

## Standards Improvement Committee Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 5.30 pm, via Teams

**Committee members:** Grant Glendinning (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Lorraine Preston (staff governor and Manager of Student Services), Dot Smith (Chair), Anne Vickers, Bernice Wood (co-opted member) and Gary Wright

**Apologies:** Liz Dixon (staff governor)

**Officials:** Chris Andreou (Group Director of Business Development and Innovation), Becky Cadden (Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality, for Agenda Item 4), Jason Faulkner (Executive Principal, Redcar and Cleveland College and NETA), Lesley Graham (Executive Principal, Stockton Riverside College and Higher Education), Phil Hastie (Chief Operating Officer), Sean Johnston (Director NETA Training), Patrick Jordan (College Principal Bede), Dave Laycock (Head of Construction, Engineering & Service Industries, for Agenda Item 2), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation), Peter Wood (Group Director of Quality) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

**In attendance** Himeetjua Kajau, prospective student governor

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### **SIC23/57 Agenda Item 1 – Welcome, apologies for absence, declarations of interest, notification of items of other business**

The Chair welcomed governors and officials to the meeting.

An apology for absence was received from Liz Dixon, due to an open evening taking place. There were no other declarations of interest in items on the agenda and no items of additional business were notified for consideration.

### **SIC23/58 Agenda Item 2 – Clean Energy Education Hub presentation**

The Head of Construction, Engineering & Service Industries presented to governors on the Clean Energy Education Hub (CEEH) and the Retrofit Academy. He outlined the range of programmes developed and delivered; key partnerships with employers, and public and charity sector organisations; success stories; planned future investments; and links to the Tees Valley sector action plans.

He highlighted, in particular, the success of the bp Teesside Clean Energy Technician scholarship programme, a two year programme which had been funded for a further cohort of 20 students from September 2024. The Head of Construction, Engineering & Service Industries commended the input of one student from this course during a groundbreaking event at Teesworks, including a question and answer session with the Tees Valley Mayor. Etc. had

received fantastic support from bp, including in co-creating curriculum to meet the needs of future employers locally and nationally. The partnership with bp was also benefitting the group more widely and, as one example, bp had supported a visit by a guest speaker to Redcar and Cleveland College to talk to students about resilience, linked to bp's sponsorship of the Paralympic Games.

Other partnership work included with:

- GE, which had supported co-creation of curriculum in relation to competencies and skills and also provided a number of apprenticeship placements;
- the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA), which had supported with funding for bootcamps, e.g. for solar photovoltaics installation training;
- British Gas, which had provided placements for T Level learners, as well as donating and installing specialist equipment worth around £20k;
- Sembcorp, which had marketed and branded rooms and also supported with development of a battery storage programme, planned for delivery in February / March 2024;
- Parker Hanafin, which had provided access to equipment and lecturers at no charge;
- Northern Gas Networks, which was converting the Sir William Turner House to hydrogen to create a bespoke training facility in the college;
- Education Partnership North East (EPNE), in relation to the retrofit academy – the colleges were looking at ways of sharing resources and staffing.

Partners on the CEEH forum were meeting monthly.

Future plans included:

- utilising Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) funding for hydrogen electrolyser provision (likely to be via simulator) - Redcar and Cleveland College would be the only college to have this provision;
- investment in improved welding facilities;
- delivery of a Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Renewables, in collaboration with Teesside University;
- potential for international accreditation for Carbon Capture Storage (CCS);
- hydrogen awareness programmes, with initial courses taking place from December 2023;
- delivery of provision via the retrofit academy to enhance learners' experience, providing them with an additional qualification as well as employability skills;
- masterclasses from engineers, e.g. on risk assessments, as part of the partnership with EPNE.

The Clean Energy Education Hub was evidencing progress against all Etc. strategic objectives, as well as offering provision within many of the Tees Valley Combined Authority's priority sectors. It was recognised that the Clean Energy Education Hub had a vital role in ensuring the group was meeting local skills needs, a key government focus and a fundamental element of the Ofsted inspection framework.

Governors asked about the key challenges within the Clean Energy Education Hub; the Head of Construction, Engineering & Service Industries highlighted that development had been phased, to ensure high quality of provision. Partnerships and future plans were evolving. In response to a member's query relating to development of the carbon capture industry and potential for industry training, the Head of Construction, Engineering & Service Industries reported that the

college would need to work on increasing exposure and profile; bootcamps could also be offered. There had been some international interest in this provision.

Governors thanked the Head of Construction, Engineering & Service Industries and **noted** the presentation, commending the clear evidence that the Clean Energy Education Hub was meeting Etc. strategic objectives, Tees Valley Combined Authority priorities and employer needs. Governors were also pleased to note that the Clean Energy Education Hub was providing excellent additional enrichment opportunities for students studying across Redcar and Cleveland College, as well as the collaboration with other education providers.

*Dave Laycock, Head of Construction, Engineering & Service Industries, left the meeting.*  
*Becky Cadden, Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality, joined the meeting.*

### **SIC23/59    Agenda Item 3 – Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 5 October 2023 had been circulated and were **approved** as an accurate record.

The action progress log had been circulated and was **noted**. Governors thanked the Group Director of Marketing for the clarification in relation to use of student photos to represent the student body, as well as updating photos within the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

### **SIC23/60    Agenda Item 4 – Higher Education Self Evaluation Document**

The Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality, presented the circulated 'Partners Report' and clarified that Etc. was required to submit this to Teesside University, as the group's validating partner for prescribed Higher Education.

[REDACTED] In some areas, including Early Years and Performing Arts, degree provision had been replaced with Level 4 Skills qualifications, to meet the needs of learners and employers.

Student achievement rates for higher education provision were very positive and a more flexible approach to attendance, for example, allowing remote attendance at tutorials, was working well. As part of the capital work at Stockton Riverside College, a new common room and a new collaboration room for higher education students had been created. Outcomes from the National Student Survey were above sector norms, [REDACTED] Progression was very good [REDACTED]

A governor queried the timing for submission of the Partner Report to Teesside University, noting that some external examiner / quality enhancement visit reports were still outstanding. It was clarified that this would need to be submitted by 23 November 2023. Not all external examiner / quality enhancement visit reports had been received to date but the Assistant Principal had attended all external visits and was able to confirm that feedback had been positive. The Quality Assurance Agency's institutional review of Teesside University was due to take place on 14 March 2024; Etc. provision would be reviewed as part of this and the group was confident that the quality of higher education provision at Etc. was very strong.

A governor noted that, previously, a Higher Education Self Evaluation Document had been produced; this had included reflections, areas for improvement and planned actions, in addition to performance against Key Performance Indicators. The Assistant Principal clarified that a detailed action plan was being developed and progress against this would be monitored via the Higher Education and Skills Monitoring Group. The Executive Principal clarified that, in light of staffing changes, there was now no full time Higher Education Manager position and, instead, Higher Education sat within individual departments. The Assistant Principal was the main point of contact for Teesside University. A document was being developed to outline individual responsibilities in relation to HE.

Governors were pleased to note a responsive approach to changing needs of students. In response to a query, the Assistant Principal confirmed that students would receive credits for completed courses and were able to use these towards a Higher Technical Qualification.

Governors thanked the Assistant Principal for her attendance. The committee confirmed that the Partner Report was an accurate reflection of the position of Higher Education within the Education Training Collective and **agreed** to recommend this to the FE Corporation for approval.

*Gary Wright joined the meeting during this item. Becky Cadden left the meeting.*

#### **SIC23/61    Agenda Item 5 – Group Development Plans**

The Group Director of Quality presented his circulated report outlining the proposed key themes for Group Development Plans in 2023-24; Apprenticeships – curriculum intent; Apprenticeships – curriculum implementation; Teaching, Learning and Assessment; GCSE 16-18 High Grades; and Personal Development, Behaviour and Attitudes. It was noted that the Group Development Plans were now online documents, which would be updated following each Performance Review Cycle. Committee members had received links to the Group Development Plans and more detail on the areas for improvement, as well as initial action updates, would be available in late November after Performance Review Period 3.

Committee members **agreed** to:

- i) recommend the key themes for the 2023-24 Group Development Plans to the FE Corporation for approval;
- ii) review the Group Development Plans in detail in advance of the FE Corporation, with a view to making a recommendation on approval.

#### **SIC23/62    Agenda Item 6 – Areas for improvement update**

A summary of all areas for improvement identified in college Self Assessment Reports had been circulated, with information about the areas for improvement included in Group Development Plans and some early progress updates. The following were discussed, in particular:

##### Bede

In response to a governor's query, the College Principal Bede clarified that the college had piloted a small number of linear A levels [REDACTED] In response to further queries, the College

Principal Bede confirmed that AS levels attracted UCAS points and qualification reform was not expected to impact on AS levels. It was possible that there could be increased demand for A levels if BTEC qualifications were no longer funded.

[REDACTED]

#### NETA

Members noted a positive progress monitoring update but that this was too early in the academic year to evidence impact.

#### Redcar and Cleveland College

The Executive Principal Redcar and Cleveland College highlighted that the college had moved to a different awarding body for maths GCSE (Eduqas), which was felt to be a more accessible examination for students, for example, clearer language used in questions and two longer examination papers rather than three. Invigilators had fed back that students seemed more engaged and feedback from learners had also been positive.

[REDACTED]

#### Stockton Riverside College

A member noted that a review of logistics management was planned and acknowledged that that logistics was an important sector for the Tees Valley economy. [REDACTED] A new Logistics Co-ordinator post had been created and recruitment was in progress; this role would focus on employer engagement, monitoring and tracking of all programmes within the area.

In response to a member's query, the Executive Principal clarified that the Employer Engagement Log was a spreadsheet recording all activity involving employers, including enrichment activity. This was being monitored by Heads of Department. Members commended this approach. The Chief Executive and Executive Principal also agreed to discuss potential opportunities with VCTC, an awarding organisation, in respect of logistics qualifications.

Governors **noted** the updates. Members discussed whether it was valuable to continue monitoring areas for improvement in this format and it was **agreed** that the Chief Executive and Senior Management should review and recommend an effective and consistent approach to monitoring to a future meeting of the committee.

### **SIC23/63    Agenda Item 7 – Quality and Performance Issues**

*Chris Andreou, Group Director of Business Development and Innovation, joined the meeting during this item.*

#### **7.1 – Group performance against quality key performance indicators**

A report outlining attendance and retention rates, observation activity and staff development, as well as an update on apprenticeship quality, had been circulated.

In response to a governors' challenge around the current attendance rate [REDACTED], the Group Director of Quality commented that this was felt to be an appropriate overall rate, although the group's smaller delivery units, which had a very defined cohort (Bede and NETA),

would be expected to achieve attendance rates of around 90%. The group's rate was in line with secondary school attendance (88% for North East schools) and, anecdotally, also above attendance rates achieved at other colleges. In response to a governors' request for comparisons with national attendance rates, the Group Director of Quality clarified that no national data was published for colleges but he would use contacts to ascertain trends in other colleges. Governors recognised the link between high levels of attendance and high achievement and asked whether the group analysed reasons for non-attendance; the Group Director of Quality reported that the main reasons for absence related to personal challenges / well-being / family issues and the Etc. provided effective support for students in these situations.

[REDACTED]

Governors were pleased to note that apprenticeship diagnostic reviews were aligned to the Ofsted framework.

Governors:

- i) **noted** the update, commending, in particular, the information provided in relation to Continuous Professional Development (CPD), including bespoke CPD;
- ii) **agreed** that future apprenticeship updates could be included in the Quality and Performance Update or provided as a separate agenda item; and that it would be helpful for input to be provided from the Assistant Principals and / or the Group Director of Business Development and Innovation at future meetings as appropriate.

## 7.2 – Quality performance of subsidiary company (Innersummit)

A report had been circulated outlining quality and performance of Innersummit during the 2022-23 academic year, i.e. prior to the acquisition by Etc., and an overview of Innersummit curriculum in 2023-24, predicted achievement and key quality improvement themes. Governors noted that the Innersummit cohort was small and the achievement rates reported related to apprenticeship provision. Governors queried the level of confidence in the accuracy of predicted achievement rates for 2023-24, noting a significant jump from the 2022-23 achievement rates [REDACTED] He further highlighted that performance of individual learners was scrutinised through monthly reviews. It was recognised that seasonal pressures could also impact, for example, winter pressure in the NHS or governmental pressures for employees within the Cabinet Office

The update was **noted** and it was **agreed** that prediction processes for Innersummit should be aligned with those used across Etc.

*The Group Director of Business Development and Innovation left the meeting.*

## SIC23/64 Agenda Item 8 – Subcontracting

The Executive Principal Redcar and Cleveland College presented his circulated report providing an overview of subcontracted provision, quality monitoring arrangements and identified areas of risk. He confirmed that good relationships with subcontractors were being maintained and there were no emerging concerns.

Governors **noted** the subcontracting quality monitoring report, confirming that they had been reassured by the strategic lead for subcontracting that the group was fully compliant with subcontracting requirements and that the subcontracting team was providing appropriate support to subcontractors.

#### **SIC23/65    Agenda Item 9 – Personal Development update**

A report on the personal development programme including tutorials, enrichment and Students' Union activity had been circulated. The Group Director of Quality highlighted the focus on volunteering, with a successful volunteering fair held at Redcar and Cleveland College and plans in place for a similar event at Stockton Riverside College, working with Catalyst. Governors commended the wide range of tutorial topics and the high numbers of students involved. The importance of developing 'transition' / 'tranverse' skills in students via enrichment activity, as discussed at the recent Association of College's national conference, was recognised. Governors also recognised positive progress with development of the Students' Union; in response to a query, it was confirmed that the successful candidates in the Student President elections at each site had been publicised.

Governors **noted** the update.

#### **SIC23/66    Agenda Item 10 – Work Experience and Industry Placements**

The Executive Principal Stockton Riverside College presented the circulated report outlining work experience and industrial placements undertaken in 2022-23 and performance to date in 2023-24. She confirmed that the group had met its targets in relation to the Capacity Development Fund in 2022-23, with the final return submitted on 1 December 2023. In response to a query, the Executive Principal confirmed that she was confident that work experience targets would be achieved and any negative impact from T Level placements would be minimal.

The update was **noted** and governors commented that it was helpful to receive an early position update in relation to industrial placements.

#### **SIC23/67    Agenda Item 11 – Curriculum Reform programme**

A report had been circulated outlining the current national position in respect of planned reforms to post 16 qualifications, as well as potential impact on Etc. and plans to mitigate this. The Chief Executive highlighted, in particular, the recent announcement of a proposed 'Advanced British Standard', to replace A Levels and T Levels. This could take ten years to implement but there were no planned changes to the current programme of de-funding qualifications and T Levels would remain a core qualification. National data indicated that around 155,000 young people were currently undertaking a Level 3 qualification that would not be available in 2025. Awarding bodies were developing Alternative Advanced Qualifications (AAQs) to bridge gaps where there was no overlap with T Levels but no detail in respect of these qualifications was available yet. In response to queries, it was clarified that timelines for development of AAQs remained uncertain, and this could impact on the timelines for de-funding current qualifications. A further concern was that many of the qualifications that would

be de-funded were in priority areas for the Local Skills Improvement Plan, for example, care and engineering. Etc. had assigned strategic leads for each curriculum area to review the group's offer for 2024/25 and ensure the right portfolio was retained. The group was also actively campaigning at local, regional and national level.

Governors discussed whether it was likely that employers would be offered incentives to increase available apprenticeship spaces, recognising a 55% drop in apprenticeship starts with the largest decline in 16-18 year old apprentices. It was acknowledged that the recent King's Speech had referenced injecting growth but no concrete plans to achieve this had been announced and there were currently no incentives for employers to take on apprenticeships.

The update was **noted**.

#### **SIC23/68 Agenda Item 12 – Governor learning walks**

A report had been circulated outlining feedback from a recent governor learning walk undertaken by the committee Chair, Dot Smith. She thanked the College Principal Bede and the staff involved and encouraged all governors to undertake learning walks.

Governors **noted** the feedback from learning walks and **agreed** to remind all governors of the value of learning walks and encourage governors to undertake these.

#### **SIC23/69 Agenda Item 13 – Policies and Strategies**

##### **13.1 – 14-16 Policy and Procedure**

Proposed changes to the Policy and Procedure had been circulated. Governors recognised the strong focus on safeguarding and communications. Governors also acknowledged the high quality of bespoke support provided for students within the Skills Academy.

Governors **approved** the 14–16 Policy and Procedure.

##### **13.2 – English and maths Strategy**

The Executive Principal Redcar and Cleveland College reported that the English and maths Strategy had been refocussed and refreshed. The Strategy was supported by a comprehensive improvement plan.

Governors **approved** the English and maths Strategy for 2023-24.

#### **SIC23/70 Agenda Item 14 – Any Other Business**

There were no additional items of business.

#### **SIC23/71 Agenda Item 15 – Approval of Documents for Public Inspection**

It was **agreed** that the agenda of the current meeting be made available for public inspection; supporting documents were deemed confidential for reasons of commerciality, with the exception of the reports for agenda items 11 and 12 and the policies considered at Item 13,



which would be published in finalised form. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

**SIC23/72 Agenda Item 16 – Date, time and venue of next meeting**

Thursday 14 March 2024 at 5.30 pm, Bede Sixth Form College (room to be confirmed)

**SIC23/73 Agenda Item 17 – Meeting Review and Key themes**

The following key themes were identified:

- Presentation on Clean Energy Education Hub (CEEH) and Retrofit provision – outlining programme development and delivery, employer engagement and success stories; governors recognised the strength of partnerships with employers and the clarity around the role of the CEEH in meeting local skills needs;
- Higher Education Self Evaluation Document (HE SED) – governors received assurance of high quality provision and positive comments received in external reviews; the committee recommended approval of the HE SED by the FE Corporation;
- Group Development Plans (GDPs) – the committee agreed that the proposed key themes for the 2023-24 GDPs were appropriate and reflected self assessment outcomes; SIC members would review the final GDPs in detail to support approval by the Corporation;
- Quality and Performance Update – attendance rates were satisfactory and in line with schools; no concerns regarding retention at this stage; apprenticeships continued to be the primary area of concern and the committee was pleased to note planned actions including more robust Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), improved internal collaboration, more clarity in respect of staff responsibilities and more focussed End Point Assessment processes;
- Innersummit – the committee received an overview of Innersummit provision and recognised a need for improved predictions / alignment with the Etc. prediction process;
- Subcontracting quality monitoring – the committee was reassured of compliance with subcontracting requirements;
- Curriculum Reform – the committee recognised the potential impact of de-funding of qualifications across the sector and on the group; the group was seeking to plan to mitigate the impact but many uncertainties remained;
- Other items discussed included: work experience and industry placements; personal development activity, including focus on volunteering; and 14-16, and English and maths Strategies (both approved),

Members discussed the exploration of apprenticeships at this meeting. It was recognised that discussion had been appropriate, based on the data available, but it would be helpful to provide more current data to the next meeting of the FE Corporation, including predictions and retention, in recognition that data could change quickly. The committee felt able to provide limited assurance in relation to apprenticeships based on data and requested that a written report on apprenticeships be provided to the next meeting of the FE Corporation.

Governors also discussed the role of the committee and it was confirmed that there had been appropriate questioning, at a strategic level, and governors were not undertaking an executive role. It was also commented that discussions were future-focussed and emphasised how improvements could be achieved.

*(The meeting ended at 7.45 pm)*

**Approved at a meeting held on 14 March 2024**