

RICHMOND AND HILLCROFT ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MINUTES

of the meeting of the Board of Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College held at 6.00 pm on Thursday 12th December 2019 at Ashby, Hillcroft.

- Present: Ms Louise Fluker, Chair
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal
Prof. Andrew George, Quality & Standards Committee Chair (via phone)
Ms Jane O'Shea, Co-Vice Chair
Ms Farah Rachlin
Ms Lisa Sharpe
Mr Graham Tharp
Mr Nigel Ware, Finance & Resources Committee Chair
Prof. Linda Jones
Ms Helen Darracott
- In attendance: Ms Gaynor Bray, Vice Principal, Teaching & Learning (VP, T&L)
Ms Jackie Miles, Head of Finance
Ms Karen Adriaanse, Governance Consultant (item 12) (via phone)
Ms Sarah Johnson, Minute Taker

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies from Mr Neil Wallbank, Mr Richard Brewster and Mr Mark Albrow. Andrew George was present via phone and Karen Adriaanse joined via phone for item 12 of the agenda. Jackie Miles was present in place of Neil Wallbank, Director of Finance & Resources.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 3 October 2019

The Board approved the minutes of the Board meeting held on 3rd October 2019 as an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

The Principal highlighted management's recommendation for confidential items. The Board approved the redactions from the previous minutes.

There were no matters arising that were not covered on the agenda.

4. MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES

a) Quality & Standards Committee (7 November 2019)

Andrew George commended the minutes and the work on the SAR.

In response to Linda Jones' query whether the learning walks (direct observation of teaching and learning) would only be for members of the committee or for all governors, Andrew George explained that all Governors would be asked to attend particular lessons with objectives to be achieved, details of which would be circulated for discussion at the feedback session in March.

The Board noted the Minutes of the Quality & Standards Committee.

b) Search & Governance Committee (13 November 2019)

On page 4, 'Reflection of the self-assessment process', was suggested by Nigel Ware to be amended to, 'Reflection on the self-assessment process'.

The Board noted the Minutes of the Search & Governance Committee.

- c) Finance and Resources Committee (21 November 2019) and the Joint Audit and Finance & Resources Committee (28 November 2019)

The Board noted the Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee and the Joint Audit and Finance & Resources Committee.

Helen Darracott joined the meeting.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

a) Principal's Report – December 2019

The Principal reported that there had been discussions of the appropriateness, rationale and schedule for DFE's review of residential funding. However, little progress had been made. While stating that there was no schedule, the DFE had insisted that the first stage be completed in December. They had wished to visit the College the week starting 16 December to gather information for five academic years and funding streams but declined to postpone the visit to January and would continue the review with only the information from other colleges. RHACC would still be included in the feedback. The Principal would respond thanking them and reiterating that she would be happy to meet in January and would provide appropriate information via email.

The Principal had recently met the other residential colleges, but it had not been possible to organise a joint approach. The other colleges had already submitted information to the DfE.

The Principal stated that for the first time the DfE appeared to be asking how learners were assessed as needing high cost, residential learning. To date it had been sufficient that the provision was able to meet learner needs.

Andrew George asked whether there could be anything in other colleges' responses to DFE that could negatively impact RHACC by association. The Principal noted that other colleges paid residential monthly allowances to learners from the hardship bursary. Linda Jones stated that Hillcroft had never done that. She agreed that the College should produce a report of how it used the residential funding.

Nigel Ware asked when the DFE would be giving feedback. The Principal stated that there was no date yet.

The Board agreed that the strategy meeting should be on 7 February 2020.

The Board noted the Principal's Report.

7. RISK REGISTER AND ACTION PLAN

a) Risk Register 2019/20 – Autumn term update

The Principal reported that the Risk Register reflected additions and deletions proposed by the Finance and Resources Committee, Audit Committee, and Quality and Standards Committee. The review of residential funding was number 16 on the register with a High risk rating.

Nigel Ware noted that DFE would now be supporting the 2021 pension scheme, as of 2 December. DFE would make a payment in September 2020 to cover from August 2020 to March 2021, on a similar approach of the September 2019 payments but using the

Capita data on audited payments into TPS for the 2018 - 2019 financial year and updated information of average wage increases. Spending beyond March 2021 would be confirmed following the next spending review.

Linda Jones queried whether risk 7 (Teaching and Learning quality falls below relevant benchmarks and standards) was encompassed in risk 3 (Failure to appropriately develop the skills and expertise of teaching and management staff) The Principal said that she wished to combine them but had not because the risk around 'one culture' had been removed.

b) Heat Map

c) Risk Register and Action Plan

The Board approved the Risk Register, Heat Map and Action Plan.

8. FINANCIAL AND AUDIT MATTERS

a) Management Accounts – October 2019

Jackie Miles noted that these were the first accounts of the financial year. She reported EBITDA of £48,000. The Lettings income had been as expected, which she would be verifying with the Hires and events Manager. All other values had been as expected.

There had been some legal fees incurred, with an ongoing litigation, for which further provisions would need to be made.

There had been significant staff advertising in the first term to fill key positions.

The Big Lottery Project would close during the year and was expected to break even.

The key performance indicators (KPIs) were showing positive ratios. The ESFA had still not responded to RHACC's further query about the payment of £1.7 million

The Board noted the October 2019 Management Accounts

b) Education & Skills Funding Agency Financial Health Letter

The Chair highlighted the grading of outstanding

c) Education & Skills Funding Agency Financial Dashboard

The Board noted the Education & Skills Funding Agency Financial Health Letter and Dashboard.

d) Financial statements and regularity audits for 2018/2019

The Board considered the Audit Committee's annual report to the Board, the Post Audit Management Report 2019 by Buzzacott, the draft financial statements and regularity audits for 2019-20 and the draft letter of representation by the Board to the auditors, all of which had been reviewed at the Joint Audit and Finance & Resources Committee which recommend that the Board adopt the report, approve the draft financial statements and regularity audits and sign the letter of representation.

Jackie Miles noted that the only outstanding item of the Report had been the final allocation reconciliation statement, which had not been received from the EFSA which had, however, confirmed that it had been approved.

The Chair noted that the number of recommendations and observations in Appendix 2 had reduced from previous years.

Andrew George asked whether the auditor as fully aware of any legal cases that might come against the College. Jackie Miles confirmed that they were.

The Board:

- 1) ***noted the Audit Committee Annual Report to the Board 2018/19;***
- 2) ***noted the Post Audit Management Report 2019;***
- 3) ***approved the draft Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2018/19 and delegated signing authority to the Chair and Principal;***
- 4) ***approved the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements 2018/19 and delegated signing authority to the Chair and Principal.***

The Board considered the Audit Committee's recommendation to reappoint Buzzacott as external auditors and RSM as internal auditors, but only for the key financial controls and learner number systems.

[REDACTED]

The Chair recommended that the Audit Committee discuss rotating the audit partner of Buzzacott

The Board approved the reappointment of Buzzacott as external auditors and RSM as internal auditors for key financial controls and learner number systems

Jackie Miles left the meeting.

9. TEACHING & LEARNING MATTERS

a) RHACC Self-Assessment of Performance

Gaynor Bray reported that the draft SAR report had been scrutinised twice by the Quality & Standards Committee. Andrew George explained how the report had been compiled involving all teachers and learner views. The Quality and Standards Committee had robustly explored the rationale behind the grades proposed by management. Some changes had been made, which had been outlined in the papers. Andrew George felt that the scrutiny had been robust. He recommended that the 'Good' grades be validated but that management investigate what was needed to convert to Outstanding. The single rating of "Requires Improvement had been the learning programme, for which remediable provisions had already been made.

Linda Jones noted surprise that the behaviour and attitudes of students had only been rated as 'Good'. Gaynor Bray explained that the main metric had been attendance which was improving. It was a difficult metric to improve and there was debate over how relevant it was for adults. However, work was being done to support those learners unable to attend to catch up. Andrew George stated that a report had been proposed to prove that catch-up work was effective in making up for absences.

The Chair asked that it be made clear what RHACC needed to do to attain "Outstanding" in different areas. The Principal stated that Gaynor Bray could present on the key areas at the strategy event.

The Chair asked for Andrew George and Farah Rachlin's views on what constituted outstanding performance. Consistency was important, as was sharing best practice across different areas and the next stage of excellence would be promoting the College as a leader in adult education to influence other colleges.

The Board approved the RHACC Self-Assessment of Performance Report 2018/2019.

b) RHACC Draft Quality Improvement Plan 2019/20

Gaynor Bray stated that the Quality & Standards Committee had scrutinised the plan and noted the changes requested.

Andrew George stated that areas needing attention included consistency. The areas highlighted were consistent with the SAR.

Nigel Ware highlighted that KPI was an incorrect term; they were simply 'things to do'. Linda Jones noted that there were a lot of KPIs. Gaynor Bray explained that it was the commonly used term. The Chair commented that some points were vague for tracking progress. She asked that absolute KPIs be identified. The Principal stated that they were factors to measure success by.

The Chair queried whether there was a record of the partnerships described in judgement 21. Gaynor Bray confirmed that there were lists of the key contacts. Some partnerships were more significant than others.

The Board approved the RHACC Draft Quality Improvement Plan 2019/20.

10. RECOMEMNDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

a) Annual Safeguarding and Prevent Duty Report 2018/19

The Chair noted that Mark Albrow as the safeguarding governor had been involved in this report.

Gaynor Bray noted that the Keeping Children Safe in Education document was refreshed every year, so the safeguarding procedures were updated to reflect these.

The Board agreed with Andrew George's recommendation that the Board complete the government's online Prevent training. Training should be refreshed to every three years from every five years, to be in line with DBS checks. .

The Board approved the Annual Safeguarding and Prevent Duty Report 2018/19.

b) Revised Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy 2019/20

The Chair highlighted the changes which Nigel Ware explained, needed to be approved.

The Board approved the Revised Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy 2019-20.

UPDATE ON ESTATES

11. a) Hillcroft Capital Development

The Principal stated that the College was behind the schedule set when it bid for GLA funds because of the delay in receiving grant confirmation from the GLA. However, given the review of residential funding this was not necessarily negative. Management was revising the schedule for the project.

Consultants were being appointed for the planning application. The Capital Projects Steering Group had decided that management should have authority to approve consultant fees under £10,000. Higher fees, such as project manager and architect, required CPG approval.

CPG will consider VAT reclamation at its meeting on 17 January 2020.

The Principal stated that the Board would discuss the residential requirements for the new build on the strategy day on 7 February, the planning application was for five blocks although only three would be built initially.

The Board noted the Hillcroft Capital Development update

12. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

a) RHACC's evaluation of governance 2019

The Board considered the evaluation of governance by Karen Adriaanse, an external consultant.

Karen Adriaanse joined the meeting. She highlighted that the evaluation she had undertaken involved governors completing self-assessment questionnaires, interviews with governors and attending committee meetings to assessing the committees' performance. She thought the overall process worked well and the meetings gave opportunities for self-reflection.

Karen Adriaanse agreed with the comments that the generic questionnaire had been too long and repetitive. It had asked the Board to rate the progress from the previous year's judgements. The responses had been honest.

The overall effectiveness of the processes had been graded in the questionnaire, not the effectiveness of the governance. Karen Adriaanse had graded that herself, with categorised strengths and weaknesses, but that piece had not been sent to the Board.

Andrew George queried how the College's strengths and weaknesses compared with other boards and whether they were typical. Karen Adriaanse stated that she had been able to categorise the points similarly to other boards, but there was significant variance of views and category sizes.

Linda Jones recommended that the Board consider whether the College had evidence of its impact on particular communities at the strategy day as this was queried in the report. Karen Adriaanse stated that the College could also examine whether the curriculum did what was expected and the reasons for focus areas.

Andrew George suggested sharing the evidence drawn up by the different committees.

The Chair thanked Karen Adriaanse for her work. Karen Adriaanse stated that there was scope for the College to be outstanding.

Karen Adriaanse left the meeting.

The Chair noted that Karen Adriaanse had not included the Chair of the board in her evaluation, despite the recommendation. She had also not seen board or committee meeting minutes. In future assessments the external assessor should attend a Board or Committee meeting to assess how they work.

The Chair recommended that how to assess the College's impact on the local community be discussed at the strategy day. Linda Jones noted that was a tool on gov.uk, called the social value of investment, which could potentially be adapted.

b) Search and Governance Committee Annual Report

On the recruitment of new governors, the Chair reported that two candidates had been seen and two would be interviewed in January after which recommendations would be made to the Board

The Board noted the Search & Governance Committee Annual Report

c) Hillcroft Centenary plans

Hillcroft Archive: Potential for Centennial exhibition

The Principal stated that a permanent exhibition was being planned for the new learning centre. Lottery funds were being used on projects to encourage literacy and writing. There were competitions around writing for life, writing for stage and screen, and writing for children. An exhibition of writing had been suggested for October 2020. Linda Jones had reviewed archive materials held by the Kingston Council and onsite to create an exhibition, with a budget of £10,000 from Lottery funding. The exhibition would use digital copies, so it could be reproduced. The archive materials would be donated to Kingston Council, for them to look after and make accessible to the public.

Nigel Ware queried whether donating the materials would give the Council the power to destroy them. Linda Jones said that it would not. They would be made as a gift with negotiated terms for their use. The archive would be catalogued but not digitised.

The Board approved the donation of archive material to Kingston Council, subject to agreement of satisfactory terms for the College.

Graham Tharp queried whether press coverage of the Centenary was being actively pursued. The Chair stated that management should present a plan.

The Board approved the Centenary celebration in October 2020.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 8.14 pm.