

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE HELD ON Wednesday 28 February 2024 at 16.30

Present: Teddy Bridges, Ann Donoghue, Graham Lawrence, Dan Lodge (Principal), Paul Mittendorfer, Clare Ruaux, Dominic Wakefield

In attendance: Members of SMT – Ian Dumbleton (FD), Steve Martell (DP)
Olivia Blake (HR Director), Rob Hussey (VP Curriculum), Russha Sellings (Clerk)

In the Chair: Ann Donoghue

1. Chair's Introductions and Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting. The HR Director and VP (Curriculum) were present to provide updates under Item 5. The Committee were in full attendance. The Chair welcomed Staff Governor Clare Ruaux was attending her first meeting since changing committees.

2. Declaration of Interests

None declared with regard to the agenda items.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment.

4. Matters Arising

(not already covered on the agenda)

Item 5 – International provision and the continuation of the tier 4 license if the College converted to academy status. Other matters had taken priority for the Academisation Working Party more recently however the options would need further exploration. The Principal reiterated the importance of international students for the College community, however needed to be realistic about what was possible.

Item 6 – People Strategy for which the HR Director was present to discuss the latest developments.

5. Strategy Developments

Papers: Workload action plan and tracker, Business KPIs, International report, Adult Ed funding and forecast, QIP updates

a) People Strategy: workload action plan and workforce planning

The Principal referred to the College Planning Day in the autumn term. Assurances would be provided to Governors on progress since the event. In terms of context, it was important to note the challenges in managing workload in a sector where funding did not keep pace with demand. There was also the added complexity of post-Covid societal factors and Ofsted readiness and the workload required to achieve marginal improvements in a high performing College. However, it was acknowledged that workload was a concern for staff, especially as the College was growing and there were significant organisational changes ahead. This may have had an impact on staff survey results which had reached a high bar during the pandemic.

For transparency and understanding, the corresponding RAG rated workload action plan that followed Planning Day had been shared with all staff. Members heard about the response to the suggested areas of improvement. It was noted that the action plan was largely teacher focussed and a member asked about the workload consideration for Support Staff. The Principal acknowledged it was weighted towards teaching staff and in response, the balance would be addressed and had started with a focus group specifically for Support Staff with the outcomes shared at SMT. There was also a specific HoS group and the Staff Governor emphasised the importance of

their involvement, despite demands on their time in the short term. Union representatives would also be reviewing all the findings for full and part time staff.

The methodology was discussed as there wasn't always a clear consensus amongst the staff community on the order of prioritisation. By example, one suggestion under Phase 4 (not being taken forwards) was moving in-person Staff Briefings on Monday mornings online. There had been consideration to events post Covid and utilising technology to enhance flexibility, where appropriate. However, in this instance, SMT believed it was an opportunity for an all staff update and sharing of successes at the start of the College week which members agreed was important, especially during periods of change. One area that had been agreed to cut back was Upper Manager Group meetings as the value versus time commitment was more limited.

There was a further question about the scale of workload pressures post-Covid and what, if any, benchmarks could be used to assess the level of the situation and then measure the impact of proposed actions. The Principal thought it was important to take an evidence based approach and said Government research confirmed that on average teachers' workload had increased by approximately 4 hours per week. In terms of the implications arising from growth, class sizes remained the same (averaging around 21 with a maximum of 24) so for teachers generally not much was anticipated to change, however for a Head of House and other student facing teams, the workload would be greater with more students.

The Principal said a steady level of growth around 3-4% was easier to manage than sharper increases and due to anticipated numbers, the College were preparing to bolster specific areas using in-year funding to support capacity, service and quality. One proposal was adding administrative resource across curriculum and pastoral areas for each faculty which had been fully supported by the Education Committee.

The Principal had sought the counsel of the two HR experienced Governors which included the Committee Chair on strategic workforce planning and was advised to think more generally about the roles needed as the College expands. The HR Director provided some further background on the initial planning and specific areas and structures needed for the College and how to grow this through talent development.

AI was raised in respect of efficiencies. There could be many opportunities in the medium term, however GDPR remained a risk. Options were being considered through S7, SFCA, AoC and FE Sussex. There were also other areas that could be automated without AI and members asked about CRM systems and MIS and there would be some future developments to consider here.

A member asked whether the underlying growth assumptions in long term planning remained the same and whether it was more appropriate to consider a stepped rate of growth. The FD was confident what had been incorporated in the longer term forecast and shared with the Mercers' Company with respect to the loan was sufficient for planning and this would be regularly updated.

b) KPIs (Business)

Reference was made to domestic growth and the applications up 22% YoY, although there was a note of caution on applications versus actual enrolments. The DP spoke of a range of activity and events and the opportunity to target new schools including the independent sector. On the current trajectory, the FD expected there would be further in-year funding in the future.

The impact of growth on the estate would be discussed under Item 6c. Members considered the capacity level and the Committee Chair referred to the Admissions Policy. The Principal was planning to ensure the College was prepared for the eventuality of reaching 3,000 students although by this stage numbers may start to level off naturally as pupil numbers in the lower keys stages reduced. Other S7 colleges were currently experiencing similar growth levels and had started to introduce measures to streamline admissions, due to lack of extra capacity. It was expected that students were submitting multiple applications possibly in part leading to the current increase in the College's applications. It would be sensible for the Governing Body to consider this in the context of

the Estates Masterplan and Property Strategy. Governors would be provided with an update at the next strategy event in the summer term. Members asked whether the growth in particular subject areas would correlate to recruitment of new teachers and the VP (Curriculum) confirmed that there would be additional recruitment in particular subjects such as Maths and Media.

i) International student report (*ref Q&C*)

The DP was thanked for the preparation of report to assure Governors on numbers and profitability. Diversification was an important element of the recruitment strategy and he had recently travelled to Hong Kong to speak to prospective students. Members questioned the return on investment in response to the workload. While it was recognised there was some income variance by country, the Principal said there wasn't a great deal of additional work once the students were onsite and attending lessons, and there were benefits to the College's community more generally in terms of diversity.

ii) Adult Ed update

The VP (Curriculum) presented a forecast to members beginning with an update on the structure of Adult Ed funding and how this was changing over time. This explained the figures in the KPIs and the difference in modelling which had been observed. Currently the net income was approximately 3% without including added costs such as utilities and SMT time, however the income was set to increase in the next year and there were further efficiencies identified to ensure it became sustainable over time with an estimated £50k profit (modelled by the Information Services Manager). The Principal emphasised the social community aspects of the provision, and a member of the Skills Agenda working party spoke of the important link provided through Adult Ed to local skills. The VP (Curriculum) was thanked for the report and the helpful funding briefing.

c) QIP updates (sections 3&4)

There was a question about the EV vehicles and it was shared that the College were exploring the possibility of a salary sacrifice scheme.

6. Finance Matters

Papers: Budget and mid-year update, note on support staff modelling, Management Accounts, Estates top sheet

a) Financial forecast for 2023-24 (mid-year budget update)

i) Support staff Minimum Wage modelling

A note had been included in the papers on the financial impact. The HR Director explained the current discrepancy in reaching the minimum wage level on pay point 3 and the need to implement changes for pay points 3-8 for the 1 March.

The Principal warned that this would cause clustering of the pay spines 8-10 and in response to a members feedback suggested waiting for the SFCA to address the issue before considering taking any action. Overall this would be a welcomed move for staff on the lower pay spines.

Resolved: Agreement to the uplift to meet the agreed minimum wage level for Support Staff on pay spines 3-8 from the 1 March 2024.

[17.52 – Olivia Blake and Rob Hussey were thanked for the updates and left the meeting]

The FD gave an update on the financial forecast and the substantial changes since budget setting which included the funding uplift, in-year funding, and Snelling legacy which had increased by circa £50k. In terms of modelling, the forecast surplus was more positive. The draw down of £170k from Trustees would likely be deferred and not needed for the purposes of EBITDA.

b) Management Accounts to 31 Jan inc Balance Sheet & Cashflow

Again the position was positive at the half way point across all key metrics, the main indicator being staff costs; Members queried the budgeted figure versus financial objective and the FD responded that this was aspirational and noted as especially positive due to the number of services such as

catering and cleaning being delivered in-house. In terms of benchmarking, the College was positioned mid-range against other S7 colleges.

There was a further question on the payback of the small loan and this was confirmed as an action prior to academy conversion as it could not be ported across.

Recommendations: The Governing Body approve the mid-year update to the financial forecast and the Management Accounts at their next meeting.

c) Capital projects/masterplan and funding update (Estates)

The Principal referred to the top sheet and summary following some recent developments. There was a proposal to be considered on the possibility of a larger auditorium for the Duckering Hall once the RAAC was removed and the area renovated. The cost was estimated at £250k. To accommodate the displaced classrooms during the RAAC remedial works, the Estates Committee had discussed portakabins at a cost of £300k over the next 3 years. Members queried whether the costs would be reimbursed by the DfE and the Principal was hopeful as there was Government funding available, although timescales were uncertain.

There was a discussion about rephrasing of the Masterplan and the advice from the architects once appointed. The Chair suggested the Committee endorse the financial costs to the Governing Body, however the Estates Committee explain the rephrasing of the Masterplan.

Recommendations: The Governing Body approve the costs for the Duckering Hall project (£150k) and the mobile classrooms (£150k)

7. Community Update

Papers: SMCG minutes x 2

SMCG meetings

i) *30-11-23

ii) *11-01-24

There were no specific comments on this consent item.

8. Policies

Papers: Admissions Policy, Student Fees & Charges, Fol Publication Scheme

i) Admissions Policy

It was noted that the application deadline for all new students had been aligned to a new date of the 10 January.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the Admissions Policy.

ii) *Student Fees/Charges (schedule)

There were no comments on the accompanying fees and charges schedule.

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the Student Fees/Charges schedule.

iii) *Fol Publication Scheme

Recommendation: The Governing Body approve the Fol Publication Scheme.

9. AOB

None to record.

10. Meeting Assessment

Members agreed it was positive to hear from other members of staff at relevant points during the meeting.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee would meet on Wednesday 22 May 2024. Members agreed that subject to the agreement on the proposal to Governing Body to merge the Remuneration and Governance & Search Committees explained by the Clerk, the meeting could move forward to 16.30.

The meeting closed at 18.20

Chair

Date

RRS 07-03-24