the next scheduled meeting. One governor concurred that this was also an issue in the school sector. Governors noted that whilst risks associated with staff recruitment and retention were reported to Finance & Resources Committee (which was responsible for HR matters) but asked that staff recruitment/retention risks which impacted on the quality of learning be brought to the Committee. Governors **Noted** the learning and quality risk register.

006   **Performance Data: Highbury College, Portsmouth College & City of Portsmouth College**

Simon presented paper 0042/21/L&Q setting out performance data for the two former colleges and the City of Portsmouth College. The Chair thanked Simon for the additional spreadsheet circulated prior to the meeting identifying the ten best and worst courses by outcome in 2020/21.

The report looked at both former colleges' results focusing on data trends since 2018/19 by age range and level. The final section drew conclusions about data had the College been merged in 2020/21. Key trends were:
- **Highbury College**: Three-year decline in achievement rates for 16-18 year olds (particularly at Entry/Level 1 and Level 2 due to the impact of Covid) and similar decline for 19+ learners, albeit less pronounced.
- **Portsmouth College**: Three-year trend of improving results although decline of Entry/Level 1 learners due to Covid. 19+ achievement was significantly below national rates (department now transferred to Highbury Campus).
- **Merged College**: Overall results for 16-18 year olds and 19+ would be 0.5% and 4.6% below the 2018/19 respectively, meaning overall headline figure would be 2.8% below the 2018/19 rates.

Simon noted that the focus for 2021/22 was to share good practice across the College to improve achievement rates, with effective systems and processes being critical. Governors welcomed sharing of good practice, stressing that that the College needed to ensure quality learning across all courses.

One governor asked if analysis had taken place to identify possible common themes across the worst performing courses. Simon responded that there were several causes such as teaching and learning as well as specific issues in some curriculum areas. Another governor asked about functional skills and Simon confirmed that achievement rates were low compared to the national average as these learners had found it very difficult to engage with learning throughout the pandemic. A governor asked what plans were in place to address poor maths attainment to ensure that it didn't continue to be a problem. Simon noted that improving maths and English (ME) would improve attainment across the College and that good practice was being shared between the ME teams, including digital innovations and a pilot project with

Basingstoke College of Technology. In addition, a request was being considered for greater teaching remission for team leaders so they could follow up attendance etc. Simon confirmed that a more rigorous extended projects process was now in place to ensure students were only admitted to the programme where appropriate.

Graham stated that individual course improvement targets for 2021/22 would feed into the balanced scorecard which would be used by governors and staff to measure performance. The scorecard would be limited initially as it was challenging to draw data from the College's two existing MIS systems (work was underway to use a single system). He hoped to bring it to the Committee's next scheduled meeting.

Governors **Noted** the Highbury College, Portsmouth College and City of Portsmouth Colleges performance data.

007   **Draft Self-Assessment Report & Quality Improvement Plan Proposed Grades**

Simon presented paper 0044/21/L&Q setting out the draft 2020/21 self-assessment report (SAR) and gradings for curriculum areas, including process and timeline information and the 2021/22 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The report included feedback on the SAR validation process and creating a single process for 2021/22.

At this point in the year the Committee would consider the final SAR and make a recommendation to Corporation but that was not possible so a further meeting would be arranged prior to Corporation in December. Simon noted that good progress had been made on the SAR with only a few grades missing. One governor asked if the significant increase in *Requires Improvement* grades was solely due to Covid. Simon believed it was in part, but there were other issues such as staffing and teaching and learning. SAR validation was a data-based and rigorous process, enhanced by governor involvement. One governor suggested milestones for the Board during this transitional year and suggested the Committee review progress against the QIP at its next meeting to ensure there was sufficient time for impact. Governors noted the QIP was in draft form and would need amending following finalisation of the SAR. Prue stressed that as the only driver for improvement in the College the QIP needed to identify tough targets. Governors asked that the SAR and QIP timeline be revised to include monitoring at Board and Committee level.

Governors **Noted** the draft Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan.

008   **Curriculum Strategy**

Simon presented paper 0045/21/L&Q outlining the College's curriculum development plans which had been designed to meet local and national priorities.

Simon outlined the various elements of the strategy:
- Current context of Portsmouth including its key social and economic features and economic and skills needs for the city and region
- Context of the newly merged college and its '*one city one college*' vision including opportunities for growth and key sources of funding .
- Aim to develop responsive and high-quality provision delivered by motivated and well qualified staff across an estate fit for 21st century.

- Strategic priorities covering key delivery areas and challenges including digital, ME and supporting learners to develop the employability skills they need.
- Summary of how the strategy can meet the key local and national needs
- Success measures.

Governors welcomed the strategy, noting that there were no obvious omissions although they believed there could be stronger references to education partnerships in the city, HE, international activity and engaging with the community. They believed it felt like a transitional strategy and agreed the importance of it being informed by the strategic objectives to be set by Corporation. Graham concurred, noting the importance of the College's educational character and mission. Governors suggested that the strategy include timelines. Governors **Noted** the curriculum strategy.

009   **Learning & Quality Monitoring Report**

Simon presented the learning and quality monitoring report (paper 0046/21/L&Q) including updates on Covid-19, quality policy, apprenticeships, Teaching, Learning and Assessment (TLA) systems and learner voice.

Covid: After half term the College would launch a campaign stressing the importance of hand sanitising and social distancing as well as asking students to undertake regular lateral flow testing and to wear face masks in communal areas.

Apprenticeships: Work was underway to align the apprenticeship quality cycle to the College's quality cycle. Graham noted that an FE college could either run apprenticeships as an integrated model with standard curriculum or as a standalone apprenticeship model delivering directly to employers. Both had advantages and disadvantages. The College was currently running a hybrid model which meant that it had the problems associated with both models and fewer of the advantages. He would defer to the permanent principal/CEO to resolve which model was best and instead would focus on improving what was currently in place.

Quality policy: The QIP and quality strategy outlined the expectations around the delivery of high-quality teaching and learning and showed how these expectations were delivered and monitored. The policy had been updated to reflect the merger, both in terms of the new management structure and roles and in terms of the coming together of the quality processes of the two former colleges.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment: Themes for 2021/22 included target setting, developing the use of digital in the classroom, developing personalised learning and in class student support. One governor noted that the report described two systems and asked how harmonisation would be achieved. Simon responded that a great deal of activity was taking place to create a single system. Another governor asked about the College's learning walk system. Simon stated that there was a difference between how both former colleges operated these walks and whilst both were effective, it was important to harmonise them. Prue noted the importance of the outcome, namely an improved learner experience rather than a paper exercise.

Learner Voice: The report summarised the results of the recent student survey on induction at both Highbury Campus and Tangier Road Campus. One governor asked

if learner voice focus groups continued to meet and if so, whether governors could continue to be involved. Simon stated that the learner voice cycles were different and work was underway to create a single system.

Governors **Noted** the learning and quality monitoring report.

010   **Higher Education (HE) Strategy Report**

Simon presented paper 0047/21/L&Q providing an update on HE developments, particularly partnership working with the University of Portsmouth (UoP).

The College had a small number of continuing HE students for one year, after which time its HE strategy would revolve around:
- Partnership with the UoP
- Growing more pathways onto UoP's degree programmes
- Exploring degree apprenticeship routes through Higher Apprenticeship provision
- Expanding Access to HE provision, with direct access to UoP entry.

Governors welcomed this partnership working and **Noted** HE developments.

011   **Equality & Diversity Monitoring including targets**

Simon presented paper 0048/21/L&Q outlining the proposed Equality and Diversity policy, incorporating suggestions made at Corporation in October. The report broke down the student induction survey results by gender, learning difficulty and ethnicity and achievement rates by gender, ethnicity and socio-economics. Governors asked for clarification concerning the College's legal requirements on equality and diversity reporting and targets and this would be brought back to the Committee. Governors **Agreed** the equality and diversity policy and how it was monitored.

012   **Safeguarding Report**

Frances Mullen joined the meeting and presented paper 0049/21/L&Q providing an update on new and developing safeguarding arrangements across the College.

Safeguarding Board: The first meeting of the Safeguarding Board, to which Prue as lead safeguarding governor was invited, took place on October 2021 and provided the opportunity for further scrutiny of safeguarding arrangements at the College.

Statutory Safeguarding Training: Staff were required to complete online training and work was underway to ensure all staff had completed this training. Prevent training would be continued through student and staff newsletters and would be tailored to the local context. Training for students would take place as part of fresher activities. Prue suggested including this in the learner voice system.

A **City of Portsmouth College Safeguarding Structure** was being created, supported by the purchase of a Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS), to ensure that that the College was able to meet its statutory requirements. CPOMS would allow the College to identify trends and staffing needs etc, something that was

not currently possible with two different systems. In response to a question, Frances confirmed that the appropriate staff were linked to local support and processes. Frances also confirmed that Highbury Heights, the residential provision in the Tower, was included within the College's current procedures. The Chair asked that a student well-being report be brought to the Committee's next scheduled meeting.

The **Single Central Register** (SCR) provided a record of the safeguarding checks carried out by the College and an audit would shortly take place on behalf of the Safeguarding Board. One governor noted that local safeguarding audits were carried out every few years and he would like to see the results of the College's audit when available. Governors are responsible for ensuring the College is compliant with its statutory safeguarding duties.

Governors **Noted** the Safeguarding Report and how statutory requirements were being met in the College in relation to staff training, the Single Central Record and activities undertaken to strengthen safeguarding practices at the College.

Frances left the meeting.

Graham noted that the Committee hadn't yet discussed the crisis for 16-18 year olds who had lost connectivity with learning during the pandemic. Schools and colleges had a big job to support young people and it was something the Committee needed to keep an eye on. He believed it was likely to impact on quality issues. He also noted that staff morale at the Tangier Road Campus was noticeably lower than at the Highbury Campus and steps were being taken to address the issue. He noted that low staff morale could impact on the quality of learning.

013 **Committee Terms of Reference & Business Plan**

Paola presented paper 0050/21/L&Q reviewing the Committee's terms of reference and 2021/22 business plan.

This Committee was asked to reflect on its activity in 2020/21 and, more importantly, to ensure the terms of reference remained fit for purpose in 2021/22. Following a previous conversation with the Chair, Paola suggested members might wish to include reference to careers and school links, student well-being, HE as well as an explicit reference to apprenticeships. After a brief discussion members agreed that curriculum strategy was a Board responsibility.

Governors **Agreed**, with the outlined amendments, the Committee's terms of reference and 2021/22 business plan.

014 **Meeting without Staff & Students present**

Governors did not believe it necessary to meet without staff and students on this occasion.

The meeting ended at 4.45pm