



REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2024 at 9.30am
Committee Room Reaseheath Hall

Present: Malcolm Burns (independent) MB
 Marcus Clinton (principal) MC
 Elizabeth Harrison (independent, chair) EH
 Angela Potter (independent) AP
 Liz Watts (staff) LW
 Paul Weston (independent) PW

In attendance: Graeme Lavery (VP finance and resources) GL
 Louise Woodman (director of people and culture) LWoodman (*item 2 only*)
 Charlotte Clifford Taylor (head of finance) CCT
 Jackie Schillinger (company secretary and head of governance)

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	Opening items
1.1	Apologies for absence from David Pearson were received and accepted. The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout. No declarations of interest were made.
1.2	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 were approved as a correct record.
1.3	The action log was reviewed, and actions confirmed as complete or progressing, with confirmation that the principal had arranged a meeting with the appropriate contact to explore the social prescribing point made at the previous meeting.
2.	Holding executive leaders to account for the performance of staff
2.1	Human Resources Report: LWoodman presented an overview of the full report, which had been provided to the committee with the papers and opened the item for discussion and questions. The key points raised in the discussion were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome progress is being made on iTrent with the additional staff resource in place. There remain challenges on recruitment/retention in the HR team which is putting some pressure on the team. - HR statistical data is moving in the right direction with turnover and there is an expectation of positive impact from the salary changes and pay award improvements that have been put in place this year. - Clarification of the timing of the staff pay awards, with an overall impact of 7.5%, which is above the recommended AoC pay award of 6.5%. - Wellbeing support is being utilised well to support staff with stress/personal issues outside of work. - Overall, the risk exposure on recruitment and retention of staff has decreased slightly with isolated pockets rather than recruitment/retention issues across the college, meaning that the executive team are cautiously positive. The staff governor confirmed that the changes made had stabilised retention in her team. The principal confirmed that some excellent new appointments had also been made recently.
2.2	RESOLVED: Review of risk exposure shows signs of progress from the mitigation actions put in place and the college should continue to put in place tailored solutions to target specific areas of risk.
2.3	The Gender Pay Report shows positive change this year, particularly to the median which has seen a significant shift and with the top two quartiles showing a positive shift, which was welcomed by the

2.4	committee. The committee noted the good progress being made on the equality diversity and inclusion action plan now that the audit had been completed and clear priorities had been established. RESOLVED: The committee takes good assurance on progress on gender pay as part of the overall EDI strategy and action plan and recommends the Gender Pay Report to the Board for approval.
3.	Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, your organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met
3.1	Student Recruitment and Funding Report: VP Finance and Resources, GL presented the report, which had been provided to the committee with the papers and opened the item for discussion and questions. The committee welcomed the clear reporting, with further enhancement by the addition of a summary table at the top showing the budget outturn. The key points raised in the discussion were: - The variance on overall budget outturn is due to several income streams, with higher education income being down on budget, which continues a reduction from the previous year. One factor was a reduction in the STEM element of the funding. Higher education recruitment remains very challenging across the sector. Apprenticeship income remains constrained by staff capacity to deliver in some areas as well as funding levels for apprenticeships, with this sector wide message being heard by government with continued lobbying. T level numbers are below allocation. One member's own experience and the recent ESFA conversation confirmed that T level under delivery is not solely a Reaseheath issue and is sector wide with the college comparing quite well to others in the region. - Some queries were discussed, including the drop in the specialist subject area 3 numbers to below the college target of 60%, which indicates a slight shift away from the higher funded land-based specialist areas. Following questions, assurance was taken that there was no risk around specialist designation, that the base rate and weighting changes made this year have made up for any shift and that the current application picture in the specialist areas suggests that this percentage will increase again next year. Some fluctuation was accepted as inevitable. However, the committee was keen to understand more about the various factors, including retention contributing to this shift to inform the quality and standards committee's work on retention and the student experience as well as curriculum planning and growth strategies going forwards at Board level. <i>ACTION: GL/MC analysis/overview report to Board to enable review at the March meeting.</i>
3.2	Confidential Part B item.
3.3	RESOLVED: Assurance is taken that student recruitment variance to budget can be managed this year and there are positive signs of better recruitment for next year, but the factors impacting the recruitment picture in both FE and HE need to be carefully considered to inform work on retention and the student experience as well as curriculum planning and growth strategies going forwards at Board level.
3.4	Confidential Part B item.
3.5	RESOLVED: Authority is granted for an additional college contribution of approximately £150,000 to the funding for the Institute of Technology capital build project to enable the build contracts, as previously approved, to be entered into.
4.	Strategic risks within committee remit
4.1	Committee strategic risk reporting to audit committee/board: The Committee reviewed the risk scores presented by the executive team on the strategic risk areas within their remit. The committee supported the decrease in risk exposure from Red to a high Amber for the risk of a failure to recruit and retain the right staff to meet the college's needs. Based on the reporting received and discussion in the meeting they considered this a justified and welcome move, whilst acknowledging that the position may fluctuate and remains dynamic. Financial risk and estates and property development risk remain well managed and within risk appetite. The committee highlighted the underlying variances and the short and medium term challenges in securing income growth as needing to be a key part of the strategic planning taking place this year.
5.	Closing items
5.1	There was no further business reported to the meeting.
5.2	RESOLVED: The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 4 July 2024 9.30am

5.3	<p>Meeting impact summary: Committee Chair, EH summarised the meeting discussion, highlighting the following key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, your organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met: Escalated to Board the pressure on the college's core business model that whilst currently mitigated with T levels and the base rate increase in funding will require the Board and its committees to keep a close eye on the growth and funding indications for next year and take appropriate strategic action as needed. • Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, your organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met: Escalated to Board the drop in the specialist subject area 3 numbers to below the college target of 60%, which indicates a slight shift away from the higher funded land-based specialist areas. There is a need to understand more about the various factors, including retention contributing to this shift to inform the quality and standards committee's work on retention and the student experience as well as curriculum planning and growth strategies going forwards at Board level. • Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, your organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met: Considered and approved a small increase in match-funding for the Institute of Technology capital build to enable approved contracts to be entered into. • Holding executive leaders to account for the performance of staff: Able to report signs of progress in managing staff recruitment and retention risk by the strategic actions taken by the executive team and supported by the Board. • Determining and developing your college's educational character: Recommended approval of the Gender Pay Report showing a welcome positive shift in the gender pay data, as part of the college's equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan.
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The meeting closed at 11am

Approved as a correct record 4 July 2024

Chair: Angela Potter