

**HARROW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LEARNER VOICE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 14 MAY 2014**

1. PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 Welcome , Introductions & Committee Business

Welcome and introductions were made.

Whilst acknowledging the particular circumstances attributed to the delay of the papers for the meeting, for future meetings the Chair emphasised:

- To managers, the importance of timely, written reports to allow all participants to come to meetings sufficiently well-prepared to be able to have constructive and positive dialogues; and properly discharge their responsibilities; and
- For reports to be succinct and written in plain English so that all members are able to understand the key issues; and where accompanied by tables of data, for a brief analysis to be provided highlighting the key strategic points to help focus attention of the main issues and make best use of time in the meeting.

1.2 Attendance, & Apologies for Absence

Membership: Yvette Adu-Mante
Tracey Critchley
Tony Medhurst
Kanwal Munir
Antonio Weiss (Chair)

In Attendance: Simran Advani Student Representative
Pat Brown
Pat Carvalho
Jayne Chaplin (Clerk)
Chris Faux
Kevin Grindley
Lee Janaway
Eamon Keating Student Representative
Farah Khan Student Representative
Chloe McIntosh Student Council President
Steven Porter
Sue Wilson

1.3 Declarations of Interest

There were none.

1.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 March 2014 were confirmed as a correct record, and were signed by the Chair.

1.5 Matters Arising & Other Business

Feedback from Focus Groups (Minute 3.3)

Members were advised that the Head of Learner Services & Marketing would provide an update at the next meeting on the importance of progression, enrichment and careers information as part of a holistic package to students to equip them with the skills necessary for moving into employment.

2 THE LEARNER VOICE: COLLEGE FEEDBACK

3.1 Outcomes from the QDP Survey

A report was presented outlining the main points arising from the QDP Survey.

The report highlights were summarised, advising that:

- 3.1.1 Whilst the response rate was lower than recent years, with a 46% response in contrast with that of previous years which had been as high as 70%, it was considered that it remained representative of learner views. Noting the response rate the feasibility of survey fatigue was explored.
- 3.1.2 The apparent decline in satisfaction rates with many ratings showing an inexplicable drop compared with the rates reported in 2012/13
- 3.1.3 19+ students were more satisfied than 16-18 with students on the lower level courses showing greater satisfaction levels; and White British and a few BME groups reported to be significantly less satisfied.

There was particular consideration of:

- 3.1.4 The reasons attributed to the decline in the survey response rate noting that the only obvious difference on previous years appeared to be that the College no longer used an external organisation to process the survey.
- 3.1.5 The administration of the survey reporting that an investigation into the possibility of a technical fault resulting in a failure to capture all responses currently suggested this not to be the case. In response to questioning however, the student representatives cited individual instances where this had occurred and it was agreed that this would be reviewed further to ensure no recurrence in future surveys.
- 3.1.6 The survey responses:
 - Overall, which it was noted at first sight appeared inexplicable and not reflected by other sources of information or feedback elsewhere, including the experience of the student representatives present. Members were advised that further work was to be undertaken with focus groups comprising those groups that had expressed dissatisfaction in order to ascertain the nature of any particular issues with the findings then to be reported back to the Committee at its next meeting.

- In particular the ratings by course level noting that in general, satisfaction rates rated highest at the lowest levels of course and appeared to decline as the course level increased. Advising members that level 3 learners in particular appeared to be less satisfied, in response to questioning it was reported that this was to be the subject of further investigation.
- Highlighting improvement in the ratings for questions concerning maths and English which if representative, were welcomed in the context of the national agenda to focus on improvements in English and maths; and the question related to bullying. Observing the potential for a misunderstanding of the question attributed to the particular wording of the question, as the rating appeared to be in contrast with other sources of information and feedback elsewhere, it was agreed to pick this up in discussion elsewhere on the agenda (Minutes 2.2 and 3.1 refer).

Following discussion, the report was noted.

2.2 Departmental Responses to the QDP Survey

Reports were provided from each of the Heads of Departments on the feedback from the QDP Survey, focussing on the top and bottom three responses in each department.

After summarising the feedback, there was a general discussion with Managers and the Committee's student representatives of the findings; and the extent to which this correlated with their experiences.

After noting those areas of commonality in the nature of the issues being raised and the action to be taken, there was discussion of more specific issues highlighted elsewhere on the agenda (Minute 2.1 refers), particularly the specific responses at College level to the Survey question concerning bullying. Confirming that similarly nothing had been reported at departmental level, members were advised that the Survey appeared to highlight instances that were not being raised formally through the established College procedures. In this context and noting concern expressed by management at the findings, there was discussion:

- 2.2.1 Of the findings with the student representatives, acknowledging the potential misunderstanding of the survey question and observing a further potential lack of awareness of the reporting arrangements already in place.
- 2.2.2 The further work at department undertaken and planned in response to those specific instances highlighted in Hair & Beauty and in Foundation Learning & Skills the Bullying Amnesty Week scheduled to take place in June.

Requesting for the student representatives to be involved in discussions to assist in raising awareness, it was agreed that an update would be provided to the Committee at its autumn term meeting.

After thanking all parties for their respective contributions, the reports were noted.

3 THE LEARNER VOICE: STUDENT FEEDBACK

3.1 Report from the Student Members

Reporting on the Student Council Meeting that had recently taken place, there was consideration of the key items raised:

- 3.1.1 Highlighting the need for better notice of lesson cancellations and for extended library opening hours during exam periods and discussion of the impact on individual attendance records of learners taking home study leave in preparation for exams. Further review highlighted the varied nature of the perceived benefits of group revision sessions, attributed to the fact that revision topics did not necessarily cover the areas of most value to individual learners; in contrast with the greater value placed on exam preparation sessions. Acknowledging the need for a more differentiated approach it was agreed that this would be reviewed further by management.
- 3.1.2 Noting the continuing, limited food offer despite feedback, the request for the introduction of cash-less systems the need for automatic doors to the Austen Building to facilitate access for learners with limited mobility.
- 3.1.3 With Management expressing concern about the College complaints system and learners' perceptions of bias towards teachers. The Head of Quality & Learning invited further discussion outside of the meeting to follow up the matter.
- 3.1.4 Reviewing with the student members the concerns about security expressed with learners citing instances of non-College students moving unchallenged about the College estate, particularly at Harrow Weald. Acknowledging that there had been no security issues reported and noting the particular access challenges of the sites, in the event of any further concerns management re-iterate the importance of and the need for these to be raised either with security staff directly or lecturers or managers.

Thanking the student members, the report was noted.

4 ANY OTHER BUSINESS & MEETING EVALUATION

4.1 Any Other Business

None reported.

4.2 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 10 December 2014 – tbc

4.3 Meeting Evaluation

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and their participation in what had been an interesting and informative meeting.

Members completed the meeting evaluation forms and the meeting closed.