

RICHMOND AND HILLCROFT ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MINUTES

of the meeting of the Board of
Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College
held at 5.30 pm on Thursday 23 March 2023 at Parkshot (PK9)

Present: Prof. Andrew George, Chair
Mr Richard Brewster
Ms Kate Clarke
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal
Mr Nick Jones
Mr Dave Munby
Ms Claire O'Donnell
Ms Jane O'Shea
Ms Sharon Raj
Mr John Riglin
Mr Graham Tharp, Staff Governor
Mr Nigel Ware

In attendance: Ms Haifa Abdul Amir, VP Curriculum & Quality (VP, C&Q)
Mr Neil Wallbank, Vice Principal, Finance & Resources (VP, F&R)
Mrs Sara George, Interim Clerk

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

1.	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Ms Renuka Fernando sent her apologies.	
2.	<u>MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2022</u> The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 were approved as an accurate record.	
3.	<u>MATTERS ARISING</u> Management Accounts – October 2022 The Board noted that the Financial Recovery Plan is being taken forward, following its approval at the February Strategy Day. Our People Strategy The People Strategy Implementation Plan has been scrutinised by the Finance & Resources Committee. Work to achieve the Investors in People accreditation is ongoing. Feedback from Ofsted 1:1 Training All key college documents have been uploaded to the GVO. Risk Register and Action Plan Risk appetite was discussed at the Strategy Day and amendments have been made to the Risk Register as a result.	
4.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> None.	
5.	<u>PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</u> The Principal presented her report for December, noting the increase in learner numbers and use of funding. The current staffing issues, with several unfilled vacancies, were also noted. The two vacant academic director roles will be replaced by one Director of Teaching & Learning.	

<p>The Principal informed the Board about complaints from learners regarding the stoneware kiln being broken. Management are addressing the issue and a new kiln is being ordered and paid for via the DfE grant for sustainability and energy efficiency. All complaints are being dealt with in line with the College Complaints Policy and Procedures and the Programme Manager for Art is liaising with them regarding alternative firing options.</p> <p>Mr Brewster asked whether the capital intensity of ceramics courses is considered. The VP, F&R indicated that this was not the case at course level. The Principal added that a firing charge is added to the sale price of clay, but learners are not limited to how often they fire their work or the size of their pieces.</p> <p>Mr Riglin expressed concern about the potential reputational damage and the large number of complaints received. The Principal replied that managers have been empowered to move quickly and be proactive, with learners kept informed and offered alternative options for their work. In answer to a question from Mr Munby regarding the likelihood of other kilns and art equipment breaking, the Principal noted that the Technical Support Manager had previously been asked to RAG rate the condition of the various pieces of art equipment, taking into consideration the service agreements in place. The stoneware kiln was on the list of items to be replaced. An equipment replacement plan, which considers the accepted length of life of items, will be drawn up. It was agreed that a RAG rating will be added to the College asset register for consideration by the Finance & Resource Committee.</p> <p>Ms Clarke expressed concern about senior management capacity in light of the current director/middle management vacancies. The Principal informed the Board that a new staffing structure was being considered, replacing the two Directors of School with one Director of Teaching and Learning. The Chair noted that this change would result in a thinner middle management layer. The Principal replied that the plan would reduce the silo feeling noted by staff when the structure included two separate Schools, and promote best practice sharing and cross-College support. Having six curriculum-area Heads reporting into a Director of Teaching & Learning will provide opportunities for team working and efficiencies.</p> <p>Mr Brewster asked whether management capacity was being limited by teacher vacancies and the College's current inability to increase pay. The Principal gave the example of cookery provision, which was popular during lockdown; once lockdown lifted teaching staff were hired back into the hospitality industry. Accountancy provision has a similar issue of staff being able to earn more in the industry than in teaching. In areas such as Counselling, the College is hiring practicing professionals and supporting them to achieve their teaching qualification. In answer to a question from Mr Jones about the impact on curriculum planning, the Principal noted that recruitment is being undertaken earlier to enable more time for recruitment.</p> <p>Mr Jones asked if it were possible to quantum the amount of income that was being lost due to staffing issues. The Principal replied that it was not possible to define this due to the modular nature of the majority of courses, and that care must be taken to ensure that staff are treated fairly and are not undervalued if they teach a less desirable subject. It was noted that paying some teaching staff more is common in the university sector. The Principal agreed that this could be considered but careful consideration would need to be given to implementation.</p> <p>Ms O'Donnell queried the increase in learners disclosing a disability or learning difficulty. The Principal indicated that RHACC has a good disclosure rate, with learners comfortable in informing the College of their needs. It was noted that the increase is not in the supported learning area, but with learners who are more willing to declare mental health issues or long-term sickness (particularly linked to covid). This is in line with local data.</p>	<p>VP, F&R</p>
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	<p>Ms Clarke asked why the learner age profile was separated into 16-18 and 19+ age bands. The Principal replied that 16-18 year old learners were funded by a separate EFA allocation, whilst the majority of 19+ learners were funded by the GLA. It was suggested that the Quality & Standards monitor attainment by detailed age profiles.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Principal's Report for March 2023.</i></p>	VP, C&Q
6.	<p><u>FINANCE AND RESOURCES MATTERS</u></p> <p>a) Management Accounts – January 2023</p> <p>The VP, F&R presented the Management Accounts up to 31 January 2023, noting the operating deficit of around £100k adverse to budget resulting from reduced tuition fee income and changes to funding rules. January forecasts currently indicate that 98% of the GLA allocation will be used; the GLA will pay for delivery up to 103% of allocation and this is the target. Additional measures are being put in place to achieve the 97% use of the ESFA allocation needed to avoid clawback. The financial health grade remains, as per the budget, at requires improvement, with a staff cost to income ratio of 72%. Tuition fee income (excluding adult learner loans) is looking positive at £1.3m from a full year budget of £1.7m. Costs are increasing, particularly in relation to energy. It was noted that the LGPS triannual revaluation outcome will add an additional £40k to costs annually, effective from 1 April 2023. Actions from the Financial Recovery Plan will impact on the accounts later in this academic year and in 2023/24.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Management Accounts for January 2023.</i></p>	
7.	<p><u>TEACHING AND LEARNING MATTERS</u></p> <p>a) Teaching & Learning Quality Update</p> <p>The VP, C&Q presented the Teaching & Learning Quality Update, highlighting the high level of learner satisfaction but slow progress on Quality Improvement Plan actions. Attendance is currently good, although below target. Predicted achievement is forecast to be higher than in 2021/22. Observations of teaching and learning show a significant improvement in all areas, particularly in assessment and planning. Moderation meetings for observations have been introduced to ensure consistency of reporting. Good progress is being made with curriculum planning after the introduction of new software and processes. Inconsistent reporting of learner progress within Community Learning has led to a review of processes and documentation. Following low attendance at CPD sessions in term one, a full, paid, inset day of CPD will be offered in July, after a series of short courses in April. Learner numbers are on target for Multiply provision, with enrolments growing for distance learning.</p> <p>Ms O'Shea noted that for the distance learning provision, the report stated that 22 applications were likely to lead to only eight enrolments and queried whether the 30-learner target would be reached. The VP, C&Q replied that she was confident that the target would be reached by the end of the academic year.</p> <p>In answer to a question from Mr Riglin about the slow progress with PLPs, the Principal noted that the issue was highlighted in the self-assessment report for 21/22 and agreed that not enough progress has been achieved.</p> <p>Mr Brewster questioned the 694 missing achievements detailed in the report. The VP, C&Q noted that these achievements were not yet recorded as learners finish their courses at different times and may need additional time to resubmit assignments. This is why attendance, retention and progress are tracked so that achievement can be predicted. It was agreed that 'pending' may be a more useful phrase than 'missing' within the report.</p>	VP, C&Q

	<p>Mr Ware asked why management do not insist that staff attend training sessions. The Principal replied that some training is made mandatory and that staff are paid to attend, however it may not have always been clear which training was being recommended and which was mandatory. This is an area for improvement.</p> <p>The Chair asked for a progress update on moving to Ofsted 'outstanding' and how the trajectory was being assessed. The VP, C&Q replied that the Quality & Standards Committee are monitoring the actions through scrutiny of the Quality Improvement Plan; more actions will have been completed by their next meeting on 29 June.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Teaching & Learning Quality update.</i></p>	
8.	<p><u>HILLCROFT CAPITAL UPDATE</u> Item Redacted</p>	
9.	<p><u>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>a) Risk Register and Action Plan / Heat Map The VP, F&R presented the Heat Map and Risk Register & Action Plan, noting that they had been scrutinised by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 14 March. After the discussion regarding risk appetite at the Strategy Day the Audit Committee has added the College's appetite to the descriptor box for each section. Ms Raj added that the Committee had asked management to add the risk appetite explanatory document to the Risk Management Strategy as an appendix; this will be reviewed by the Board in July.</p> <p>The Chair asked whether adding the risk appetite to the Register will affect the way that the College treats those risks. Ms Raj replied that the Board has already considered the risks currently within the Register, the appetite will affect how new risks within those sections are treated. The Chair asked that the risk appetite document be uploaded to the GVO, along with a copy of the Risk Register.</p> <p>Mr Jones asked whether management were underestimating the impact of the loss of senior staff. The Principal replied that key staff were not necessarily senior and that the wording of this risk would be reviewed. The Chair suggested that recruitment and filling key vacancies should be a separate risk, particularly as the mitigations are different to those for losing key staff. Mr Jones noted that the capacity of key staff was also not included. It was agreed that management and the Audit Committee would review the risks around workforce.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Heat Map and the Risk Register & Action Plan.</i></p>	<p>Interim Clerk</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>VP, F&R</p>
10.	<p><u>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</u></p> <p>a) Recruitment of the Chair The Interim Clerk informed the Board that interviews for the role of Chair would take place on 20 April, and that Paul Butler (National Leader of Governance and Chair of Waltham Forest College) had agreed to be an external member of the panel.</p> <p>b) Appointment of Independent Governors Ms Clarke informed the Board that the Search & Governance Committee had interviewed three candidates for the role of Independent Governor. They will recommend the appointment of one candidate, Rosa Chu. Ms Chu's application will be circulated to the Board for her appointment to be approved by written resolution. In answer to a question from Ms O'Shea about equality and diversity in recruitment, Ms Clarke noted that Ms Chu has a Hong Kong Chinese background; her experience of moving to the UK and learning English will bring a valuable perspective to the Board.</p>	

	<p>Mr Ware expressed concern that there were no further candidates, as five governors are due to leave the Board in July. The importance of only appointing suitable candidates was emphasised. Personal recommendation and adding the vacancy to Governor’s LinkedIn profiles was suggested. It was noted that candidates with experience in finance, education and audit would be particularly welcome.</p> <p>Ms Raj informed the Board that Ms Elizabeth Ayles, co-opted member of the Audit Committee, had been approached about becoming a governor and invited to attend a meeting as an observer; an answer is awaited.</p> <p>It was agreed that the role should be advertised again through all available routes.</p> <p>c) AoC Code of Good Governance Consultation</p> <p>The Principal presented the AoC’s consultation on the Code of Good Governance, noting their intention to both shorten and streamline the Code. It was noted that responses were not limited to one per organisation, and, if adopted, the College will need to comply with the Code or explain why it does not. The Board agreed that the Code no longer strives for exceptional standards and seems content with good and high quality.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Code of Good Governance Consultation and agreed that no feedback from RHACC was required.</i></p>	Interim Clerk
11.	<p><u>ITEMS TO APPROVE</u></p> <p>a) Complaints Policy</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Complaints Policy</i></p>	
12.	<p><u>MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES</u></p> <p>a) Search & Governance Committee – 3 January 2023</p> <p>Mr Brewster commented that an explanation for the removal of the need for student governors would be helpful, which states the different ways the College engages with learners and notes that several governors are students at RHACC.</p> <p>b) Capital Projects Steering Group – 23 January 2023 c) Finance & Resources – 26 January 2023 d) Capital Projects Steering Group – 8 March 2023 e) Finance & Resources – 8 March 2023 f) Audit Committee – 14 March 2023</p> <p>Mr Ware noted the external review of governance report and recommended that all Governors read it. Ms Raj noted that the report will be reviewed by the Search & Governance Committee before the recommendations and actions are brought to the Board.</p> <p>g) Quality & Standards Committee – 16 March 2023</p> <p><i>The Board noted the minutes of the Standing Committees.</i></p>	
13.	<p><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p> <p>Mr Brewster suggested that the Board consider appointing a link governor for sustainability. The Principal replied that sustainability falls under the remit of the Finance & Resources Committee, who receive reports on Estates matters.</p>	

The meeting closed at 19:30