**RICHMOND AND HILLCROFT ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

**MINUTES**

of the meeting of the Board of

Richmond and Hillcroft Adult and Community College

held at 6:00pm on Thursday 3 April 2025 at Parkshot (RBS 22)

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| Present: | Ms Sharon Raj, Chair  Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal  Mr Matthew Pope  Mr John Riglin  Mr Nick Jones  Ms Claire O’Donnell  Dr Elaine Hawkins  Mr Graham Tharp, Staff Governor  Ms Sue Preston  Mr Robert Dykes  Ms Jane O’Shea  Ms Emily Frank |
| In attendance:  Apologies: | Ms Haifa Abdul Amir, Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality (VP, C&Q)  Mr Neil Wallbank, Vice Principal, Finance & Resources (VP, F&R)  Ms Laura Morgan, Clerk to the Governors  Apologies were received from Ms Rosa Chu and Dr Siu Wo Im |

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

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|  | **GOVERNOR TRAINING SESSION – COURSE COSTINGS**  The Vice Principal (Finance and Resources) delivered a training session for Governors on the course costing process. This was in response to a request by several Governors for additional training on this topic made during the Summer 2024 Governor 1-1s.  Governors noted the following:   * The course costing process is completed by Programme Managers using 4Cast software. It takes account of all course costs including teacher pay, materials, resources, assessor costs on vocational courses etc. A course contribution level is targeted at approximately 50% * RHACC’s funding allocation from the GLA is £4.9m. £1.6m of this is for non-accredited Tailored Learning. This covers the cost of the total Guided Learning Hours (GLH) of Tailored Learning provision. * Assumptions need to be made about the profile of a course including how many co/fully funded learners, how many concessions and how many fee-paying learners are likely to attend. This prediction is based on previous years’ enrolment patterns. * Due to funding cuts in 2025/26, there is a need to increase the contribution level of all courses and to increase fee income. * Governors questioned the system for ensuring that courses are viable to run. It was explained that there is weekly monitoring of courses with low numbers and at risk of closure. The aim is to close a course no later than 3 days before it is due to start. However, experience has shown that there are some courses where learners enrol on the first day. * Late enrolments are less problematic and therefore permitted on non-accredited courses. Late enrolment is not permitted on qualification provision as it can impact on achievement. * Each department has an established Head and Programme Manager. Foundation Learning, Business and IT have established teachers, and it is important to ensure that they are utilized effectively. In some departments (for example Art) the curriculum is very broad and so uses a lot of variable hours teachers who are very specialised so may only teach for a small number of hours. The rate for VH staff includes half an hour planning and preparation for each hour of teaching.   The Vice Principal (Finance and Resources) was thanked for a very useful and informative presentation. |  |
|  | **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  Governors were welcomed to the meeting. Emily Frank, new Independent Governor, was introduced and welcomed to her first Board meeting.  There were apologies for absence from Rosa Chu and Siu Wo (Tarloff) Im. |  |
|  | **MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2024**  The minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2024 were approved.  It was agreed that the highlighted areas in the minutes would be redacted from publication. |  |
|  | **MATTERS ARISING**  All matters arising were covered in the agenda. |  |
|  | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  There were no declarations of interest. |  |
|  | **PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**   1. **Principal’s Report –March 2025**   Governors received the Principal’s report for March 2025.  The notification of GLA funding cuts has now been received. There will be a 1.65% cut each year in 2025/26 and 2026/27. This applies to all areas of GLA funding except Free Courses for Jobs (which are usually specific Level 3 courses).  In light of these reductions RHACC is reviewing costs by ensuring that minimum class sizes are set and that all established staff are effectively utilized. In addition, the staffing structure is being reviewed to evaluate whether further efficiencies can be made. It was noted, however, that the staffing model is already very lean.  Governors questioned which of the financial KPIs in the Principal’s report were the priorities to focus on. Attention should be given to the cash in hand figure, the fee income and the EBITDA which are the KPIs that the Further Education Commissioner and other stakeholders focus on. Governors noted that, notwithstanding the challenging financials, RHACC provides a good quality of education.  The Principal was thanked for a very clear and informative report.  ***The Board noted the Principal’s Report for March 2025*** |  |
|  | **TEACHING AND LEARNING MATTERS**  a) **Spring Term Teaching and Learning Quality Report**  Governors receive the Spring Term Teaching and Learning Quality Report which showed a very positive picture. Governors noted, and discussed, the following:   * Enrolments are on track for both accredited and non-accredited courses. * Attendance is very near the college target. * Achievement rates are looking positive although it is still very early in the year. * There is a much higher number of teachers accessing CPD, but training needs to be more targeted. Governors queried how the improvement in CPD attendance had been achieved. This has resulted from improved communication with teachers and better recordkeeping. However, it is recognised that there is a need to target the minority of teachers who have not attended any training and to understand why. Governors recommended that management continue to tighten reporting practices so that the distinction between enrolments and individuals was always clear. * The OTLA system has been reviewed. Most teachers will have been observed by the end of the Spring term. Learning Support Assistants will also be observed. * The use of the RARPA system by teachers to monitor learner progress has also improved but there is still a need for consistency in some areas e.g. Art and Design. * The Quality Review week involved two external consultants who are Ofsted inspectors to ensure managers’ judgements are objective. The report is being reviewed by management before it is shared with teachers. The report will be shared with Q&S Committee and actions identified will be used to update the QIP. Governors from Quality and Standards Committee also participated in Quality Week and felt that it was very useful in understanding the quality process used at RHACC.   The Vice-Principal (Curriculum and Quality) was thanked for a very useful report and was asked to pass the Board’s thanks to Elina and Ivana.  The Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee particularly thanked the team for the thorough report on underachieving ethnic groups. This demonstrated the commitment to ensuring all learner groups achieve well and showed the EDI Policy in action.  ***The Board noted the Spring Term Teaching and Learning Quality Report*** |  |
|  | **HILLCROFT UPDATE**  ***[Item Redacted]*** |  |
|  | **FINANCE AND RESOURCES MATTERS**   1. **Management Accounts – January 2025**   Governors received the Management Accounts for January 2025 which had previously been shared with Finance and Resources Committee. The following points were noted:   * Income is down. This is mostly due to the fall in tuition fees, however, there have been some savings in pay and non-pay costs. There is a shortfall of approximately £200k against what was predicted for this time of the year. * There is now a more pro-active process for closing courses which have low numbers. * Cash reserves remain a concern. The GLA funding allocation for 2025/26 has been cut by approximately £80k and the ESFA allocation by approximately 6%, but the 16-18 allocation from the ESFA will increase by around £70k. This gives a total reduction of approximately £50k. * Increased Employer National Insurance Contributions start from April 2025. The full year cost of this is approximately £180k however it is still uncertain how much of this the DfE will fund. It is anticipated that there will be a 15-20% shortfall which will be clarified in May (with the funded amount paid in September). This makes budget planning very difficult. * Governors noted that there will need to be two budget models created for 2025/26: one which includes Hillcroft and one without. The timing of a sale of Hillcroft is very important. The CPSG will meet on 7 May 2025. * Governors queried the variable-hour teacher costs, noting that these are exceeding the budget. These costs include the costs for training so are naturally boosted when RHACC increases CPD requirements.   ***The Board noted the Management Accounts – January 2025***   1. **Financial Recovery Plan**   There has been good progress on achieving the aims of the Financial Recovery Plan. This is mostly due to a vacancy in the estates team and a more stringent system for closing courses with low numbers. There have also been grants achieved from Google (for AI development) and Family Action (a charity which funds learners and resources).  Governor’s queried whether these grants were one-offs or might become reoccurring. It is prudent to consider them as one-offs, though Management will attempt to renew successful grants wherever possible.  ***The Board noted the Financial Recovery Plan***  **c) RHACC Fee Rates 2025/2026**  RHACC Fee Rates for 2025/2026 were presented to the Finance and Resources Committee in March 2025. These have been benchmarked against other similar providers and RHACC is in the mid-point (South Thames College tend to be at the lower end and City Lit is at the higher end).  Concessions were reduced from 50% to 30% last year and this appears to have had little impact on enrolments. It was felt that previously RHACC had been very generous in terms of concessions and that this was now in line with other providers.  There is a need to increase and retain fee paying learners.  Governors queried whether it was possible that students were less price-sensitive than the fee rates were implying, noting that several learners encountered during the TUWYT week had been RHACC students for many years. Management explained that price sensitivity tends to vary by course and many learners now seem to be purchasing less e.g. enrolling on only one course instead of two or more.  The Finance and Resources Committee had agreed some flexibility in the process for setting fees as some curriculum areas may be able to accommodate larger increases than others. Focus groups have previously been surveyed on how much they may be prepared to pay for courses, but the results were often inconclusive.  It was agreed that, given the need to retain existing learners / increase new learner numbers and the mixed evidence on student price-sensitivity, RHACC should proceed cautiously with price increases as envisaged in the fee rate proposal.  ***The Board approved the RHACC Fee Rates 2025/2026*** |  |
|  | **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**   1. **Risk Register and Audit Plan**   **i) Heat Map**  **ii) Risk Register and Action Plan**  The Board received the Heat Map and the Risk Register and Action Plan. It was noted that the key movement related to Risk 16 (2024/2025 budget is not delivered as planned which could have subsequent implications for 2025/26 and beyond)  Mitigations against these risks are detailed and updated in the Risk Register.  ***The Board approved the Risk Register and Action Plan*** |  |
|  | **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**  a) (i) Extension of Nick Jones term of office until July 2025 – approved by Written Resolution in March 2025.  ***The Board noted the extension of Nick Jones term of office until July 2025***    (ii) Appointment of Rob Dykes as Lead Governor for Health and Safety Improvement  ***The Board approved the appointment of Rob Dykes as Lead Governor for Health and Safety Improvement.***  Nick Jones and Rob Dykes were both thanked for their ongoing commitment to the College.   1. Recruitment Update   There have been two applicants for the staff governor role and interviews will be held in May 2025. There is currently an active advertisement for an Independent Governor which is on the RHACC website and live with several other organisations.  ***The Board noted the recruitment update for governors*** |  |
|  | **ITEMS TO BE APPROVED (will not be discussed unless a governor requests it)**  **a) Equality and Diversity Policy**  ***The Board approved the Equality and Diversity Policy***  **b) Health and Safety Policy**  The Health and Safety Policy will follow for approval via Written Resolution  **c) Exams Policy**  ***The Board approved the Exams Policy***  **d) Policy and Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Expression**  ***The Board approved the Policy and Freedom of Speech and Expression***  **e) Code of Conduct for Governors**  It was noted that this is a new document and that the signature page will be completed alongside the declarations on an annual basis.  ***The Board approved the Code of Conduct for Governors***  **f) Procedure for Complaints against the Governing Body**  ***The Board approved the Procedure for Complaints against the Governing Body***  **g) CPSG Terms of Reference**  ***The Board approved the CPSG Terms of Reference***  **h) RHACC Anti-fraud Policy 2025-2028**  ***The Board approved the RHACC Anti-fraud Policy 2025-2028***  **i) Data Protection Policy and Procedures**  ***The Board approved the Data Protection Policy and Procedures***  **j) Freedom of Information Policy and Procedure**  ***The Board approved the Freedom of Information Policy and Procedure***  **k) Procedure for Resignation, Disqualification, Suspension and Removal of governors**  ***The Board approved the Procedure for Resignation, Disqualification, Suspension and Removal of Governors***  **l) Accountability Statement**  ***The Board approved the Accountability Statement***  The Chair directed Governor attention to items e, f and k which relate specifically to the functioning of governance in the College, and expectations regarding Governor behaviour. |  |
| **12.** | **MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES**   * Search and Governance Committee – 27 February 2025 * Capital Projects Steering Group – 10 March 2025 * Finance and Resources Committee – 13 March 2025 * Audit Committee – 6 March 2025 * Quality and Standards Committee – 20 March 2025 * Notes from Strategy Day   ***The Board noted the minutes of the Standing Committees.*** |  |
| **13.** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**  The dates of future meetings were confirmed as:  Thursday 10th July 2025 6pm in RBS 22  Governors were thanked for taking the time to set up their RHACC email addresses. During the summer term all governor communication will be sent via these email addresses including access to GVO.  Tell Us What You Think week was felt to be a very valuable process. The visibility of governors was appreciated by learners and staff. The feedback from TUWYT week will be included in reports during the summer term, however feedback forms and boxes are available all year round.  Governors are also encouraged to attend the learner awards when the date is confirmed.  Laura Morgan was congratulated on passing her FEGP Award. |  |