



BOARD STRATEGY SESSION
Monday 28 September 2020 17:30-19:00

Teams

Draft minutes

Board	Independent Governors: Ian Valvona (Chair of Corporation); Sue Kingman (VC); Andy Chew (VC); Elaine McMahon (interim CEO and Principal); Vincent Neate; Rosh Sellahewa; Mike Sutcliffe; Jim Marshall; Alex Gallagher; Helen Litvak Staff Governors: Neal Hook; Cait Orton. Student Governors: Japneet Kaur; Hamish Murray
In Attendance	Jason Jones (Deputy CEO & Principal, Curriculum and Quality); Ian Rule (Interim Finance Director); Alison de Lord (AP HR & OD); Sheila Fraser-Whyte (Executive Director, Business Development & Innovation); Chris Dearnley (ESFA) (observer); Sarah Connerty (interim Governance advisor); Ellie Woods (Board support)
Apologies	

At the start of the meeting Lucy MacArthur, Schools Coordinator for the Kingston and Richmond Safeguarding Children Partnership (KRSCP) gave a presentation on the work of the Partnership in the community and with RuTC. The Chair noted that safeguarding is a key area for the Board and reminded governors that safeguarding is all our responsibilities and all about partnerships. CO welcomed LM to the meeting. She explained that the partnership has overall responsibility for the area to make sure statutory responsibilities are met and young people are kept safe. It works with various statutory agencies. Lucy supports school leaders including RuTC. Lucy shared a presentation for governors. The logo for KRSCP represents the two boroughs and represents that the Partnership is looking after all the children of the two boroughs and was designed by a nine-year-old child. The professional advisor Elisabeth Major liaises with the three partners (Ian Dodds/Ian Thomas-Local Authority, Owain Richards-Police, and Fergus Keenan-Clinical Commissioning Group/NHS). The Partnership develops strategies around child protection and child safety policy and rolls out training in the borough. The body is independent and can check on the work of all organisations working with children and families and LM outlined the aims of the Partnership. LM showed a video of chicken shop grooming. The Partnership conduct Child safeguarding practice reviews for when a child is seriously hurt or killed, safeguarding strategies for example the Neglect Strategy, Section 11 audits, community engagement and awareness raising and a vast amount of training. LM works with the schools and sixth forms, Early Years and two FE colleges carrying out Section 11 audits, DSL forums and safeguarding legislation. The presentation outlined the current themes and priorities of KRSCP and the training available. CO thanked LM for the presentation and for everything KRSCP does to support the College. The Chair passed on his thanks and noted how important it is for the Board to understand the functions of the Partnership. Governors to send any questions to CO for follow up to follow up with LM.

Item	Item Description	Action
1	Welcome and apologies There were no apologies received. JK and HM did not attend the meeting. The Chair noted that the extraordinary meeting is the opportunity for the Board to discuss, ask questions and approve the standalone proposal for the SPA. He apologised about the timelines for reading of the papers and noted that the process has gone on for some time and has been elongated and it is welcome that it is about to conclude so the College can be clear where the future lies. The Chair outlined the timeframe for the SPA: 5 October - submission date 14 October - Steering Group 4 to consider proposals 15 October - confirmation from the FEC of final stage presentations	

	<p>3 November - presentations</p> <p>4 November - confirmation of FEC recommendations and report to the Minister</p> <p>11 November - RuTC extraordinary Board to decide</p> <p>17 November – extraordinary SRP to take forward recommendations</p> <p>He clarified that this evening’s meeting is about collectively accepting that the standalone proposals is a credible and acceptable document for submission and is not about deciding on the preference for a proposal of standalone over merger.</p>	
2	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>There were no declarations received.</p>	

<p>3</p>	<p>SPA standalone submission</p> <p>EM introduced the standalone proposal noting that there has been a lot of work done at the College on financial recovery and moving forward on improving quality. The College is on a really good journey which is why the CLT felt it was in a position to put in a standalone proposal. The proposal asks if this the right time to be making a decision on merging or staying as a standalone. People have been giving good feedback about how they feel at the current time. At the moment the College is on a really good trajectory in terms of finances, stability and with the second year of substantial increases in student numbers by 30%. Staff are very pleased that has been the outcome, both because of the new building and because of all the hard work of Diane Dimond and the team on the new building, quality and financial recovery, and they feel confident to move forward in the short term as a standalone. The College has moved a long way in a short time, but there are more things to do around quality and building financial recovery and there needs to be the space to put this in place. The country is sat in a pandemic, the school next door has got one staff member and students with Covid and the College has severe restrictions in place to keep staff and students safe. It doesn't feel the right time for merger with staff having to do double the work load, re timetable all the time and managing small groups in college and remote learning. We can't see where the pandemic is going to take us and there may be another lockdown. These are difficulties for all the potential partners who would then have the added workloads of merger and due diligence. The College are delighted that HCUC and STCG put in expressions of interest for merger, and disappointed that Roehampton have withdrawn as it is not the right time for them, and welcome working in partnership with them and looking at merger again at a future point. A merger at this time could destabilise recovery if the College doesn't have a real focus on the case of change to get the building work done, to deal with quality that is getting on track and to manage the financial recovery. The College has got to retain its increased student numbers and attendance is one of the challenges the College faces. The Board had a very good strategy session and a follow up session with the Chair and Vice Chairs about the feasibility of the standalone proposal and this journey is led by the Board in partnership with CLT. The proposal talks about the delivery of the recovery plan which has been well rehearsed in Board and Committee meetings over the last year with all of those meetings leading to the case in the document. Members of the CLT have taken a lead on each of the sections. Rather than presenting the document EM welcomed feedback and challenge on whether there are omissions in the document and whether it sets the right tone.</p> <p>AdL reported on the risk register which summarises the discussions that have taken place over the last year at Board and Committee meetings on the key risks for the College. She noted that as a College we have our own challenges and risks and the additional challenges of merger may make staff take their eye off the ball. AC noted that a big part of the risk is that if the CLT is engaged in merger planning then what are they not able to focus on. EM agreed to add this to the risk register.</p> <p>The Chair thanked EM and the CLT for all the work that has gone into the proposal.</p> <p>The Chair opened the discussion to Board members. There was a detailed and in-depth discussion. Key points and actions included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HL noted that she had really enjoyed reading the document which is solid and well thought out. She commended the team for getting everything down in less than 30 pages and felt the document was quite succinct. She agreed to add her comments to the document for EM to follow up on after the meeting. She asked about the documents referenced and EM explained that these are documents that the Board and Committee are already familiar with and will be added to the final document. SC to share any documents in advance to governors if requested. HL noted that the College has a really strong governing board, with a varied skills set and it is a Board that really gets involved in the College and is a real asset. She suggested this could be expanded in the document. Marketing and student recruitment demonstrates the amazing work the team are doing, they really know their audiences and the work output from such a small team is amazing. Marketing is at the 	<p>AdL</p> <p>HL</p> <p>EM</p>
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	<p>core of a College's success and she suggested this is brought to the fore more as without student recruitment, advertising and social media the success wouldn't be there. The section on progression doesn't sing out to HE, there are going to be some amazing students coming out of their A levels and some of them will be moving onto HE; SFW noted the progression will include data from last year and HL noted she could help with this section and look at the number of HE students coming to Kings College London from RuTC. EM thanked HL for the strong points to incorporate into the document.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair noted that the positive and helpful contributions are very useful. He asked SK and AC as Vice Chairs to contribute to the debate as they had been involved in the developing thinking on the proposal last week. SK reported that the document reflects the conversations last week and it was important to check back against the evaluation criteria to ensure the proposal was meeting all the points. AC reported that the executive summary really captures the tone and content that now is not the time and the College needs to concentrate on the recovery plan. A commitment to undertaking a College SPA in two- or three-years' time to pick its own long-term optimum solution had been discussed last week. By this point the College will be in a position of viability. It was agreed that there should be an explicit reference to a College led spa in 2022-23 or 2023-4. The critical point is that the College will be viable as a standalone entity at this point. The trigger for the SPA was the financial position of the College and the position is now fundamentally different with the College successfully managing that financial situation VN noted that the content makes a very good case for staying as a standalone college. It reads that now is not the right time, rather than there is a fantastic plan, and this is not the right time to stop the progress. It doesn't say that we are in control and know what we are doing. We have financial stability, have completed the building plan so close to budget and are on course for Phase 2 of the redevelopment and we have smashed enrolment targets on top of managing Covid 19. The document is not powerful enough, the language needs to be much more proactive and demonstrate that the College is delivering on its recovery plan beyond all expectations. He suggested describing what it is like for staff and stakeholders now; staff are already seeing the benefits of the new building and are more trusting with management and these are the features that are driving the benefits. He noted that it is a great statement of intent and needs to be beefed up. EM responded that it is about positioning and she is in complete agreement about being positive about progress, but the College is on a journey and it hasn't cracked it all. The staff are positive but are also down that IT isn't working fully and there are major issues with it. Staff have put in place innovative ways to address problems, but we haven't done the best for them at the start of the year. With Covid we are always on the back foot and not as slick as we would like, we have had to keep altering timetabling which is disruptive for staff and students. We are on a journey in terms of quality, and we have improved but we are way off where we need to be and if Ofsted came in now the College is still judging itself as Requires Improvement. It needs to be a balanced paper, but we have to be realistic or the audience will realise this is not a solid proposal. VN agreed this is absolutely right and CLT are much more aware of every detail of what is going well and not so well, but it does need to read as though we fundamentally believe in our standalone proposal. EM noted that we must be honest about what still needs to be tackled and the journey we are on and should never turn down the opportunity in the future for partnership working and merger. It is a new world and we don't know the impact of Covid and are still finding our way with it, but the aim is to keep our options open while fighting tooth and nail to be a standalone. EM agreed to visit the tone of the proposal and agreed it needs to be proactive SK agreed that it has to be clear that it is not just aspirational but that it is happening. The document should be quite specific about what we have achieved and what we aim to achieve, it needs clarity and emphasis JM noted that the document should explain why RuTC is here and that is addressed. The financial aspect is addressed. The other areas that gave cause for concern around student outcomes and Requires Improvement are picked up in the weaknesses section and VN's 	<p>EM</p> <p>HL</p> <p>EM</p> <p>EM</p> <p>EM</p> <p>EM</p> <p>EM</p>
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	<p>comments on linking this with a more proactive language is important. He noted he had some micro comments which he would send offline. EM noted that she had spent some time with CLT on this section and the weaknesses are the key areas being worked on from last year and continuing this year with additional focus this year on culture, wellbeing of staff and staff workload. The new strategy will build in all these areas. SFW noted that the College is solution focused on what has taken place over the last year. All issues have been brought to the fore and addressed. Staff have gone through so much and continue with business as normal. Huge progress in marketing, the new build, enrolling 2500 learners are all areas of great success and so much work has been done to drive it. The College is a speedboat moving forward so fast and with impact. It has moved from a sleepy college to something that has a presence in the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AG noted that the proposal refers to not being the right time because of the pandemic but potentially this is not going away for the next one to two years and asked what the plan in six months' time is and should this be more explicit. He asked about revenue financials and growth and for more discussion and information around apprentices and adult learners to give confidence we are able to hit targets under the current financial plan <p>The Chair thanked colleagues for all the work done in a compressed period of time. He asked governors to bear in mind their roles, especially in relation to Committee chairs who are members of the SPA steering group. He felt the proposal sets out a strong case that will deliver very good benefits for students and staff and will need to be compared against the final proposals from HCUC and STCG. He stressed the importance for governors to view the proposals in the best interests of staff and students.</p> <p>The Chair thanked colleagues for the important and helpful feedback and asked for delegated authority for the Chair and Vice Chairs to consider how the feedback is included in the final document prior to coming back to the Board by written resolution by the end of the week.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the standalone submission to the SPA in principle, subject to further iterations incorporating the discussion points from the meeting. The final proposal will come to the Board by written resolution in advance of the SPA deadline of 5 October 2020.</p> <p>To note that the written resolution does not allow for further debate.</p>	<p>JM</p> <p>EM</p> <p>EM</p>
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Vision and Mission

EM reported that she had updated the paper this afternoon on where CLT have got to around the vision and mission. A limited amount of student feedback has been received due to the timing of the start of term, plus staff contribution and governor contributions. The feedback is that a statement that is both a vision and mission statement is the preference.

EM explained that the overall staff view is that the vision should be real and not just words. They felt that the previous vision wasn't modelled on the behaviours of the leaders of the College and want to move away from what is there now.

The current vision and mission are:

To drive aspiration, ambition and achievement

A college that enhances careers and life chances with inspired provision and a commitment to our community values of mutual respect, honesty, integrity and personal accountability. The vision commits to creating life-changing opportunities that encourage individuals to be purposeful and considerate citizens who are capable of making significant contributions to the world of work and society.

Words that came up as values from staff were respect, honesty, teamwork and collaboration, integrity, trust, development and curiosity. Staff want the vision to be succinct and impactful and aspirational about the learning at the College and the importance of staff in providing life opportunities to its learners.

EM explained that she had presented a first draft of a revised vision and mission to staff at the all staff address, following their feedback:

Vision: Transforming lives through education and training

Mission: A college that puts students first, is employer focused and embedded in the local community. We provide inspiring, high quality education and training and we create success and we create futures

The College Marketing Team have worked with the further feedback to create the following vision and mission for consideration:

Vision: To transform lives by developing skills for a successful future

Mission: Richmond upon Thames College puts students first. It is employer focused and supports the local community and provides students with inspiring and high-quality education and training.
Or

Mission: We aim to drive aspiration, ambition and achievement. We are a college that puts students first, is employer employment focused and supports the local community. We provide inspiring, high quality education and training, creating success and securing futures.

Five variations of the vision and mission statements were considered by the Board.

EM asked colleagues for their views and the following points were raised:

- HL noted how hard it is to create a vision statement and the challenge with the words is that they can be upheld. She asked how much the word transforming can be underpinned by the College. What does it really mean and can we explain it in a way that we really get? She asked whether it is too big a word. There are two key criteria for a vision statement - is it credible and believable and can we differentiate from other colleges
- AC added that the vision has to be inspirational. What are we doing to make those aspirations clear and can we point to the things that will drive that ambition? He asked if staff feel they have the power to transform lives and can we explain how and why they do what they do
- JJ noted that learning does have the power to transform lives and we are in this business as educators to transform lives
- *Transforming lives through a passion for learning* was discussed
- SK noted that the learning and aspirational part are clear and questioned whether the reference to passion is about staff or students. JJ agreed there is a semantic issue and felt

	<p>it is both and that it is good to have that slight ambiguity. It is about the staff having the passion for learning and the students taking ownership and having the passion to achieve it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MS noted that it is about useful learning and having the right skills to go forward. He suggested <i>Transforming lives through a passion for useful learning</i> • The Chair explained that it is about being broadly supportive of a statement that is in confirmation with where the College at this moment in history to include in the SPA and knowing that it is not set in stone and will evolve • AC noted that the normal criticism of vision statements is they end up as blah blah statements and don't stand up to scrutiny. It should be about how the vision explicitly links to the Strategy and how the Strategy links to operational plans in terms of a flow and how this feeds back over time. That is what can give more credibility to what is put into the vision statements. EM agreed and confirmed that this was the case and could be captured in the mission by including reference to expanding opportunities and providing learning to all that encourages curiosity • EM agreed with the Chair's view that the statements were evolving and in development but would also want to share with staff and students to ask how they feel about the vision and mission to be included in the standalone proposal. The Chair agreed and noted that it is absolutely valid that the mission and vision would be capable of evolving and that the FEC and ESFA would accept that it is not something fixed in stone • AdL suggested including expanding opportunities and learning to all that encourages curiosity to the proposed statements and EM agreed to go forward with a hybrid of the statements proposed by staff <p>RESOLVED: The Board were in support of CLT's decision to go forward with a vision and mission statement to include in the standalone proposal that is a hybrid of the proposals brought to the meeting. CLT to draft the final version to share with the Board, staff and students.</p> <p>The Chair asked CD if he had any observations on this evening's meeting and CD noted that it had been an interesting discussion.</p> <p>The Chair thanked colleagues for a very worthwhile discussion and the CLT for all their work in preparing the papers.</p>	
4	<p>Meetings for 2020-21: 7 October; 11 November 2020; 9 December 2020; 24 March 2021; 14 July 2021</p> <p>Holding dates: 27 January 2021; 28 April 2021; 10 June 2021 (all 17.30 starts)</p>	
5	<p>Any other business There were no items raised.</p>	

Meeting closed: 19.05