

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, 15 July 2021 onsite Parkshot and via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Prof. Andrew George, Chair (onsite)
Mr Mark Albrow (onsite)
Mr Richard Brewster (onsite)
Ms Helen Darracott (remote)
Nasrin Farahani (remote)
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal (onsite)
Mr David Izett (remote)
Mr Nick Jones (remote)
Mr Dave Munby (onsite)
Ms Jane O'Shea (onsite)
Ms Farah Rachlin, Vice Chair (remote)
Mr Paul Simmons (onsite)
Mr Graham Tharp, Staff Governor (onsite)
Mr Nigel Ware (remote)

In attendance: Ms Gaynor Bray, Vice Principal, Teaching & Learning (VP, T&L) (onsite)
Mr Neil Wallbank, Director of Finance & Resources and Clerk (DoF&R) (onsite)
Ms Laura Ercolani, Programme Manager Cookery for pre-meeting presentation only (remote)
Ms Grit King, Corporate Support Assistant (onsite)

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting.</p> <p><u>PRESENTATION BY LAURA ERCOLANI, PROGRAMME MANAGER COOKERY</u></p> <p>Laura Ercolani gave a presentation to the Board outlining the purpose and structure of the cookery provision. Laura explained the different learner groups and the value that cookery provision brings to a broad range of adults. She highlighted that the curriculum offer had been expanded from 14 to 85 cookery courses and also that the College had been successful in delivering provision online and providing learners with important skills, connections and positivity during a very difficult time. The aim is to increase provision to 125 courses, including more Saturday courses. Blended learning will continue until Christmas after which a decision will be made about which classes to keep online, on site or blended. The development of community outreach will also be a priority.</p> <p>Farah Rachlin asked about the staff recruitment for cookery and the PM explained that it is proving difficult to find candidates with both teaching and chef expertise. Andrew George enquired about the diversity of students and was informed that 56% of students are white British with the rest being of mixed backgrounds. Efforts are being made to increase the number of male learners by reaching out to local charities.</p> <p>The Governing Body commented on and thanked Laura for her for her enthusiasm and contribution.</p>	
1.	<p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>Kate Clarke and Sharon Raj sent their apologies.</p>	
2.	<p><u>MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2021</u></p> <p>The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 25 March 2021 were agreed to be an accurate record and approved with redaction.</p>	

3.	<p><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>There were no actions arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p>	
4.	<p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
5.	<p><u>a) PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</u></p> <p>The Board received the Principal's report for the period to July 2021. The Principal summarised the challenges faced by RHACC during the year by the pandemic and commended the efforts of staff in addressing them. She outlined the challenges that remain ahead e.g. control of costs, staff retention and capacity. The Principal informed the Board that RHACC has been successful in being progressed to the next round in its application for DfE Capital Transformation Funding in support of the Hillcroft development.</p> <p>Nick Jones enquired about the strategy update resulting from the Board strategy meeting in May. The Principal explained that the management team are providing feedback on the priorities identified by the board. An update will be presented at the Autumn Board meeting.</p> <p>Nigel Ware stated that the £275K loss of income from Deer Park School could not be replaced by the additional funding received by the hiring of the Richmond Council AEB contract to RHACC as it would involve delivery costs. The Principal stated that the aim was to increase learner numbers with the funding rather than class numbers.</p> <p>Farah Rachlin asked whether the space occupied by Deer Park School will be re-used. The Principal explained that the cabins have now all been removed, and parking spaces created as more learners and staff use their cars to feel safer. It would not have been cost effective to move the cabins to the Hillcroft site. Plans for the cabins were brought to the Finance and Resources Committee last year.</p> <p>Jane O'Shea questioned what social prescribing meant. The Principal outlined that it is a social care initiative based around developing relationships with local GP surgeries to refer patients to RHACC courses.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Principal's report for July 2021.</i></p>	Principal
6.	<p><u>I.T.</u></p> <p>a) Digital Transformation Strategy</p> <p>The Board received an update on the Digital Transformation Strategy from the DoF&R. The proposed approach was first presented to F&R Committee in February and the Head of IT has since worked on a more detailed plan. A revised paper was received by the F&R Committee in July and the members agreed that it was a much clearer and a more realistic strategy. Priorities have been identified for the implementation of new core business systems for Finance, HR and Payroll, the recruitment of new IT Services staff, a review of REMS (RHACC's management information system) and a new website in 2022/2023.</p> <p>Paul Simmons commented that this is a vast piece of work and enquired if it was a new or an enhanced system. The DoF&R confirmed that they would be new systems as the existing systems are reaching the end of their useful life.</p> <p><i>The Board noted and supported the digital transformation strategy.</i></p>	
7.	<p><u>FINANCE AND RESOURCES MATTERS</u></p> <p>a) Management Accounts</p> <p>The Board received the management accounts for the period to the end of May. showed a positive variance against revised budget of £134k. The College's cash flow remains reasonably strong with a balance of around £4m at the end of May. The College financial health grade has remained 'Good' for May 2021. The shortfall of £689K in tuition fees was the result of the lockdown announced in early January that has severely affected the income in both the Spring and Summer terms.</p>	

	<p>The DoF&R provided the Board with an update from a conversation with Buzzacott at the external audit planning meeting relating to the treatment of funds potentially due to the ESFA which are held on the balance sheet. He advised that the audit team would provide the College with further advice following advice that they receive from their own technical department.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the management accounts.</i></p> <p>b) Budget for 2021/22 and College Financial Forecast Return</p> <p>The Board received the budget for 2021/22 and the college financial forecast return. The DoF&R presented the main assumptions underpinning the budget and highlighted that there still remains a great deal of uncertainty as to how learners will react to a return to on-site learning and the impact that this might have on the 2021/22 budget. The budget provides a positive EBITDA and a 'Good' financial health rating. There is also substantial capital investment in systems and Hillcroft.</p> <p>The main risk relates to the potential level of enrolments and the impact this could have on the College's ability to achieve 97% of its funding target and also the tuition fee income budget. It is proposed to set a budget of £1.78m for tuition fees, which is in line with the current year budget which will not be achieved as a result of the reduced autumn term activity and lockdown in the spring term. A budget for a normal year of activity would be around £2.3m. It is not expected that normal activity will be achieved in 2021/22 but that there will be a gradual return. The DoF&R indicated that the budget will be reviewed in the autumn term when the enrolment pattern has become clearer.</p> <p>The DoF&R informed the Board that based on current estimates, there is high risk to the achievement of most of the strategic financial targets will be achieved in 2021/22. The potential impact of reduced fee income is the main factor that will impact on the KPIs. The budgeted deficit after exceptional items is £534k which results in a positive EBITDA of £270k.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the budget for 2021/22 and the College financial forecast return, accepting that revisions might be required during the autumn term.</i></p>	DoF&R
8.	<p><u>HILLCROFT DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>a) Update</p> <p>The Board received an update on the Hillcroft development from the DoF&R. The last meeting of the CPSG took place on 21 June 2021 where RLB (Cost Consultants) presented a cost update which showed an increase in projected costs of £1.5m. Since then, meetings have been held with the design team to identify how the original budget and a realistic cost of design can be met. Submission of planning will most likely be delayed until November this year, therefore completion in September 2023 is at risk and more likely to be January 2024. A further CPSG meeting is being held on 11 August 2021 to review an updated cost report.</p> <p>Mark Albrow questioned the reliability of the cost data that RHACC has received. The DoF&R outlined that RLB has been involved in the design process but that some changes made to the scheme have resulted in increased costs. The Chair added that RHACC Management should implement closer scrutiny to the work of the external advisors.</p> <p>The Chair summarised that the £1.5m current increase over budget is a solvable problem and meetings have been put in place to find a solution that works for all parties.</p> <p>Nick Jones questioned whether the DoF&R had the time and capacity to deal with the capital project and the DoF&R and Principal responded they had staff resource in place but will discuss this further.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Hillcroft development update.</i></p>	Principal / DoF&R

9.	<p><u>CURRICULUM MATTERS</u></p> <p>a) Teaching and Learning Quality Report</p> <p>The Board received the teaching and learning quality report presented by the VP T&L and noted the strong learner retention figures. The pandemic has placed considerable additional workload on managers across all areas of the college, due to the need to plan and reschedule courses, manage changing exam arrangements, plan and enforce safety measures, and deal with staff and learner concerns and individual needs. Notwithstanding this, the curriculum teams have continued to develop their provision and drive up quality.</p> <p>Curriculum and quality teams have also successfully participated in two Ofsted monitoring visits of the LBRuT provision.</p> <p>Farah Rachlin congratulated and thanked the T&L team for their hard work and achievements during this difficult year.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the teaching and learning quality report.</i></p> <p>b) Update on Women’s Education</p> <p>The Board received an update on women’s education from the Principal highlighting that the core offer has been agreed and will be developed further. The appointment of a new Programme Manager has not yet been successful, but management are reviewing internal cover options. The Women’s Education Steering Group has asked management to evaluate the risk of future challenge to the provision of classes that are women only, which will be added to the risk register.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the women’s education update.</i></p>	Principal
10	<p><u>LEARNER FEEDBACK</u></p> <p>The Board received the learner feedback report presented by the VP T&L. RHACC engages well with learners and receives up 600 pieces of feedback that are not complaints.</p> <p>All Feedback is responded to within the required deadlines. Where further time was required to conduct an investigation, learners were informed of the delay in advance, along with the reasons for this and all revised deadlines were met.</p> <p>Managers continue to use a range of different ways to encourage learner feedback, and the effectiveness of the online forums and feedback sessions will be evaluated at the end of the academic year.</p> <p>Nigel Ware noted that there was an error on page 8 stating that ‘Hillcroft College ceased to exist in 2017’ which needs to be corrected.</p> <p>Mark Albrow commented and thanked the Quality team for the amount and exceptional detail of data presented in the report.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the learner feedback report.</i></p>	VP T&L
11	<p><u>AUDIT MATTERS</u></p> <p>a) Risk Register and Action Plan</p> <p>The Board received the risk register and action plan presented by the DoF&R pointing out that it was agreed at the F&R Committee meeting to increase the risk relating to cyber-attack in the current environment to ‘High’.</p> <p>Farah Rachlin queried whether the new systems for HR, Finance and Payroll need to be added to the risk register. The DoF&R said this will be taken into account at the next revision of the register.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the risk register and action plan.</i></p>	DoF&R

12	<p><u>SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE</u></p> <p>a) Governance self-assessment process 2020/21 <i>The Board approved the self-assessment process for 2020/21 and agreed not to engage external input.</i></p> <p>b) Committee Structure 2021/22 <i>The Board approved the committee structure for 2021/22.</i></p> <p>c) Revised Audit Code of Practice The DoF&R outlined that changes to the Audit Code of Practice will require the Board to receive the annual post audit report from the external auditors directly rather than through the Audit Committee. An additional Board meeting will be required in November to facilitate this arrangement. <i>The Board approved the revised arrangements for the external auditors to present their findings to the Board on 25th November 2021.</i></p>	Clerk
13	<p><u>MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES</u></p> <p>a) Finance and Resources Committee, 5 July 2021 b) Quality and Standards Committee, 24 June 2021 c) Search and Governance Committee, 2 July 2021 d) Women’s Education Steering Group, 24 June 2021 e) Audit Committee, 1 July 2021 f) Capital Project Steering Group, 28 June 2021 <i>The Board noted the minutes of the standing committees.</i></p>	
14	<p><u>ITEMS TO APPROVE</u></p> <p>a) Financial Regulations 2021/22 b) Draft Board workplan c) Programme of meetings 2021/22 d) Committee terms of reference 2021/22 I. Audit Committee II. Finance & Resources Committee III. Search & Governance Committee IV. Quality & Standards Committee e) Risk Management Strategy 2021/22 f) Governors’ Expenses Policy 2021/22 g) Governor recruitment and succession planning policy h) Admissions Policy <i>The Board approved all of the above items and policies.</i></p>	
15	<p><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <p>On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked the Principal and her team for all their hard work during the last year.</p> <p>The Chair asked Nigel Ware to step out of the meeting and informed the Board that Nigel Ware’s term of office will come to an end of October but it is proposed that he stays on for an additional two years to serve as Chair of F&R for one year and also as Chair of CPSG.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the extension of Nigel Ware’s term of office to July 2023 and for him to continue as Chair of CPSG to July 2023 and to continue as Chair of F&R until July 2022.</i></p>	

The meeting ended at approximately 8.10pm.