

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 3rd October 2019 at Parkshot, Richmond.

Present: Ms Louise Fluker, Chair
Mr Mark Albrow, Lead Governor for Safeguarding/Prevent and Learner Involvement
Mr Richard Brewster, Audit Committee Chair
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal
Prof. Andrew George, Quality & Standards Committee Chair
Ms Jane O'Shea, Co-Vice Chair
Ms Farah Rachlin
Ms Lisa Sharp
Mr Graham Tharp
Mr Nigel Ware, Finance & Resources Committee Chair

In attendance: Ms Gaynor Bray, Vice Principal, Teaching & Learning (VP, T&L)
Mr Neil Wallbank, Director of Finance and Resources and Clerk (DoF&R)
Mr Geoffrey Dore, Minute Taker

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Prof. Linda Jones and Ms Helen Darracott sent their apologies.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 25 July 2019

The Board approved the minutes of the Board meeting held on 25th July 2019 as being an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

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

4. MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES

The Chair requested that Management highlight any sections within the minutes which it would want to be redacted.

a) Search & Governance Committee (24 July 2019)

Andrew George highlighted the correct spelling for Newnham College, University of Cambridge.

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

b) Audit Committee (24 July 2019)

Richard Brewster stated that the Committee was considering a change of internal auditors for the basic financial controls and learner number audits due to the proposed fee from RSM. Neil Wallbank noted that he had acquired some benchmarking from the ESFA benchmark data and has challenged RSM's daily fee rate with them; RSM has responded that, as RHACC had a low number of audit days, the management in relation to the number of days was high, resulting in a high daily fee rate. The Board agreed that the matter be discussed at the next Audit Committee meeting.

Nigel Ware highlighted that the heading for item 2 was incorrect.

Farah Rachlin asked whether the Head of Finance had been replaced. Neil Wallbank confirmed that the replacement would start on 14 October.

The Board noted the Minutes of the Audit Committee.

- c) Capital Project Steering Group (18 September 2019)

Issues arising from the minutes form part of the agenda under item 8b.

The Board noted the Minutes of the Capital Project Steering Group.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

6. PRESENTATION – AREA REVIEWS END OF PROGRAMME REPORT AND THE IMPACT OF MERGERS IN THE SECTOR

Neil Wallbank gave a short presentation on recently issued reports on a case study on area reviews and a further report published on college mergers in the sector. The case studies highlighted the extent of the consolidation in the sector through the area review process and also the associated cost of around £430 million. There have been 20 college mergers in London and the South East.

The research report had revealed that 77% of consulted respondents were uncertain that a merger had delivered a benefit to them or the sector. Colleges requiring urgent restructuring had been more positive about the process. Many had not believed that financial resilience was being improved in the long term.

The final report had focused on the impact of mergers in the sector, covering a 10-year period from 2005 to 2015. There was no statistical evidence to suggest that mergers led to an improvement or a deterioration in college performance on average. This study focused on mergers actioned pre the area review process. Overall, the findings from the report appeared disappointing.

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

- a) Principal's Report – July 2019

The Principal reported that the College had not achieved its loans or fee income targets for 2018/19. There will need to be a fee increase in 2020/21. Management are reviewing various curriculum areas and learner groups in order to ascertain where the market could withstand an increase. It was noted that there had been an error on page 3 of the report, and that there were 350 learners rather than 35. There has been a 12% increase in enrolments and learners in 2019/20 compared to the same time in the previous year. There has also been some buoyant Hillcroft enrolment days. Though residential numbers have decreased it was felt that the College was beginning to reach new groups. The College has a new post planned for learner engagement and outreach on Women's Education provision.

A short-term decision had been taken to mothball Powell House due to water leakages. A more detailed report would be presented to the Finance and Resources Committee.

The IAL group have been invited to present at the Skills for Londoners Board.

Gabrielle Flint noted that the IAL group is proposing a new structural form to support representation to government and more effective group working. This came from the fact that IALs did not have a tradition of working together and were wary of making commitments. Richard Brewster asked whether there were any positive signs. The Principal responded that there were more options in terms of partnership working. The College had spoken to City Lit about undertaking a residential lip reading teacher training course. Andrew George highlighted the importance of procuring links at the lower level as well as senior management level.

Farah Rachlin stated that the College needs to be mindful in agreeing a structure for joint working of not breaching anti-competition laws.

Mark Albrow asked whether the expectation for all colleges to take action to support the Mayor's plans to reduce violent crime would have any impact on the openness of the College. Gabrielle Flint predicted that there would be an impact. The College had resisted implementing security systems appropriate for children's settings. and was implementing new security arrangements appropriate to an adult setting.

While the College and Richmond were identified as low risk by the GLA and police regarding knife crime, the issue extended to wider London. It was noted that a learner on a jazz course had been the victim of knife crime in Hounslow during the summer break. The College would provide learners with more information on how to avoid crime and stay safe.

Lisa Sharp asked about the partnership with RCVS. The Principal responded that following initial setbacks the Council's perspective was that the partnership was working, though it expected some change from RCVS. The contracts were likely to be re-tendered. Lisa Sharp asked whether the College was likely to table a bid collaboratively with RCVS. Gabrielle Flint stated that the College would need to look at the tenders before making a decision.

Nigel Ware asked for further information regarding Richmond upon Thames College. The Principal provided explained that Richmond upon Thames College had a new interim principal in place and it would be reviewing options for the site. RHACC had been invited by the Council to join a working group that would look at the use of the site going forward.

Farah Rachlin asked whether the College had to take any other actions in relation to Deer Park School. The Principal responded that alternative options were being reviewed and discussions have taken place with the Council regarding future use. .

The Board noted the Principal's Report

8. FINANCIAL & RESOURCES MATTERS

a) Management Accounts – July 2019

Neil Wallbank stated that the initial outturn for the year showed a deficit of £230,000 against a budget deficit of £76,000 but this was better than had been predicted in June. This was partly because a flat-rate staffing on-cost of circa 30% had been assumed, and the actual figure was 10%. The main concern for the year pertained to tuition fees. Richard Brewster stated that it seemed strange that the decrease had arisen between March and July. Neil Wallbank noted that summer term recruitment had been less positive than expected. The accounts assumed the College would receive 100% of its funding allocation and the final funding claim would be submitted by end of October.

The Chair asked whether the College had produced a breakdown of subject areas where tuition fees had decreased. Gabrielle Flint responded that the issue tended to be linked to the fee level rather than the subject and whether a course was government funded. Jane O'Shea suggested that an increase in tuition fees could have a negative effect. The Principal said that increases could result in decrease in enrolments if increases were not planned and targeted appropriately.

Neil Wallbank stated that the College maintained strong financial health. Regarding the potential overpayment from the ESFA, he had written to the ESFA and had asked for suggestions regarding how the College should account for the overpayment. The ESFA had yet to respond.

Farah Rachlin asked whether the complaint from a student about the counselling provision was ongoing. The Principal outlined that she would be engaging in a mediation session with the individual the following week.

The Chair asked whether the complainant was legally represented. Gabrielle Flint clarified that the individual was representing themselves. The College had done everything possible to support the learner. Following a resolution the College would review if there are any other lessons to be learned from the experience.

The Board noted the July 2019 Management Accounts

b) Hillcroft development

[REDACTED]

9. TEACHING & LEARNING MATTERS

a) Teaching and Learning Quality Report – September 2019

The Vice Principal stated that there was a tight deadline for this year's SAR. Gaynor Bray had two weeks to compile a draft SAR, which would be sent to the validation panel on 23 October. Following this, she would have a week to incorporate any suggestions before the SAR was sent to the Quality and Standards Committee for scrutiny on 7 November.

The Vice Principal believed that leadership management had achieved a 'good' grade. Personal Development was 'outstanding'.

The Chair noted that Linda Jones had asked that her question be posed in relation to the falling retention rates on Access provision. Gaynor Bray stated that this pertained to the women's residential and humanity pathways. The College was collating information from learners who had not been retained in order to ascertain their reasons for this.

The Board noted the Teaching & Learning Quality Report

b) Policies for approval:

Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk and Prevent Policy 2019-20

The Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk and Prevent Policy 2019-20 was approved.

Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk and Prevent Procedures 2019-20

The Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk and Prevent Procedures 2019-20 was approved.

Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy 2019-20

The Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy 2019-20 was approved.

10. SEARCH & GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The Principal outlined the self-assessment process, Karen Adriaanse had drafted surveys for Governors. There was also one for each Committee to fill out at its first meeting of the academic year which Karen would join by phone. Karen Adriaanse would collate the responses and provide feedback to the December Board meeting

11. AUDIT MATTERS

a) Anti-fraud Policy and Response Plan

The Anti-fraud Policy and Response Plan was approved.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm