



**Minutes of the Employer & Skills Committee held on Thursday
29 April 2010 at 5.00pm in Room 3F099 York College**

Present: Jon Arundel
Alison Birkinshaw
David Johnson
Bill Woolley

In Attendance: Richard Hinde, Clerk to the Governing Body
Louise Lawrence-Crockford, Assistant Principal Employer
Engagement
John Short, Chair of York College Governing Body

The meeting started at 5.10pm.

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10.09 Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest
Apologies were received from Danny Morgan, Shaun Watts and David Tabron.

10.10 Minutes of Meeting held on 21 January 2010
The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2010 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

10.11 Matters Arising
a) Action Summary Sheet
It was noted that all issues had either been actioned or were in progress. It was reported that no significant progress had been made with the potential cycle maintenance apprenticeship, chiefly because there had been significant growth in Motor Vehicle and this left limited capacity in the Division for any new provision. It was more likely that this would be re-visited in 2011/12. Some market research had already been carried out to try to ascertain the level of potential demand.

The "mystery shopper" exercise was in progress in relation to the College's "Employers@York" brochure, and improvements had been made to the employer elements of the College's website.

A draft copy of the College's newsletter for employers was circulated, and it was noted that the issue of corporate colours for the College was currently under discussion.

(Jon Arundel joined the meeting at 5.20pm.)

Members considered the format of the draft newsletter and recommended that the ordering of the pages should be changed. It was also suggested that the College's contact number and email

address should feature at the top of each page, and that more emphasis should be placed on the feature about the College's 98% success rate as a "good news" story.

It was resolved that the College's draft newsletter should be re-designed to reflect Members' comments.

APEE

b) Any Other Matters

None.

(It was agreed to take agenda item 8 out of order, and that the other agenda items would be deferred and updated for presentation at the next meeting of the Committee).

10.12 Discussion Paper on Employer & Skills Committee

The Principal presented her report describing the current position regarding the strategic direction given to the College's work with employers and summarising the current range of employer engagement activities promoted by the College. The report then made recommendations as to the way employer engagement might be strengthened and given further strategic direction through a review of the membership and areas of focus of the Committee. The report recommended that membership of the Committee should be reviewed so that membership was representative of the key employers in the locality. Debate also took place in relation to the way Committee members might provide strategic direction to the employer work of the College.

It was acknowledged that concern existed that the College/ Committee did not make best use of the expertise of the Committee's existing members, and also that the current membership did not include representatives from other key business areas within York and the surrounding area. It was also felt that to make the Committee meetings more worthwhile, it would be necessary to limit the amount of information being presented by the College, to allow more time for more focussed discussion/ input from members themselves.

It was suggested that one solution could be to maintain a streamlined executive group (similar to the existing Committee) and then to organise a series of specialist meetings each focussing on key sectors to which key players from those sectors would be invited.

It was noted that there were already two forums within York with which the City Of York Council ("the Council") already had dealings. These were the Economic Partnership Board and the Business Forum. It was observed that the Council had not been pro-active in promoting the College at these forums nor in informing the College what employers at these forums had to say. It was also noted that Leeds City region had an Employer and Skills Group which was

Action

chaired by John Yeomans who himself had strong links with York. It was queried whether the College should do more to strengthen its links to this body. It was noted, however, that this Group was employer-focussed and that it had expressly determined that it did not want any representation from any training providers as part of its membership. It was queried whether the Skills Funding Agency was a member of this Group.

**Chair of
Governing
Body**

Reference was also made to the European Investment Fund and it was queried whether the College was maximising the potential in this regard. It was explained that the Assistant Principal Employer Engagement already participated with this body, and further explanation of what that involvement entailed was also provided. It was also explained that money had already been earmarked through Yorkshire Forward to engage with business in order to help increase the skills level of unemployed and deprived individuals within the area. This was operated through Higher York and the College was involved in this scheme.

It was queried whether the College's facilities could be used by other organisations for meetings and conferences to help try and promote the College to others. However, it was explained that it was a question of capacity, and that the College was already being fully utilised at the times when most such events would be being held.

The Principal stated that there appeared to be two key issues. First, how the College engaged with employers in terms of promoting itself and informing employers what it had to offer. Second, how the College engaged with employers in terms of being given a strategic steer as to what the College should be doing for employers. It was acknowledged that it was crucial to first identify the needs of employers.

It was observed that the Council was to receive funding from Yorkshire Forward to undertake work to ascertain from businesses what their needs entailed including requirements for specific skills. The funding would last initially for three years with a possibility of renewal after that. It was acknowledged that this was the very information that the College required and queried whether the College might be able to make use of the information gained by the Council during this process. It was also noted that the Council would want to be in a position to inform businesses and employers about the College and what it had to offer for them. It was acknowledged that one difficulty was keeping up to date with employers' changing needs and how best this could be achieved.

Members agreed that the membership of the Committee should be augmented to ensure that appropriate representatives came to the Committee's meetings. Members also felt that the frequency of

Committee meetings should be reduced from four to three meetings a year. It was queried whether such meetings should start with an “executive” meeting followed by a second focussed section to which more employers would be invited.

Members felt that there were two key employer engagement issues to be addressed. The issue of how well the College’s employer engagement provision was going; and the more strategic issue of how well the College was meeting the needs of employers. It was queried whether these two roles could or should be separated. It was suggested that the monitoring of performance could become the responsibility of the Quality & Curriculum Committee, in the same way that that Committee monitored the performance of other College areas. The meetings of the Employer & Skills Committee could then begin with a top line summary of strategy and developments presented by the Assistant Principal Employer Engagement followed by in-depth employer participation. It was felt that employers would be more inclined to attend if the agendas made clear that they would be making decisions on future policy/developments rather than merely receiving reports for information. It was stressed that these meetings would be no substitute for employer engagement itself, but rather were to determine the strategy for employer engagement at the College.

It was acknowledged that there were a number of emerging industries, such as green technologies, that the College knew little about. It was felt that it would be good to secure representation on the Committee from those industries so that the College could gain a better insight in to opportunities that might exist. It was also felt important to ensure that there was sufficient representation at the appropriate level of other established sectors that the College already serviced.

(David Johnson left the meeting at 6.20pm and Alison Birkinshaw agreed to act as Chair for the remainder of the meeting.)

Members resolved that the following proposal be developed for further consideration at the next meeting of the Committee, with the intention of making a formal recommendation for approval at the July 2010 Governing Body meeting:

Principal/
APEE

- ***The number of Committee meetings to be reduced to three per year.***
- ***The key responsibility for monitoring the performance/ quality of the College’s employer engagement provision to be transferred to the Quality & Curriculum Committee (subject to presenting a summary overview at each Employer & Skills Committee together with a summary overview of other issues of note).***
- ***To identify around twelve key employers from key sectors within York and the surrounding area with whom***

the College should seek to strengthen its links.

- *To aim for the College to strengthen its links with other relevant key bodies and organisations, regularly reviewing opportunities to engage with employers.*
- *To convene Committee meetings with specific themes for consideration, discussion and decision by members.*

10.13 Any Other Business

None.

10.14 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 17 June 2010 at 5.00pm.

The meeting ended at 6.30pm.

Signed (Chair):.....

Name:.....

Date:.....