

**Minutes of the Standards Committee Meeting  
Innovation Centre  
Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023 at 3pm**

- Present:** Kash Kalim (acting Committee Chair)  
Mark Aberdein (Independent Governor)  
Michelle Brabner (Principal)  
Catherine Durr (Staff Governor)  
PJ McGregor (Student Governor)  
Elaine Small (Independent Governor)  
Susannah Porter (Independent Governor)  
Katy Robinson (Independent Governor)
- In Attendance:** Mark Burrows (Deputy Principal and CEO)  
Lisa Farnhill (Clerk to the Corporation)  
Stephen Musa (VP Curriculum and Support)  
Vicky Hayes (Head of Student Support and Inclusion)
- Apologies:** Roderic Gillespie (Committee Chair)  
Anita Holt (Associate Committee Member)

**Absent:**

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| <b>S.24.01</b> | <p><b>Item 1: Open And Welcome and Apologies For Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were detailed and approved. The meeting was opened, noting the Committee Chair was unavailable, with member Kash Kalim agreeing to Chair the meeting. This was unanimously supported by the Committee.</p> <p>New members were welcomed, and brief introductions given.</p> <p><b><i>Item 1 – Resolved:</i></b> <i>Members accepted the apologies as provided above and resolved to approve appointment of Kashfa Kalim as meeting Chair.</i></p> |        |
| <b>S.24.02</b> | <p><b>Item 2: Declarations Of Interest</b></p> <p>Standing interests were noted, with no declarations made in relation to items on the agenda.</p> <p><b><i>Item 2 – Noted:</i></b> <i>The Committee resolved to note the position.</i></p>   |        |
| <b>S.24.03</b> | <p><b>Item 3: Appointment Of A Committee Vice Chair</b></p> <p>The Clerk confirmed that in line with the TOR and Corporation Standing Orders, the Committee was seeking to appoint a Vice Chair, either in an active capacity, considered as succession planning or this could remain as</p>  |        |

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|            | <p>supportive role. Kash Kalim self-nominated. With no further nominations, this was approved by the Committee.</p> <p><b><u>Item 3 – Approved:</u></b> <i>The Committee approved appointment of Kashfa Kalim as Committee Vice Chair for 2023/24</i></p>   |         |
| S.23.04    | <p><b>Item 4: Minutes of The Previous Meeting Held 26<sup>th</sup> June 2023</b><br/>The Clerk was thanked for minutes which were approved as an accurate record of the meeting held.</p> <p><b><u>Item 4 - Approved:</u></b> <i>The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.</i></p>  |         |
| S.24.05    | <p><b>Item 5: Matters Arising / Actions Summary</b><br/>The Deputy Principal confirmed that additional detail around apprenticeships had been provided and would be discussed within the relevant item and confirmed there had been a follow up with governors between meetings, which had reviewed in detail concerns raised previously.</p> <p>It was clarified that staffing risks, as overseen by the Resources Committee, although not included in the risks item, had been addressed through the reports, in relation to impact on quality.</p> <p><b><u>Item 5 - Resolved:</u></b> <i>The Committee resolved to accept the report.</i></p>   |         |
| S.24.06    | <p><b>ITEM 6: CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS</b><br/>No items within the minutes or on the agenda were considered to be confidential.</p> <p><b><u>Item 6 – Resolved:</u></b> <i>The Committee resolved to approve the minutes for publication. The Committee confirmed they did not need any items on the agenda to be reviewed confidentially.</i></p>   |         |
| S.24.07    | <p><b>Item 7 Quality of Education Report To Include Outcomes And Targets</b><br/>The Deputy Principal provided the Committee with a comprehensive overview of the report.</p> <p>Members were reminded that this would feed into the self-assessment process, with governors invited and encouraged to support the SAR Validation process and reminded that there was the opportunity to participate in Learning Walks on October 4<sup>th</sup>, with the format of the day outlined.</p> <p>The results were summarised, highlighting retention and pass rates, noting improvements across both sites. Members were advised that whilst improved, it was from a low starting point, with the Deputy Principal outlining plans to ensure improvements are delivered at pace.</p> <p>Members were advised that the above national achievement in apprenticeships provided a low benchmark, with the drop in achievement discussed at length. Members received details of challenges gaining employer support for EPA's where a licence to practice is awarded ahead of the EPA, with it acknowledged that this needed addressing.</p> <p>A member highlighted the opportunity open for college's to support an IFATE focus group to tackle challenges faced by all stakeholders, whilst</p> | DP/Ctee |

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acknowledging this may not provide immediate resolutions, could shape the qualifications to ensure these issues are addressed in the long term.

**DP to  
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Members challenged the data and actions, and considered the impact of staffing challenges, particularly in relation to GCSE English and Maths. The correlation between staffing issues in the previous year and achievement were highlighted. Members noted staffing remained challenging and were assured by the implementation of a scheme of learning with the use of an AI system to ensure a tailored approach to learning, focusing on gaps in knowledge. The use of internal support, with the SLT providing cover to ensure quality and consistency was commended but challenged as being unsustainable. Applications, recruitment challenges and supply, agency and internal and cover were discussed, with a member providing details of a high-quality long-term supply available locally, with details shared.

**DP/KR**

The Committee received details of how the updated SLT structure and the use of specialist consultants, underpinned plans to improve systems and processes, through closer monitoring and increased support. Members were provided with details of the support available. Whilst reminded that the high expectations were underpinned by strategies of support, were further strengthened by performance measures, noting continued underperformance and non-engagement with support would result in the initiation of other processes.

Members discussed the support available, noting the best practice sessions were mandatory, with consideration being given to ensuring part time staff are included. Members discussed targets and terminology around observations and were assured by the consistent, transparent approach in line with the EIF, which was holistic, and supportive. with areas prioritised using a risk-based approach.

The annex outlining how the college is meeting local skills needs was summarised, noting this evidence would be needed to underpin the Board's review of how well the College is meeting local skills needs. The Clerk advised the Committee that the Governance Committee would be responsible for ensuring the review and report meets with requirements, with plans to utilise a Strategy Day to provide the Board with the opportunity to review this in detail, with the support of an external consultant. The Clerk added that examples of other College's approaches had been shared and would be discussed with the Principal and Governance Committee.

**Clerk/  
Principal**

Ahead of concluding, issues relating to apprenticeships were raised again, noting the long-standing issue around improving timely reviews. It was explained that part of the support implemented included a quality assurance process, with some reviews completed, but not uploaded for failing to meet the required standard, with support being offered ahead of having conversations about performance with those still failing to meet the required standards.

The Deputy Principal agreed the pace of improvements was not acceptable, detailing the actions implemented as outlined in the circulated action plan, and whilst agreeing the sector benchmark was not an appropriate measure for success, it did highlight sector wide concerns over the quality of apprenticeships.

To conclude, targets were reviewed, highlighting how these were incremental, supporting the achievement of the long-term strategic targets with the updated plan approved by Members in summer. Consideration was

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given to the need to embed stakeholder engagement into the KPI's, with it agreed this was adequately captured, with the process for collating feedback detailed whilst reminding the Committee of employer involvement in curriculum design and delivery. Members highlighted how the link governor scheme and learning walk days would offer the opportunity to triangulate the information, whilst being reminded that these were for insight and oversight and should not be used to judge learning or overstep the strategic versus operational line.

The Acting Chair summarised the item, highlighting the successes, noting positive achievements, T Level successes and improved retention, with acknowledgement that there remained areas for improvement. Whilst agreeing that some areas were a priority for action, the team were reminded not to forget A Level and Higher Grades. The Acting Chair asked that progress against the Apprenticeship and GCSE action plans, along with the impact of the use of consultants is fed back to the Committee, perhaps underpinned by link governor feedback.

DP

**Item 7 – Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept the outcomes, recommending the approval of the targets for 2023/2024.*

**S.24.08 Item 8 Final Update Of Progress Against QIP 2022/2023**

The Deputy Principal highlighted the crossover with the Quality of Education Report.

Members noted the accuracy of the predicted grades, evidencing appropriate monitoring systems were in place.

Members were advised projects and actions were in place to improve A Level and BTEC alps grades, with the impact of CAGs and TAGs on outcomes discussed, with sector benchmarking data for 22/23 not yet available. Members were informed of the early positive impact of the Head of Learning, Innovation and Teacher Education

Members were reminded of the intention to align the Quality Improvement Plan to the Strategic Objectives, to be overseen by the Committee, again asking members to support the SAR validation process.

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**Item 8 – Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept the update.*

**S.24.10 Item 9: Enrolment Report**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the data, highlighting the inclusion of pre and post census targets as well as trend data as requested by the Committee.

Positive enrolments and progression across both sites were commended by the Committee, asking if there was capacity for further growth without impacting on the quality of experience. Assurance was given, with specific examples of the availability of facilities and capacity within teams to support the growth. Focus on succession planning and learning to lead were considered to be instrumental in providing a positive working culture, which had seen a number of recently retired staff keen to return to support the larger than anticipated cohort.

Acknowledging positive data around market share, members discussed further opportunities for growth, considering in detail the underlying data for feeder schools and aspirations to further reduce the number of students

studying out of the area, with the team committed to understanding the rationale, to ensure a well-positioned and comprehensive offer was being marketed in the right way.

The item concluded with a summary of attrition rates, including work to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities, with evidence of impact through higher retention year to date. Members were assured by early intervention strategies and an expectation that post census figures would be comfortably above the financial targets set.

**Item 9 – Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept the report, commending the work of those involved in exceeding recruitment targets.*

**S.24.11 Item 10: Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes Report**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support advised the Committee, that as a new report, it had provided additional detail of the offer, with future reports intended to be more data focused, highlighting the impact of the strategies and support in place to drive high expectations and achievement as outlined in this report.

The areas of the report were outlined, with a member asking for more information about rewards and incentives. The Committee received an overview of a variety of initiatives, highlighting the focus on 'improvement' to ensure that all students, in particular those with caring responsibilities were equally motivated and able to be rewarded.

In response to a question about student engagement with the initiatives, Members were informed of a focus on normalising good habits, with strategies to ensure quality provision made lessons unmissable, with a shift in focus from attendance percentages to days missed to highlight impact, with this reinforced with students and parents.

The student governor was given an opportunity to provide feedback on the holistic approach to student development, with examples given of enrichment they had engaged with, with it highlighted that their new programme of study meant they had less free time to engage with the optional enrichment activities.

**Item 10 – Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept the update.*

**S.24.12 Item 11: Safeguarding  
Item 11.1 - Annual Safeguarding Report**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support provided an overview of the information, with the Committee agreeing it provided a suitable high-level overview of the regular reports presented to the Committee, with it agreed it should be presented to the Corporation as essential information.

In reviewing the data, the retention of vulnerable learners was highlighted, noting it had been impacted by looked after students moving out of area, which was out of the College's control.

The increased number of looked after students attending the College, including those travelling from other areas, was considered to be as a result of the positive reputation the college had for the holistic development and support provided to students.

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|            | <p>Members noted the sector-wide issues relating to mental health concerns were reflected in the college data. The increasing use of the foodbank was also highlighted, with members reminded they can donate at reception or hand items in at meetings to support with the appeal.</p> <p>The safeguarding link advised that she was due to visit and complete a learning walk and more detailed review of the provision, noting this was considered to be an area of strength of the college, noting the considerable CPD, knowledge and commitment of the team, with this having been strengthened in 22/23 to increase capacity in line with increasing demand for support.</p> <p>Members discussed the implications of increased demand on the team, suggested to be bridging the gaps of insufficient social care, with members advised that wider staff teams were also supported and trained, as issues impacted all aspects of college life.</p> <p><b><u>Item 11.1 – Resolved:</u></b> <i>The Committee resolved to recommend the annual safeguarding report to the Corporation as essential information.</i></p>   | Governors |
| S.24.13    | <p><b>Item 11.2: Safeguarding Policy</b></p> <p>The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the updates, assuring the Committee these were in line with updated Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Guidance.</p> <p><b><u>Item 11.2 – Resolved:</u></b> <i>The Committee resolved to recommend the Safeguarding Policy to the Corporation for approval.</i></p>   |           |
| S.24.14    | <p><b>Item 11.3: Managing Allegations Policy</b></p> <p>The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support provided an overview of the policy, highlighting how some elements had been extracted from other policies and strengthened in this standalone policy in response to KCSIE updates, providing additional clarity around low level concerns, and the role of the LADO in investigating complaints and providing support to the sector.</p> <p>Members were advised of the wider remit now in relation to lettings, as included in the policy, with the policy having been used to support tighter controls, with one provider no longer able to utilise college premises after failing to comply with the requirements despite being supported to comply.</p> <p>Members considered financial and wider implications and were assured the college continued to promote community use, with some organisations able to utilise space without cost, to ensure the college is seen as the 'hub' of the community, however, this remained risk assessed and in line with other policies, with details of measures to minimise risks to students, including the introduction of this policy, outlined.</p> <p><b><u>Item 11.2 – Resolved:</u></b> <i>The Committee resolved to recommend the Managing Allegations Policy to the Corporation for approval.</i></p> |           |
| S.24.15    | <p><b>Item 12: Student Engagement Report: Termly Focus - Annual Complaints Report</b></p>  |           |



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The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support invited feedback on the report. Members noted the low overall number of complaints, with none escalated to governors, and none being Ofsted or OFS qualified.

The Clerk advised the Committee that the governance self-assessment was underway, with the survey having indicated that the Board was not aware of, or sufficiently reassured in relation to the oversight of complaints. The Clerk confirmed that it would not impact the self-assessment outcome, as there was evidence in reports and minutes to provide assurances this had been effective, however, suggested that there was perhaps an action to improve how this was communicated to the wider Board. A presentation was suggested, however, considered to be unnecessary, with it agreed this could be highlighted verbally as part of the Committee feedback to the Corporation.

***Item 12 – Resolved:*** *The Committee resolved to recommend the report to the Corporation as essential information.*

**S.24.14 Item 13: Policies for Approval**

**13.1 Observation of Teaching and Learning Strategy**

The Deputy Principal highlighted the deep dive emphasis, offering a more valid reflection of the quality of teaching and learning.

Members discussed terminology and grading, highlighting the impact on perception, with members advised that this had been considered, however, in consultations with the union management forum, it had been agreed the process needed to remain supportive, whilst ensuring any underperformance can be addressed. It was agreed terminology would be reviewed again with the UMF and any amendments considered and advised to the Committee.

**DP**

Members questioned triangulation with other strategies, particularly the English and maths strategy, asking about accountability and leads for differing areas, with it clarified there was a broader teaching and learning strategy, with this only covering the observation elements, and not incorporating curriculum planning and intent.

In considering the period of review and assessing impact, it was clarified that this would be on a two-year cycle, with impact evidenced in the Quality of Education report. Further discussions within Item 15 resulted in the Committee agreeing only the broader Teaching and Learning Strategy needed to be presented for approval in line with the Committee Terms of Reference, with the observation policy delegated to SLT as operational, agreeing that the UMF should be further consulted on the terminology, however, updates would not require Committee approval.

***Item 13.1 – Approved:*** *The Committee resolved to approve the Teaching and Learning Strategy suggesting terminology used should be reviewed further ahead of the next revision, agreeing that this could be operationally approved by the SLT.*

**Item 13.2: Assessment Strategy**

The updates were summarised by the Deputy Principal, with clarity offered over responsibilities for approving resubmission and extensions.

***Item 13.2 – Approved:*** *The Committee resolved to approve the Assessment Strategy.*

**Item 13.3: MSR Policy**

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Support summarised the changes to the policy, highlighting the commitment to fairness and transparency. The consultation process was outlined and members asked about implementation and communication of the policy with students, including steps taken to support and warn ahead of initiating formal processes.

Members considered whether some terminology should be less punitive, discussing examples of alternatives used in their own organisations, to avoid negative connotations. Members were advised this had been taken into consideration, however, in line with the collaborative approach working with students, and the need for transparency in terms of students taking responsibility for their behaviour, it had been agreed to maintain language around corrective action for clarity and impact.

**Item 13.3 – Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to recommend the MSR Policy to the Corporation for approval.*

**13.4 Freedom of Speech Policy**

The Deputy Principal summarised the changes, with the policy having been fully overhauled with the use of a template from the legal firm Eversheds to ensure compliance with updated legislation.

Members resolved to recommend the policy for approval, subject to minor amendments in relation to titles, having changed since the policy was drafted.

**DP**

**Item 13.4 – Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to recommend the Freedom of Speech Policy to the Corporation for approval subject to the updating of roles and responsibilities.*

**Item 14: Standing Items**

**S.24.16 Item 14.1 Risks Relating to Standards**

The Deputy Principal confirmed that the risks and mitigations as circulated were unchanged from those presented in the summer, with a review having taken place after paper distribution, which resulted in a lowered risk rating for outcomes and tuition fund.

**Item 14.1 - Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept the update.*

**S.24.17 Item 14.2 Audit reports relevant to Standards**

The Deputy Principal provided an overview of the voluntary diagnostic review of curriculum efficiency, highlighting the focus on financial aspects, with the management responses complimented as comprehensive by the FEC team. Members were advised a number of actions were already in place at the time of the review, due to it looking at retrospective data.

Members were informed that the Resources Committee Chair had supported the review process, with the final presentation form the FEC and management responses to be presented to the Audit Committee.

**Item 14.2 - Resolved:** *The Committee resolved to accept the update*

**S.24.18 Item 15: Committee Self-Evaluation**

The Clerk summarised the report, asking the Committee if there were any amendments required ahead of approval. It was clarified the Teaching and



Learning Strategy referred to was the formally named Quality Strategy, being that discussed earlier as the overarching strategy which is currently under review. It was agreed that this needed to be maintained as an action point as the Observation of Teaching and Learning Strategy did not satisfy this requirement.

***Item 15 - Approved: The Committee resolved to approve the self-evaluation as drafted by the Clerk, committing to undertaking the actions to maintain improvements in the oversight of quality.***

**S.24.19 ITEM 16: ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE CORPORATION**

The Acting Chair summarised the key points to be highlighted to the Corporation, including improved recruitment, and outcomes, highlighting awareness and action plans for areas still to be addressed.

The Clerk summarised the resolutions and recommendations to be presented to the Corporation as follows:

- All outcomes papers should be recommended to the Corporation as essential information
- Enrolment information would be provided, noting that this would be updated delivered as part of MB report
- Safeguarding Policy (for approval)
- Safeguarding Annual Report, presented as essential information
- Annual complaints report (as essential information)
- MSR Policy for approval
- Freedom of Speech Policy for approval
- The Committee Self-Evaluation would be reported to and monitored by the Governance Committee.

**S.24.23 Item 17: Closing Comments and Date of Next Meeting**

The Acting Chair thanked staff for their efforts in presenting reports and for having taken on board the feedback of the Committee and Corporation to deliver detailed yet concise information.

The Deputy Principal thanked members, noting their time and expertise as volunteers was appreciated by the team.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

**The meeting ended at 5.20pm.**