

# **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF THE REASEHEATH COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This Code is intended as a guide, to indicate the standards of conduct and accountability which are expected of governors, to enable them to understand their legal and ethical duties and to assist them both in carrying out those duties and in their relationship with the Governing Body and Principal as the Chief Executive. This Code therefore is aimed at promoting effective, well informed and accountable college governance, and is not intended to be a definitive or authoritative statement of the law or good practice.
- 1.2 In addition to this Code, governors are recommended to familiarise themselves with the source documents listed in the Schedule.
- 1.3 If a governor is in doubt about the provisions of this Code or any of the source documents, the Company Secretary should be consulted and, if necessary, professional advice should be obtained. However, ultimate responsibility for the appropriateness of conduct as a governor of the College and for any act or omission in that capacity rests with the individual governor.
- 1.4 This Code applies to every committee or working party of the Governing Body and to any subsidiary company or joint venture of the College to which governors may be appointed.
- 1.5 By accepting appointment to the Governing Body, each governor agrees to accept the provisions of this Code.

## **2. INTERPRETATION**

In this Code:-

- 2.1 'Agency' means the Education and Skills Funding Agency or any successor body;
- 2.2 'College' means this College;
- 2.3 'College Mission Statement' means the statement set out in paragraph 3.1 of this

Code or such other mission statement as may be agreed by the Board from time to time;

2.4 'College Vision and Core Values' means those set out at paragraph 3.2 of this Code or such others as may be agreed by the Board from time to time;

2.5 'Code of Good Governance' means the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges issued by the Association of Colleges Governors' Council in March 2015;

2.6 'Governor', 'Chair', 'Principal' and 'Company Secretary' mean respectively the Member of the Governing Body of the College, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Principal of the College and the Company Secretary of the Governing Body;

2.7 'Governing Body' means the further education Corporation which was established for the purpose of conducting the College;

2.8 all other definitions have the same meanings as given in the College's Instrument and Articles of Government; and words importing one gender import any gender.

### 3. **AIMS AND VALUES**

3.1 The College's Purpose is encapsulated in its Mission, Vision and Core Values set out below:

Mission

*Industry Focused Career Ready*

3.2 Vision and Core Values

- Be the leading specialist land-based college in the UK
- Be the preferred place to learn, work and progress
- Support the growth and prosperity of the specialist land-based industries, technical sectors and rural communities we serve
- Place our students and staff at the heart of everything we do
- An inclusive offer facilitating appropriate progression for everyone
- Deliver an inspirational learning experience and environment supported through our values, our guiding principles and commitments.

People:

We will work together in a safe and secure environment with a positive approach to our own and others health and wellbeing. We will respect democracy and individual liberty, recognising the valuable contribution each person can make to society.

Responsibility:

We will be responsible for our own actions and decisions whilst making a positive contribution to community cohesion and pride. We will demonstrate environmental sustainability through our behaviour.

Integrity:

We will demonstrate honesty, integrity and ethical standards in everything we do. We will respect the rule of law and act fairly in the best interests of all.

Diversity:

We will actively promote equality: recognise, respect, promote and celebrate diversity and individual difference and strive to create an inclusive environment. We will challenge behaviour or views which discriminate against others.

Excellence:

We challenge ourselves to strive for the highest standards of quality and behaviour by adopting a supportive self-critical approach in our pursuit of excellence. We will always aim to be the best that we can be.

#### **4. DUTIES**

- 4.1 Governors owe a fiduciary duty to the College. This means that they should show it the highest loyalty and act in good faith in its best interests. Each governor should act honestly, diligently and (subject to the provisions appearing in paragraph 10 of this Code relating to collective responsibility) independently. The actions of governors should promote and protect the good reputation of the College and the trust and confidence of those with whom it deals.
- 4.2 Decisions taken by governors at meetings of the Governing Body and its committees must not be for any improper purpose or personal motive. Decisions taken must always be for the benefit of the College, its students and staff and other users of the College and must be taken with a view to safeguarding public funds. Accordingly, governors must not be bound in their speaking and voting by mandates given to them by other bodies or persons.

- 4.3 Governors must observe the provisions of the College’s Instrument and Articles of Government and in particular the responsibilities given to the Governing Body by the College’s Articles of Government. Those responsibilities, including a list of “reserved” responsibilities which are so important that they must not be delegated, are set out in Appendix 3 to this Code.
- 4.4 Governors should comply with the Standing Orders and terms of reference of the Governing Body and its committees to ensure that the Board conducts itself in an orderly, fair, open and transparent manner. Governors must keep those Standing Orders and terms of reference under periodic review.
- 4.5 Governors should also have regard to the different, but complementary, responsibilities given to the Principal as the College’s Chief Executive. Whereas it is the Governing Body’s function to decide strategic policy and overall direction and to monitor the performance of the Principal and any other senior post holders, it is the Principal’s role to implement the Governing Body’s decisions, and to manage the College’s affairs within the budgets and framework fixed by the Governing Body. Governors should work together so that the Governing Body and the Principal as Chief Executive perform their respective roles effectively.
- 4.6 Governors should refer to the Company Secretary for advice relating to the governance functions and have regard to the Company Secretary’s independent advisory role.

## 5. **STATUTORY ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 5.1 Governors are collectively responsible for observing the duties set out in the Financial Memorandum which the College has entered into with the Agency as a condition of receiving public funds.
- 5.2 Although the Agency is the main provider of funds to the College, governors should note that they are also responsible for the proper use of income derived from other sources, such as the Office for Students (OFS) and the European Union (EU) and for the control and monitoring of expenditure of such income, in order to meet the requirements of the relevant funding body and public audit.
- 5.3 As accounting officer for the Agency, its Chief Executive is directly responsible and accountable to Parliament for ensuring that the uses to which the Agency puts its funds are consistent with the purposes for which the funds were given and comply with the conditions attached to them. The Principal, as accounting officer for the College, is also directly responsible and accountable to Parliament, through the Committee of Public Accounts, for the effective stewardship by the College of public funds. The Principal may be required to appear before the Committee of Public Accounts, alongside the Chief Executive of Education and Skills Funding, to give an account of the use made by the College of such funds. The Governing Body

is accountable to Parliament for ensuring the financial health of the College, and to the Courts for ensuring that the College is conducted in accordance with the Education Acts and the general law.

## **6. PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES**

Public service values are at the heart of the further education service. High standards of personal and corporate conduct, based on the principles set out in Appendices 1-2 of this Code, and the recognition that students and other users of the College's services come first, are a requirement of being a governor, and should underpin all decisions taken by the Governing Body.

## **7. SKILL, CARE AND DILIGENCE**

A governor should in all his or her work for the College exercise such skill as s/he possesses and such care and diligence as would be expected from a reasonable person in the circumstances. This will be particularly relevant when members act as agents of the College, for example, when functions are delegated to a committee of the Governing Body or to the Chair. Governors should be careful to act within the terms of reference of any committees on which they serve.

## **8. POWERS**

Governors are responsible for taking decisions which are within the powers given to the Governing Body by Parliament under sections 18 and 19 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as amended. A summary of those powers is set out in Appendix 4 to this Code. If a governor thinks that the Governing Body is likely to exceed its powers by taking a particular decision, s/he should immediately refer the matter to the Company Secretary for advice.

## **9. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

9.1 Like other persons who owe a fiduciary duty, governors should seek to avoid putting themselves in a position where there is a conflict (actual or potential) between their personal interests and their duties to the College. They should not allow any conflict of interest to arise which might interfere with the exercise of their independent judgement.

9.2 Governors are reminded that under the Governing Body's Instrument of Government they must not acquire or hold any interest in any property held or used for the purposes of the College or receive any remuneration for their services (save as a member of the College's staff) except where this would be permitted under charity law and where necessary with the consent of the Charity Commission.

- 9.3 Governors are reminded that under the Governing Body's Instrument of Government and the general law they must disclose to the Governing Body any direct or indirect financial interest they have, or may have, in the supply of work to the College or the supply of goods for the purposes of the College, or in any contract or proposed contract concerning the College, or in any other matter relating to the College or any other interest of a type specified by the Governing Body in any matter relating to the College, or any duty which is material and which conflicts or may conflict with the interest of the Governing Body.
- 9.4 If an interest of any kind (including an interest of a spouse, civil partner or partner of a governor or of a close relative of the governor or his or her partner, civil partner or spouse) is likely or would, if publicly known, be perceived as being likely to interfere with the exercise of a governor's independent judgement, then:-
- 9.4.1 the interest, financial or otherwise, should be reported to the Company Secretary;
- 9.4.2 the nature and extent of the interest should be fully disclosed to the Governing Body before the matter giving rise to the interest is considered;
- 9.4.3 if the governor concerned is present at a meeting of the Governing Body, or any of its committees, at which such supply, contract or other matter constituting the interest is to be considered, he or she should:-
- (a) not take part in the consideration or vote on any question with respect to it and shall not be counted in the quorum for that meeting; and
- (b) withdraw from that Governing Body or committee meeting where required to do so by a majority of the governors or committee members present at the meeting.
- 9.5 For the purposes of clause 9.4 "close relative" includes but is not limited to a father, mother, brother, sister, child, grandchild and step-father/mother/brother/sister/child.
- 9.6 Governors must not receive gifts, hospitality or benefits of any kind from a third party which might be in breach of the Bribery Act 2010 and the College's Anti-Bribery Policy or be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity. Any offer or receipt of such gifts, hospitality or benefits should immediately be reported to the Company Secretary.
- 9.7 The Company Secretary will maintain a Register of Governors' Interests which will be open for public inspection. Governors must disclose routinely to the Governing

Body all business interests, financial or otherwise, which they may have, and the Company Secretary will enter such interests on the Register. Governors must give sufficient details to allow the nature of the interests to be understood by enquirers. Governors should inform the Company Secretary whenever their circumstances change and interests are acquired or lost. In deciding whether an interest should be disclosed, Governors should have regard to the meaning given to “interest” in paragraphs 9.4 and 9.5 of this Code.

## **10. COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

- 10.1 The Governing Body operates by governors taking majority decisions in a corporate manner at quorate meetings. Therefore, a decision of the Governing Body, even when it is not unanimous, is a decision taken by the governors collectively and each individual governor has a duty to stand by it, whether or not he or she was present at the meeting of the Governing Body when the decision was taken.
- 10.2 If a governor disagrees with a decision taken by the Governing body, his or her first duty is to have any disagreement discussed and minuted. If the governor strongly disagrees, s/he should consult the Chair and, if necessary, then raise the matter with the Governing Body when it next meets. If no meeting is scheduled, the governor should refer to the power of the Chair or any five governors under the College’s Instrument of Government to call a special meeting and, if appropriate, exercise it, requesting the Company Secretary to circulate the governor’s views in advance to the other governors. Alternatively, as a final resort, the governor may decide to offer his or her resignation from office, after consulting the Chair.

## **11. OPENNESS AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

- 11.1 Because of the Board’s public accountability, governors should ensure that, as a general principle, students and staff of the College have free access to information about the proceedings of the Governing Body. Accordingly, agendas, minutes and other papers relating to meetings of the Board are normally available for public inspection when they have been approved for publication by the Chair.
- 11.2 There will be occasions when the record of discussions and decisions will not be made available for public inspection; for example, when the Governing Body considers sensitive issues or named individuals and for other good reasons. Such excluded items will be kept in a confidential folder by the Company Secretary, and will be circulated in confidence to governors. Some confidential items are likely to be of a sensitive nature for a certain period of time only (for example information relating to a proposed commercial transaction or collaboration with another institution). The Governing Body should specify how long such items should be treated as confidential or, if this is not possible, such items should be regularly reviewed to consider whether the confidential status should be removed or whether the public interest in disclosure outweighs that confidential status and the

item made available for public inspection.

- 11.3 Staff and student governors have no right of access to minutes dealing with matters in respect of which they are required to withdraw from meetings under the College's Instrument of Government.
- 11.4 It is important that the Governing Body and its committees have full and frank discussions in order to take decisions collectively. To do so, there must be trust between governors with a shared corporate responsibility for decisions. Governors should keep confidential any matter which, by reason of its nature, the Chair or members of any committee of the Governing Body are satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis.
- 11.5 Governors should not make statements to the press or media or at any public meeting relating to the proceedings of the Governing Body or its committees without first having obtained the approval of the Chair or, in his or her absence, the Vice Chair. It is unethical for governors publicly to criticise, canvass or reveal the views of other governors which have been expressed at meetings of the Governing Body or its committees.

## 12. **ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

A high level of attendance at meetings of the Governing Body is expected so that Members can perform their functions properly.

## 13. **GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT**

- 13.1 Governors must obtain a thorough grounding in their duties and responsibilities by participating in the College's governance induction and training programmes, including regular refresher workshops.
- 13.2 In order to promote more effective governance, governors will carry out a formative review annually of the performance by the Governing Body of its duties and responsibilities, as part of a continuing and critical process of self-evaluation, and an in-depth review triennially.
- 13.3 The Governing Body will seek to ensure that all governors are appointed on merit, in accordance with an open selection procedure carried out by the Governing Body's Search and Governance Committee, and are drawn widely from the community which the College serves so as to be representative of that community. The Governing Body should have regard to the provisions relating to the membership of the Board in the College's Instrument of Government, the need to combat discrimination and to promote equality, and the need to make available a range of necessary skills and experience to ensure that the Governing Body carries out its functions under the College's Articles of Government.

## **SCHEDULE - List of key source documents which should be made available to governors**

1. the College's Instrument of Government (contained in the Board Constitution);
2. the College's Articles of Government (contained in the Board Constitution);
3. the Standing Orders and terms of reference of the Governing Body and its committees (contained in the Board Constitution);
4. the Financial Memorandum entered into by the College with the Agency;
5. the College's Mission Statement and Corporate Objectives;
6. the College's Strategic Plan;
7. the College's anti-bribery policy as required by The Bribery Act 2010;
8. the principles laid down by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Nolan Committee) for those holding public office, namely:
  - selflessness;
  - integrity;
  - objectivity;
  - accountability;
  - openness;
  - honesty; and
  - leadership.

An extract from the report of the Nolan Committee setting out these Principles in more detail is set out at Appendix 1;

9. the Joint Audit Code of Practice issued by the Agency;
10. the Good Code of Governance for English Colleges;
11. the Good Governance Standard for Public Services published by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services (Good Governance Standard).

An extract from the Good Governance Standard setting out the six core principles of good governance is set out at Appendix 2.

## **Appendix 1**

### **The Seven Principles of Public Life**

The following is an extract from the Second Report of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life, May 1996

#### **SELFLESSNESS**

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

#### **INTEGRITY**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

#### **OBJECTIVITY**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

#### **ACCOUNTABILITY**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

#### **OPENNESS**

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

#### **HONESTY**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

#### **LEADERSHIP**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

## Appendix 2

### Six Core Principles of Good Governance

The following is an extract from the Good Governance Standard for Public Services published by the Independent Commission on Good Governance in Public Services, January 2005

1. **Good governance means focusing on the organisation's purposes and on outcomes for citizens and service users**
  - 1.1 Being clear about the organisation's purposes and its intended outcomes for citizens and service users;
  - 1.2 Making sure that users receive a high quality service;
  - 1.3 Making sure that taxpayers receive value for money.
2. **Good governance means performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles**
  - 2.1 Being clear about the functions of the governing body;
  - 2.2 Being clear about the responsibilities of the non-executives and the executive, and making sure that those responsibilities are carried out;
  - 2.3 Being clear about relationships between the governors and the public.
3. **Good governance means promoting values for the whole organisation and demonstrating the values of good governance through behaviour**
  - 3.1 Putting organisational values into practice;
  - 3.2 Individual governors behaving in ways that uphold and exemplify effective governance.
4. **Good Governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk**
  - 4.1 Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken;
  - 4.2 Having and using good quality information, advice and support;

- 4.3 Making sure that an effective risk management system is in operation.
- 5. **Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective**
  - 5.1 Making sure that appointed and elected governors have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well;
  - 5.2 Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as a group;
  - 5.3 Striking a balance, in the membership of the governing body, between continuity and renewal.
- 6. **Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real**
  - 6.1 Understanding formal and informal accountability relationships;
  - 6.2 Taking an active and planned approach to dialogue with accountability to the public;
  - 6.3 Taking an active and planned approach to responsibility to staff;
  - 6.4 Engaging effectively with institutional stakeholders.

## Appendix 3

### Summary of Main Responsibilities of Governing Body Members under the Articles of Government

Under the College's **Articles of Government**, the Governing Body shall be responsible:

- a) for the determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the institution and for oversight of its activities;
- b) for publishing arrangements for obtaining the views of staff and students on the determination and periodic review of staff and students of the educational character and mission of the institution and the oversight of its activities;
- c) for approving the quality strategy of the institution;
- d) for the effective and efficient use of resources, the solvency of the institution and the Governing Body and for safeguarding their assets;
- e) for approving the annual estimates of income and expenditure;
- f) for the appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal and determination of the pay and conditions of service of the holders of senior posts and the Company Secretary; including, where the Company Secretary is, or is to be appointed as, a member of staff, the Company Secretary's appointment, grading, suspension, dismissal and determination of pay in their capacity as a member of staff;
- g) for setting a framework for the pay and conditions of service of all other staff; and
- h) for setting the policy by which the tuition and other fees payable to the College are determined (subject to any terms and conditions attached to grants, loans or other payments paid or made by the Agency).

Responsibilities which **must not be delegated**:

The Articles of Government prohibit the Governing Body from delegating the following:

- a) the determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the institution;
- b) the approval of the annual estimates of income and expenditure;
- c) the responsibility for ensuring the solvency of the institution and the Governing Body and the safeguarding of their assets;
- d) the appointment of the Principal or holder of a senior post;

- e) the appointment of the Company Secretary (including, where the Company Secretary is, or is to be, appointed as a member of staff, the Company Secretary's appointment in the capacity as member of staff);
- f) the modifying or revoking of the Articles of Government;
- g) the consideration of the case for dismissal, of the Principal, the Company Secretary or holder of a senior post unless such function is delegated to a committee of the Governing Body; and
- h) the power to determine an appeal in connection with the dismissal of the Principal, the Company Secretary or holder of a senior post unless such power is delegated to a committee of the Governing Body.

The Governing Body may, from time to time, resolve to add other functions which must not be delegated to this list of "reserved" responsibilities.

## Appendix 4

### Summary of the Statutory Powers of the Governing Body

#### PRINCIPAL POWERS

Under section 18(1) of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 a further education Corporation may:

- a) provide further and higher education;
- b) provide secondary education suitable to the requirements of persons who have attained the age of 14 years, or provide secondary education or participate in the provision of secondary education at a school (subject to the consultation with the appropriate local education authority); and
- c) supply goods and services in connection with the provision of education.

These powers are known as the Governing Body's "principal powers".

#### SUPPLEMENTARY POWERS

Under section 19 of the 1992 Act, a Governing Body may do anything which appears to it to be necessary or expedient for the purpose of, or in connection with, the exercise of any of the principal powers conferred by section 18 of the Act, including in particular the following powers:-

- (a) to acquire and dispose of land and other property;
- (b) to enter into contracts, including in particular:
  - (i) contracts for the employment of teachers and other staff for the purposes of or in connection with carrying on any activities undertaken in the exercise of a Governing Body's principal powers; and
  - (ii) contracts with respect to the carrying on by a Governing Body of any such activities;
- (c) to form, participate in forming, or invest in a company or become a member of a charitable incorporated organisation;
- (d) to borrow such sums as a Governing Body thinks fit for the purposes of carrying on any activities it has power to carry on or to meet any liability transferred to it under sections 23 to 27 of the 1992 Act (i.e. when the College achieved corporate independence on 1st April 1993) and, in connection with such borrowing, the power to grant any mortgage, charge or other security in respect of any land or

other property of the Governing Body;

- (e) to invest any sums not immediately required for the purposes of carrying on any activities a Governing Body has power to carry on;
- (f) to accept gifts of money, land or other property and apply it, or hold and administer it on trust for, any of those purposes;
- (g) to do anything incidental to the conduct of an educational institution providing further or higher education, including founding scholarships or exhibitions, making grants and giving prizes; and
- (h) to provide advice or assistance to any other person where it appears to the Governing Body to be appropriate for them to do so for the purpose of or in connection with the provision of education by the other person.

The Governing Body may also provide facilities of any description (including boarding accommodation and recreational facilities for students and staff and facilities to meet the needs of students having learning difficulties) which appear to be necessary or desirable for the purposes of or in connection with the carrying on of the principal powers.

The powers conferred by section 19 of the 1992 Act are known as “supplementary powers”.