

RICHMOND & HILLCROFT ADULT & COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MINUTES

of the meeting of the Board of Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College
held at 6.00pm Wednesday 3 April 2019 at Parkshot

- Present: Ms Louise Fluker, Chair
Mr Mark Albrow, Lead Governor for Safeguarding/Prevent and Learner Involvement
Mr Richard Brewster, Audit Committee Chair
Ms Helen Darracott
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal
Prof. Andrew George, Quality & Standards Committee Chair
Prof. Linda Jones
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: Mr Neil Wallbank, Director of Finance & Resources and Clerk (DoF&R)
Ms Gaynor Bray, Vice Principal, Teaching & Learning (VPT&L)
Ms Louise Fournier, Minute Taker

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2018

It was noted that Prof. Linda Jones had been omitted from the list of attendees in error. The minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 13 December 2018 were approved as an accurate record subject to the above amendment being made.

The Board approved the minutes.

3. MATTERS ARISING

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

4. MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES

- a) Search & Governance Committee (27 February 2019)
- b) Audit Committee (7 March 2019): Following a question from a governor, the DoF&R outlined that there was no funding impact resulting from the KPMG funding audit undertaken during September – November 2018. Recommendations in the report were of a procedural nature.
- c) Quality & Standards Committee (14 March 2019): A governor noted that he was pleased that there are plans for the Board to have more discussions around curriculum issues.
- d) Finance & Resources Committee (19 March 2019)

The Board noted the minutes of the four committees.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared an interest in Item 11, paper 11d.

6. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT – March 2019**

The Principal presented her report as at March 2019. She highlighted that the fall in learner numbers is being experienced by other IALs and that there is also a fall in achievement of the AEB allocations nationally.

In response to a question from a governor regarding steps being taken to reverse the trend for declining learner numbers, the Principal explained that the course guide is being issued earlier than in previous years and a new specific Access Course Guide is being produced. There will also be specific guides for Adults with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities; Basic Skills and ESOL. The curriculum teams are also working with marketing on dedicated marketing plans.

In response to a question from a governor regarding the declining number of residential learners, the Principal explained that, in the past, there was a requirement that a learner had to be 'residential' in order to be accepted on a course. If places remained vacant on a course, they were then offered to non-residential learners a week before the start of the course.

Some learners would sign up as 'residential' to obtain a place but would not necessarily use the accommodation. This requirement has now been removed.

A governor noted that it will be important to assess and understand the impact of learners not being resident on retention and achievement rates. In addition, the Board will also need to consider the proposed new build at Hillcroft in the context of the reduction in residential learner numbers.

The Principal stated that the outcomes of residential and non-residential learners will be monitored. Learners will also be consulted on their needs with regard to residential learning. This information will inform capital development plans.

The Principal informed the Board that the AEB funding bid to the GLA submitted in December has not been selected to go through to the final round of the assessment. The College has challenged the decision with the GLA and is seeking further clarification. The outcome of the capital bid to the GLA for the Hillcroft re-development will hopefully be announced by 12 April.

The Principal outlined that Richmond and Wandsworth Councils have been unable to deliver their adult community learning contract and have requested assistance from the College to do so. The College is discussing with the Council ways in which it can help.

In response to a question from a governor regarding the potential loss of income of £250k per annum from the rental of space to Deer Park School, the Principal and the DoF&R confirmed that a meeting had recently been held with Deer Park School and representatives from the DfE. The school is now likely to be in occupation until summer 2020 and has requested additional space from the College to accommodate growing numbers.

The Board noted the Principal's Report for March 2019.

In response to a question from a governor about two learner complaints, the Chair of the Q&S Committee, who is chairing an appeal from one of the complainants, confirmed that both complaints are yet to be resolved. Management was asked to consider the potential impact of complaints on the reputation of the college.

7. **AUDIT MATTERS**

a) **Heat Map, Risk Register and Action Plan**

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the Risk Register and Action Plan and accompanying Heat Map.

A governor suggested that risks 11 and 12, relating to the risks of network failure and risks of cyber-attack, could be combined. It was agreed that the Audit Committee would consider this issue for the next draft of the risk register.

DoF&R

The Board requested that there should be a presentation from the Head of IT in addition to presentations from the Heads of Schools.

The Board agreed with the F&R Committee request that the potential loss of income from the Deer Park School should be added to the next version of the risk register and that Risk 8 relating to the Annex capital works will be removed from the register.

DoF&R

Subject to the above points the Board agreed the Risk Register and Action Plan and the accompanying Heat Map.

8. **FINANCE AND RESOURCE MATTERS**

a) Management Accounts – January 2019 (including revised budget)

The DoF&R presented the Management Accounts for January 2019, highlighting a surplus at the end of January of £18k, which was £49k better than budget. Income is down by £159k but this is offset by reduced expenditure of £208k

The ESFA financial health grade based on the January 2019 management accounts is 'Outstanding'. The DoF&R explained that the College is currently operating on the boundary between 'Good' and 'Outstanding'

In response to a question from a governor x x x x xx (redacted)

In response to a question from the Chair, x x x x x((redacted)

The DoF&R outlined the revised budget for 2018/19 included in the management accounts and the reasons for the variations. The revised budget results in a financial health grade of 'Outstanding' as was the case with the original budget. The site at Parkshot was revalued as at the date of merger which has resulted in an increased depreciation charge and therefore movement in the deficit, but this does not affect EBITDA and the financial health grading of the College.

The Board noted the Management Accounts for January 2019 and approved the revised budget for 2018/19

b) Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Financial Health Letter and ESFA Financial Health Benchmarks

- i. The DoF&R presented the Financial Health Letter recently received from the ESFA (dated 21 March 2019) which showed the College as having 'Outstanding' financial health based on the financial plan submitted to the ESFA in July 2018 and the financial statements for 2018/19.
- ii. The ESFA Financial Dashboard which accompanies the financial Health Letter was noted.

The Board noted the ESFA Financial Health Letter and Financial Health Benchmarks.

c) Staff Survey 2018

The Principal explained the context of the survey and its role in providing a benchmark for future staff development work. Although the negative tone of some responses could be attributed to the unsettling effect of merger, it was important to engage and respond to staff feedback. Staff reported that they found workloads to be challenging. Therefore, management are conducting a consultation on workloads and means of addressing this. This has been discussed with staff and the Staff Forum. The Principal would respond to staff regarding their feedback and would then communicate proposed changes by the end of the summer term for implementation in September 2019.

Governors considered that the report was not easy to follow and did not provide clear information.

A governor asked about communication with the sessional teacher workforce. The Principal explained that an intended outcome of the workload consultation is to ensure that Programme Managers have appropriate capacity to effectively direct and support variable hours teachers.

In response to a question from a governor, the Staff Governor confirmed that the workload consultation meetings were a positive development as staff felt that they had 'freedom of speech' and were being given an opportunity for their voice to be heard.

Following suggestions from the governors, the Principal agreed that the format of the report and the survey would be revised for the current year. A governor suggested that some questions are kept the same every year and that some new and topical questions be introduced each year.

The Board asked to be updated as to the outcome of the consultation and especially improvements to communication with sessional teachers.

The Board noted the Staff Survey 2018 and the actions proposed by management.

d) Approach to Fundraising and Fundraising Proposal

The Principal presented a paper on fundraising and a proposal that has been received from x x x x. The Chair of F&R explained that the Committee had reviewed the proposal at its last meeting and was seeking recommendations on the way forward or if there was a view that fundraising would have little success at the College. The Chair of Quality & Standards outlined his experience of fundraising in his previous role in HE and that he was sceptical of what could be achieved. He would contact his previous colleague for recommendations of potential fundraisers.

The Board agreed that further research was required to identify a consultant with good connections and a proven track record of raising funds for a college similar to RHACC.

e) Update on Hillcroft Capital Development

The DoF&R provided a brief update on the current position of the bid for capital funds to the GLA and that the 2nd pre-planning application has been submitted to Kingston Council.

The Board noted the oral update on Hillcroft Capital Development.

9. **TEACHING & LEARNING MATTERS**

a) Teaching and Learning Quality Report

The VPT&L introduced the report and the input into it from the Q&S Committee. Although retention is generally extremely good across the board there are a few areas e.g. Accountancy that require improvement and are subject to management review.

The Chair of Q&S outlined that the Committee had reviewed the report and that there has been good improvement since the previous year, especially in the Hillcroft Women's education offer.

Adult attendance can be negatively affected by work patterns and caring responsibilities. Therefore, RHACC has a process for enabling learners unable to attend to catch up rather than applying a disciplinary sanction. However, more work needs to be done to record this catch up as if a learner is just marked as absent the attendance data can inaccurately be correlated with poor learner engagement with their studies.

The Board noted the Teaching and Learning Quality Report.

b) Learner Feedback and Involvement

The Principal introduced the annual learner feedback and involvement report (paper 9c) but stressed that it is important to focus on the 'Tell Us What You Think' (TUWYT) sessions and the summary of issues outlined in paper 9d.

Whilst the governors appreciated the transparency in papers 9c and 9d, they expressed concerns at the volume of complaints in Art and Design, a subject area that constitutes 40.1% of RHACC fee income. The governors also expressed concern at the low satisfaction levels reported by learners in the Tell Us What You Think sessions in March. The Chair noted that management at a lower level need to be more effective in their

roles. Art & Design generates a significant amount of income and therefore learners in those areas need to receive appropriate service.

A governor asked whether learner feedback will be shared with staff. The Principal confirmed that feedback had already been shared but that information had been anonymised as appropriate.

Governors acknowledged that there were also positive messages coming from the TUWYT sessions and that the paper was transparent and provided good feedback.

The Principal outlined that an action column would be added to the report for the next meeting and that feedback on actions will be communicated to learners at forums during summer term.

The Board noted the Annual Learner Feedback and Involvement Report and the feedback from the TUWYT sessions, and the remedial actions proposed by Management.

10. **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE QUALITY STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Review of provision for learners from 16-18 years

The VPT&L introduced the report on the review of provision for 16-18 year olds that has been recommended for approval by the Q&S Committee.

The Board approved the proposal as recommended by the Quality & Standards Committee that RHACC cease to enrol learners aged 18 or under aside from the stated exceptions with effect from the 2019/20 academic year.

11. **RECOMEMNDATIONS FROM THE SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

a) Remuneration Code

The Chair outlined that the Search & Governance Committee has reviewed the need to adopt the Remuneration Code and the revised AoC Code of Good Governance which necessitates changes of RHACC'S current processes. To ensure compliance with the Remuneration Code and the revised AoC Code of Good Governance, the Committee recommends establishing a Remuneration Sub-Committee of the Search and Governance Committee, which will not be chaired by the Chair of the Board.

The Board approved the adoption of the Colleges' Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code, the adoption of the revised AoC Code of Good Governance and the establishment of a Remuneration Sub-Committee of the Search & Governance Committee to oversee Senior Post Holders Remuneration.

b) Programme of Meetings 2019/2020

The Board noted the revised draft Programme of Meetings 2019 /2020

c) Recruitment of new governors – update

The Chair provided an update on the search for new governors and that the Search and Governance Committee had recently interviewed two candidates. Unfortunately, the Committee did not consider either of them suitable for appointment.

There was some discussion around what further actions could be taken to attract new governors. Following a suggestion from the governors, the Principal agreed to expand the outreach work on the recruitment of new governors, including asking the IAL network, and exploring other trustee networks. Governors' requested that a short fact-sheet about the College and the role of a governor at RHACC be produced that can be used to attract new governors and used at events such as the Richmond May Fair.

Principal and Clerk

The Board noted the update on the recruitment of new governors.

d) Extend the Term of Office of the Chair

The Chair left the meeting and Prof. Linda Jones (Vice Chair) took over as Chair of the meeting. The Vice Chair explained the process that the Search & Governance

Committee had adopted in a review of the Chair's term of office and possible extension to October 2020. She also outlined that the Search and Governance Committee plan to commence succession planning for a new Chair at its October 2019 meeting.

It was suggested by a governor that the succession planning and search for a new Chair may need to commence earlier if it is planned to appoint an external Chair. It was agreed to place this as an agenda item for the June meeting of the Committee.

The Board approved the extension of the Term of Office of the Chair to October 2020.

12. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

A governor asked if any dates have been set for Hillcroft centenary celebrations. The Principal replied that this had not yet been done and it was agreed that it would be an agenda item on the next Search & Governance Committee.

Clerk

The meeting closed at 8.30pm