



Croydon
College



COULSDON
SIXTH FORM COLLEGE



Croydon
University
Centre

THE CORPORATION OF CROYDON COLLEGE

Wednesday 26 March 2025 at 3.00pm

Room 405B Croydon Campus

PART ONE MINUTES

PRESENT:

Ian Valvona (Chair)
Caireen Mitchell (Principal & CEO)
Louise Cretton (Vice Chair)
Andrew Lowe – until item 8.i
Andrew Gilchrist
Andy Wilson – not item 1.ii
Niral Patel
Jonathan Brookes
Maria Glasscock
Michael Cutbill
Nicholas Voute (Staff Governor, Coulsdon Campus) – not item 1.i
Terrance James (Staff Governor, Croydon Campus)
Nezia De Roche (Student Governor, Croydon Campus)
Oleksandr Bristow (Student Governor, Coulsdon Campus) until item 8.i

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ann-Christine Harland (VP Finance & Resources)
Martin Silverwood (Deputy Principal, Curriculum)
Helen Langford (Director of HR)
Sam Hanmer (Executive Director, Employer Engagement, Apprenticeships and Skills)
Jane Holloway (Director of Teaching and Quality)
Claire Does (Interim Director of Student Services)

CLERK:

Clare Mitchell (Director of Governance)

QUORUM:

The meeting was quorate

	ITEM
1.	<p>PRELIMINARY BUSINESS</p> <p>i. Appointment of Staff Governor for the Coulsdon Campus</p> <p>The Corporation APPROVED the appointment of Nicholas Voute as the Staff Governor for the Coulsdon Campus for a four year term.</p> <p>ii. Reappointment of Andy Wilson</p> <p>The Corporation APPROVED the reappointment of Andy Wilson for a second four year term following a recommendation from the Search and Governance Committee.</p> <p>iii. Reappointment of Frederick Law</p> <p>The Corporation APPROVED the reappointment of Frederick Law for a second four year term</p>

	<p>following a recommendation from the Search and Governance Committee.</p> <p>Action: DoG to send formal appointment letters to Nicholas Voute, Andy Wilson and Frederick Law</p> <p>iv. Appointment of the Chair of the Governing Body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair of the Search and Governance Committee reported that interviews for the new Chair of the Governing Body had taken place on Friday 21 April 2025. Given the importance of this appointment, the selection panel had decided to have a second meeting with one of the candidates. As a result, the Search and Governance Committee was not able to make an appointment recommendation at this meeting. It was likely that a short online Board meeting would be arranged to consider an appointment recommendation from the Committee but the timescales for this had yet to be finalised. <p>v. Welcome and introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He introduced Nicholas Voute, an A Level Chemistry teacher, who had been elected as the Staff Governor for the Coulsdon Campus. <p>vi. Apologies for absence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies for absence were received from Frederick Law, Martin Bentham and Armaghan Ul Haq. <p>iv. Declarations of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew Gilchrist declared that he is currently a Governor at Brooklands College. Nicholas Voute and Andy Wilson had an interest in Item 1.i above and were not present for this agenda item.
2.	<p>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>i. Minutes of the Part One meeting on 11 December 2024</p> <p>The Corporation APPROVED the minutes of this meeting subject to a number of amendments from Andrew Gilchrist.</p> <p>Action: DoG to amend the minutes of the Part One meeting on 11 December 2024</p> <p>ii. Matters arising from the minutes not covered on the agenda (see action list)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair reported that the actions were largely complete. <p>The Corporation NOTED the updated action list.</p> <p>iii. Update on Security</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Security Committee had met with the management of the Freshwater property opposite the College. It had been confirmed that the link between George Street and College Road was a public thoroughfare. The Council had been contacted to ask whether the public access rights could be changed. Governors had been informed of several external security events involving College students recently. Following this, meetings had been held with the Council, the Police and external organisations. Two external organisations had been invited into the College to

	<p> speak to students. The number of classroom screenings had been increased and a Police assisted knife arch had taken place at the Croydon Campus. </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The rise in external incidents and increased findings from searches were discussed by the Chairs of Committees and the Executive in March. The College was engaging with local partners including the Council. A lack of maintenance of the surrounding area was providing further opportunities for the drug dealers. Drug related activity was now taking place behind as well as in front of the College. The P&CEO's report also included an update on security concerns, which was discussed under this agenda item. The Board challenged the Executive to consider whether security risks had increased inside the College. The P&CEO's view was that the security risks remained predominantly outside the College. The Staff Governor for the Croydon College queried whether HE students could be subject to searches. The P&CEO clarified that the College was undertaking classroom screening, not carrying out searches, to check that the learning environment was safe. HE, FE students and apprentices were treated in the same way, but the risk profile was considered. The Chair of the Audit Committee noted that there had been a discussion about the signs around the College emphasising that there was a zero tolerance policy on drugs. There had been some concern that this would deter any student who was drug dependent from asking for help. The Executive were considering the messaging and would be discussing it with students. The College was engaging with external agencies who could provide support to students in this position. The Vice Chair asked the Student Governors whether they had any feedback on classroom screening and security within the College. The Student Governor from the Croydon Campus reported that classroom screening made students feel safer. Some students had found the knife arch exercise slightly intimidating. The Student Governor from the Coulsdon Campus commented that there hadn't been a noticeable increase in classroom screening. The P&CEO assured the Board that the Executive was not complacent about internal security and would continue to review this risk. <p> The Corporation NOTED the security update. </p>
3.	<p> PRINCIPAL'S REPORT </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report was set out under the headings in the new Strategic Plan. The DPC reported that the results from the January 2025 BTEC examinations had been positive. The January 2024 BTEC results had been a good overall predictor of achievement. On this basis, there should be a further increase in achievement in 2024/25. As in 2023/24 students had sat their external examination earlier in the year so any resits could take place in the summer and students could focus on their internal course work which would also count towards their final grade. The impact of the quality team could be seen in improved results in key areas. The College had already exceeded its target of 40% work placements for 16-18 year olds. 45% of young people had now benefited from placements. In addition, YTD 46% had taken part in employer related activities. The College's funding allocation for 16-18 provision in 2025/26 would see a welcome increase of c£1.25 million through a base rate increase and an increase in disadvantage funding. However, the Adult Skills Fund had been reduced nationally by 3% in 2025/26. The P&CEO had written to the Deputy Mayor to make a case for additional funding and provided a business case through the GLA contract management process. This might well

	<p>be declined due to the national cuts, but no written confirmation had been received. As a result, the College could not meet demand for ESOL courses, could not provide Sector Work Academies locally for Job Centre Plus, and would have to reduce the number of courses provided to adults in 2025/26.</p> <p>Action: P&CEO to chase the GLA to provide a formal response to the College's business case for additional adult skills funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government had announced an additional £600m for construction training and skills. The P&CEO would be part of the AoC group working on this. Construction was a key development area for the College. • The College was affiliating with the Black Leadership Group and there had been improvement in both the gender and ethnicity pay gaps. The pay gap reports for 2023/24 would be published shortly. The Executive would be implementing the 2% pay increase included in the 2024/25 budget in the March payroll. This would be against union wishes but was necessary to avoid the additional NI payments that would come into effect from 1 April 2025. The 2% pay increase 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 Finance and Resources Committee supported this approach. The College was on track to achieve the small surplus budgeted for 2024/25. • The Staff Governor from the Croydon Campus challenged the distribution of the College's adult skills funding. Did the emphasis on providing ESOL courses reduce the availability of courses for adults in areas such as construction? The P&CEO agreed that there was a tension, but adults who could not speak English were excluded from work, access to services and their local community. • The Board challenged the Executive to identify which issues, other than security and government funding, Governors should focus on. The P&CEO reported that there was a risk of industrial action by unions and managers in some areas were still difficult to recruit. There were also several curriculum areas where the quality of teaching and learning needed to improve. • The Chair congratulated the Executive, particularly the DPC and the Quality Team, on the strong BTEC results. He noted that the Board needed to focus on the College's financial position as well as curriculum and quality issues. <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the Principal's report.</p>
4.	<p>STRATEGIC MATTERS</p> <p>i Draft Stakeholder Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ED EEAS thanked Governors for their input into developing the draft strategy. A corporate stakeholders communications register had been developed, which defined the College's key stakeholders and would be used to record interactions with them. The register would be reviewed after one year of operation. • The Board queried whether trade bodies and professional institutions were included. This was the case, particularly for construction, and would expand into other areas over time. • The Board asked how Governors could assist with the implementation of the strategy. The ED EEAS asked Governors to use their own networks, particularly with employers, to connect stakeholders with the College. The focus would be on engagement with employers for the remainder of the year. The link governors for apprenticeships and careers,

	<p>employability and skills reported that there was an overlap between their remits and asked for a review of these two link governor roles</p> <p>Action: Review of the remits of link governor roles for apprenticeships and careers, employability and skills to be reviewed with the new Chair due to overlap between the two roles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board suggested that a column identifying next steps for each stakeholder should be included in the register. The Board queried where the monitoring of the implementation of this strategy would sit within the governance structure. The Chair stated that the strategy would remain in draft until the new Chair had had the opportunity to review it. A decision would then need to be made as to where it would sit within the governance structure. A discussion on whether the strategy should be extended to include communications and marketing could take place at a later date. The Vice-Chair thanked the ED EEAS for developing the stakeholder strategy. <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the draft Stakeholder Strategy.</p>
5.	<p>CURRICULUM LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS</p> <p>i ESOL / English and Maths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonathan Brookes reported that maths and English at the Croydon Campus were expecting higher achievement this year. The College was one of only a small number that offered functional skills. The Croydon Campus had a high retention rate for English/maths and functional skills. Recent achievements included students winning the FE Maths challenge and entries into the Big Writing and Big Idea challenges. The next task would be to visit English and maths provision at the Coulsdon Campus. <p>ii Apprenticeships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew Lowe had met with the ED EEAS and discussed both the apprenticeship and stakeholder strategies. He commented that apprentices were different from most of the students at the College and suggested that they should have their own base room which provided facilities similar to their work environment; this could be fed into the new estates strategy. <p>iii Coulsdon Campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Louise Cretton reported that the substantive headteacher would take up post after the Easter holidays. Her report was based on feedback from a focus group of students. Behaviour appeared to be good, students felt safe and were very positive about the safeguarding team. As was often the case, feedback on tutorials was mixed. Students who had a good relationship with their tutor were likely to attend and discuss any concerns with their tutor. The opposite was also true. She had also spoken to the Interim Head Teacher about tutorials and how innovations such as AI could assist with taking teaching to the next level. The VPF&R reported that the e-learning manager was delivering AI training to staff. Students would encounter AI in their work environment and the College needed to consider how to teach students to use AI creatively and avoid plagiarism. The Staff Governor for the Coulsdon Campus expressed concern that some students had reported that they did not confident using the common room and asked if any data had been collected on this. Data was not available, but this issue had come up at previous focus groups. The Interim Dir of SS provided assurance that the student experience team were

	<p>aware of this issue, and several measures were being taken to make the common room a quieter environment that all students would feel comfortable using. The Student Governor for the Croydon Campus asked if similar adjustments could be made to common room provision at the Croydon Campus. Students aged 16-18 and adult students did not necessarily have the same needs.</p> <p>Action: Dir of SS to consider adjustments to the common room provision so it met the requirements of different groups of students</p> <p>iv Higher Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Michael Cutbill reported that he had met the DPC recently. The College had provided the OfS with confirmation that HE provision had been reviewed. Completion and progression data was expected to improve but high retention would be necessary to achieve this due to the low number of students. • The three year degree format did not meet local needs, and the College needed to work with the University of Roehampton to revalidate three year programmes into a series of one year qualifications with a stepping off point after each year. In the medium term there were opportunities to develop HE provision in biomedical and applied sciences. <p>v Adult and Vocational</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy Wilson reported that he had had an in depth discussion with the DPC about areas for improvement and areas with the potential for growth. However, some of the areas with the greatest potential for growth also had weaknesses that needed to be addressed. <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the curriculum link governor reports</p>
6.	<p>FINANCE/RESOURCES</p> <p>i Finance and Resources Committee Chair's Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee reported that the College was on track to achieve the budgeted surplus for 2024/25. • The Committee had supported the Executive's decision to implement the 2% staff pay increase in the March payroll to avoid additional NI costs. The Committee also supported increasing the staff pay award later in 2024/25, if additional funding was available from the DfE. • A tender has been issued to appoint a company to draft a new estates strategy. The development of the new strategy would take place over the Summer. Unfortunately, the College had stopped working with Vital Energi on the decarbonisation of the Sports Hall at the Coulsdon Campus. This project could not proceed due to the significant increase in the proposed costs and issues with the proposed site. • The College had had its 2024/25 budget externally benchmarked against both the FE sector and London FE Colleges. The results were reviewed by the Committee. There were some areas of over and under spend that needed focus, but it was important to note that the profile of every College was different. <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the Finance and Resources Committee Chair's report</p>

6.	<p>QUALITY/CURRICULUM STANDARDS</p> <p>i. Improvement Plan / Post Intervention Monitoring and Support (PIMS) Plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The P&CEO reported that the DfE had approved the PIMS plan, which formed part of the overall College improvement plan. Updates would be provided on the Governor Portal monthly. <p>Action: DoG to provide updated version the College Improvement/PIMS Plan monthly via the Governor Portal</p> <p>The Corporation APPROVED the Post Intervention Monitoring and Support Plan.</p> <p>ii. Learning and Quality Committee (LQC) Chair's report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair of the Learning and Quality Committee reported that the Committee continued to consider the student context. The focus of the March meeting had been on deprivation. Students in receipt of a College bursary had higher achievement than those who did not, this also applied to students who received free school meals. The Committee had also considered the possible impact of curriculum reform on the College's provision. The full impact would not be known until the government's position was clear. The Committee reviewed the apprenticeship strategy, and the Chair commented on the links between that and the stakeholder strategy. The review of HE provision required by the OfS had been completed and the actions were being taken forward. However, the OfS could take further action if the College's B3 data did not continue to improve. The Committee had made it clear that its expectation was that 2025/26 would be the last year that HE students would be able to enrol on a three year programme. <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the LQC Chair's Report</p> <p>iii. Student Governors' Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Student Governor for the Coulsdon Campus noted that the majority of the issues affecting student experience had been included in the link governor's report. However, it would be helpful to have seats in corridors for students waiting for classes. The standard of toilets and vaping in the toilets remained an issue. The Student Governor for the Croydon Campus raised concerns about the tool used to detect the use of AI in students' assignments. Students were unable to view the results. <p>Action: Director of Teaching and Quality to review why students could not see the results of the process for detecting the use of AI in their assignments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There were still concerns from some students about the common room as discussed above. Tutorials should be more engaging, with more being student led. Some students had raised concerns about exam preparation. The P&CEO expressed concern that surveys sent out to students by Student Governors could cause confusion and potentially reduce completion rates for key QDP student surveys. The new Director of SS would be asked to undertake a piece of work to increase integration between Student Governors and the Student Representative/Student Executive
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	<p>system as a means of getting a more coherent student voice, which would inform Student Governors' reports to LQC and the Board.</p> <p>Action: Director of SS to undertake a piece of work to increase integration between Student Governors and the Student Representative/Student Executive system as a means of getting a more coherent student voice to inform Student Governor reports to LQC and the Board.</p> <p>The Corporation NOTED the Student Governors' Reports</p>
8.	<p>AUDIT/RISK</p> <p>i Audit Committee Chair's Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair of the Audit Committee Chair reported that the Committee had received two internal audit reports. The audit opinion for compliance with the College Financial Handbook was substantial assurance. Five low priority recommendations had been made. The audit opinion for cyber security technical controls was partial assurance. The internal auditors had commented that a partial assurance opinion was typical in an area which was moving quickly. A significant number of the recommendations had already been completed. The FE Benchmarking Report from RSM showed that the College had had more partial assurance internal audits than the sector benchmark for 2023/24. However, the College had also had several advisory audits in 2023/24 and the College selected areas of higher risk for internal audit. This was not the case for all Colleges. The Committee approved an amended Information Policy The use of AI was included in the policy for the first time. The use of AI would need express prior written approval from the Director of IT and Estates. <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the Audit Committee Chair's Report.</p> <p>ii 2024/25 Strategic Risk Register Spring Term Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The VPF&R presented the paper. The net scores for three key risks had been reduced to acceptable levels. R2 'Inability to develop and implement strategies towards one organisation, one shared culture across both campuses', R3a 'Unable to safeguard our students from internal safety threats, affecting their wellbeing', R7 'Inability to recruit and retain staff'. A new risk had been included, R3B, which related to security risks outside the college. The College could not mitigate this risk alone and assistance was required from the Local Authority, the GLA and the Police. The Executive held a separate meeting to review the mitigations and scoring for the full risk register each term. The updated risk register had been shared with the Board Committees during the Spring term, with feedback from all three committees incorporated into the register for this Board meeting. Two further changes were requested. Following the review of the February 2025 Internal Audit report on Cyber Controls by the Audit Committee, the net score for Risk 9 had been increased to Medium. The LQC's view was that the reputational score for Risk 5 'Inability to meet OFs Conditions of Registration and to grow our HE cohort' should be increased from two to three, increasing the total net score to 12 from 10. This risk continued to have a medium net risk score.

	The Corporation DISCUSSED the Strategic Risk Register
9.	<p>GOVERNANCE</p> <p>i. Search and Governance Committee Chair's Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair of the Search and Governance Committee reported that the Committee had received a progress update on the recruitment of the new Chair. At that point shortlisting had not yet taken place. The Committee also discussed the recruitment process for the new Director of Governance and discussed the merits of making the position a Senior Post Holder. Legal advice would be sought on the implications. This would need to be discussed by the Remuneration Committee and any change would need Board approval. The P&CEO reported that the legal advice had been commissioned. Interviews for the DoG role would be taking place shortly. The Committee had also reviewed the induction programme for the new Chair, the draft succession planning policy and reviewed the move to appointed student governors, which was seen as broadly positive. <p>The Corporation DISCUSSED the Search and Governance Committee Chair's Report.</p> <p>ii. Succession Planning Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This policy had been reviewed by the Search and Governance Committee and was recommended for approval . <p>The Corporation APPROVED the Governing Body Succession Planning Policy</p>
10.	<p>FOR INFORMATION PAPERS</p> <p>i. Full Croydon College Strategic Risk Register – Spring term update (Audit)</p> <p>ii. Benchmarking of 2024/25 Budget Exercise</p> <p>iii. Management Accounts January 2025</p> <p>iv. Management Accounts February 2025</p> <p>The Corporation NOTED the papers listed above.</p>
11.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>The Chair noted that the item on post meeting evaluation had been missed from the agenda. The number of papers presented to the Board for information and discussion rather than for decision was challenged.</p> <p>Action: DoG to include an item on post meeting evaluation on future agendas</p> <p>Action: DoG/Executive to review the number of papers presented to the Board for information and discussion rather than for decision</p> <p>The Chair of the LQC commented on the usefulness of the classroom visits which had taken place earlier in the day, particularly the opportunities to engage with students.</p>

	<p>The Student Governor for the Croydon Campus reported that the first formal graduation ceremony for health and social care students was due to take place in June. Details would be provided to the DoG who would circulate to Governors.</p> <p>Action: Student Governor for the Croydon Campus to provide the DoG with details of the first formal graduation ceremony for health and social care students in June. The DoG would circulate the details to Governors</p>
12.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The next Board meeting would take place on Wednesday 2 July 2025 from 6pm – 8pm at the Croydon Campus.</p>