



**REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
BOARD MEETING**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024 at 9.30am
D1/2 Food Centre Reaseheath College**

Present	Karol Bailey (associate) KB Malcolm Burns (independent) MB Marcus Clinton (principal) MC Jane Cowell (independent) JC Gary Crowe (independent) GC Evelyn Davies-Jones (independent) EDJ Andrew Fletcher (independent) AF Phil Gibbon (staff) PGibbon Mike Gorton (independent) MG Peter Green (independent) PG Elizabeth Harrison (independent) EH David Pearson (independent) DP, Chair Angela Potter (independent) AP Alastair Taylor (associate) AT Paul Weston (independent) PW Isabella Yates (student) IY
Attending	Graeme Lavery (vice principal, finance and resources) GL Paul Spearritt (vice principal, curriculum and quality) PS Louise Woodman (director of people and culture) LW James Eagney (assistant principal) JE John Kendal (assistant principal) JK Sharon Yates (assistant principal) SY Jackie Schillinger (head of governance) JS

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.1	Apologies were received and accepted from Prof Eunice Simmons, Prof Chris Gaskell, Liz Watts, Alex Hickey and Casey Crispin.
1.2	The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout.
1.3	No declarations of interest were made to the meeting.
1.4	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 were confirmed as a correct record, subject to a correction to list of members present.
Corporation Core Function Accountabilities	
2.	Determining and developing college educational character – vision mission and values
2.1	Student Union: Student governor IY presented an update on the SU activities against the aims and plans set out for the year. Members thanked the students for the report which evidenced progress on aims for the year and continued active SU contribution to the student experience. IY confirmed that the shadow committee is largely in place to ensure a smooth transition next year and the new SU president is Summer

	Lakin. Members welcomed the RAG charity activity and progress with more fundraising to come, including the sponsored Sandstone Trail and Skydive activities. The link to these would be shared with governors so that they could contribute to the RAG sponsorship activities.
2.2	Safeguarding, Prevent and Wellbeing: Vice Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead PS presented the termly update report. Following on from the annual report in December, he reported on the outcome of the safeguarding audit commissioned from the Cheshire East safeguarding team, which had provided good assurance and some useful recommendations which were being taken forwards and noted a further internal audit service safeguarding and prevent audit is due in the summer term. The Cheshire East audit was supported by governors DP and MG who met with the audit team. Discussion followed on the continued complexity and challenge in this area, the resourcing of the college services to meet need and the proactive way the college works with the local authority, seeking assurances on processes and practice. It was agreed that these third-party level assurance sources are an important part of the internal control process, providing confidence that safeguarding, prevent and wellbeing responsibilities are effectively managed within the current context.
2.3	RESOLVED: Good assurance is taken from the Safeguarding Prevent and Wellbeing report on the continued management of the college's safeguarding and prevent responsibilities and wellbeing support
2.4	Health and Safety: Vice Principal GL presented the termly update report, including progress on the actions in place, HSE communication and the independent audit assurance report awaited following the board's requested assurances at its November 2023 meeting. Full discussion was held on this critical area of risk including recommendations from the Audit Committee, which had considered health and safety risk at its recent meeting. The committee recommended that this area be considered in the forthcoming internal audit planning meeting with a view to agreeing a timescale for the college internal auditors RSM to carry out a check and challenge exercise on the actions taken across the college in response to the investigation/external independent audit. Members supported the amber risk rating due to the additional actions agreed on health and safety, until assurance is received that these have been completed. In addition to the audit work, the discussion covered appropriate governance oversight and it was agreed that several members of the audit committee would work with the link governor for health and safety to oversee progress in the next couple of months and to report this into the Audit Committee and to the next governing body meeting in the summer term.
2.5	RESOLVED: The Health and Safety Report is received, with agreed audit and governance oversight recommendations.
2.6	Strategic Plan 2024-2027 Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Intent: Feedback from the Sparsholt visit and strategy session was considered. The Principal MC presented the draft strategy document following the governor strategic session held at the recent away event at Sparsholt College, with those recommendations incorporated into the draft. Good practice gained from the governor visit to Sparsholt was discussed and it was agreed to put in place a similar governor committee on Curriculum Skills and Stakeholders to support the college's Industry Focused Career Ready Mission, with the new round of governor recruitment in the summer enabling this. This would provide greater focus to governance input and oversight into how the college meets skills needs and works with/engage with stakeholders.
2.7	RESOLVED: The key strategic intent priorities are agreed, to be brought forward with the final strategic plan document for approval in July: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Career Ready learners who have the technical skills, transferable skills and aptitudes to thrive and progress in the workplace or to higher levels of education. • Aligning the curriculum offer to address industry skills gaps by working in partnership to drive sustainability and productivity. • Delivering an outstanding quality of education. • Delivering a Reaseheath Experience for staff and learners that is centred on personal development, community, inclusivity and has high aspirations. • Telling the Story to enthuse and attract the workforce of tomorrow to the career paths and opportunities that exist.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing key national priorities such as food security and protection of the environment. Governance committee structure to develop alongside strategic intent with Curriculum Skills and Stakeholder Committee.
3.	Setting and Communicating the College Strategy and Goals – Strategic Plan and Annual Operating Plan
3.1	Chair's Report: DP presented his final report to the college Board as Chair and placed on record how proud he was to have been associated with Reaseheath, its staff and its students over the past 12 years. He thanked colleges, staff, and student members for all their support. Members thanked DP for all his commitment and contribution as a board member and then as Chair and wished him all the best for the future.
3.2	RESOLVED: The Chair's Report is received with thanks to the Chair for his contribution and commitment to the college as he steps down from the role.
3.3	Principal's Report: MC provided a strategic progress update on the general position of the college and university centre since the last report in December 2023 and reported progress against the annual strategic objectives and college level KPI. The ESFA strategic conversation outcome letter was shared with members. He outlined the current risk ratings and mitigation controls in relation to the principal strategic risks and he reported good progress on the strategic plan objectives in the final year of the current plan. He expressed his thanks to Chair DP for his sterling work and support for the college over the last twelve years and he welcomed the new Chair Jane Cowell OBE into her role from April.
3.4	RESOLVED: The Principal's report is received for information providing a good understanding of the overall college position.
4.	Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, your organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met
4.1	<p>Audit Committee Report: Committee chair GC reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive assurance on regularity with no irregularities reported in the period. Good progress on implementing the recommendations on a comprehensive counter fraud strategy following the internal audit on this area. Good progress and assurance on existing controls on information/cybersecurity working towards ISO27001 in a realistic timescale. On track on the internal audit plan this year. Internal Audit Further Education Benchmarking Report provides useful information and confirms the college is not out of line with other similar colleges in terms of internal audit outcomes. Substantial assurance received on: Internal Audit Report: Arrangements for the Delivery of Skills Priorities and Internal Audit Report: Academic Quality Framework. An initial discussion was held on internal audit planning for 2024-25 and the Audit Committee Chair and another member of the committee will attend this planning meeting with management and auditors. Two date variations agreed for the internal audit actions to July 2024, and this and all action down as completed will be picked up and checked in the internal audit follow up report by RSM. Health and Safety Processes: Full discussion on this and the committee recommends this area be considered in the forthcoming internal audit planning meeting with a view to agreeing a timescale for internal audit to carry out a check and challenge exercise on the actions taken across the college in response to the investigation and the committee offers its full support in securing further assurance.
4.2	RESOLVED: The Audit Committee Report is received for assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of the corporation's risk management and control processes with the recommendations supported.
4.3	<p>Finance and General Purposes Committee Report: Committee chair EH reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. (Gender Pay Report provided as part of the Consent agenda item).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good progress on mitigating the staff recruitment and retention risk, with the decrease in risk exposure from Red to Amber, based on reporting received and discussion in the meeting • 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, which needs to be a key part of the strategic planning taking place this year. • Student recruitment variance to budget can be managed this year and there are positive signs of better recruitment for next year. • The committee will monitor the student recruitment for 2024-25 in relation to specialist subject area 3, which had dropped in the current year, but with current early indications could return to target levels in 2024-25. • Good progress on capital projects/bids including Institute of Technology capital build.
4.4	RESOLVED: The Finance and General Purposes Committee Chair's Report is received with welcome progress on securing a more stable staffing environment with the investment in salary scales, cost of living pay award, leave entitlement and continued wellbeing resource investment showing positive impact, whilst acknowledging the environment remains challenging.
4.5	Confidential Part B item.
4.6	Confidential Part B item.
4.7	RESOLVED: The Board confirms the authority granted by Finance and General Purposes Committee 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.
5.	Holding executive leaders to account for educational performance and quality and performance of staff
5.1	<p>Quality and Standards Committee Report: Committee chair JC reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good progress on the quality improvement plan, with impact and traction evident on improving the quality of provision and student experience in several of the self-assessed 'requires improvement' (RI) areas. However, still significant work to do and the committee took assurance on the leadership drive, commitment, and capacity evident from the meeting and the governor link visits that informed the committee's view. The committee will monitor progress at its next checkpoint meeting in early May. • The committee reports its appreciation and support to staff for all the work done and still to be done in achieving consistent quality of teaching and student experience across the college and agreed that the priority this year is to achieve improved pass rates. Governors can support by giving this message in their link visits and the committee chair will draft a note to thank staff and express the committee's support. • The Committee reports a cautious but encouraging picture on student recruitment and that it is assured that significant work is ongoing to maximise student recruitment for next year and it will monitor progress at the next checkpoint meeting In May.
5.2	<p>Quality Improvement Actions Impact quality of teaching and learning: Assistant Principal JE presented an overview of the impact of improvement actions on the requires improvement areas, where the college is and the direction of travel. The key points covered in the discussion were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early signs of impact with attendance strong, high student satisfaction back to pre-covid levels and more consistent behaviour and compliance across the college. Projected achievement rates point to an improvement for 23/24. • Attendance remains strong. • Retention is currently above last year's position. • L3 carry-in has an impact of L3 retention. • Leadership presence in classrooms is increasing. • Greater focus on teaching and learning performance. • Leadership compliance has increased.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • However, still need to improve consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. • The current position and direction of travel was considered in Academy of Land and Environment (Agriculture); Sport; Equine and Foundation. • Next governors' checkpoint on 2 May 2024 will look at where are we on KPI including pass rate indicators, next steps, further action.
5.3	<p>Higher Education Committee Report: Committee vice chair GC reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks to Peter Greenall for all his work as Dean and wishing him all the best as he moves back to Blackpool for a new opportunity at Blackpool and the Fylde College. • Recommended approval of the 2025-26 UCR tuition fees to remain unchanged at the current level. • Student survey results are very strong and evidence that UCR has been able to build on the significant improvement in NSS results for 2022-23 with further improvement. Student satisfaction this year could still be impacted by factors to do with the overall environment including the catering services, but the UCR café opening has been resolved and this has been welcomed by the students. • Quality Improvement Plan monitoring shows good progress on the planned quality improvement actions for 2023-24. • Management is working more closely with the SU and continues to focus on the quality of its communication to students in terms of ensuring that a stronger message on 'you said, we did' is received by students. • Strong strategic curriculum development and good management of strategic risk is reported • Review of the student recruitment picture whilst remaining challenging is now showing encouraging signs especially in relation to first year recruitment.
5.4	RESOLVED: The Quality and Standards and Higher Education Committee reports are received for assurance on clarity of the current position, impact of actions and direction of travel on educational performance and quality and performance of staff.
6.	Consent Agenda - For Approval items
6.1	RESOLVED: Higher Education Tuition Fees 2025-2026 are approved, unchanged.
6.2	RESOLVED: Gender Pay Report is approved for publication.
6.3	<p>RESOLVED: The following appointments are approved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Jane Cowell appointed to the role of Chair of the Board from 1 April 2024 for the remaining period of her current term of office to 31 July 2025, with re-appointment as chair for a further term of office possible at that time. 2. Elizabeth Harrison appointed to the role of Senior Independent Governor from 1 May 2024 for the period to 31 July 2025, with re-appointment possible at that time. 3. Mike Gorton appointed to the role of Vice Chair from 1 May 2024 for the period to 31 July 2025 with re-appointment possible at that time. 4. Andrew Fletcher re-appointed as a member of the Board for a short period to 31 July 2024, after which Andrew will step down but remain involved as an external member of the farm steering committee. 5. Mike Gorton appointed to the role of Safeguarding Lead Governor from 1 April 2024. 6. Angela Potter appointed to chair the Finance and General Purposes Committee from its next meeting. 7. Jane Cowell to join Finance and General Purposes Committee and Remuneration Committee. 8. Claire Blanchard appointed to the Higher Education Committee as a co-opted external member providing higher education quality expertise to the committee from its next meeting, for a period to 31 July 2025, with re-appointment possible.
7.	Any other business (notified to chair/clerk in advance): There was no other business reported to the meeting.
8.	Part B item– independent governors only
The meeting closed at 12.45pm	