

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 24 March 2022 at Parkshot (RBS 22)

Present: Prof. Andrew George, Chair
Mr Richard Brewster (remote)
Ms Kate Clarke
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal
Mr David Izett
Mr Nick Jones
Ms Jane O'Shea
Ms Farah Rachlin, Vice Chair
Ms Sharon Raj
Mr Graham Tharp, Staff Governor
Mr Nigel Ware

In attendance: Ms Gaynor Bray, Vice Principal, Teaching & Learning (VP, T&L)
Mr Neil Wallbank, Director of Finance & Resources (DoF&R)
Mr Paul Smith, Executive Director, Commercial (ED,C)
Ms Sara George, Executive PA to the Principal and interim Clerk

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

1.	<u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Mr Dave Munby and Mr Paul Simmons (Student Governor) sent their apologies.	
2.	<u>MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2021</u> The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 9 December 2021 were agreed to be an accurate record and approved without any redactions.	
3.	<u>MATTERS ARISING</u> Principal's Report The Principal reported that the Head of HR is investigating the possibility of offering flu vaccinations for staff as part of a wider package of benefits. RHACC Draft Self-Assessment Report 2020/21 The Vice Principal for Teaching & Learning will be inviting other IALs to participate in an external moderation of the SAR (in October 2022) shortly. It is hoped that the invitation will be reciprocal. Risk Register and Action Plan Risk 14 has been returned to a 3 x 3 high risk rating. It was noted that the Risk Register and Action Plan will shortly undergo a refresh, linking it to the objectives within the 2022 – 2025 Strategic Plan.	
4.	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> The Chair declared that he has recently been appointed Co-Chair of the UK Committee on Research Integrity (UK CORI). It was agreed that this appointment would have no material impact on the Chair's role or the business of the College. The Register of Interest will be updated.	Clerk

<p>5.</p>	<p>PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</p> <p>The Principal presented the report for March 2022, noting the challenges of the Spring term caused by the lifting of covid restrictions at a faster rate than the fall in infections, and difficulties in recruitment of staff that has left either unfilled vacancies or new starters still in their induction periods. Academic standards have not been impacted by the challenges.</p> <p>The Principal highlighted the improving financial health score resulting from the Treasury acceptance of the ESFA funding repayment plan.</p> <p>With regard to the 5% increase in fees in 2022/23, it was noted that a competitor benchmarking process has been undertaken and RHACC is generally similar in price to other IALs and local providers. Details of how to access help to pay fees will be displayed across both sites and on the web to ensure fees do not present a barrier to learning.</p> <p>The Principal asked whether the board would find it helpful for her to present the new staffing structure at the Board meeting on 14 July, governors could express areas of interest for staff presentations, learning walks and/or link governor opportunities. The board said this would be helpful. Ms Clarke queried whether the Board was giving sufficient attention to the staffing changes and restructure, and particularly staff morale. The Principal replied that the changes had been scrutinised by the Finance & Resources Committee at their meeting on 10 March. Management are trying to minimise disruption; there will be no job losses and all staff who have a change of line manager or role have been spoken to and are so far in agreement. The Chair noted that staffing issues were a risk and therefore suggested that an early deep dive into the HR area would be beneficial, particularly as the team are all new to RHACC.</p> <p>In answer to a question from Ms Clarke regarding National Skills Funds (NSF) funding, the Principal explained that the additional funds received from the GLA for L3 qualifications were not helpful when the College was experiencing difficulty using its AEB and loan funding allocations. Learners would rather opt for a free NSF L3 course rather than take out an adult learner loan (ALL) which has to be repaid; this has impacted the College's use of the ALL allocation. Providers have asked the Government to make the NSF funding regulations less restrictive and available for L1 and 2 courses.</p> <p>The Chair queried the rise in the number of BaME learners in 2021/22. The Principal indicated that a significant number of BaME learners were undertaking vocational courses in the Business School. Many of the learners lost as a result of the pandemic were white British students undertaking art classes which could not be provided online.</p> <p>In answer to a question from the Chair about the ongoing work for carers, the Principal reported that there are RHACC learners with caring responsibilities who do not necessarily consider themselves carers and who suffer from isolation and poor wellbeing. The College's offer of part time, modular learning makes learning accessible for carers. Going forward carers will be offered membership of the Learning Centre which means that they can use the College facilities at any time for both learning and accessing the internet. RHACC have surveyed local carer's organisations about what would be of help to them, and the results are awaited; ACL funding vired from Richmond Council will be used to support carers access learning. Author Kate Mosse (a carer) and the Rt Hon Sir Ed Davey MP have agreed to speak at an event designed to raise the profile of local carers.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Principal's Report for March 2022.</i></p>	<p>Principal</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>FINANCE AND RESOURCES MATTERS</p> <p>Management Accounts – January 2022</p> <p>The Director of Finance & Resources presented the January 2022 Management Accounts, which were scrutinised by the Finance & Resources Committee at their meeting on 10 March. It was reported that whilst fee income is £200k below budget, expenditure savings have resulted in an operating deficit of £60k below budget with the EBITDA £92k below budget.</p>	

	<p>RHACC's financial health rating is currently 'requires improvement', as budgeted, however this score will improve as a result of the Treasury approving the 3-year repayment plan for the £1.8 million overpayment from the ESFA, which moves £1.2million of the debt into longer term liabilities. It was noted that a reforecast is being undertaken and this will be incorporated into the February management accounts.</p> <p>In answer to a question from the Chair regarding capital expenditure and IT only spending £8k of a £60k budget, the Director of Finance & Resources indicated that the total budget will be spent during the course of the year and the back-ended spend will only effect cash flow.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Management Accounts for January 2022.</i></p>	
7.	<p><u>TEACHING & LEARNING MATTERS</u> Teaching & Learning Quality Update</p> <p>The Vice Principal presented the Teaching & Learning Quality Update report, informing the Board that whilst work on the Quality Improvement Plan has been impacted by staffing shortages, good progress had been made.</p> <p>In answer to a question from Mr Ware regarding the London Learner Survey, the Vice Principal indicated that the GLA survey seeks the views of students both at the start and end of their course to assess the impact of adult learning, particularly around soft outcomes. A concerted campaign has resulted in a 30% completion rate, higher than other Colleges. The survey does not provide individual college results so RHACC is only able to access info from the survey at a sector wide level.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Teaching & Learning Quality Update.</i></p>	
8.	<p><u>HILLCROFT CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>The Director of Finance & Resources provided a verbal update on the Hillcroft Capital Development, informing the Board that the DfE are yet to announce the results of the capital funding bid. Forty-four objections to the scheme have been received by the Council to date, with a lot of activity on social media in relation to the ecology and archaeology of the site. Social media is being monitored by the RHACC marketing team and decisions regarding if and when to respond are being considered. The frequently-asked-questions section of the consultation website will be updated to reflect the concerns expressed. Details of the objections will be passed to the College's planning consultant by the Council as they are not visible to the public. The Director of Finance & Resources added that the Hillcroft Open Day on 14 June will also be used as a public consultation event with the ecologists and tree specialists in attendance.</p> <p>Ms Rachlin asked whether individual objectors would be responded to. The Principal reported that neighbours who had contacted the consultation team directly had been met with onsite. Many residents had been mistaken about the location of the proposed college building and the residential block. Social media commentators will be directed to the consultation website. The Capital Project Steering Group will be kept updated regarding local objections. Weekly meetings are being held between management and the project team.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the Hillcroft Capital Development update.</i></p>	
9.	<p><u>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE</u> Risk Register and Action Plan</p> <p>The Director of Finance & Resources presented the Risk Register and Action Plan, previously circulated to the Audit Committee for their comments, which were included. The finance and resources related risks were reviewed by the Committee at its meeting on 10 March.</p>	

	<p>The Director of Finance & Resources highlighted the change to the risk scoring of Risk 15: <i>Cut or changes in government funding for adult provision related to potential clawback of funding as result of DfE review of Residential funding</i> which reduced in score from high to medium. The additional audit of 2017/18 residential funding has resulted in a recommended clawback of £60k for that year, and a total clawback of £190k. A final value and potential repayment plan will be discussed with the ESFA. If the ESFA pursue clawback, RHACC will request that the debt is added to the 3-year repayment plan for the overpayment of funding. In answer to a question from the Chair regarding agreement with the audit findings, the Principal noted that the ESFA have not responded to RHACC's representation as to why 2017/18 should not be audited. Other residential IALs have received clawback demands of several million pounds.</p> <p>It was noted that the Risk Register and Action Plan would be refreshed to link it to the objectives within the Strategic Plan.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Heat Map and Risk Register & Action Plan.</i></p>	
10.	<p>ITEMS TO APPROVE Freedom of Information Policy</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Freedom of Information Policy.</i></p> <p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy It was suggested and agreed that the name of the Quality & Standards Committee Chair within the Roles and Responsibilities section on page 8 of the Policy should be removed and contact solely made via the Clerk.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy subject to the change above.</i></p>	Principal
11.	<p>ITEMS TO NOTE Programme of meetings 2022/23</p> <p><i>The Board approved the programme of meetings for 2022/23 subject to the change of one typographical error.</i></p>	
12.	<p>MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES a) Quality & Standards Committee – 9 March 2022</p> <p><i>The Board noted the minutes of the Quality & Standards Committee on 9 March 2022.</i></p> <p>b) Finance & Resources – 10 March 2022 Ownership of the Risk Register and Action Plan was clarified; it is written by management, scrutinised and recommended for approval by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board.</p> <p><i>The Board noted the minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee on 10 March 2022.</i></p>	
13.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS Appointment of new Governors The Chair informed the Board that the Search & Governance Committee had interviewed five potential Governors and three were being recommended for appointment, Claire O'Donnell, John Riglin and Renuka Fernando. The Search & Governance Committee will</p>	

	<p>agree their Committee appointments until the end of this academic year, before appointments for the 2022/23 academic year are made in June. Governors were asked to let the Chair know if they wished to change their Committee appointments.</p> <p><i>The Board approved the appointment of Ms O'Donnell, Mr Riglin and Ms Fernando.</i></p> <p>Farewell to Farah Rachlin The Chair thanked Ms Rachlin for her service to Hillcroft College and subsequently RHACC as Chair of the Quality & Standards Committee and as Vice Chair, and for her commitment to women's education and equality, diversity and inclusion. Ms Rachlin thanked the management team for the support they had provided her.</p>	All
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The meeting ended at approximately 6.45 pm.