

Learner Council Forum

**Minutes of the Learner Council Forum held on
25 March 2021 4pm
via Zoom**

Chair: Jon Willcox – SU Vice President (Gravesend) – Public Services
Members: Deputy Executive Principal (Teaching, Learning and Improvement) –
Rhiannon Hughes (“RH”)
Student Engagement Officer – Trevor Fox (“TF”)
Teaching and Learning Improvement Partner – Sue Barry (“SB”)

**Student Union
Representatives** Elizabeth Parker – SU President - Hair
Jessica Seamons – Miskin
Lily Read – Miskin
Jamie Heslelden – Catering
Belle Carrad – Early Years
Harry Stebbeds – Sport
Georgia Peeke – Beauty

College Governors: Keith Norman (KN) (apologies given)
David Martin (DM)

1.	Introductions Introductions were made by all members of the Learner Council Forum.	Action By
2.	Feedback on points from the last meeting Trevor Fox fed back on the points raised from the previous meeting (see below Appendix 2).	
3.	Summary of points raised (full details attached – Appendix 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate charities who help students to purchase their own IT devices. Forward details of Currys loans or other loans for low-income families to Bursary staff. Discuss with Lilly and Jessica what their vision of healthy food entails. Speak to RF to investigate the possibility in the future to add a salad bar. Look into smaller portions to make hot meals a bit cheaper. It was reported that the App for the Bus did not work. RH to speak to SH to investigate. Football pitches security and maintenance to be reviewed. 	SB TF TF RH/SH Estates
4.	Close of Meeting Learners, staff and Governors were thanked for their attendance and valuable contributions. RH stated that the students’ contribution was very important to the College as we want the students to have the best experience possible during their time here. The meeting finished at 5.00 pm.	

Appendix 1		
Points raised	Suggested solutions	SLT response
Due to the Covid situation there are not many places to sit in between classes and breaks on the Dartford Campus. Students would like to have more benches and seating spread out around the site so they can sit safely in the fresh air. Possibly some areas could be covered in case of adverse weather	Place benches around all the blocks on the Dartford campus, some areas will need shelters in case the weather is bad.	25 Picnic Benches purchased for Dartford and some more for Gravesend. With regards to the sheltered areas, this will require a Capital bid so will take a bit longer. We will begin to get quotes and investigate temporary solutions.
The gym equipment used by public services at the Gravesend Campus is old and outdated and needs to be improved. As well as this the room has no ventilation and due to COVID-19 would require this when we use it. There is no other sport/fitness provision at Gravesend other than the gym.	Updated equipment purchased to improve our studies, and safety measures put in place to keep us safe.	Gym equipment is currently being reviewed. A Capital bid will be required. The building is designed so that Heating, Ventilation and air conditioning in CR and S Block are as effective as an open door or window. This is therefore Covid safe.
Would the College consider looking at what other educational establishments offer in the terms of a loaned Mini Laptop or tablet to assist with the IT issues faced, not only in lockdown but also when in College.	Students issued with a device that is their responsibility throughout their time at College and returned when they leave. This would allow students not to have the issue of not being able to find or use a PC, as well as having a device to use if lockdown occurs.	The college has loaned many laptops, devices and dongles out to students during lockdown. It would not be possible to purchase a device for every student due to the volume of learners at the college (6000). Students are encouraged to bring their own devices and use the college Wifi. The College managed to secure over 500 laptops from the Government, and these have been handed out to students during lockdown and at present have not been asked to be returned so that students can carry on with their online studies. The IT strategy is currently being re-written which is due by next summer this will set out the Colleges IT investment priorities. Sean McCormick (SMC) and Rhiannon Hughes (RH) have investigated company schemes to aid students to purchase IT devices but so far, the APR % after 4 months is high. Local Councils have schemes in place for low-income families, but learners would need to investigate these specifically with their Council. Trevor Fox will pass information to Bursaries and Sue Barry (SB) will investigate any charities that are also supporting students in

		purchasing IT devices for education purposes. A poll was taken of the seven students present, and all seven had a device at home.
Points raised	Suggested solutions	SLT response
Students across both campuses are finding the increased cost of food unaffordable within the College. Dartford students especially have no other options at breaks due to distance to reach shops for a cheaper deal.	More affordable options to be made available to students, who are not on Free School Meals. Some don't work and cannot afford to buy food every day they are in due to cost. Maybe look at cheaper brands or meal deals that compare with what can be purchased outside the College.	Both refectories are subsidised. Food costs have been rising so this has to be taken into account. The refectories are not profit making. The more choice on the menu could raise costs. TF to contact Lilly and Jessica to discuss more ideas around healthy food options and what students would consider a healthy lunch. TF to explore the possibility of a salad bar with Rob Fitzgerald (RF) (when Covid restrictions allow). It was also raised that perhaps the hot food option could be decreased in portion size so that it could match the less healthy option of nuggets and chips.
The Shuttlebus is often overcrowded, and students are not following the rules to wear facemasks on the services being run. Also, a later bus for students here later would be helpful. An updated timetable or app to track buses would also help	Staff could monitor the buses more regularly to ensure social distancing and people following the rules. Could there possibly be more buses run at peak times to stop the overcrowding. Maybe ask a college course to design the app for use.	Capacity has been reduced and we have added another bus. We piloted a later bus but there were very few people using it after 6.30pm. With regards to face masks being worn, some people will be exempt. We can only advise, and we are not able to challenge why face coverings are not being worn or discipline students. We have changed the markers to encourage spreading out and a cartoon video has been signed off by RH today so this will be broadcast on the screens around the college and via tutors. This informs students about the colleges approach to the Covid safety measures in place. There is an existing Bus app in place. Steve Humphries (SH) will investigate why this is not working.
Students feel that the Football pitches at Dartford are not kept to the best standard that they should be. They are very lumpy in places as well as there being bald spots across the pitches. In addition to this they are often not cut for a long time and can be left weeks in-between cutting.	Please can the College start to look at the pitches as a useful resource and be cared for better with a planned schedule for maintenance and repair.	This is a recurring topic. Contractors are in place to manage the football pitches. There is a schedule of maintenance with regular mowing and repair work done. It is often hard to repair the pitches when they are used so this has to be done during periods when the pitches are not being used. Estates department to speak to the contractors to investigate. We will also look at the security of the pitches as there have been reports of unauthorised use. RH will liaise with the Sports leaders as to options to further improve the pitch quality.

Feedback on points from Spring 2020 (Appendix 2)

Course Area	Question for Learner Council	SLT Response
Sports Academy	Can something be done to improve the football pitches?	The football pitches are only used by college students, despite numerous requests we do not let external groups hire them in order to keep them in good condition. Training takes place on the training pitch and not on the match pitch in order to preserve the condition. The contractors mow the grass once per week at present. In the height of the growing season this is sometimes not enough. We will liaise with the contractors so that if the contractors alert the team to their schedule, the college will move the posts off the pitches rather than the contractors mowing around them as they leave a long patch of grass when they mow. We will also ask about mowing the grass more regularly but again, this needs to be negotiated with the contractors and costs reviewed.
T&T	The laptops are not good at all and we need to get them replaced. More decent laptops to be made available for support at home. Especially those that do not have the technical requirements. Home learning a bit more patience and understanding to the individual needs.	<p>These Classmate devices are tablets (not laptops) designed for web Office 365 and Internet and work reasonably well if used for this basic purpose. If used for other applications, they will be slow. IT Department works with the area managers to provide equipment that is affordable and sustainable. Other PC rooms with more powerful PC's are available to be timetabled in the same building. IT will refresh these devices over the summer and label them for web use only.</p> <p>The College does not have facilities at present for devices to be loaned to students routinely for home although we have supported a significant number of learners during the Lockdown with a device as they are not needed inside the college at present during Lockdown.</p> <p>The lead Assistant Principal for the area is reviewing whether it is possible for a capital bid to gain higher specification machines to do activities beyond the web related activities, but we will not have confirmation of this until July.</p>
Creative Media	1: The computers in media are not the best. They crash and do not save they could all be updated. 2: The learners would like that 'hats being banned rule' looked at especially when walking around campus.	<p>1. We did upgrade some of the Macs in Media to help with tasks like rendering this year. Because rendering is a resource hungry exercise, two special heavy duty Macs were provided off the network for this purpose. The College continually works with the area to review and purchase appropriate equipment, however, must be affordable.</p> <p>2. The Campus Expectations are to be reviewed at the end of the academic year via the Assistant Principals' and T&L Forums to discuss more broadly the impact they have had on learner behaviour over the past 12 months. Currently, hats are allowed whilst walking around campus but not in teaching spaces.</p>

Course Area	Question for Learner Council	SLT Response
Carpentry	Please can we have Air Con in the Carpentry workshop, as it does get warm in there	The installation and running of a full aircon system which could operate in such a large area is prohibitively costly and bad for the environment. We will work with technicians and Estates to try and alleviate the issue through ventilation and limiting peak use to the cooler parts of the day in Summer. For the few particularly hot days, where this becomes a major issue, it will be better to hire spot coolers and additional ventilation when this becomes necessary.
Construction	Although new college canteen at Gravesend is good, there is very little area to sit in poor or bad weather.	We have been discussing with the Student Union the possibility of opening up a supervised student zone at the Gravesend campus. There will be a cost to the College, and a need to ensure that learners treat the area with respect and keep it clean and tidy. In order to justify the cost and become confident that behaviour and tidiness will be acceptable, we agreed that the facility would be offered as a reward to students for their engagement in a variety of College projects around campus tidiness, care for the environment, and socially responsible behaviour. A proposal for how the reward system will operate, and target date for the zone to be available, is to be jointly developed between the VP Gravesend and the SU ready for roll out in September. There is clearly going to be some uncertainty as to how such a zone would operate given the current COVID situation, but we are committed to planning for a facility to be available in the medium term as students are willing to play their part and demonstrate their commitment to making it work.
Construction	Gravesend canteen needs to be open though out the day with more hot food, some group have no choice and no hot food in their break times.	Just prior to Lockdown, hot food had been available either on the Coffee Bar (grab and go) from 8.00am until 1.00pm, or on the Hot Food Counter between 12.00pm and 1.45pm. The overall opening hours need to be restricted because the overall takings do not cover our staff costs. We are aware that there may be limited choice for students who arrive after English or maths sessions finishing at 1.30pm, and are planning to experiment with a range of opening and closing times which may help e.g. (8.15am to 2.00pm) to see on which days, and on which counters there is sufficient demand to justify the staff required to provide the service. We will also work with curriculum to ensure that timetabling of classes is aligned as best as possible to the Canteen opening hours to ensure an even spread of demand, and therefore better choice throughout the sittings.

Course Area	Question for Learner Council	SLT Response
Public Services	<p>We need a student zone at Gravesend.</p> <p>Restrooms in C Block at Gravesend and in S Block in Dartford are not always in the best state of repair.</p> <p>The water point in S Block at Dartford has not worked all year.</p>	<p>Please see notes above regarding student zone at Gravesend.</p> <p>The toilets in C and S Blocks are cleaned daily. We do try to keep these in a good condition and have refreshed toilets where possible. S Block is repainted annually however, due to ongoing vandalism it is hard to keep these toilets in a condition that we would like and would ask that students help in notifying us when they witness ill-use of the facilities causing the damage to the toilets.</p> <p>There has been an issue with poor behaviours in the downstairs boys' toilet/changing room in S block. I We have discussed with Estates possible solutions of reducing the size of the area to try and prevent the opportunity to spoil the facilities for others. We have also requested an extra clean at the end of the day before the external users come in. This is a very busy area, sadly with poor toilet etiquette employed.</p> <p>The water point usually works but it leaks, this has been reported to Estates for repair. This is a very busy water point, directly outside the Sports Hall and adjacent to reception so we appreciate it gets much use throughout the day.</p>
Early Years	Can we have more seating areas in other parts of college to spend break times	<p>We will provide some additional benches outside to accommodate the use of more outdoor space seating. This should ensure that learners continue to respect that there should not be eating in corridors.</p> <p>Also see above re introduction of a student zone at Gravesend.</p>

Key

Gravesend	
Dartford	
Both	