



Croydon
College



COULSDON
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE



Croydon
University
Centre

MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 6.00pm

Room 422, Croydon Campus

MINUTES

Present:	Andrew Lowe (Chair) Caireen Mitchell (Principal & CEO) Ian Valvona Niral Patel Frederick Law Maria Glasscock Louise Cretton (for this meeting only)
In attendance:	Ann-Christine Harland (VP Finance and Resources) Helen Langford (Director of HR)
Observer:	Martin Silverwood, Coulsdon Principal
Clerk:	Clare Mitchell, Director of Governance

1.	Apologies for Absence There were no apologies for absence.
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations of interest.
3.	Minutes of the Part 1 and Part 2 meetings held on 13 November 2024 The minutes of both meetings were <u>approved</u> as a correct record.
4.	Matters Arising not on the Agenda The Committee <u>noted</u> the updated action list. Action #5 – the VPF&R reported that a tender had been issued to appoint a company to draft a new estates strategy. The development of the new strategy was expected to take 17 weeks, and Committee members would be asked for their input. The estates strategy was likely to be completed by September 2025. It would include a number of options, which would need to be prioritised and funding identified.
5.	Human Resources Update The Director of HR outlined the key points from the paper. Change proposals were taking place in a number of areas. Further information was provided in the paper.

	<p>Recruitment and retention were positive. The number of vacancies had reduced significantly as had the use of agency staff. This was having a positive impact on the budget.</p> <p>The budget included a 2% increase to staff pay in 2024/25. This had been rejected by unions, who had strongly expressed the view that they did not want the College to implement a pay award without agreement. The situation had been complicated by the additional funding expected from the DfE, which might enable the College to award a higher pay increase. The details of this additional funding had been expected in February but had now been delayed to an unspecified date in March. Dialogue with the unions was continuing and to date no ballot for strike action had taken place.</p> <p>The Executive now planned to implement the 2% pay increase in the March payroll. Implementing this pay increase without union agreement would be against their wishes but was necessary to avoid the additional NI payments that would come into effect from 1 April 2025. The 2% rise would be backdated to September 2024. If it was possible to award a higher pay increase during 2024/25, this would be implemented at later date. The Committee supported this approach.</p> <p>The Committee noted that the increase in the London Living Wage meant that pay for the lowest paid workers at the College would increase by 5.3%.</p> <p>The Chair of RemCo's view was that there should be a discussion about a multi-year pay award strategy for future years. The Director of HR reported that some other Colleges had taken this approach. A multi-year pay strategy would depend on the College's financial position. The Chair of the Committee noted that the College had not been in a financial position to consider a multi-year pay award when the budget for 2024/25 was approved. The P&CEO's view was that this could be considered in the future. However, the College's income would reduce in 2025/26 as a result of a 3% cut in adult funding. There could also be cuts to other income streams.</p>
6	<p>Financial Monitoring and Forecast Report as of 31 December 2024</p> <p>This report summarised the College financial performance for the 5 months to 31 December 2024. It showed an operating surplus of £399k against a profiled budget deficit of £29k, a favourable variance of £429k. The Executive were forecasting to attain budget, with savings in non-pay costs to meet reductions in income.</p> <p>The costs and delivery of apprenticeships for 2024/25 were being reviewed. A new apprenticeship in health and childcare was being introduced and a forward plan to grow apprenticeship provision was under development. The RemCo Chair reported that she had attended the College's careers day and that there was significant demand for apprenticeships from students, but more employers need to be encouraged to create apprenticeships, particularly in construction.</p> <p>Pay costs were £29K over budget. Implementing the 2% pay would increase this figure. Pay costs against budget were likely to be 73% in 2024/25 against a benchmark of 70%.</p> <p>16-18 student numbers were still slightly below allocation, but there would be another student recruitment round in April, which should address this. Student numbers in the lower sixth at the Coulsdon Campus were lower than in previous years. As adult courses were already oversubscribed, marketing activity was now focusing on recruiting 16-18 students.</p>

	<p>The Committee <u>discussed</u> the management accounts for 31 December 2024.</p> <p>ESFA letter re 2023/24 Financial Health Score</p> <p>The letter, which had been previously circulated to the Board, confirmed the College's Financial Health Score for 2023/24 as requires improvement rather than good, as self-assessed by the Board. The College was forecast to return to good financial health in 2024/25.</p> <p>The Committee <u>noted</u> the letter from the ESFA</p>
7.	<p>Key Issues – Finance and Estates</p> <p>The VPF&R reported that there had been a significant increase in applications for 2025/26 at the Coulsdon Campus. Applications to date were down at the Croydon Campus, particularly in creative, business and hospitality. However, there was a 66% increase in applications for courses in construction. This data was being fed into the business planning process for 2025/26. Courses which were delivered on both campuses were being rationalised so that they were delivered on one campus only.</p> <p>To reach a surplus position in 2025/26, with only increases in the 16-18 grant rate, at least £700k would need to be reduced from pay and non-pay expenditure compared to the current 2024/25 forecast.</p> <p>The West End façade and roofing works were nearing completion and the final claims for the FECTF grant were being made.</p> <p>As the Committee was aware, the College has stopped working with Vital Energi on the decarbonisation of the Sports Hall at Coulsdon. This project could not proceed due to the significant increase in the proposed costs and issues with the proposed site. As a result, the College would be replacing its gas boilers with more gas boilers when they reached the end of their useful life in the next 5 years. However, as a result of the preparatory work for this project, the College did have a decarbonisation plan for both campuses should more funds become available.</p> <p>The Committee <u>discussed</u> the key issues report.</p>
8.	<p>Termly Reports</p> <p>i Health and Safety Update – Spring Term 2025</p> <p>The VPF&R presented this report. There had been no RIDDORs reported this term. Work was continuing to reduce the risk of fire at the Croydon campus and unused chemicals had been removed.</p> <p>A number of security incidents were included in the report. The College was working with local strategic organisations, including the Council and the police, to reduce the security risks around the Croydon Campus. The College was also increasing its internal security checks. Updates on the security risk (3b) were brought direct to the Board.</p>
9.	<p>Committee Risk Register</p>

	<p>The Committee noted the cover paper setting out the key risks monitored by the Committee. The net risk score for risk 7, relating to recruitment and retention, had reduced. Ofsted's judgement that the College was good appeared to be assisting both recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Risk 10 relating to the estates strategy - further estates improvements were currently limited as the College did not receive a capital allocation in 2024/25.</p> <p>The Committee <u>discussed</u> the strategic risks within the remit of the Committee.</p> <p>i Deep Dive into benchmarking against the 2024/25 budget</p> <p>The VPF&R explained that the College had had its 2024/25 budget externally benchmarked against both the FE sector and London Colleges. Croydon College's reliance on funding for 16-18 students (rather than adults) was higher than other local Colleges. The amount of high needs funding received was also higher. However, the College's margin was 3.3% less than other London Colleges, with spend on non-teaching activities accounting for this overspend compared to benchmark. The Executive would be reviewing the College's management structures.</p> <p>While the College had fewer teaching staff, their pay was higher than other local Colleges. This was partly due to the use of recruitment and retention allowances for some hard to fill posts. The College was keen to develop existing staff into teachers to increase the number of teachers who were earlier in their careers.</p> <p>The College spent less than other Colleges in some areas e.g. marketing and business development and this would need to be reviewed.</p> <p>The Committee asked how often this exercise was undertaken. The VPF&R responded that the last benchmarking exercise had been in 2017/18 during the merger process with Coulsdon College. The outputs had been used to develop a combined budget for the merged College. The Committee's view was that this exercise was very helpful and challenged the Executive to increase its frequency. The Committee asked for the paper to be included on the Board meeting on 26 March 2025.</p> <p>Action: Paper on benchmarking of 2024/25 to be included on the agenda for the March 2025 Board meeting.</p> <p>The Committee <u>discussed</u> the outputs of the benchmarking against the 2024/25 budget.</p> <p>ii Next deep dive</p> <p>It was agreed that the next deep dive would focus on the amount of funding received for disadvantaged students, which was calculated according to a national formula, and whether it was sufficient to meet students' needs.</p> <p>Action: Next deep dive to focus on the amount of funding received for disadvantaged students, and whether it was sufficient to meet students' needs</p>
10.	<p>Policy Updates</p> <p>There were no policy updates for this meeting.</p>

11.	<p>Post Meeting Evaluation</p> <p>The Chair's view was that the business had been dealt with efficiently. The P&CEO queried the balance between items for information, discussion and decision, and whether the focus should be on items for decision. Committee members could also be asked for input prior into work that was under development.</p> <p>It was agreed that the focus of the Committee meeting in November 2025 should be the options within the new estates strategy and how they fitted into the overall strategic plan.</p> <p>Action: Finance and Resources Committee meeting in November 2025 to focus on the options in the new estates strategy and how they fitted into the overall strategic plan</p> <p>Niral Patel asked to be involved early in the development of the strategy and to see the scope of the tender for a consultant to develop the estates strategy.</p> <p>Action: VPF&R to send Niral Patel the scope of the tender for a consultant to develop the estates strategy and to involve him early in the development</p> <p>The VPF&R agreed to circulate the timeline for the development of the estates strategy and ask which areas members would be interested in contributing to.</p> <p>Action: VPF&R to circulate the timeline for the development of the estates strategy and ask which areas members would be interested in contributing to</p> <p>The Committee noted that the development of the estates strategy was a good opportunity for the LQC to work with the Finance and Resources Committee to secure the best possible facilities for students.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair of the Board asked which Committee would oversee the development of the stakeholder engagement strategy, which should be considered by a committee before going to the Board. Similarly, governors had no sight of marketing or relationships with external stakeholders within the current Committee structure.</p> <p>Action: Chair of Governing Body, Vice Chair and DoG to consider how best marketing and stakeholder engagement could fit within the Committee structure</p>
12.	<p>Any other business.</p> <p>There were no items of other business.</p>
13.	<p>Dates of future meetings</p> <p>Wednesday 11 June 2025- 6pm to 8pm in person at the Croydon Campus</p>