



Summary of External Review of Reaseheath College Governance (Published in the Governance Statement in the Annual Accounts)

The Reaseheath College governing body undertook an independent external review of governance in the 2022-23 academic year. It was undertaken by Stone King LLP. The review consisted of observation of governing body and committee meetings, interviews, survey responses and a governance documentation review. Work was undertaken during the spring term 2023, with the outcome reported to the governing body at its summer term meeting in July 2023. The basis for the review was the college's adopted code of governance – the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges. The review also considered whether governance is well aligned to the Higher Education Code of Governance in relation to the college's higher education provision.

The outcome of the review is that the governance of Reaseheath College is committed, structured, and demonstrates effective governing practice, considering both codes of governance. It identified potential for further improvement by making aspects of governing more focused and, therefore, more productive.

The governing body welcomes the opportunity to develop its strategy for further enhancing its effectiveness and impact. A presentation of the review and a governance development session in September 2023 informed the governing body's development plan for 2023-24 and beyond.

Key Strengths:

Capability: Governing body membership provides a useful well-rounded and skilled mix of experienced and more recently appointed members. There is a well-organised governor induction programme as an element of the governor training and development policy. The governing body demonstrates succession arrangements for the role of Chair, with a Chair Designate appointed to support a smooth transition to the role at the end of the 2023-24 academic year.

Culture: Led by the Chair, there is a positive and respectful culture which supports the practice of governing and which is focused on teaching, learning and the student experience. The Principal is committed to open and informed governing. He and the Head of Governance work closely with the Chair to provide leadership in governing matters. There is a strong sense that the culture is student-centred with many examples of interactions between governors and students, with the governing body demonstrating a positive approach to student, staff, and stakeholder engagement. Link and lead governor roles have been established with governors meeting with staff and students to gain further insight into the college and to enable better

triangulation of formal reports. Governors attend various college events ranging from formal awards to lunches with students and the Principal.

Strategy and Planning: The governing body values strategic planning and has established a plan for 2019 - 2024. It regularly monitors progress towards the achievement of its plan using performance indicators and strategic risk is regularly monitored. There is a governing body forward agenda plan in place. Decision making is supported by a scheme of delegation. There is effective use of the governance space outside of formal meetings. The governing body holds three strategy events in the academic year. These events are used to engage more widely with the sector with bodies such as the AoC and the FE Commissioner being invited to speak to governors.

Structures and Processes: The governing body has established a comprehensive committee structure with appropriate terms of reference to assist it to achieve its responsibilities. There is an annual governance meetings planner to provide a system of governing. Agendas for the governing body are structured by themes. The observation of selected meetings showed active, engaged events with a suitable balance of challenge and support. Annual reports on key governing body responsibilities are comprehensive and attractively produced. The Head of Governance uses a tracker system to provide accountability for governing body and committee decision making.

Key Areas for Further Development:

Capability: Secure the governing body's capability strengths for the future by further developing its succession planning approach and by further consideration of governing body diversity, induction processes and ongoing training at its next recruitment round, taking into consideration several good practice suggestions made in the review.

Culture: Further enhance the strong stakeholder centred culture by developing more structured governing body level stakeholder mapping and engagement frameworks to support the college's engagement strategies and by which the governing body monitors stakeholder voice systems and emerging messaging to meet evolving and future needs.

Strategy and Planning: Continue to develop the valuable strategic sessions as the governing body moves into developing its next strategic plan during 2023-24 and consider the good practice suggestions in the review to enhance the visibility of its strategic impact on the success of the college via the strategic risk and strategic progress reporting in formal meetings.

Structures and Processes: Review and consider adopting the Higher Education Code of Governance in addition to the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges, alongside reviewing some of the day-to-day processes and practices of governance to enhance visibility of the governing body's accountability and impact.