

**REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD**  
**FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15 February 2018 at 9.30am**  
**Committee Room, Reaseheath Hall**

Present: Malcolm Burns  
 Sonia Belfield (*item 4 onwards*)  
 Meredydd David  
 Dr Elizabeth Harrison (Chair) (*except item 10*)  
 Angela Potter

In attendance: Robert Brown, Head of IT (*item 8 only*)  
 Charlotte Clifford-Taylor, Head of Finance (*item 7 only*)  
 Rachel Ellis-Jones, Assistant Principal and Dean of HE (*items 1 – 6 only*)  
 Graeme Lavery, CFO and Director of Resources  
 Dave Kynaston, Vice Principal  
 Nigel Sobotta, Health and Safety Manager (*item 4 only*)  
 Louise Woodman, Director of HR  
 Jackie Schillinger, Clerk

**PART A**

Item	Content	Action
1.	<p><b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and in particular welcomed Angela Potter to her first meeting of the committee. Apologies were received and accepted from Richard Ratcliffe and Jon Furber. Sonia Belfield had informed the Clerk that she would be joining the meeting a little late. The meeting was quorate.</p>	
2.	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>The following interests were declared:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meredydd David as a director of DART Limited and member of the University of Chester Council;</li> <li>• Angela Potter, as an employee of Barclays Bank PLC</li> <li>• Dr Elizabeth Harrison in relation to item 10.1, for which she declared a potential conflict of interest and left the meeting for that item, taking no part in the discussion or decision.</li> </ul> <p>Except as set out above, no conflict of the declared interests arose in relation to the content of the agenda items.</p>	

<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p>Part A of the minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.</p>	
<p><b>4.</b></p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p>	<p><b>HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed the Health and Safety Manager to his first meeting since joining the College in December. His report provided an update on progress against the College health and safety action plan, which is monitored by the committee at each termly meeting. He confirmed that no significant risks to the action plan progress had been identified and actions are progressing well. He identified those actions added to the plan and provided assurance that these additional actions will not impact on delivery times for the original plan. His reporting also covered accident statistics. He confirmed that data for the first term is in line with previous years, but noted that he sees a further cultural shift needed across the College in order to increase performance in continuing to reduce the number of accidents. He provided details and context for the one RIDDOR reportable accident that involved a trip/fall and the committee took assurance that there was no wider impact from this accident. He also noted the work that is continuing with the British Safety Council with a pre-audit assessment in February.</p> <p>Members took assurance from the good work and progress made and the pleasing performance in 2017-18 to date. Questioning on the use of surveys, benchmark reporting in conjunction with Landex, near miss reporting and PAT testing of student appliances in residential accommodation followed. On discussion of these areas, it was agreed that the Health and Safety Manager will carry out a review of the PAT testing process to improve its enforceability and effectiveness. It was also agreed that dates of any health and safety statutory inspections be added to his reporting in future.</p>	<p>PAT test process review</p> <p>Statutory audits included in reporting</p>
<p><b>5.</b></p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p>	<p><b>HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT</b></p> <p>The Director of Human Resources presented the Human Resources Update Report, which provided the committee with an overview of continued work within the HR and Payroll Department. It outlined progress against the HR Area Plan Objectives and highlighted the key priorities going forward. The report also provided statistical data reports on four key areas: headcount; turnover; recruitment; and absence. In terms of the statistical data, the reporting confirmed that headcount has increased over the reporting period and turnover has decreased. Members noted that absence continues to be a key area of focus going forward but it is positive to see a reduction over this last three month period and the team are continuing to support managers to tackle absence fairly and robustly. Training for managers in Managing Absence was delivered during January 2018.</p> <p>The committee received the report and questioning followed. A key area for detailed discussion included the challenges in recruiting and retaining staff on existing salaries in some areas of College provision. Members discussed this challenge and referred to the College's risk register entry, provided with the committee papers to inform the discussion. The Director of HR explained that the executive team has spent a</p>	<p>Progress</p>

5.3	<p>considerable amount of time looking at sensible options to address some of the issues and has identified a number of measures. These measures were discussed in the meeting, including the significant resource investment required. The local, national and political context of the staffing challenges was discussed. Committee members expressed their understanding of and support for the resourcing implications, the actions planned and those already in progress, with an update to be provided at the next meeting.</p> <p>Discussion then focused on sickness absence reporting, which indicated that absence is down in the last reporting period, but that on a rolling year basis there remains more work to be done to bring the rate of sickness absence down in line with sector averages. Benchmark figures were considered, including from within the college sector as well as from within the NHS, against which the College remains high. Development and training in place to support managers and achieve cultural change was discussed. The committee strongly supported the recommendation from the executive team that a priority push on sickness absence management across college was needed. In addition, actions agreed were to continue to reinforce with managers the unacceptably high level of sickness absence and for the executive team to make full use of the recently available sickness absence reporting tool to drive behaviour change down through the organisation. The committee confirmed that it would continue to monitor HR statistical data, including sickness absence, at its termly meetings.</p>	<p>report on recruitment and retention at next meeting</p> <p>Sickness absence reporting monitored at next meeting</p>
6.	<p><b>STUDENT NUMBERS AND FUNDING REPORT</b></p> <p>6.1 The Vice Principal gave his update report on in year retention, attendance and applications for FE and Apprenticeships. His report provided assurance that 2017-18 recruitment will realise or exceed expectations in the majority of the varied income streams associated with student recruitment. However, he noted that the Adult Education Budget is an exception. He reported that Apprenticeship provision is expected to slightly exceed the budget target in 2017-18 and indicates an expected 75% improvement on the previous year, which is exceptional compared to the national picture with most training providers forecasting deficits this year. Retention is tracking in line with the same time last year, with the next termly report a key report for confirming the assurance on retention data. The Vice Principal further noted that applications for 2018-19 are looking strong, but at the same time, there are variations across provision with concerns in some specific areas, which were set out in the detail of the report and highlighted in the meeting. Committee members received the report for assurance in relation to 2017-18 funding. In further discussion in the meeting they also gained a full understanding of expectations for 2018-19 and the areas of current uncertainty and risk to keep closely monitored going forwards.</p> <p>6.2 The Assistant Principal and Dean of Higher Education gave her overview report of current retention, applications and conversions for Higher Education. She provided assurance that overall retention is tracking in line with the same time last year and above the college target of 90%. However, last year saw a fall in retention in the latter part of the year, following the summer exams. She highlighted the actions put in place this year to prevent a similar pattern. The committee took assurance from the action plan and confirmed that it would monitor retention again at its next meeting. The reporting on applications for 2018-19 was very positive at this stage, especially when compared to the University sector in general as well as particular competitor institutions. However, the committee in discussion acknowledged the challenge is</p>	<p>Termly monitoring report</p>

	<p>conversion and it considered and supported the actions in place to support conversion again this year. These included the very effective applicant and offer holder days, with an increased number of these planned for this year. The committee looked forward to a clearer picture on applications and conversions at its next meeting in June. In terms of income performance against budget, overall performance was confirmed as very good. Areas of some concern were noted and discussed in context, with particular questions digging down into trend data. Members took assurance from the discussion that management were aware and taking actions to address small pockets of concern. The committee confirmed that it would continue oversight at its next meeting, and took assurance at the overall positive picture.</p>	Termly monitoring report
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>FINANCIAL MONITORING</b></p> <p>The Head of Finance presented the Period 5 Management accounts, confirming that the forecast is good and in line with budget. She had no areas of concern to report to the committee. Members considered variances and pay and non-pay costs in some detail. Discussion on the pay spend against budget clarified that the variance is as a result of the time it takes to fill vacancies rather than any planned action to reduce pay costs. Discussion focused on the increasing pressure caused by funding factors and members took assurance that the executive team continue to keep on top of the ongoing challenges by careful, regular and prudent financial management, with forward scenario planning as routine.</p>	
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>RISK MONITORING REPORT TO AUDIT COMMITTEE</b></p> <p>The committee considered the college strategic risks that fall within its remit, including an update on General Data Protection Regulation compliance, following the recent internal audit service advisory audit. The Head of IT joined the meeting for this item and provided an update on the ongoing actions ahead of the implementation date in May 2018. Members took assurance that a sound plan for compliance is in place and progressing well, with no areas of significant concern raised by the internal audit service advisory audit. Members noted that the audit report will be provided to the Audit Committee on 15 March and that this would then be followed up with a compliance audit to provide a good level of assurance to the Reaseheath College Board. In relation to the risk register, the committee considered that it reflected the level of risk well in those areas within its remit and recommended it to the Audit Committee for consideration.</p>	Report to audit committee
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>MATTERS TO REPORT TO THE BOARD</b></p> <p>The Chair will provide a report to the Board which reflects the good assurance level received on the areas within its remit, with those risks on staff recruitment and retention in some areas of provision and actions on staff sickness absence to be highlighted in the report.</p>	
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p><i>Dr Elizabeth Harrison left the meeting for this item. Malcom Burns chaired the meeting for this item.</i></p>	
10.1	<p>The Clerk requested consideration of approval for some project work that the College is undertaking on student recruitment market research and customer relationship</p>	

10.2	<p>management and for which it is intending to commission the services of Dr Liz Harrison. The Clerk explained that the proposal would involve payment being made to the governor for her work and set out details of the proposed payment. The Clerk provided a paper setting out the constitutional and charity law considerations required when considering payment to a governor for work that is over and above that expected as part of the normal voluntary governor role. The Vice Principal explained the reasons for the project work and the reasons that the work is proposed to be carried out by the particular governor in relation to her skills and experience. The CFO and Director of Resources confirmed that the value for money requirements in relation to procurement of services and quotations as set out in the College Financial Regulations were being followed, which provide assurance that the proposed payment is reasonable and provides value for money. The committee considered the requested approval and decided that the recommendation was in the best interests of the College, that charity law and College regulations would be met and that approval for the project work and consequent payment to the governor should be given. The committee confirmed that it would recommend approval to the Reaseheath College Board at its meeting on 22 March 2018, at which point the necessary agreement and safeguards could also be confirmed in place.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: To recommend approval for the student recruitment, market research and customer relationship management project work to be undertaken and for the consequent payment, as detailed in the meeting, to be made to Dr Liz Harrison, and for the amount of such payment to be declared as a related party transaction in the College Group end of year accounts.</b></p>	
11.	<p><i>Dr Liz Harrison returned to the meeting.</i></p> <p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 21 June 2018 at 9.30am</p>	

A Part B meeting followed.

The meeting closed at 12.00pm, followed by a tour of the Agri-tech and Sports Hall capital projects.

Signed:

Dated: