

**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 12 December 2024 at Parkshot (RBS 22)

Present: Ms Sharon Raj, Chair  
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal  
Mr Matthew Pope  
Mr John Riglin  
Ms Claire O'Donnell  
Dr Elaine Hawkins  
Mr Graham Tharp, Staff Governor  
Ms Sue Preston  
Mr Robert Dykes  
Ms Rosa Chu  
Dr Siu Wo Im  
Ms Jane O'Shea

In attendance: 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: Apologies were received from Nick Jones

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

1.	<b><u>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b> Governors were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies were received from Nick Jones.	
2.	<b><u>MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2024</u></b> The minutes of the meeting held on 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 were approved with one minor amendment – a meeting end time to be added.  It was agreed that the highlighted areas in the minutes, plus everything except the title and action of Item 9b (Whistleblowing and FOI Report 2023/24), would be redacted for publication on the website.	Clerk  Clerk
3.	<b><u>MATTERS ARISING</u></b> Updating the Instruments and Articles – RHACC has received conflicting advice from external counsel regarding the updates requested to the Instruments and Articles. It has now been requested that one person is assigned to provide the relevant legal advice.	
4.	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></b> There were no declarations of interest	
5.	<b><u>PRINCIPAL'S REPORT</u></b> a) <b>Principal's Report –December 2024</b> Governors received the Principal's report for December 2024 and the following points were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There has been no confirmation yet from the GLA regarding the possibility of additional funding.</li><li>• The ESFA have not yet confirmed that they will agree to pause repayments until the sale income from Hillcroft is received. RHACC have currently suspended repayments until a decision is confirmed.</li><li>• The first meeting of the new staff forum was held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2024. Governors asked about staff representation, the purpose of the forum, the frequency of meetings, and how useful management had found the meeting. The first meeting included 8 representatives from across the college, including business support, academic and variable hours staff. The forum allows for consultation between staff and management and meetings will take place termly. The agenda included flexible working, annual leave policies and the staff governor role. There had been some limited interest in the role and interested individuals may contact Graham Tharp for an informal discussion. Management noted that the forum was likely to become more useful over time as forum practicalities and expectations become embedded.</li></ul> <b><i>The Board noted the Principal's Report for December 2024</i></b>	
6.	<b><u>TEACHING AND LEARNING REPORT</u></b> a) <b>The College 2023/24 Self Assessment of Performance (SAR)</b> Governors received a copy of the College 2023/20204 Self Assessment of Performance (SAR). This has been reviewed by Quality and Standards Committee on two occasions and its feedback incorporated. Committee members noted that this was an excellent report which reflects the success of the College. It was evident that the SAR is built up from individual areas to reflect the whole College and this has led to a very clear and informative report. The following revisions were noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Behaviour and Attitudes grade has improved to Outstanding (1) and the report has been amended to reflect this. The evidence was reviewed in line with the criteria from the inspection framework and this improvement was justified. The improvement in attendance data over time (including since the December 2023 Ofsted inspection) has been highlighted.</li><li>• Curriculum enrichment occurs on both a whole college (e.g. an exhibition) and a curriculum area/department level (rather than by individual teachers), however, this needs to be more formally tracked which is why it is included in the QIP.</li></ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from external review and moderation was reflected in the report. External peer review is not formally required, but is considered good practice. The peer review group included Redbridge and Westminster adult learning services and an Ofsted inspector.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Board approved the College 2023/24 Self Assessment of Performance (SAR)</i></b></p> <p><b>b) RHACC Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25</b> It was noted that this was a working document and that KPIs will be confirmed in January. The SAR is an Annual document and the QIP is updated each term and monitored by Quality and Standards Committee.</p> <p>In response to questions from Governors, Management explained that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The QIP emphasises the need to create access to work experience for some learners; a work experience strategy is required to identify the relevant courses and learners. Not all qualifications require learners to undertake work experience to achieve their qualification.</li> <li>The Quality and Standards Committee will continue to monitor employer engagement/involvement and there are two tabs on the QIP linked to this area.</li> <li>Enrolment is considered a leadership and management issue as this is linked to how resource is allocated – for example the development of the website and recruitment of staff.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Board approved the RHACC Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25</i></b></p> <p><b>c) Autumn Term Teaching and Learning Quality Report</b> Governors noted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enrolments are broadly on track to meet targets.</li> <li>Although attendance is slightly below targets it is expected to improve as the term progresses. Attendance issues, particularly amongst learners with caring responsibilities are being addressed.</li> <li>The Curriculum Planning process is expected to be fully completed by May 2025.</li> <li>There has been more CPD available, and more staff have been targeted for training by i) identifying and mandating training, ii) offering hybrid options, and iii) ensuring that the CPD options are referenced in development plans.</li> <li>Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) is ongoing. Currently 43% of the lessons seen have been judged as Exceeding Standard and 57% as Meet Standard. There have been no sessions judged as Requires Further Development.</li> <li>The response rate for the London Learner Survey has improved significantly to 45% but this is still below the minimum target (of 50%) set by the GLA</li> </ul> <p>Governors questioned the reasons behind low attendance and low enrolments in Business Studies and Management. Management noted that the data was heavily affected by a high proportion of students with caring responsibilities on one course and several other courses being distance learning with flexible start dates. It was noted that attendance has also been reviewed at the Quality and Standards Committee.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Autumn Term Teaching and Learning Quality Report</i></b></p> <p>The Board extended its thanks to Haifa Abdul-Amir, Ivana Vasic and Elina Kumpina for all their hard work in this area.</p>	
7.	<p><b><u>HILLCROFT UPDATE</u></b> [Item Redacted]</p>	
8.	<p><b><u>FINANCE AND RESOURCES MATTERS</u></b></p> <p><b>a) Management Accounts – September 2024</b> Governors received the Management Accounts for September 2024 which had been reviewed by the Finance and Resources Committee in November 2024. It was noted that these are also consistent with the Management Accounts for October 2024. The dashboard often looks more positive earlier in the year and Financial Health was judged to be Good at this point.</p> <p>Tuition fee income continues to be the main challenge, however, this is offset by savings on staff costs and non-pay costs. Tuition fees are likely to remain below budget due to changes to GLA funding rules that have resulted in a limited allocation which is accessed by more learners.</p> <p>Governors questioned the impact of the reduction of concessionary fees from 50% to 30%. Although there have been some complaints there is no noticeable difference in the number of learners with concessions compared to previous years.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Management Accounts – September 2024</i></b></p> <p><b>b) Financial Statements and Regularity Audits for 2023/2024</b></p> <p><b>i. RHACC Post Audit Management Report 2024</b> There was a joint meeting of the Audit and Finance and Resources Committees, also attended by the Chair, on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024 which included a presentation from Buzzacott LLP of the RHACCC Post Audit Management Report 2024. It was felt that overall this was a very pleasing report.</p> <p>Governor attention was drawn to the outstanding items on P5 and the final GLA reconciliation statement is still awaited. This was a clean, unqualified audit opinion and there were no significant findings that arose – the two items from 2023 have now been cleared.</p> <p>The bulk of the audit adjustments are due to the Hillcroft decision and costs accrued over the previous five years as a result of the project. These also include a pensions adjustment. The Chair highlighted the information on Pages 8 and 13 relating to Going Concern for governor attention.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the RHACC Post Audit Management Report 2024</i></b></p> <p><b>ii. Letter of Representation</b> the Auditors require the GLA funding reconciliation be received before the Chair can sign the Letter of Representation. <b><i>The Board approved the Letter of Representation for signature by the Chair.</i></b></p> <p><b>iii. RHACC Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2023/24</b> The Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire is completed each year and this was shared with Audit Committee in November 2024. The Auditors are proposing an unqualified opinion.</p>	

	<p><b><i>The Board approved the RHACC Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire and delegated signing authority to the Chair and Principal.</i></b></p> <p><b>iv. Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023/2024</b></p> <p>The Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023/24 were shared at the joint Audit and Finance and Resources Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024. Feedback from this meeting has been incorporated in the report. There is further discussion with Buzzacott regarding Going Concern which is detailed on P8 and P40 in accordance with the Accounts Direction. The IME Account includes loss and disposal of assets which includes the writing off of the costs of the Hillcroft project so far. This is at full cost and includes everything which may have to be repaid to the GLA. This report is produced in line with the Companies Act and the Charity Commission regulations. It is a strategic report which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Statement of Corporate Governance signed by the Chair and the Principal</li> <li>• Statements of the Responsibilities of the Board signed by the Chair</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements and delegated signing authority to the Chair and Principal</i></b></p> <p><b>c) Financial Recovery Plan</b></p> <p>Governors received the Financial Recovery Plan which aims to align costs with income and address RHACC's financial sustainability. It is likely that the GLA funding allocation will be exceeded so the curriculum offer is being reviewed to bring it in line with available funding. Governors asked whether this involved course closures that would affect Curriculum Strategy objectives. Management responded that it would involve class closures but not closure of curriculum areas and so would not undermine Curriculum Strategy objectives. The impact of the Hillcroft site sale on the revenue streams, both pay and non-pay is outlined in the report. The cashflow graph assumes £5m capital income in July 2025 however this is ringfenced for capital expenditure and sale related costs. It cannot be used for revenue items. Architects will be asked to complete a feasibility study on the Parkshot site to identify possible further development opportunities. Any future board decision to expand the Parkshot site would be included in an Estates Strategy. Room usage at Parkshot is also being reviewed to provide additional capacity so courses from Hillcroft can be accommodated along with new fee paying courses. Further grant income is being sought e.g. £50k from Google for AI initiatives. There is an anticipated non-pay cost saving of £260k from the closure of the Hillcroft. Governors questioned whether this implied that there had been a deficit from running Hillcroft over the past few years. Management noted that this was not the case as income was generated from Hillcroft too, which means it has broadly broken even. This income will continue to be generated if courses relocate to Parkshot.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Financial Recovery Plan</i></b></p> <p>The Board thanked the Vice-Principal Finance and Resources and the Finance Team for all their hard work in this area.</p>	
9.	<p><b><u>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE</u></b></p> <p><b>a) Audit Committee Annual Report to the Board 2023/2024</b></p> <p>The Audit Committee Annual Report to the Board 2023/24 was discussed at the Audit Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024. Some corrections had been made to the table at the beginning of the report in the version provided to the Board.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Audit Committee Annual Report to the Board 2023/2024</i></b></p> <p><b>b) Internal Audit Plan 2024/25</b></p> <p>The Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25 includes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Financial Controls – with a focus on payroll</li> <li>• Learner Number Systems</li> <li>• IT – with a focus on control of IT assets</li> <li>• External Review of Governance</li> <li>• HR – follow up to 2021 review. It was noted that there has been significant changes in personnel and systems since the previous review.</li> <li>• Health and Safety follow up to the 2024 review.</li> </ul> <p>Recommendations on who should complete these internal audits will be provided to Audit Committee.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Internal Audit Plan 2024/2025</i></b></p> <p><b>c) Risk Register and Audit Plan</b></p> <p><b>i. Heat Map</b></p> <p><b>ii. Risk Register and Action Plan</b></p> <p>A number of the Risks have been changed following discussion at Committee. This is mostly rewording or a change of emphasis but includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk 1 – Inability to pay market rates leads to loss of key staff and difficulties in recruitment.</li> <li>• Risk 3 – There is insufficient evidence that the curriculum makes a 'strong' or 'reasonable' contribution to local skills needs to provide a positive Ofsted grade.</li> <li>• Risk 4 – Course offer and support available not effectively communicated to different learner groups who access funding from difference sources</li> <li>• Risk 6 – Failure to develop the College's own online learning platform leads to employed learners not being able to access learning that suits their work pattern.</li> <li>• Risk 12 – Delay to the timetable for the new website has the potential to cause business disruption.</li> <li>• Risk 13 – Sale of the Hillcroft site does not progress as planned due to the lack of a buyer/Decant to Parkshot encounters problems and additional costs.</li> <li>• Risk 15 – The Parkshot site needs investment to bring it up to a standard that will support outstanding teaching and learning</li> <li>• The previous Risk 15 - Partnership working does not lead to new funding opportunities has been deleted.</li> <li>• Risk 17 – The College suffers an event that has an adverse impact on its reputation/operation</li> </ul> <p>The Heat Map has these changes showing as new risks (as ovals without a corresponding triangle)</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Risk Register and Action Plan</i></b></p>	

	<p><b>d) Appointment of Internal and External Auditors</b></p> <p><b>i. Reappoint RSM for the Key Financial Controls and Learner Number Systems audits, with external specialists appointed for other internal audits</b></p> <p><b>ii. Reappointment of Buzzacott LLP as external auditors</b></p> <p>The reappointment of the Internal and External Auditors was discussed in the Audit Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2024.</p> <p>RSM have been the internal Auditors since 2017. Buzzacott are in the third year of their reappointment after retendering.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Appointment of Internal and External Auditors</i></b></p> <p><b><i>i. RSM for the Key Financial Controls and Learner Number Systems Audits, with external specialists appointed for other internal audits</i></b></p> <p><b><i>ii. Buzzacott LLP as external auditors</i></b></p>	
10.	<p><b><u>GOVERNANCE SELF ASSESSMENT</u></b></p> <p>Governors received a summary of the Governance Self-Assessment Process. All governors were thanked for their engagement in the process.</p> <p>The outcomes were discussed and a grade of Good was agreed.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the Board Self-Assessment Process 2023/2024 and agreed a grade of Good for Governance.</i></b></p>	
11.	<p><b><u>BOARD MEMBERSHIP</u></b></p> <p><b>a) Membership Update</b></p> <p>The Board were informed that Dave Munby had resigned as an Independent Governor with effect from after the Audit Committee meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> November.</p> <p>Governors noted their thanks to Dave for his valuable contribution and a small gift will be sent to him.</p> <p>Following the Health and Safety Audit there will be a new Lead Governor role for Health and Safety Improvement. This role will be filled by a member of the Audit Committee and a role description is being finalised.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the membership update</i></b></p> <p><b>b) Independent Governor Recruitment</b></p> <p>Following a recruitment campaign, including attendance at the Richmond CVS Trustee Recruitment event, three applications were received for the Independent Governor Role. Two were shortlisted by Search and Governance Committee but one candidate later withdrew.</p> <p>Emily Frank was interviewed by a panel from Search and Governance and her appointment as an Independent Governor on the Audit Committee is recommended (subject to the necessary references and checks)</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the appointment of Emily Frank as an Independent Governor subject to the necessary references and checks.</i></b></p> <p><b>c) Staff Governor Recruitment</b></p> <p>The content of the Staff Governor Recruitment Pack was shared. The process of recruiting a second staff governor (to allow for succession planning) will start in January 2025. The role has already been discussed in the staff forum.</p> <p>It was noted that it is important to have the staff perspective on the Board.</p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the recruitment pack for Staff Governor recruitment</i></b></p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p>
12.	<p><b><u>ITEMS TO BE APPROVED (will not be discussed unless a governor requests it)</u></b></p> <p><b>a) Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Procedures 2024/2025</b></p> <p><b><i>The Board approved the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and Procedures 2024/2025</i></b></p> <p><b>b) Annual Safeguarding and Prevent Report 2023/2024</b></p> <p>It was noted that the Lead Governor for Safeguarding had previously been Jane O'Shea but is now Elaine Hawkins. Jane O'Shea confirmed she was happy with the content of the report. Elaine Hawkins has already attended a safeguarding meeting and completed a spot check on the staff database.</p> <p><b><i>The Board considered and noted the Safeguarding and Prevent Report 2023/2024</i></b></p> <p><b>c) Annual Health and Safety Report 2023/2024</b></p> <p><b><i>The Board considered and noted the Annual Health and Safety Report 2023/2024</i></b></p> <p><b>d) Annual HR Report 2023/2024</b></p> <p><b><i>The Board considered and noted the Annual HR Report 2023/2024</i></b></p> <p><b>e) Stakeholder/Learner Feedback Annual Report 2023/2024</b></p> <p>It was noted that the Lead Governor for Learner Involvement had previously been Jane O'Shea but that it was now Tarloff Im with the wider remit of Stakeholder Involvement. Jane O'Shea confirmed that she was happy with the content of the report. Tarloff Im has already attended a learner forum and met with the Head of Quality.</p> <p><b><i>The Board considered and noted the Stakeholder/Learner Feedback Annual Report 2023/2024</i></b></p> <p><b>f) Complaints Against Governors Procedure</b></p> <p>This policy will follow for approval by Written Resolution.</p> <p><b>g) Freedom of Information Requests Policy and Procedures</b></p> <p>This policy will follow for approval by Written Resolution</p> <p><b>h) Data Protection Policy and Procedure</b></p> <p>This policy will follow for approval by Written Resolution</p>	
10.	<p><b><u>MINUTES OF THE STANDING COMMITTEES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Search and Governance Committee – 3 December 2024</li> <li>• Capital Projects Steering Group – 13 November 2024</li> <li>• Finance and Resources Committee – 13 November 2024</li> <li>• Audit Committee – 21 November 2024</li> <li>• Quality and Standards Committee – 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024</li> <li>• Quality and Standards Committee – 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024</li> <li>• Remuneration Sub-Committee – 11 July 2024</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Board noted the minutes of the Standing Committees.</i></b></p>	
12.	<p><b><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></b></p> <p>The dates of future meetings were confirmed as:</p> <p>Board Strategy Day – Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February @ Parkshot</p> <p>Tell Us What You Think Week – w/c 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025</p> <p>Board Meeting – Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025</p>	

	The Chair encouraged governors to participate in the Tell Us What You Think week as it provides a great opportunity to hear directly from students. Some learners prefer to provide feedback in person rather than completing a questionnaire. College staff also appreciate the involvement of governors in the process.	
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The meeting finished at 19:55.