

## GOVERNING BODY

### MINUTES

of the meeting of the Governing Body of Richmond Adult and Community College held at 6.15pm  
Thursday 03 March 2016 in PK9, Parkshot

Present: Ms Louise Fluker, Chair  
Mr Mark Albrow  
Mr Richard Brewster  
Sir Vince Cable  
Mr Kevin Finnigan  
Ms Gabrielle Flint, Principal  
Prof. Andrew George  
Mr Gavin Hardcastle-Jones  
Ms Jane O'Shea  
Ms Amanda Rowlatt CBE  
Dr Michael Sevvitt  
Mr David Sidonio  
Mr William Symington

In attendance: Ms Gaynor Bray, Vice Principal for Curriculum and Learner Services  
Ms Shereen Sameresinghe, Deputy Principal  
Mrs Sara George, Clerk

The meeting remained quorate throughout.

1. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None

2. **MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 10 DECEMBER 2015**

The minutes of the meeting of 10 December 2015 were approved.

**MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY DAY ON 22 JANUARY 2016**

The minutes of the Strategy Day on 22 January 2016 were approved, subject to being marked Clerk as confidential.

**ACTION TRACKER**

The Action Tracker was noted.

3. **MATTERS ARISING**

None

4. **MINUTES OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

***The Governing Body noted the minutes of the following Standing Committees:***

- Joint Audit and Finance & Resources Committee (2 December 2015)
- Quality & Standards Committee (3 December 2015)
- Quality & Standards Committee (10 February 2016)
- Finance & Resources Committee (17 February 2016)
- Audit Committee (18 February 2016)
- Search & Governance Committee (22 February 2016)

5. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Mr Mark Albrow declared an interest, as a trustee of Richmond Homes and Lifestyle Trust, in any items where the proposed Enterprise Hub was due to be discussed, as RHLT is a potential tenant.

Ms Louise Fluker declared an interest, as Chair of Governors, in the Any Other Business item, 'Chairs role'.

## 6. **THE PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Principal presented her report to the Governing Body, and added that the College had just received notification from the Skills Funding Agency that funding for the adult mental health pilot will be extended until July 2016, resulting in a further £30k for RACC.

Richmond Homes and Lifestyle Trust has applied for funding for a staff member to support learners with disabilities to work in the College Shop and the Working Model enterprise scheme, but this has not yet been secured. A job description for this role is currently being drafted.

A meeting will be held with Deer Park School, Bellevue Education Trust and the EFA to negotiate the terms of a further year's rent of the portacabins on RACC land.

### **Enterprise Hub (Confidential)**

#### **Federation and Area Reviews**

The Principal reported that RACC has formally opted in to the adult learning review that will take place concurrently with the South London Area Review. There is still considerable confusion as to how the two reviews will link together; however it was felt that it was better to participate despite the additional work involved as there could be opportunities to promote the important role of adult learning and influence how the devolution of skills funding will be implemented.

In answer to a question regarding the London Skills Vision, the Principal commented that the inclusion of wellbeing outcomes, along with ESOL and LLDD provision in the reviews, was a positive step. The Chair of the Audit Committee reported, from his attendance at the AoC's Governance Summit, that Nick Boles (Minister of State for Skills and Equalities) had wished to protect adult learning and adult apprenticeships. However the Chair understood from the speech that the government wants to see College mergers and not partnerships, and that it expects institutions to act on the recommendations that emerge from the area review process. A sum of money has been put aside at the Treasury to assist with mergers, but the SFA has stated that this is only available as a last resort, will be subject to interest, and no further money will be available at any later date. It was noted that pensions were not mentioned in Mr Boles's presentation, and that this issue may prove the most problematic.

### ***The Governing Body noted the Principal's Report***

## 7. **STRATEGIC PLAN AND ACTION PLAN**

### **Strategic Plan**

The Governing Body approved the draft Strategic Plan at the Strategy Day on 22 January 2016. On page 3 it was noted that Core Beliefs 6 and 7 had been repeated and should be removed.

Principal

Concern was expressed about the number of cash days mentioned on page 16 and the figure will be checked. It was noted that a two sided summary document will be produced for publication.

Deputy  
Principal

### ***The Governing Body approved the Strategic Plan, subject to the drafting amendments mentioned.***

#### **Strategic Plan Implementation Plan**

The Principal reported that the Implementation Plan is showing an improving position, largely due to the increased flexibilities of the new funding regulations, and the extension of the lease of land to Deer Park School. The Implementation Plan will be read by staff, the Skills Funding Agency and the Joint Area Review Delivery Unit (JARU). KPIs for individual departmental development plans will be drawn from this document.

The Chair of the Quality & Standards Committee asked whether the QAA could approve RACC's HE provision as meeting all UK standards by December 2016. The Principal confirmed that the date has been confirmed with the QAA.

A suggestion was made that, on page 7, as well as numbers of attendees as a target for events income should also be included. This was agreed by the Principal and both will be included. A further question was asked about the 'new regulations' mentioned on page 9 in relation to

Principal

learners from Kingston, Wimbledon and Putney. The Principal replied that the new funding flexibilities and Adult Education Budget could enable RACC to attract new learners with non-qualification provision, in particular those currently participating in non-qualification provision at Wimbledon and Putney art schools.

In response to a question about the most challenging aspects of the Implementation Plan, the Principal responded that it will be the development of a new curriculum to attract new learner groups, reaching students who are not traditional learners on leisure courses. The Principal is currently talking to LBRuT about its preventative health agenda, how RACC's wellbeing offer can support that and how to work together to produce a programme. Another challenging aspect of the Plan will be the reduction in the staffing budget; to make the savings required whilst remaining responsive to learner needs.

A question was asked as to why the Plan only contained one target for external communications. The Principal replied that the College is currently looking at its marketing strategy to achieve the greatest reach in the most cost effective way.

It was suggested that objective 7, 'To create a financially sustainable future for RACC and its adult learning mission', should contain a target that states that cash reserves will not be used for sustaining the College. The Principal agreed to add this further target.

Principal

In answer to a question as to how realistically achievable the learner number targets were in objective 6, 'Create a federation of partner organisations that enhance learner experience and outcomes to help to create a sustainable future for adult learning', in light of the imminent area reviews, the Principal replied that the area review process outcomes were uncertain and will have opportunities as well as risks. It may result in RACC being merged with a larger college, or could result in increased adult education budget funding from other ACL providers. Discussions are ongoing with other local providers.

***The Governing Body noted the Strategic Plan Implementation Plan***

**8. FINANCIAL MATTERS**

**Management Accounts – January 2016**

The Deputy Principal reported that the January Management Accounts had been created using the assumption that 99% of the College's funding allocation would be used. It was noted that the budget split between funded and non-funded provision was not completely correct, and forecasting will improve year on year. It is currently difficult to compare funding year on year as the government moves courses in and out of funding regularly.

The Deputy Principal added that the lettings budget line will improve when a new regular Sunday hire commences. This hire will pay for the College to open on a Sunday, allowing new provision to be scheduled on this day.

***The Governing Body noted the January 2016 Management Accounts***

**Financial Recovery Plan**

The Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee reported that the Financial Recovery Plan has been amended to incorporate key performance indicators and had been sent to the Skills Funding Agency. The Governing Body agreed that the Plan was well laid out and the red, amber, green rating was useful. It was noted that the Plan can be resubmitted to the SFA once the funding allocation is received.

***The Governing Body noted the Financial Recovery Plan***

**Revised Two Year Forecast**

A suggestion was made that the cash forecast should be included and this was agreed. The Deputy Principal reported that, with the increased income from the extended lease of the Deer Park School, the College might make a small surplus in 2017/18; however this was dependent on making the level of staff savings required.

Deputy  
Principal

***The Governing Body noted the revised Two Year Forecast***

**9. RISK REGISTER AND ACTION PLAN**

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the Risk Register and Action Plan, the Federation Risk Register and the Risk Matrix Heat Map, noting that several risks have moved to a lower grading. The Deputy Principal noted that there are several risks that are similar, and that some rationalisation will take place for the 2016/17 academic year.

***The Governing Body noted the Risk Register and Action Plan, the Federation Risk Register and the Risk Matrix Heat Map.***

**10. TEACHING AND LEARNING**

**Teaching and Learning Quality Report**

The Vice Principal reported that the College has now received the full report from the QAA. The QAA judgements were disappointing and appear disproportionate to the impact of the issues identified. However there are lessons to be learnt and the issues identified are accurate so the findings will not be appealed. The issues identified by the QAA have no impact on the learner experience or outcomes. It was noted that the Pearson standards verifier had not picked up on the points raised by the QAA and therefore redress is being sought. A new standards verifier has been appointed.

In answer to a question regarding the high number of priorities for curriculum development and expressions of concern that resources are spread too thinly, the Vice Principal replied that the College has to have a diverse and refreshed provision to attract learners. In response to a further question concerning course consolidation in light of the area reviews, the Principal responded that some may take place but there is no guarantee that learners will move Colleges to stay with a particular course. Travel to learn patterns will need to be considered, along with College specialisms, going forward.

***The Governing Body noted the Teaching and Learning Quality Report***

**Learner Involvement Strategy Progress Report and Summary of Learner Feedback.**

A discussion took place regarding the number of complaints received concerning the admissions process and waiting times. It was noted that learners can wait up to three hours during peak open day periods. Delays arise due to the government requirement to screen for English and maths ability when students apply for funded courses. The Vice Principal reported that screening systems are being reviewed and ways that learners can do self-assessments at home and bring the results in to interviews are being explored.

The Lead Governor for Learner Involvement noted that more feedback is being received because the College is talking to learners more. The regular Tell Us What You Think sessions are a useful way for governors to hear learner views first hand and governors were invited to participate. He emphasised the importance of the 'you said, we did' communications, and suggested that these be made more prominent in the future.

Vice  
Principal

***The Governing Body noted the Learner Involvement Strategy Progress Report and Summary of Learner Feedback.***

**11. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**Fees Policy 2016/17**

The Finance & Resources Committee recommended the Fees Policy 2016/17 to the Governing Body. The new government regulation extending loans to 19-23 year olds, and the new fee rates are the only changes to the existing policy. The Chair of the Quality & Standards Committee expressed concern that the flexibility given to Heads of School regarding fee setting would result in a multiplicity of fees over the years which would be difficult to justify to learners. The Vice Principal responded that discretion is required to ensure courses are competitive and costs vary according to materials provided and exam costs, but reassured the Governing Body that fees are set using standardised rates and are moderated by senior management prior to publication.

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee expressed surprise that full cost recovery was not mentioned within the Policy. The Principal assured the Governing Body that courses are closed if they will not be financially viable.

The take up of bursaries was queried. The Principal replied that bursaries had been very well accessed, particularly for mental health and wellbeing courses and that as a result the College was applying for further bursary funds this year.

The lower course closure rate in 2015/16 was questioned. The following factors were cited: the completion of building works, the rationalisation of the course offer and improved marketing.

***The Governing Body approved the Fees Policy for 2016/17***

**Safeguarding Policy and Procedures**

The Finance & Resources Committee recommended that the Governing Body approve the revised Safeguarding Policy and Procedures, which have been amended to include the Prevent duty requirements, the new definitions from the Care Act 2014, the Mental Capacity Act and the Counter Terrorism Act 2015, to emphasise the person centred approach to adult safeguarding and the reporting requirements of the female genital mutilation duty.

The Deputy Lead Governor for Safeguarding requested that the College's Lead Governors should also review relevant policy amendments before presentation to the Governing Body. This was agreed. It was noted that the Lead Governor and Deputy Lead Governor for Safeguarding are invited to attend Safeguarding Group meetings where the policy and procedures frequently appear as agenda items.

Clerk

***The Governing Body approved the revised Safeguarding Policy and Procedures***

**Capital Projects Update**

The Finance & Resources Committee recommended that the Governing Body increase the capital expenditure in relation to the Phase 2 build to allow for a greater contingency fund, and to note the appointment of Russell Cawberry as the contractor. A member of the Audit Committee asked whether any financial checks had been carried out on the contractor. The Deputy Principal replied that Russell Cawberry were a £25 million turnover company with a great deal of experience working in the education sector. Two very good references were received from a school and a College who had used the contractor on more than one occasion. It was noted that Russell Cawberry's workforce are employees of the company and not subcontractors – which is the main reason why their quote was the lowest received.

***The Governing Body agreed to increase the capital expenditure relating to phase 2 from £520,683 to a possible maximum of £556,683 (which would allow for a total of £50k contingency) should it be required.***

***The Governing Body noted the appointment of Russell Cawberry to carry out all elements of the phase 2 capital project.***

**Annual Health & Safety Report 2014/15**

The Finance and Resources Committee asked the Governing Body to note the Annual Health & Safety Report for 2014/15. It was noted that the Finance & Resources Committee had suggested that the severity of instances be recorded in reporting going forward and this had been agreed. The Governing Body commended the use of unannounced Health & Safety audits.

Deputy  
Principal

***The Governing Body noted the Annual Health & Safety Report 2014/15***

**12. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures**

The Audit Committee recommended the revised Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure to the Governing Body. A query was raised regarding the clarity of clause 3.2 in relation to the evidence that would be required for a disclosure, and concern was expressed that the current requirement for 'information' may be a barrier to whistle-blowers. The Deputy Principal reported that the wording of the Policy comes directly from the Association of College's template but would consider clearer alternatives.

Deputy  
Principal

The use of the phrase 'This list is not intended to be exhaustive' at the end of clause 4 was questioned. The Deputy Principal replied that the clause is attempting to differentiate between the different policies that might be used if a member of staff becomes concerned about an issue. The list is not exhaustive because there may be other areas that have not been considered at the point of writing the policy.

***The Governing Body approved the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure subject to the suggested drafting changes.***

#### **Internal Audit Reports**

***The Governing Body noted the Subcontracting Controls and Key Financial Controls internal audit reports.***

**13. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE  
Senior Post Holder Appointment (confidential)**

**14. SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT DUTY ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15 (AND YEAR TO DATE)**

***The Governing Body noted the Safeguarding and Prevent Duty Annual Report for 2014/15.***

**15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Resolution to add signatories to the bank account**

The Deputy Principal proposed to add the Director of CIS and IT, and the Head of Finance, to the bank account signatories. As a safeguard, either the Principal or the Deputy Principal will be required to countersign anything authorised by the new signatories. This was agreed.

***The Governing Body approved the addition of the Director of CIS and IT and the Head of Finance to the bank account signatories.***

#### **Chair role**

The Vice Chair informed the Governing Body that the term of office of the Chair is due to expire at the end of July. Her continuation for a further year was discussed by the Search & Governance Committee, who recommend that, due to the need for continuity through the area review process, a one year extension should be granted. This was agreed by the Governing Body and accepted by the Chair who was prepared to serve an additional year.

***The Governing Body approved the extension of the term of office of the Chair for one year, until July 2017.***

#### **Resignation of Mr David Sidonio**

The Chair reported the resignation of Mr David Sidonio from the Governing Body, and thanked him for his years of service.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm.