



Croydon  
College



**MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**  
**Wednesday 6 March 2024 at 6.15pm**

**Virtual Meeting**

**MINUTES**

**Present:** Andrew Lowe (Chair)  
Caireen Mitchell (Principal & CEO)  
Nasim Jivani Hemani  
Niral Patel

**In attendance:** Ann-Christine Harland (VP Finance and Resources)  
Helen Langford (Head of HR) – Item 5

**Clerk:** Clare Mitchell, Director of Governance

<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>  Apologies for absence were received from Ian Valvona and Catherine Boyd Maunsell.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  There were no declarations of interest for Part 1 of this meeting.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Part 1 meeting held on 8 November 2023</b>  The minutes of the meeting were <b>approved</b> as a correct record.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Matters Arising not on the Agenda</b>  The Committee <b>noted</b> the updated action list. It was agreed that action relating to a review of the property strategy should be removed.  The HoHR clarified that in order to comply with KCSIE all shortlisted applicants were required to complete a College application form. Prefilled applications could only be accepted at the longlisting stage. The HoHR was investigating whether the current iTrent HR system should be linked to the College recruitment process. The HoHR would bring an update to the next meeting.  <b>Action: HoHR to bring an update on automated application processes to the next meeting</b>  The VPF&R reported that the property strategy would need to be updated in the light of the new strategic plan, which was under development. It was agreed that current action relating to a review of the property strategy should be removed. The Chair noted that he was on the group of Governors overseeing the development of the new strategic plan and he would ensure that the property strategy was included in those discussions.

**Action DoG to remove the action relating to the review of the property strategy post Covid**

The VPF&R reported that preliminary discussions were taking place with CALAT about them renting a significant number of rooms at the Croydon Campus from September 2024.

A pre application meeting held with the LBC had resulted in significant reductions to the planned changes to the West End entrance to the Croydon Campus, due to heritage concerns about the West End entrance, which was locally listed. These plans were to be part funded by the FECTF grant.

**5. Human Resources Update**

The HoHR reported that performance improvement had continued to be a key focus for the HR team. A significant change proposal to the management structure at the Coulsdon Campus had now been implemented. Staff turnover was relatively low and retention of Learning Support Practitioners, which had been high in the past, had now improved significantly following focus on this area. The HR teams had onboarded 100 permanent new starts ytd and 31 fixed term or sessional staff.

The Chair stated that his main concern was the significant increase in staff costs and in particular the high use of agency staff. The HoHR reported that it had been necessary to use agency staff for hard to fill academic posts and where interim staff were needed to ensure the improvements necessary prior to a full Ofsted inspection e.g. in the quality team.

The Chair expressed concern about whether controls on the use of agency staff were in place and effective. The HoHR reported that all managers had been set a deadline of 28 March to either end the use of agency staff or resubmit their claim for agency staff. Significant justification would be required for agency staff to continue except in the most critical areas. The College's policy was that agency staff should be used for a maximum of three months. The paper outlined the actions that were being taken to address recruitment to hard to fill roles.

The HoHR reported that agencies currently had limited numbers of candidates and were increasing their fees and direct recruitment was being used as much as possible. Agency and interim staff had now been added to the central HR system as non employees so that they could be included in staffing reports and HR could ensure the use of these staff was reviewed before the three month point

The VPF&R noted that there were a number of interims in SMT posts. The HoHR noted that permanent staff had now been recruited to vacancies with an April start date and cover had also been needed for senior staff sick leave. Senior interims had been required at the Coulsdon Campus to support the management restructure.

The Chair queried whether controls were in place for the use of agency staff. The HoHR provided assurance that there were effective controls in place through HR for the initial sign off to use agency staff, but the three month follow up process needed to be strengthened.

The HoHR reported on a small number of employment and tribunal and provided an update on changes to a number of HR policies. F&R was responsible for approving changes to the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure only. The HoHR

	<p>reported that there had been no comments from the unions and the changes were in line with the ACAS code for disciplinary and grievance.</p> <p>The HoHR was asked for any comments on the HR related risks in the updated risk register. She noted that the most significant risk was in relation to recruitment and retention, which had already been discussed.</p> <p>The Committee <b>discussed</b> the HR update and <b>approved</b> the changes to the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure</p>
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Financial Monitoring and Forecast Report as at 31 January 2024</b></p> <p>This report summarised the College's financial performance for the six months to 31 January 2024, which showed an operating deficit of £1,043k against a profiled budget deficit of £473k, an adverse variance of £570k.</p> <p>This variance had arisen due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Very high staff costs, at 77% of income, due to increased groups, but also high levels of agency teaching staff filling vacancies (forecast to be nearly double the 2022/23 outturn). The FE benchmark was 65%.</li> <li>- over delivery on our main 19+ AEB grant, expected to be approx. £700k by the end of the financial year. Bids has been submitted to the GLA for increased AEB funding in year and a higher AEB funding allocation. There continued to be a high level of demand for AEB in the local community, which the College would not be able to meet without additional funding.</li> <li>- 16-18 recruitment – January starts have increased the number of learners to 101 above allocation and it was assumed that they would not be funded until 2024/25.</li> <li>- £100k of additional costs forecast to meet the DfE Conditions of Funding.</li> </ul> <p>HE income and contribution was below forecast due to low enrolments,</p> <p>The P&amp;CEO stated that, where possible savings were being made in non-pay budgets and contracts with existing agency staff would finish by the end of March 2024 with the aim of reducing the forecast overspend. Controls on additional spending to meet Ofsted requirements were being tightened.</p> <p>There were areas where there were specific budgetary pressures related to the quality team where there had been difficulties recruiting permanent staff and key management posts at the Coulsdon campus which were now out to advert but interim cover would be needed for these two roles until permanent staff were in post.</p> <p>The P&amp;CEO noted that a deficit budget has been agreed for 2023/24. This was an exceptional year as the College needed to make changes at pace to satisfy both Ofsted and DfE/FEC requirements. This additional spend had been compounded by over recruitment of 16-18 students who would not be funded until 2024/25, some late changes to funding streams and a dramatic increase in energy costs.</p>

	<p>The VPF&amp;R reported that the College’s insurance requirements would be put out to tender in 2024/25 for the next five years. The current insurance claim for flood damage had now been concluded.</p> <p>The draft budget for 2024/25 would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting in June.</p> <p>The VPF&amp;R reported a decline in the College’s performance against a number of the FEC financial measures and the need for a substantial contribution from reserves in 2023/24. Significant capital expenditure in 2024/25 would also result in a reduction in reserves. The Committee noted that the FEC was aware of the College’s position.</p> <p>The Committee <b>discussed</b> the management accounts for 31 January 2024.</p>
7.	<p><b>Key Issues – Finance and Estates</b></p> <p>The Committee noted that the majority of the issues included in this paper had already been discussed. The VPF&amp;R highlighted the change in the 2024/25 ESFA Funding Guidance to include a new funding requirement for an extra hour of Maths teaching a week for students who had not yet achieved a Grade 4 at GCSE Maths by 2025/26. The College was exploring how best to trial running an additional hour of maths tuitions in 2024/25. This would require changes to timetabling as well as additional teaching costs and staff recruitment challenges.</p> <p>The Committee <b>discussed</b> the key issues paper.</p>
8.	<p>The VPF&amp;R reported that following a funding bid to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme run by Salix to decarbonise the Coulsdon Campus at a cost of £607K, the College had received an offer from Salix of £245K of funding to cover expenditure in the fiscal years 2024/25 and 2025/26. The College has been given 10 days to accept the grant of £245k for the £607k project.</p> <p>Additional energy costs at the Coulsdon Campus from this work would be in the region of £3K per year. The deliverables would continue to be monitored by Vital Energi post project. The contract would ensure students could undertake work experience on this project. This was now a requirement of all large tenders.</p> <p>Assuming the college wished to accepted the grant, the next stage would be for the College to enter into a Call Off Agreement with Vital Energi The agreement would be part of the GLA Accelerator Scheme documentation and must be entered into before 31st March.</p> <p>The Committee agreed to recommend that the College accepted the SALIX grant and that the Board approve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) the signing of the Contract for the Provision of Services contract with Vital Energi under the GLA’S Retrofit Accelerator scheme by 31 March 2024.</li> <li>2) Subject to satisfying key conditions, the award of a works contract to Vital Energi for the first phase of the decarbonisation of the Coulsdon Sports Hall for £607k.</li> </ol>

	<p>The Committee noted that the award of this grant was good news for the College and asked that it was publicised outside the College once a new Head of Marketing was in place.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><b>Health and Safety Report – Spring Term 2023/24</b></p> <p>The VPF&amp;R reported that RSM had undertaken an internal audit of health and safety which would be presented to the next meeting of the Audit Committee. This had resulted in an internal audit opinion of reasonable assurance with two medium and two low priority recommendations. One of these related to the fire risk assessment at the Coulsdon Campus, which had now been completed.</p> <p>The report indicated that the Safeguarding team continued to provide support for staff and students following the increase in violence last term. The College was still negotiating with the Council for students to have access to an enclosed space behind the College.</p> <p>One RIDDOR reportable incident had occurred. The engineering workshop had been closed since half term. The necessary work on equipment had taken place but staff training was still required. The Committee asked how this was impacting on learners. The P&amp;CEO stated that students were undertaking class based work with practical sessions delayed until the workshop reopened. The VPF&amp;R was asked to take this up with the Head of School and give an update on the reopening date at the Board meeting on 27 March 2024.</p> <p><b>Action: VPF&amp;R to discuss the reopening date for the engineering workshop with the Head of School and provide a reopening date at the Board meeting on 27 March 2024</b></p> <p>The Committee <b>noted</b> the Health and Safety Report for Spring 2023/24.</p>
<p>10.</p>	<p><b>Risk Register</b></p> <p>The Committee agreed that the strategic risks within the remit of the Committee had already been discussed during the meeting. The meeting had included a deep dive into agency staffing (see the minutes for items 5 and 6). There had been no change to the scoring of the net risk for three of the four strategic risks within the remit of the Committee. The net score for the risk relating to the implementation of a detailed estates strategy which would enable the College to meet the needs of a modern curriculum and net zero by 2030 had reduced.</p> <p>The Committee queried whether strategic risks 9 and 10 relating to recruiting and maintaining staff in specialist areas and inability to maintain good financial health for the next two years should have a higher net risk score given the discussions that had taken place during the meeting. It was agreed that risk 9 (HR risk) should be redrafted so it wasn't limited to staff in specialist areas.</p> <p><b>Action: VPF&amp;R and HoHR to review the next risk scoring for strategic risks 9 and 10.</b></p> <p><b>Action: VPF&amp;R and HoHR to redraft strategic risk 9 so that it was not limited to recruitment and retention of staff in specialist areas</b></p> <p>It was agreed that front sheet of the risk register would be included in the main pack for future meetings.</p>

	<b>Action: DoG to include the front sheet of the risk register in the main pack for future meetings.</b>
<b>11.</b>	<b>Policy Updates</b> There were no financial policies for approval at this meeting.
<b>12.</b>	<b>Post Meeting Evaluation</b> This was discussed at the end of the Part 2 meeting,
<b>13.</b>	<b>Any other business</b> There were no items of other business.
<b>14.</b>	<b>Dates of future meetings</b> Wednesday 12 June 2024 - 6pm to 8pm in person at the Croydon Campus

*Approved as an accurate record by the Finance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 12 June 2024*

*Clare Mitchell  
Director of Governance*