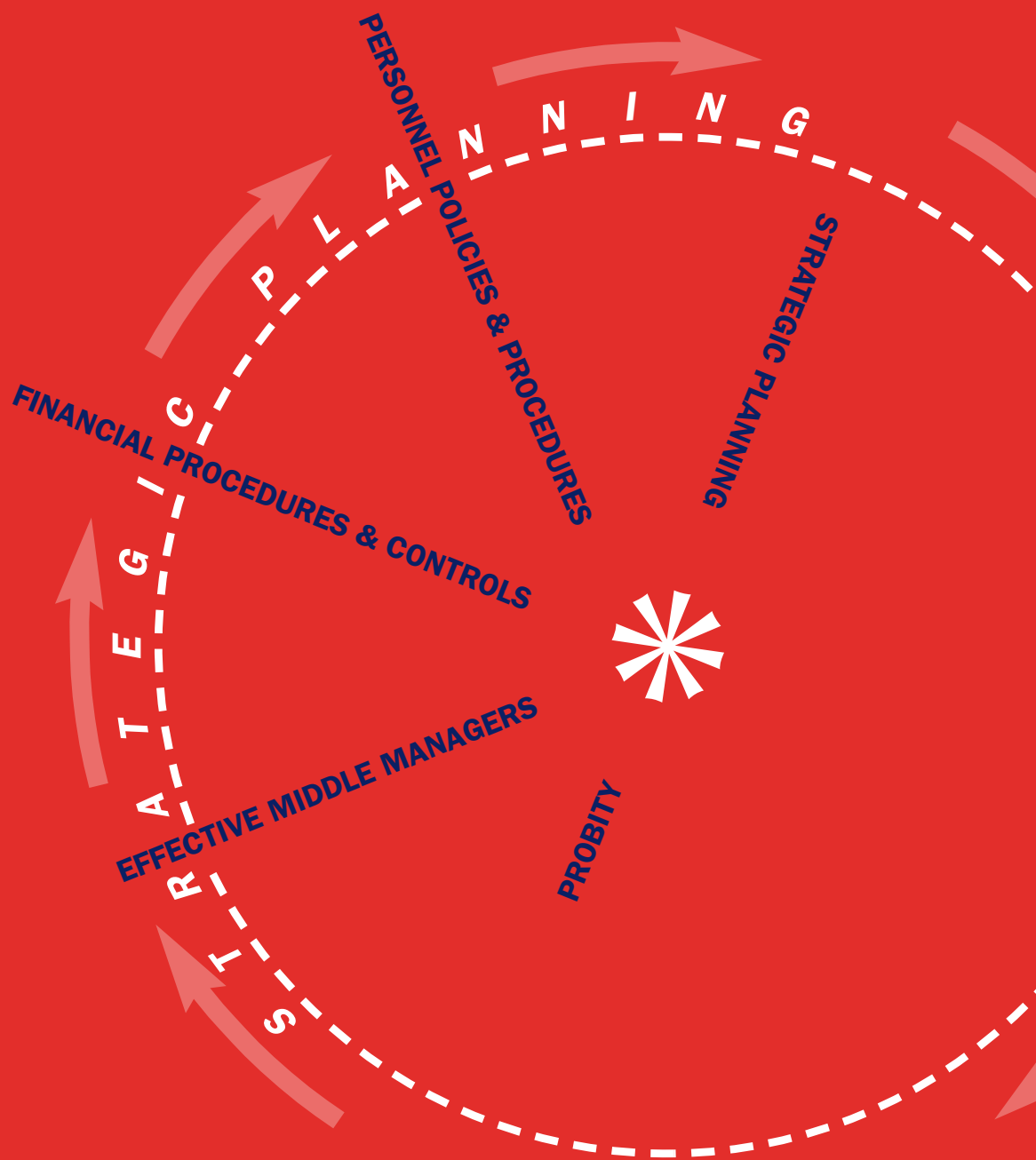


good governance & management at Thanet College



strategic planning

INTRODUCTION

The FEFC Inspection of Thanet College in May 1998 assessed College Governance and Management as Grade 1 outstanding provision, which has many strengths and few weaknesses.

The College has been successful in bidding for resources under Strand 4 of the Standards Fund to develop this information pack as a contribution to sharing 'good practice' with other further education colleges in Kent. We are pleased to take this opportunity.

Our aim has been to produce material which conveys the overall nature and character of the approach which we follow at Thanet College without in any sense wishing to produce an A to Z guide. Our intention has been to make the pack useful, practical and supportive of colleagues in Kent and other colleges who believe there is a need to review their approach to aspects of management and governance.

The units in this pack cover the following governance and management issues:

- Strategic Planning
- Personnel Policies and Procedures
- Financial Procedures and Controls
- Probity
- Effective Middle Managers

COMMENTARY OF THE THANET COLLEGE INSPECTION TEAM

1) In relation to the role of governors in strategic planning:-

'Governors are knowledgeable about the challenges which the College faces. They are clear about the mission of the College and ensure through their activities that this vision is translated into a continuously improving response to the education and training needs of the community.

Governors are committed to the College, they understand their role of stewardship and observe the boundary between governance and management.

Governors are actively reviewing the College's strategic direction through a well-planned consultation exercise both within the College and involving existing and potential partners. The Governors' Strategic Committee, which oversees the planning process, has been in existence for some years. Inspectors are agreed this is a strength. There has been training for governors, especially through presentations from curriculum managers, to enable them to understand more fully the issues of strategic



planning and the needs of teaching divisions. From time to time, there are also briefing papers for governors on current issues and on FEFC or government policy'

2) In relation to the management of strategic planning:-

'The College's strategic planning process is informed by widely based research. Inspectors agreed with the College's assessment that strategic planning is strength. Section and division plans are produced to a common format and brought together by senior managers. Drafts are considered by the corporation's strategic committee before the plan is submitted to the corporation for approval. Operational targets are set at section, division and college level and these form the basis of regular monitoring throughout the year by managers and the corporation'.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Our approach to Strategic Planning is set within a framework which will:

- meet the needs of the local community who are defined as school leavers, adults, employers, international students
- improve student achievement
- improve student retention

CORE PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THANET COLLEGE

- The pivotal role of strategic planning in supporting the direction and development of the College.
- Clarity in the definition of the strategic aims of the College which are clear and unambiguous.
- The accountabilities and responsibilities of key members of the college community, in particular governors, the Senior Management Team and middle managers for the delivery of the Strategic Plan.
- The value placed upon performance target setting throughout the College at corporate, divisional and section level ensuring clear and strong linkage with strategic planning.
- The use made by the College of regular review, measurement and evaluation enabling it to build upon its strengths and address those areas in need of development.
- The need for strategic planning to be informed by the needs of the community we serve and the wider local and national context in which the College operates.
- The strategic planning role has to be underpinned by clearly specified and well-



managed Management Information Systems and effective communication throughout the College.

KEY FEATURES OF THE THANET COLLEGE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

- **Consultation with key stakeholders relating to the aims of the College**

The College exists to meet and serve the needs of the local community. We believe it is vital for the community to view the College in a positive light and as a place where their needs and views are valued highly. Consultation provides an opportunity for partnerships to be developed and consolidated.

- **Translating aims into an operational setting (Actions and Performance Targets)**

The strategic aims provide the context for strategic planning (see page 2 of the Strategic Plan). Each strategic aim is translated into the necessary actions and performance targets which we use to establish a basis for review and evaluation. Each action and target is written in a way which is clear and in which achievement is measurable. Managers are held accountable for individual performance targets relating to the Strategic Plan.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation**

A cascade model is used within a common framework. The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) structure defines the performance indicators to be used as measures of achievement. This enables specific targets, actions and milestones to be allocated to divisions or sections together with an individual lead responsibility. The outcomes of the AOP are then monitored and reported upon regularly through the Senior Management Team and on to the appropriate committees of governors. The Strategic Committee reviews the AOP against the Strategic Plan and presents a report of its findings to the full Governing Body.

- **The timeframe of the Strategic Plan**

Perhaps unusually our strategic planning enables us to take a nine year view. This reflects the appreciation of the nature of change in our 'operating climate' and the vital need to integrate short to medium term planning with a longer-term perspective to support our decision-making. The Strategic Plan is based upon academic years and is structured in three phases, each of three years' duration.

- **Market Research**

Significant use is made of market research by reference to national data and by application of customised techniques which provide useful contextual information and



customer surveys. Annual Local Marketing Intelligence (LMI) is used to inform strategic planning and is shared widely within the College.

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

- **Governing Body**
Reviews strategic aims and approves strategic planning process/timetable. Considers the findings of the work of the Strategic Committee.
- **Strategic Committee of Governors**
Reviews the Strategic Plan annually through the annual report process and reports findings to the full governing body. Ensures there is integration of the Strategic Plan with the work of other committees of governors, helped by common membership of committees in particular Quality Standards, Finance, and Personnel.
- **Principal**
Prepares the draft Strategic Plan supported by the Senior Management Team reflecting the contribution of governors and staff. Meets a number of external stakeholders with the Chair of Governors to discuss the draft College Strategic Plan and to inform the final plan. Annually provides a review report of the College strategy to the Strategic Committee of Governors. Ensures clear communication in place for disseminating the College Strategic Plan to staff and other stakeholders. Oversees the College operational/business plans for each division of the College.
- **Senior Managers**
Prepare contribution of their division to the Strategic Plan to a common agreed framework. Review and report on the operation of the Strategic Plan at divisional level. Lead responsibility for Divisional Operational Plan.
- **Middle Managers**
Prepare contribution of their section to the Strategic Plan in consultation with their colleagues to a common agreed framework. Review and report on the operation of the Strategic Plan at section level.

TYPICAL TIMETABLE FOR THE PRODUCTION AND UPDATING OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

- Early November – Strategic Committee develops draft framework, criteria and the process for involvement of stakeholders.



- Late November – Governing Body approves the recommendations of the Strategic Committee.
- January/February – middle and senior managers prepare input to the Strategic Plan in consultation with their section staff.
- Late February – draft section plans developed for integration into the draft Strategic Plan.
- Spring/Early Summer – Principal and Chairman of Governors meet a number of external stakeholders to consult about the Strategic Plan including local MPs, Leader and Chief Executive of Thanet District Council, Board Members of Thanet Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- June – Strategic Committee considers update report from Principal and identifies further action/change to be reflected in the Plan.
- September – Strategic Committee identifies issues for other committees to address related to their areas of responsibility.
- October/November – Finance Committee and Personnel Committee agree those elements of the Plan relating to their areas of responsibility.
- Late November – Governing Body agrees the College's nine year Strategic Plan.
- Following September – review outcomes and modify actions and targets as necessary.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Thanet College Strategic Plan 1998-2008

We would be willing to share other relevant information/documentation on request.

YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS PACK

Our commitment is to respond to colleges who may wish to pursue an interest with us in using any of our ideas or information.

We are continually reviewing and modifying our management and governance capability in the clear recognition of its value in achieving better outcomes in College performance and effectiveness. Should you wish to comment upon the information contained in the pack we would be pleased to hear from you. Contact either Bryan Mitchell, project co-ordinator, or Teresa Fitzgerald on 01843 605000 or Email: principal@thanet.ac.uk

