



REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11 December 2019 at 2.00pm L3/4 Philip Leverhulme Centre, Reaseheath College

Present Karol Bailey (independent) KB

Colin Baxter (independent) CB

Charlotte Brunt (student) CBr (items 1 – 10 inclusive)

Malcolm Burns (independent) MB Marcus Clinton (principal) MC Jane Cowell (independent) JC Andrew Fletcher (independent) AF Francesca Francis (independent) FF

Jon Furber (independent) JF

Prof Chris Gaskell (independent) CG Mike Gorton (independent) MG Peter Green (independent) PG

Dr Elizabeth Harrison (independent) EH

Anne McKay (staff) AM

David Pearson (independent, Chair) DP

Angela Potter (independent) AP (items 1- 9 inclusive)

Alastair Taylor (independent) AT

Liz Watts (staff) LW

Charlie Woodcock (independent) CW (items 1 – 10 inclusive)

Attending Sarah Houghton (assistant principal) SH (items 1- 17 inclusive)

Graeme Lavery (chief finance officer and director of resources) GL (items 1-17 inclusive)

Dave Kynaston (vice principal) DPK (*items 1- 17 inclusive*)
Paul Spearritt (assistant principal) PS (*items 1-17 inclusive*)

Louise Woodman (human resources director) LW (items 1-17 inclusive)

Sharon Yates (assistant principal) SY (items 1-17 inclusive)

Luci Newell (student association president) (items 1 - 10 inclusive)

Mark Birkitt (head of student services) MBirkitt (item 8)

Ed Parrish (farm manager) EP (item 10)

Jackie Schillinger (clerk) JS

A Development Session was held in the Main Hall from 1pm – 1.45pm – Student Destinations and careers strategy

PART A (unless stated)

ANIF	(unless stated)	
item	Content	
1.	Welcome and apologies for absence	
1.1	The Chair, DP, welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Tim Wheeler and Gary Crowe. The meeting was declared quorate and remained quorate throughout. Apologies from attendees Peter Greenall and Matt Gower were received. Members asked that their congratulations be passed on to Matt Gower and his wife on the birth of their baby daughter.	
1.2	DP expressed the board's appreciation to Tim Wheeler for his valued contribution to the board as his term of membership comes to an end at the end of the year and for his support and collaboration with the college over many years. DP confirmed that there is the opportunity to thank Tim at a governor event planned for February.	
1.3	DP noted that it was Dave Kynaston's last attendance at a formal board meeting before he retires but that there will be an opportunity to say thank you and farewell to Dave in February as well.	
2.	Declarations of interest	
2.1	The declarations of interest form was circulated. There were no interests declared as giving rise to a conflict of interest in relation to the agenda items for the meeting.	
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019	
3.1	Part A of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The rolling action log was received and noted with actions completed or on track. DP thanked the clerk for the high standard of the minutes.	
3.2	<u>Confidential Part B item</u> - The Part B minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.	
4.	Chair's Report	
4.1	The Chair provided brief feedback on his activities in the autumn term including:	
	-Attendance at the Chairs' and Principals' forum in Warrington on 3 October, an excellent opportunity to meet fellow chairs and receive briefings from AOC officers.	
	-Attendance at the welcome lunch for new Student Association members on 21 October - the association goes from strength to strength and its members' commitment to improving student life and supporting charitable works is inspirational.	
	-Along with other members of the governing body and college staff, attendance at our students' graduation at Chester Cathedral, the event was a wonderful celebration of our students' achievements.	
	-On 7 November the college once again held its external validation of the self-assessment report (SAR). A panel chaired by Alistair Taylor made up of governors and academic staff, Landex and an external	

principal scrutinised the SAR following a morning of learning walks. The day was a well-run and rigorous event to test out internal assumptions.

- Thanks to board members for their participation in the Chair's 360 appraisal and for their continued support.
- Meetings with individual members over recent weeks to identify their development needs etc going forwards has been a very rewarding process. It is important as a board that we are reflective and hold a mirror up to ourselves to ensure that the college continues to be well led and governed.
- On 20 October, attendance at the second day of the AOC annual conference at the ICC in Birmingham. It was an interesting day if somewhat diluted as a consequence of Purdah restrictions.
- On 25 November, attendance at the link governor meeting with the college safeguarding team. It was great to hear of the new initiatives being planned and sobering to hear of the daily challenges our team face in keeping our students safe.
- -Attendance with the principal on a series of site visits, the first one being with engineering. It was helpful to speak directly to the staff and to hear first-hand from them about the strengths and challenges of their improvement plans for the area. It was also reassuring to triangulate their involvement in the development of the college strategic plan.
- -On 29 November attendance with a number of other governors and the clerk at the AoC North West Governance Conference in Manchester, where we heard from external speakers including Frances Wadsworth from the FE Commissioner's team, Bev Barlow of Ofsted, the Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit, Chris Cherry of the Strategic Development Network (on what governors need to know about T Levels) and a legal update on the insolvency regime. The event was also useful to network with other governors and clerks in the north west and discuss the similar challenges that we are all facing.
- Involvement in the Ofsted inspection on 4 and 5 December, which ran smoothly and felt controlled and calm. Addressed the staff at end of the inspection, which was wonderful to be able to celebrate a very good inspection outcome with them. Thanks to all and in relation to the governor meeting thanks to LN who came along and made a great contribution with a powerful message and for the excellent contributions of AT, JC and PG.
- 4.2 Members received the Chair's report for information, with thanks.

5. Principal's Report

- 5.1 MC presented his report and highlighted the very recent Ofsted inspection, with thanks to all for the successful outcome to the short inspection with a strong report expected and confirmation that the college remains a good provider. He added that the timing at the start of the college's new strategic plan is good. He also welcomed the feedback from Ofsted on the unprecedented response rate and extremely positive survey feedback from staff, students and parents.
- In addition, the Principal's written report summarised that overall the college remains in a good position and highlighted the following:
 - -Finance

Detailed forecasting illustrates we expect to achieve the Reaseheath budget and under deliver the DART budget by £50-100K.

Shortfalls in HE, Food, as well as supporting growth and Learning Support present challenges, which are offset by staff costs under budget and accommodation income above budget.

-Enrolment

Strong across Adult, Apps and FE. Under delivery in HE.

Growth in FE and government increased funding should deliver increased income in 2020-21.

On track to repeat FE growth in Sept 20.

Strategies in place for HE - environment, offer, retention and progression, marketing

-Quality

SAR profile strong and validated by Ofsted.

Ofsted inspection - positive outcome and good range of strengths

16-18 QAR above National Rates (NR) but work to do on RQF L3 in some areas

Maths and English continue to improve and both positive progress score

Adult below NR but improving and small percentage of provision

Apprenticeships on NR but NR should drop. However declining due to impact of EPA/Standards, with an action plan in place

-Strategic

Opportunities presented by the IOT/Accelerate programme – work on offer ongoing One million secured in capital to support – digital milking and controlled environment Steady progress being made on annual and five-year plan

Need to ensure the day job pressures are also resolved - specialist staffing and HE for example Launch of CMT leadership programme

-Risk Areas

Specialist staffing – Some appointments but still pressure in some areas

DART - work to do on Ofsted readiness and building the business up – brand, market reach

HE - Impact of approach by OFS and implications of Access & Participation Plan

-Success

World Skills - Four UK finalists and one Bronze in Butchery Rugby 7's - NW regional champions

- 5.3 Questions and discussion followed, with the points set out below:
 - -MG welcomed the fantastic success of the students that comes through in the report.
 - -FF requested an update on applications for HE for next year. MC confirmed these to be slightly behind again and that an update can be provided at the February strategy day, where the scenarios can be modelled in the financial plan.
 - -AM requested and received clarification that higher level apprenticeships income sits within the apprenticeship budget. JC queried if this impacts on the applications to full time programmes and SY confirmed that it does not as the land-based higher apprenticeships are not yet in operation and it tends to be a different, employer-led market in any event. CW confirmed the university's situation is also challenging on applications this year.
 - -PG requested an update on the Reaseheath 100 celebrations. MC explained the plans to re-engage with alumni as far back as possible and to run a series of events to engage them and a celebratory publication and micro site.

- -PG requested an update on the institute of technology initiative. MC explained that this was branded as Accelerate and presented a fantastic opportunity. He noted that the capital bids were signed off and that the training revenue is the other aspect with an exciting training offer subsidised to employers, as well as capacity building funds.
- 5.4 The Principal's Report was received for information, with thanks.

6. Student Association Annual Report

- 6.1 The Student Association President, LN, and the student governor, CBr, presented the Student Association (SA) Annual Report. In particular, they presented the main aims for 2019-20, progress on the SA led projects and the social and sporting events that have taken place and are planned. The update included:
 - -Main Aims for the year:

£20,000 for RAG

Weekly engagement with SA projects

Students getting involved the daytime and evening entertainments

Support and maintain 15 student led societies

As an AOC Sport Leadership Academy, work on improving sport participation. With special reference to 'This Girl Can' and 'Inclusive Ambassador'.

-The SA have taken part in four projects so far:

Macmillan Cancer Support

Children in Need

Ask for Angela

This Girl Can

Upcoming projects include; CPR Project, Drink and drug awareness and the buddy scheme

6.2 Members welcomed the very informative report and presentation and received the reporting, with thanks. AT asked whether any areas of the student population are harder to reach and LN confirmed that the day students are more difficult to engage and so they try a number of ways to include them. AM asked if there had been any feedback from the Ask Angela project and LN confirmed that there is evidence that it is working well in that it is very well know but there has been no need for its use.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

- 7.1 Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report: LW presented the report, highlighting the very positive feedback from the EDI audit and the work on policy, training and awareness. Members had considered the report and thanked LW for her presentation. A number of comments were suggested to enhance or clarify the reporting and, subject to these being incorporated, members were content to approve the report for publication on the college website. They also raised some points for discussion to take forwards into next year:
 - -FF noted that the Higher Education student response to the survey was low. MC explained that this was due to the timing of the audit which missed the HE satisfaction survey, but it will be built into this survey going forwards.
 - -PG suggested that the EDI report might benefit from scrutiny by the relevant subcommittees before coming to the full board. All agreed.

-FF suggested the report could perhaps provide a clearer vision of the targets and where the college wants to be in five years' time. LW acknowledged this challenge and explained that the vision is to have the EDI golden thread through everything the college does and so it is about a real culture change. LW agreed that the college needs to pick a theme and really make some progress. MC added that the National Centre for Diversity has a useful programme that takes you through a really full experience and detailed action plan with smart targets, which the college could consider working towards.

-FF noted the challenge for the college presented by the Access and Participation Plan especially in relation to the objectives on increasing access for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students. She said that she agreed that the college needs to try and do more and MC agreed that work in partnership with LANDEX and the sector is needed. JC and KB noted the opportunities to promote the science and technology side to the land-based sector to try and attract a more diverse student body.

- 7.2 DP summarised that the comments on this year's report would be incorporated following the meeting and the report is approved on this basis and that in future the report would be presented to the relevant subcommittees.
- 7.3 RESOLVED: Receive and approve the Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Annual Report, including the Action Pan, for publication on the college website.

8. Safeguarding and Prevent

- 8.1 Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report: The Head of Student Services, MBirkitt, joined the meeting for this item. DPK presented the report, considered by members in advance of the meeting. He noted that the structure and content of the report going forwards will change, in line with governors' comments in previous meetings. Areas of reporting included the FE and HE safeguarding and prevent dashboard, breakdowns of safeguarding and prevent occurrences and behavioural non-safeguarding occurrences for both FE and HE, any FE and HE referrals to outside agencies, key outcomes and actions and safeguarding staff development. Questions and discussion followed:
 - -PG commented on the continued high number of mental health issues presented and the increase in drugs related issues. MBirkitt confirmed that the college has seen an increase in mental health issues over the past few years and this remains a key area of focus for the team. He confirmed that the college has experienced an increase in drugs on campus, almost exclusively cannabis, with the issue largely within the day student population rather than residential. He explained that a lot of work has been carried out working closely with the police and through the Beready and BeResi programmes and the issue is starting to quieten down. CB asked if there was a problem with repeat offenders and MBirkitt confirmed that this is not the case due to the zero tolerance approach of the college to drugs on campus. JC questioned whether enough is being done in terms of students realising it will harm their future job prospects especially if they wish to join the public services sector. MBirkitt acknowledged this and noted that there have been consequences where block release students have lost their jobs as a result. MBirkitt noted that the availability of drugs around Nantwich increased as a result of the police station being closed but it has now re-opened and is open 24 hours and so this should help to control the situation again in Nantwich. FF suggested that the college works with the block release employers early on before the students come on campus and SY confirmed that this currently happens. DP noted that the drugs issue can be an uphill struggle, as often the parents are not supportive of the college position. CG noted that the direction of travel in society is towards more tolerance. JC noted though that the college has under 18s on site and, despite tolerance, cannabis remains illegal and so the college should continue its zero-tolerance battle. DP noted that he would continue to follow this issue closely, as link governor on safeguarding.

- -JC queried whether there was scope to tackle mental health resilience issues by using campus facilities such as adventure sports and high ropes etc. MBirkitt confirmed that the college is looking into this and had recently won an NHS award for building the self-help capacity of the under 18 students and the next step is to aim for the silver award, which will link in with using facilities on campus.
- -AT queried the small number of incidents recorded under online related issues. MBirkitt clarified that these did not include any online bullying as this is recorded as bullying and that the online ones in the report relate to safeguarding issues such as grooming.
- -DPK provided a disciplinary policy update. He explained that the college has a process for reporting and is collecting the relevant data but has not yet collected sufficient data to report in full. He provided an update in the meeting and confirmed that a full report would be provided in March.
- 8.2 DP thanked governors and managers for a useful discussion and members welcomed the additional assurances provided by the discussion as well as the positive assurance received from the very recent Ofsted inspection on strong and effective safeguarding practices at the college. PG requested that managers consider his previous suggestions on the reporting of safeguarding (in the action log). Members received the Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report for assurance, recognised the work being done by the safeguarding and wellbeing team and thanked them for their continued commitment and hard work.

9. Health and Safety Annual Report

- 9.1 Health and Safety Annual Report: The Chief Finance Officer and Director of Resources, GL, presented the annual health and safety report for information and assurance. The report set out the governance of health and safety at college. It explained that the Health Safety and Environmental Policy sets out the accountability and responsibility for health and safety. The Policy was approved by the Board in July 2019 and was further reviewed and ratified by written resolution in advance of this meeting. The report also highlighted the key points from 2018-19 reporting including:
 - -The increased reporting of the near misses and unsafe acts which are a cornerstone of effective health and safety management.
 - -The increased visibility to the executive through comprehensive weekly reporting which includes DART.
 - -The inclusion of the health and safety reporting system within the Be Ready programme and associated health and safety modules within the curriculum.
 - -The increase in reporting by students, reports made during training are identified separately. Improved monitoring of incidents to ensure closure which can only be signed off by the Health and Safety Manager.
 - -The delivery of a specific IOSH+ training to support our assessors and work placement officers.
 - -Improved visibility to executive and governors on the legal compliance, statutory requirements.
 - -Clearer actions to support the continued development of the health and safety culture within the college.
- 9.2 Governors had considered the report in advance of the meeting and had some questions in the meeting. These were:
 - -AT noted that he is the link governor for health and safety and that he plans to attend the cross-college Health and Safety Committee meetings, but the meeting arranged last week was postponed due to the Ofsted inspection.
 - -JC challenged managers to consider the question of decreasing incidents, as she felt that the college has been reporting that incidents have increased due to increased reporting for a few years now, but when will incidents start to decrease. SH provided assurance that the scrutiny at executive level is much

more than it used to be and that the change to qualifications in her area of animal management has increased the amount of animal handling required significantly. As such, the important point made by JC needs to be considered in the light of all the variables. AM added that it would be useful to get an idea of proportion of accidents not just numbers so that the points made by JC and SH can be considered.

- -DP requested and received assurance on the weekly health and safety report to the executive team, which drives actions by responsible managers, which are then closed down and signed off by the Health and Safety Manager.
- -EH requested assurance on the compliance elements of health and safety in relation to asbestos and legionella. GL provided an update on actions on both areas of risk for assurance. MB confirmed from his experience that the college approach is normal practice in terms of the asbestos risk and that he was comfortable from his link governor meeting with the Head of Property that both these compliance areas are being dealt with properly.
- 9.3 DP thanked GL for the report and noted the assurance that can also be taken from the very recent Ofsted inspection that confirmed effective health and safety management at college. He welcomed the sound governance reporting and noted that the focus this year will be on the reduction in number/severity of incidents.

10. Strategic Plan Monitoring

- 10.1 Strategic Plan Monitoring 2019-20: MC introduced the update presentation on 2019-20 strategic objectives and each member of the executive team provided an update on their area of strategic responsibility. Members referred to the major outcome tracker in the strategic plan working document for reference. Members welcomed the update showing good progress made so far this year on the strategic initiatives.
- 10.2 Farm Strategy Report: The Farm Manager EP joined the meeting for this item. DPK presented the farm report and thanked the governor steering group for its great support and guidance in the development of the farm strategy.
- 10.3 DP welcomed the strategy, observing that it presents a much stronger position. He asked for the observations of those governors on the steering group. MG noted that the farm had faced a challenging environment in the sector as a whole, with particular issues at the college including disappointing levels of engagement with the learning environment and poor staff morale, but that EP has now created a formidable team to drive change. He noted that the farm is now being embraced by the college and that there is much work to do but the farm is now gaining respect from the local community. KB agreed that pride in the farm is now coming back and the community is buzzing with what EP has already achieved. CG commented that the farm has made a lot of progress in the right direction, including dealing with the HR issues and the project has been a good example of escalating issues to the board and taking improvement actions with board input and support. JC confirmed that on her learning walk on the farm, she observed a better relationship between the agriculture department and the farm, but with still a number of areas where there was a gap in the middle regarding roles and responsibilities. The executive team provided their assurance that they considered this has improved further since then and the management teams are more than ever working as one team. JF welcomed the report as excellent progress, providing a clear farm strategy.
- 10.4 PG welcomed the comprehensive and ambitious plans within the strategy and asked for an update on plans for the anaerobic digester and land options. DPK updated members on plans to support recommissioning of the anaerobic digester with a research element and confirmed that the rental land

risk was under consideration by the steering group and plans to mitigate the risk will be reported back to the board.

- 10.5 DP thanked EP and DPK and the governor steering group members for the report. He thanked EP for his transformational leadership of the farm and noted that the governors will look forward to regular updates on progress on the strategy. It was agreed to continue with the steering group and to develop membership to include some external industry expertise and to retain governor membership on the group.
- 10.6 Strategic Risk Register: MC presented the executive summary of the key strategic risks and risk movements following the executive in depth review of the risks in the autumn term. Members received the report for information and assurance.

11. 2018-19 Year End Financial Statements

- Audit Committee Annual Report: The Chair of the Audit Committee, CB, presented the Audit Committee Annual Report, including the annual internal audit opinion from internal auditors, RSM. The Audit Committee reported its opinion that the Corporation has an adequate and effective framework for governance, risk management and control and has fulfilled its statutory responsibility for the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the body and the safeguarding of their assets. Members received the Audit Committee Annual Report for assurance in advance of consideration of approval of the college financial statements.
- Financial Statements Auditor Completion Report: The CFO and Director of Resources, GL, presented the Financial Statements Auditor Completion Report providing an unqualified opinion, without modification, that the financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of the college's affairs as at 31 July 2019 and that they have been properly prepared in accordance with the United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice. In addition, the Finance Statements Auditor Completion Report stated that its regularity audit confirmed that nothing has come to the auditor's attention that in all material respects the income and expenditure has not been applied to purposes intended by Parliament and the financial transactions do not conform to the authorities that govern them. These external audit assurances were received by the meeting in advance of consideration of approval of the college financial statements. It was noted for assurance that the report had been scrutinised at the joint audit and finance and general purposes committee meeting, with the external auditor in attendance.
- 11.3 Review of the year end outturn against budget (bridge report): GL presented the review of the year-end financial outturn against the budget to ensure that the meeting understood any variation of adjustments made from the period 12 management accounts to the financial statements.
- 11.4 Audited Financial Statements for the period ending 31 July 2019 and Management Representation Letter: GL presented the Audited Financial Statements for the period ending 31 July 2019 and the Management Representation Letter for approval. The meeting noted that the statements had been scrutinised by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and recommended for approval. On consideration of the consolidated financial statements and in the context of the assurances received from auditors and the audit committee, the meeting approved the statements, as recommended by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

11.5 RESOLVED:

- i. Financial Statements for the year to 31 July 2019 are approved and the Chair and the Principal are authorised to sign the statements
- ii. The terms of the management representation letter are approved
- iii. The ESFA Finance Record 2018/19 is approved.

11.6	<u>Confidential Part B item</u> – The DART Limited directors' report and financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2019 were received for information.	
11.7	The ESFA Financial Health letter and dashboard were received for information.	
12.	2019-20 Financial reporting	
12.1	Management accounts and cash flow: Period 3 management accounts and cash flow reporting was received for information. It was noted that the strategic day in February 2020 would include a deep dive financial management session.	
13.	Items for approval	
13.1	RESOLVED: The following documents presented in advance of the board meeting and approved via written resolution dated 1 December 2019 and are hereby ratified: i. Reaseheath College Self-Assessment Report, Quality Improvement Plan and Key Performance Indicators ii. University Centre Reaseheath Self-Evaluation Document, Quality Improvement Plan and Key Performance Indicators iii. Memorandum of Understanding between DART Limited and Reaseheath College iv. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy v. Health Safety and Environmental Policy vii. Safeguarding Adults Policy	
	viii. Student Association Constitution	
14.	Items for information/assurance	
14.1	The minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee meeting on 18 November 2019 were received for information by email.	
14.2	The minutes of the Higher Education Committee meeting on 28 November 2019 would be circulated by email following the meeting.	
14.3	The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting on 4 December 2019 would be circulated by email following the meeting.	
14.4	The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting on 4 December 2019 would be circulated by email following the meeting.	
14.5	Confidential Part B item: The minutes of the subsidiary company board meeting on 24 October 2019 and 13 November 2019 were received for information by email.	
15.	Any other business (notified to chair/clerk in advance)	
15.1	There was no other business reported to the meeting.	

16.	Any items for escalation to strategic risk register	
16.1	There were no items to escalate to the risk register, that were not already covered on the register.	
17.	Date of the next meeting	
17.1	The dates of the next meetings were confirmed as a governor strategy day on 24 February 2020 and the next board meeting on Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 2.00pm	
18.	Governors only	
18.1	<u>Confidential Part B item:</u> The minutes of the governor only meeting held on 13 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.	
18.2	The governance self-assessment report and development plan was received.	
18.3	RESOLVED: The governance self-assessment report and development plan is approved.	
19.	Independent governors only	
19.1	Confidential Part B item: The minutes of the independent governors only meeting held on 13 November 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.	
19.2	RESOLVED: The Remuneration Committee Annual Statement was received and approved for publication on the college website.	

Signed:	Dated:

The meeting closed at 5pm.