EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 4 December 2023 via Zoom

Present		Sue Clarke	Chair
	To item 4.2	John Laramy	Principal/CEO
		Bindu Arjoon	
		Laura Eggins	
		Ashish Ghadiali	
		Ayomide Okesola	
		Vicki Roberts	
		Lindsay Skinner	
Apologies		Pam DeGregorio	
		Tim Quine	Vice Chair
Observers		None	
In Attendance		Jade Otty	Vice Principal
		Rob Bosworth	Deputy CEO
	Item 5.1 and 5.2 only	Kristyn Woodward	Director of Student Services
	Item 4.2 only	Lucinda Sanders	Director of Adult and HE
	Item 7 only	Gemma Noble	Executive Director of People and Organisational Development
	Item 6.2 only	Dee Rowett	Director of Teaching, Learning and Development
		Alison Layton-Hill	Head of Governance

			Action
1.	**Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest.**		

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting and extended a particularly welcome to Laura Eggins and Ayomide Okesola to their first committee meeting. Laura and Ayo were encouraged to seek clarification and ask questions during the meeting and the Chair asserted that the contribution of student governors is both unique and invaluable.

Apologies were received from Tim Quine and Pamela DeGregorio and no declarations of interest were received.

2.   **Minutes**
2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2023, as circulated, were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting.

It was agreed that the action to bring data related to the timeliness of responding to complaints would be deferred to the next meeting   **HofG**

3. **Matters arising**
3.1 Hub for Independent Living and Learning (HILL)
The Committee Chair had visited the HILL recently and was pleased to report the positive progress since it had opened. She had been impressed with the learners' confidence, their interest in learning and how they are checking their own progress. She had discussed more personalised planning for the learners and complimented the staff.

The Committee noted the update

3.2 QRR Review Update
The quality and resources review meetings had been held recently and the Chair explained the process and its relationship with the SAR. Ashish Ghadiali had attended two sessions and had welcomed the insight into the quality review process. He was particularly impressed by the attitude and consistency of approach of the leadership.

The Committee noted the update

4. **Quality Assurance**
4.1 Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2022/2023 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2023/2024

The SAR 2022/2023 was received and the Committee noted the overall assessment grade of 'outstanding' with all faculties and departments being graded as 'good' or 'outstanding'. The Vice Principal highlighted the key achievements and the areas for improvement defined under intent, implementation and impact and reassured the Committee that the College is rigorous in terms of its self-assessment and grading.

The Committee provided particular support and challenge related to the evaluation of the Apprenticeship and the High Needs provisions. Following significant questioning and consideration the Committee agreed an 'outstanding' rating for Apprenticeships. This reflected the quality of teaching and learning, the support for learners in the workplace and at College, excellent outcomes and the fact that the College had been announced as one of only five FE expert providers or apprenticeships. It was noted that Exeter College achievement rates were significantly above the national average, however governors supported the College's own aspirational priority of 75% by 2025.

High Needs was debated, governors were pleased with the results and acknowledged the significant improvement in level 1 achievement. The provision had recovered well post Covid and the gap had narrowed to 3%. The Committee agreed that the College had started to respond to Ofsted's observations, however felt that more work was required to ensure more systematic individualised programmes and where appropriate, linked to other college programmes. Governors were pleased that the gap had narrowed to 3%, however noted that a few years previously there had been no gap at all. The Committee agreed to grade High Needs as 'good'

although felt that a more bespoke curriculum and a further narrowing of the gap would lead to 'outstanding'.

The Committee was pleased to note that the drop out rate for NEETS was significantly lower than expected and that the excellent retention data for care experience learners was a credit to the College.

The Chair summarised that the outcomes were impressive across the board and on behalf of the Committee expressed her thanks to all staff.

The Committee agreed to recommend the College SAR 2022/2023 to the Board for approval at its meeting on 8 December 2023	**HofG**

The Quality Improvement Plan 2023/2024 was received and the excellent progress against actions was noted. The success of the two-day induction programme for learners was discussed and the student governors confirmed that it was a beneficial change.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2023/2024 to the Board for approval on 8 December 2023	**HofG**

Lucinda Sanders joined the meeting for item 4.2

4.2   HE SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024
The Committee received the report and noted the achievements during 2022/2023 and the rationale that supported the 'outstanding' grading. The highlights and key priorities for 2023/2024 were also discussed.

Governors received assurance that the Adult and HE curriculum had evolved and now offers a deep and broad curriculum which meets a diverse need across learners. Learner support had improved and programmes are employer driven to respond to the local and national skills needs. Adult achievement rates remain high and learner satisfaction had improved.

The Committee challenged the quality of destination data for Adult and HE. It was accepted that alumni participation could be improved, however there are now mechanisms in place to collect accurate destination data.

Governors were pleased to note that following a period of challenge, the Adult and HE provision was now strong.

The Committee agreed to recommend the HE SAR 2022/2023 and QIP 2023/2024 to the Board on 8 December 2023 for approval	**HofG**

Kristyn Woodward joined the meeting for item 5.1 and 5.2

5. **Safeguarding**

5.1 Safeguarding Annual Report

The Committee received the safeguarding annual report and presentation and acknowledged the complexity and sensitive nature of the Safeguarding team's work.

The Committee noted the rise in referrals overall and in particular those related to incidents of non-epileptic attack disorder (NEAD) and suicidal ideation, which were noted as national issues. Governors asked whether current staffing and resources were able to meet the rising level and complexity of need. They were pleased that steps had been taken to increase capacity and strengthen the structure of the team.

Governors expressed concern that more learners are presenting immediately at crisis point and asked whether issues could be detected earlier. It was advised that half of the reports were issues already identified within their school setting and the team is working with schools to build resilience earlier. It was also planned to recruit an additional Designated Deputy Safeguarding Lead.

The Committee enquired as to the support received by staff who may be receiving distressing initial disclosures. The Safeguarding team is able to access external supervision and the team is supportive of each other. There is also supervision at faculty level where line managers support staff.

Governors sought clarification related to the steep increase in reports of bullying and harassment. It was advised that this is likely to be due to an increased awareness of how to report incidents. Training is delivered to staff and learners and more mechanisms for easy and anonymous reporting have been put in place.

The Committee noted that the Association of Colleges had raised the profile of mental health by providing advice and resources to colleges. There is also a likelihood that there will be a requirement for colleges to appoint a lead governor to have oversight of mental health for staff and learners.

Governors sought assurance that the College is compliant with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). One expectation is compliance related to filtering and monitoring to tackle concerns around exploitation and grooming. It was advised that internal reports to ensure compliance would be in place by January 2024.

The Committee agreed to:
a) **recommend the Safeguarding Annual Report to the Board for approval on 8 December 2023**   **HofG**
b) **sign the updated Mental Health Charter**   **KW**
c) **receive an update on filtering and monitoring compliance**   **KW**

5.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
The Committee received and considered the updated Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which is reviewed annually. The Director of Student Services outlined updates that are now included in the policy, of particular note were those related to filtering and monitoring and Prevent.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy to the Board for approval on 8 December 2023 **HofG**

6. **Responsiveness**
6.1 Meeting the Skills Need

The Committee received the report and was reminded that the Board had now delegated the responsibility of receiving skills updates to this committee. One of the new emerging themes of need is green skills and the Committee noted that the College had formulated a Green Construction Advisory Panel of 30-50 employers, regarded nationally as best practice. The work aligns to the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and has resulted in funding for related development at the Future Skills Centre and Falcon House.

In response to query, the College confirmed that it is working with expert bodies to achieve accreditation.

The Committee noted the report and agreed to receive an update on the emerging theme of health (nursing) to the next meeting **RB**

6.2 Student Induction Survey outcomes
The Committee received the report and was pleased to note the highest ever return rate and overall positive outcomes.

The Committee questioned how the return to a two-day induction programme was assessed as more impactful. It was acknowledged that although not an explicit survey question, learners expressed that they felt supported and welcomed and that integrating with their peers was easy. The student governors confirmed that the two-day induction reduced the feeling of becoming overwhelmed and helped with transition to college.

Governors encouraged the College to ensure there is a range of communication channels and opportunities for students to provide feedback, particularly related to foundation learners as well as ESOL learners who may have limited English language.

The Committee noted the report

Gemma Noble joined the meeting for item 7

7. **HR Policies**
7.1 Flexible Working policy
7.2 Redundancy policy

The Committee received the two updated policies and the Executive Director of People and Organisational Development gave an overview of the minor changes. It was advised that the Redundancy policy would be considered by governors again in one year, as opposed to two years, due to impending significant changes in legislation.

The Committee agreed to approve the flexible working policy and the redundancy policy

8. **Risk Management**
8.1 Risk Register
The Committee received those risks related to the committee's business and noted that the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee had specifically asked that R1.26, related to safeguarding, is thoroughly reviewed. The Committee debated that despite the College doing all it can in mitigation the inherent risk remains high.

Governors were advised of the measures in progress related to streamlining the work of the Student Services team to focus on safeguarding and adding capacity to the team. However, extreme safeguarding pressures were acknowledged as a national issue and it was not possible to give a timescale to reduce the risk rating but this risk will be kept under review by the committee. Governors encouraged the College to do all it can to mitigate against this concerning trend.

The Committee agreed to receive a safeguarding update as a main agenda item at the next meeting

8.2 Emerging Risks
The Committee considered any additional risks that had emerged from the discussion.

The Committee did not propose any additional risks

9. **Future Meetings**
9.1 Items to take to Board were agreed as:
   - Safeguarding Annual Report and Policy
   - College QIP and SAR
   - HE QIP and SAR

9.2 Items for the next meeting
The Committee reviewed the cycle of business for the meeting on 11 March 2024.
9.3 Date of future meetings:
   - Monday 11 March 2024
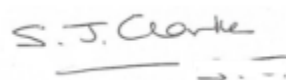   - Monday 24 June 2024

10. **Minutes/reports for information**
The following reports were **received and noted:**
10.1 Safeguarding Working Group minutes

10.2   EDI Working Group minutes
10.3   College EDI Characteristics
10.4   Advanced British Standard – letter from Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP

Signed by the Chair: S. J. Clarke

Dated: 11th March 2024