



Shaping your future

Notes of the Richard Huish College Strategy Meeting

Part II

Held at Taunton Rugby Club

On Friday 1 April 2011 12.00 midday

Action

Present:

Guy Adams	Chair	Present	Sue Popplewell	Staff Member	Present
Peter Avery	<i>Ex Officio</i> Member	Present	Oliver Price	Student Member	Apologies
Garry Charles	Member	Present	John Rudge	Member	Apologies
Tim Duffen	Vice Principal: Resources	Present	Jane Scott	Clerk to Corporation	Present
Jo Gill	Parent Member	Present	Rob Setchell	Staff Member	Apologies
Ann Helsby	Member	Present	Gill Turner	Member	Present
Harry Hodgkin	Parent Member	Apologies	Mary Tighe	Member	Apologies
Jill Jeffreys	Parent Member	Present	David Wood	Deputy Chair	Present
Hollie King	Member	Apologies	Jonathan Langdon	Member	Present
John Lockwood	Member	Present	Lucy Yarde	Student Member	Apologies
Dominic Lynch	Member	Present	Carole Melia	Director: Curriculum and Student Support	In attendance
John Abbott	Director: Curriculum and Quality	In attendance	Paul Smith	Director: Curriculum and Enrichment	In attendance
Martyn Owen	Director: Curriculum and Operations	In attendance	Ruth Walmsley	Personnel Director	In attendance
Paul Dampier	Director: Curriculum and Business Development	In attendance	Chris Brossard	Director of Marketing	In attendance
Marc Webb	Director of Finance	In attendance			

The meeting opened at 12.00 midday and was quorate throughout. The programme and papers for the meeting are appended to these notes. As the meeting was not a formal meeting of the Corporation with a formal agenda of items for consideration/decision, the following is a summary of the main discussion/action/decisions only.

The Principal and the Chair of Corporation welcomed governors and staff to the planning meeting. The Regional Director of the Association of Colleges had been invited to chair the meeting, bringing significant extra input to the meeting through his considerable knowledge of both the College and the sector generally, and also through the insight gained through his attendance at the January meeting.

1. Development Planning in the Big Society: how will the College Achieve its Development Planning Objectives in 2011 and Beyond?

In addition to the background papers for the meeting, the Principal made note of a number

of points in respect of the current position of the College in relation to recruitment/retention and achievement of students and the relationship with the funding which those students attract. The Principal also noted the considerable contribution which the income from Business and Professional Development activity provides to the College, and also the benefits of the proposed introduction of the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) for upper sixth students. The College already enjoys a strong reputation in respect of its 'A' level performance - the Alps performance table suggests 'a best in the West' position, with the College within the top 5% of schools and colleges nationally.

In order to maximise funding opportunities, the College is seeking to recruit 1880 students for 2011-12. This is set in the context that the campus would be unable to support a significant additional number of students above this level - the campus would reach saturation point at 1925 students, with insufficient classroom space.

2. Task Groups - Investigating the Options

The meeting considered the range of planning options associated with College activity included in the briefing paper for the meeting, with particular reference to how implementation of any option would impact on the nature of the College: allowing the College to work through the current financial difficulties and positioning the College for an economic upturn in due course. There was a range of views associated with any particular point, but an awareness of both negative and positive implications. The following makes brief summary of discussion only.

Closer collaboration with one or more colleges/merger

Despite the Government's desire to see colleges merge into larger organisations, members indicated little enthusiasm for merger in general, identifying only 'back room' savings as the impetus for any local merger. Closer collaboration with other colleges would present a more favourable set of circumstances than any imposed merger. Indeed, there is strong evidence indicating that the College is already working in collaboration with other colleges - Hereford and Darlington - and that there is potential to develop/increase such arrangements.

There is considerable potential for the College to investigate in respect of a range of 'back room' savings for a group of institutions in the geographic area of Somerset, in many ways replicating the services hitherto provided by the local authority.

Acquisition of an independent training provider

The College has already developed partnership arrangements with other training providers, and the meeting noted the positive potential of seeking to work with additional training providers. It would be critical in consideration of any arrangement that the College is assured of the quality of the potential partnership, whether it is complementary to existing activity, and the financial contribution it will make. It is understood that there is an immediate opportunity in respect of a local provider, but that it is critical to examine whether this or any other potential arrangement is an opportunity or a problem in the making before embarking on formalising the relationship.

Retain a focus on advanced level teaching and learning for 16-19 year-old full-time students, but increase entry requirements

Given that numbers of students and volume of study are critical to levels of funding, it was considered that the local pool of students is too small to impose higher level entry requirements and that such a move would be counter-productive. However, two-tier entry level could create a desirable set of circumstances for the College to promote its dual AS/A2 and AS/A2/Study Skills programme, but with potential negative connotations in respect of student perception of their study status. The impact of the introduction of the English Baccalaureate (EB) is not fully understood, with the potential for this to impact on the subjects/grades of students at entry to the College, as well as the choice of subject which any student makes. Any changes need to be carefully considered in the light of developing evidence.

The implications of a decrease in the study of a range of humanities subjects at EB level, and the addition of a modern foreign language cannot yet be quantified.

Remove the Provision of 'Workshop' time and Require Staff to Deliver Academic Support to Students on Top of Teaching Allocations

Members noted that information to hand does not underpin a full understanding of the relationship between the effectiveness and the style and content of workshop delivery, and that there should be further analysis of whether all types of workshop are equally effective. Whilst it was recognised that any demise of the current workshop system would be regrettable given that workshops are currently an essential ingredient of any individual student's study programme, their curtailment may be critical in achieving the financial savings required in respect of curriculum delivery. The College should examine the case for how non-classroom time can be optimally utilised, perhaps giving attention to a programme with focus on generic study skills rather than reinforcement/extension of lesson content. Creation of an additional AS/A2 programme with Study Skills will go some way to compensating for a decrease in workshop activity for that particular cohort of students. Similarly, the development of study skills required as part of the delivery associated with the EPQ qualification will also assist students in developing generic study skills. If basic study skills are included in provision of AS and EPQ study programmes, members noted their desire that some subject extension provision might also be maintained. Careful review of any change needs to be made in the light of achievement - not possible without some basic understanding of the current system of delivery.

Expand Evening and Weekend Provision to Make More Use of the Estate

Although there may be difficulties associated with improving/increasing use of the estate on a daily basis - with the College already working at capacity - the College must be proactive in seeking ways in which use of the estate can be optimised at other times. This would be particularly relevant in the case of vacation lettings which could be run in collaboration with local independent schools which have residential capacity to facilitate the viability of College lettings.

The College could reap significant benefit from its Highly Trusted Sponsor status in respect of recruitment of international students if it was able to significantly develop its campus accommodation. This is a matter for investigation through a number of avenues, including the potential for collaboration with Somerset College. There may also be merit in investigating if there are other partnerships which could benefit from College expertise and its HTS status.

The Enrolment of 14-16 Year Olds - for example AAT or Music Technology Courses in line with Recommendations in the Wolf Report on Vocational Education

There is significant merit in facilitating arrangements whereby students embark upon a vocational course in school, with the facility to then progress that qualification at the College. There is no reason why provision could not be introduced by the College at school level, with the opportunity to progress this work to a higher level at the College at the next stage. There was also some discussion of whether there is any merit in the College examining the potential of establishing a 'gifted and talented' academy for 14-16 students. The impact of the raising of the participation age in education is not yet understood, and this may be significant in terms of the courses young people wish to undertake - in turn affecting career/HE aspirations and what the College must offer by way of curriculum. All members of staff need to have a sound understanding of what the College offers in respect of vocational work, not have negative perceptions of the different levels of activity, and to increase their ability to be able to market a range of options presented to students in the marketing process, whether at interview or before/after.

The College must be proactive in ensuring that its information/advice/guidance processes underpin community respect for the institution, with young people automatically looking to the College to seek this impartial, high -standard guidance.

Review of the Mission Statement

In deliberating the value of the current mission statement, members noted that whilst it is fundamental to encapsulating what the College does and fundamental to the Corporation in setting out the educational character of the College, the statement is not used as a marketing tool. The value of the mission statement is that it is an essential check-tool against which any activity can immediately be assessed as to whether it fits the College profile.

Whilst there were a number of points raised in discussion, members noted that the inclusion of 'workforce development' in the statement was one of the strongest indicators of the breadth of activity which the College undertakes. Discussion about explicit mention of the target age range was less consensual, with some members debating whether it is a restriction or reinforcement of the core work of the College.

Guy Adams proposed that the current mission statement '*to be a centre of excellence in the South West by providing 16-19 year old students with high quality advanced level education, to prepare them for higher education and professional careers, and by contributing to workforce development in the region*' be retained for the coming period. This was seconded by Gill Turner and agreed *nem con*.

The Chair of Corporation thanked every member of the meeting for the active contribution which they had made, and noted that the Principal would be seeking to investigate the different opportunities identified by the meeting. The Corporation would be advised of progress in this respect over the coming weeks.

The meeting closed at 5.19 pm.

The minutes of the meeting was signed as a correct record

Chair.....

Date.....