



REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD

BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2022 at 9.30am – 1.30pm

Room L3/L4 Philip Leverhulme Centre PLC

Present	Karol Bailey (independent) KB Colin Baxter (independent) CB Malcolm Burns (independent) MB Marcus Clinton (principal) MC Jane Cowell (independent) JC Prof Gary Crowe (independent) GC Evelyn Davies-Jones (independent) EDJ Andrew Fletcher (independent) AF Phil Gibbon (staff) Mike Gorton (independent) MG Peter Green (independent) PG Dr Elizabeth Harrison (independent) EH David Pearson (independent, Chair) DP Angela Potter (independent) AP Prof Eunice Simmons (independent) ES Alastair Taylor (independent) AT Liz Watts (staff) LW Alice Warmisham (student) AW (<i>items 1-9 inclusive</i>) Paul Weston (independent) PW
Attending	Megan O’Hara (Student Association President) MOH (<i>items 1-6 inclusive</i>) John Kendal, (assistant principal) JK Graeme Lavery (vice principal, finance and resources) GL Paul Spearritt (vice principal, curriculum and quality) PS Sharon Yates (assistant principal) SY Trudie McGuinness (assistant principal) TM Louise Woodman (director of people and culture) LWoodman Jackie Schillinger (company secretary) JS

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	Welcome and apologies for absence
1.1	Apologies were received and accepted from Andrew Woodhead, Chris Gaskell, Kalliopi Angelakopoulos and associate member Jon Furber.
1.2	The meeting was declared quorate and remained quorate throughout.
2.	Declarations of interest
2.1	There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the agenda items in the meeting.
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022
3.1	The Part A minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 were approved as a correct record and the rolling action log reviewed for assurance.
3.2	On matters arising, it was confirmed for assurance that bank approval (via email, to be followed up with formal consent) had been received to enter the Institute of Technology Deed of Guarantee with the Department for Education.

3.3	The Part B Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2022 were approved as a correct record.
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p>	<p>Chair's Report</p> <p>The Chair's report was received for information. He reported highlights from the term including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Royal Visit and the Centenary Dinner, both part of the Reaseheath 100 celebrations. He also reported that the Chamber of Commerce dinner was held at the college, which was another great evening showcasing the county and it was excellent that the college sponsored an award at this event. - He noted that he had been able to spend a good deal of time at the college meeting staff and students this term at several meetings and events. He also welcomed the engagement in college life by the board with a visit to the Reaseheath Apprenticeship Academy in September as well as the regular governor link visits taking place. - As safeguarding link governor, he reported on his visit the previous week, which was very positive to meet with the team and gain assurance on all the work that is going on. - He provided assurance that he continues his regular meetings with the principal and his engagement with sector events, attending the AoC conference and he noted that he was pleasantly surprised to be chosen by the FE commissioner to be showcased in a film "just one thing " promoting good governance. - He updated members that his annual one to one meetings with board members are planned for the spring term onwards and noted that these continue to provide a very useful opportunity to discuss strengths and opportunities for improving governance arrangements, with this year's external review of governance promising to be a very valuable exercise for all involved. -He thanked all governors and committee members for their hard work and support, and he expressed thanks on behalf of the board to the executive team and all staff for their commitment towards maintaining the student experience during another challenging year.
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>Principal's Report</p> <p>The Principal's report was received for information and any questions or feedback from members. MC's executive summary set out the current and emerging issues for the college. He noted that whilst key judgements in finance and quality are still good there are significant pressures and an important period ahead planning for 2023-24 and continuing to recover from the impact of the pandemic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -On finance, he noted that the budget was achieved for 2021-22 and is forecast to be achieved in 2022-23, with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) confirming the college's financial health grade as 'Good'. However, he noted that setting the budget for 2023-24 will be more challenging due to the increase in energy costs, grant funding potentially decreasing and the aspirations around staff salaries as well as general inflationary costs, with the budget planning process underway. -On student recruitment he confirmed that recruitment for both Further Education and Higher Education was below target but Apprenticeships had recruited well, and he added that this mirrors the general picture across Landex colleges. - On quality he explained that the KPI dashboard shows more red indicators than has been the case, especially around achievement rates as students have struggled with the return to examinations. He provided assurance though that the overall self-assessment judgement was 'Good' for all headline categories with Apprenticeship achievement rates above National Rate, Equine, Animal Management and Construction graded as Outstanding, Engineering (although not all elements), Academy of Land and Environment (ALE) and Sport requiring improvement. He emphasised that it will be important to continue to work to support students and continue the recovery, with the introduction of Progress Coaches and Resilience and Intervention Coaches supporting this. - On recruitment and retention of staff, he explained that staffing had stabilised a little compared to 2021-22 but that the challenges still exist in some areas where there are vacancies, with the college continuing to deploy a range of strategies to aid recruitment and retention and a dedicated HR post has helped with more targeted capacity to do this. -On capital projects he reported the good progress made to maintaining an excellent campus, increasingly at the leading edge and ensuring students are Industry Focused and Career Ready. He highlighted that the priority project in the coming year will be the Lord Wooley Learning Centre as the

5.2	<p>college improves its social learning space and substantive e learning resource and this project will deliver this as well as enabling expansion of food facilities and dedicated space for employers and University Centre Reaseheath (UCR) students. He provided assurance that the Institute of Technology (IOT) is expected to be signed off imminently and brings exciting investment into the farm, Agri and dairy tech provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On the Skills Measure he summarised the work ongoing including sector networking events, planned business forums and employer engagement mapping. He noted that clarity around the 'Intent, Implementation and Impact' across the college will be key, with curriculum areas able to articulate how that looks in their local areas and sectors. He highlighted the requirement to produce an accountability statement in the first half of 2023 and noted that the Annual Strategic Conversation with ESFA will be in March. -On the recent news of Office for National Statistics (ONS) reclassification of colleges into the public sector, he noted that guidance links and webinars had been provided for members to access and that there will be further guidance issued and reported as available. He stressed though that much will not change on a day-to-day level but that there will be areas of more control and permission needed, such as future borrowing. He noted that positives could be further support for capital, cheaper borrowing through the government bank and a flat payment profile (although not an issue for Reaseheath). <p>Members thanked MC for his report and several themes were questioned further:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On the challenges ahead for the 2023-24 budget year, JC recommended aiming lobbying at Secretary of State level as this seems to be where decision-making is sitting, and she requested more information on the model the college is aiming for in terms of curriculum modelling and its growth plans as she emphasised that growth as well as efficiency is key to managing through challenging times. PG also asked for some clarification on the curriculum modelling work that is underway. MC and SY gave some detail on the lobbying carried out and planned, via land-based colleges (Landex) and Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). MC explained the curriculum work going on as part of the business planning process including indicators such as group size, utilization and contribution playing a part with this model communicated as part of the business planning process in January onwards. Discussion on opportunities for growth followed with MC confirming that it seems more young people are going into work or staying on at sixth form, a view shared by Landex colleagues. - On the ONS re-classification, EH as chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee, raised the committee's concern over the reduction in flexibility to manage finance costs of existing borrowing. GL confirmed it was his initial understanding (though this needed to be queried with the government's transition team) that a financial product intended to manage the risk of interest rate rises would likely fall into the 'permission needed' category, which may not be given, and this could leave borrowing costs exposed to the variable rate and volatility over the next few years. MC noted that on the planned renegotiation of a term loan facility there is likely to be an opportunity to move borrowing to the government bank, as this is the preferred direction of travel in the guidance issued so far. DP summarised that the board needed to be clear on this short-term risk and all agreed that the college should proactively follow this issue up with the Department for Education transition team to clarify the situation as soon as possible. <i>[ACTION: GL/MC follow up with DfE transition team issue on managing interest rate risk for existing loans]</i>
6. 6.1	<p>Student Association (SA) Annual Report</p> <p>Annual Report: SA President MOH and student governor AW presented their report, noting that the board had received a comprehensive report on 2021-22 performance and finances in the papers for the meeting. In the meeting they presented an update on aims, activities, progress for the current academic year. Their presentation set out their aims for the year as: Increased student voice through SA channels; Weekly SA projects; Further day student involvement; Cross campus engagement with RAG; Support student led clubs and societies. They set out progress so far in relation to these aims and the plans for next term. They encouraged governor and senior management involvement in the RAG charity month in March and the sky dive in June in aid of the chosen RAG charity this year - the Children's Adventure Farm Trust.</p>

6.2	<p>DP thanked the SA for the report and for supporting the governing body and the college in delivering its strategic plan in all the work that they do. SY commented that she was delighted to see the representation of apprenticeship learners this year and she noted that a great deal of support and engagement had been evident already with a real shift in focus. EH queried why the project 'This Girl Can' on girls' participation in sport was rated an 'amber' and MOH explained that this was because the SA still needed to recruit an ambassador for this role to really drive it forward next term, but that work has been going on. JK supported this assurance and noted that the sports programme at the college has girls participating across all sports. JC wondered why engagement in planned social activities was down this year and discussion followed. It was thought that people were generally staying in more and socialising less formally in halls of residence or social spaces in college as a combination of covid-legacy habits and cost of living pressures perhaps – which was supported by the feedback the SA had received from students. It was noted that the HE Committee had also debated this aspect and had supported the enhancement of social learning spaces in college and the use of the HE café in the evenings to support this type of socialising. AT noted a way of promoting the SA he had seen on in his recent trip to Aston University and he passed on the details to the SA. Following the discussion, DP confirmed that the board received the annual SA report for information and assurance, with thanks.</p>
6.3	<p>RESOLVED: The Student Association Constitution is approved.</p>
7.	<p>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion</p>
7.1	<p>Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report: LWoodman presented the annual EDI report. She explained the progress made in recruiting a dedicated EDI officer who is now driving the EDI approach as a social inclusion model rather than a deficit model. She explained that the basic approach is to ask how we include everyone and that this approach had already seen more interest, engagement, and confidence generally around college in conversations about how we can learn from our experiences rather than being restricted by a strictly defined deficit model. She noted the progress made against objectives, the establishment of the Landex EDI group and the networking that the EDI officer is doing to enable sharing of best practice. The key issue highlighted to members in the report was finding the right partner to work with on the cultural audit and the appropriate EDI framework. Members noted that this had not been for a lack of engagement with several possible partners, and they supported the aim to develop a framework that is appropriate for the college rather than 'off the shelf'. However, they encouraged a move forward now, with GC suggesting looking at a provider for a cultural audit and then choosing an accreditation framework separately. JC noted a couple of possible public sector organisations that may have appropriate frameworks and LWoodman confirmed that the EDI officer is linked into the NHS approach and several other organisations. JC suggested the college might wish to include social class/disadvantage as this is an important dimension to understand. AT suggested the team may wish to think about some key performance indicators at a college level and he noted that the governance aspect of EDI will be considered as part of the external governance review this year.</p>
7.2	<p>In summary, DP noted that there is a clear intention to drive this agenda with the EDI officer now in place. He then requested assurance around risk levels currently while this work was carried out. KB as EDI link governor attending the cross-college EDI committee provided assurance that though this work is ongoing, the college is progressing the current action plan and policy in place, as reported by LWoodman. LWoodman gave assurance that she did not consider there to be any significant risk currently and a lot of work has been carried out. She confirmed that the EDI committee will be able to commission the cultural audit in the new year and move forward with developing the new action plan as informed by the audit. She confirmed that the EDI policy had been reviewed and no substantive changes recommended at this time as it remains fit for purpose but will be reviewed again later in the year. Members welcomed the assurance and were content to approve the annual report and policy.</p>
7.3	<p>RESOLVED: The Annual Equality Diversity and Inclusion Report and Policy are approved.</p>
8.	<p>Safeguarding, Prevent and Wellbeing</p>
8.1	<p>Annual Safeguarding, Prevent and Wellbeing Report: TM as designated safeguarding lead presented the annual report. She confirmed that the engagement and local authority audit work with Cheshire</p>

	<p>East had been valuable in assuring the college on its processes and procedures. She outlined the audit assurance and confirmed that the final stage of the audit work on the new CPOMs reporting system would take place in the new year. She confirmed that the policies had been reviewed externally by Cheshire East with assurance that they are fit for purpose, with the reviewed policies presented for approval to the meeting. She confirmed that this would be an annual exercise to continue this external agency review. A key point highlighted in the annual report was the increase in suicidal ideation, with an increasing pressure and strain on the safeguarding team. She reported that there had been a couple of challenging situations where there had been real difficulty in ambulance call out delays. In the discussion that followed, key points raised were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DP provided feedback from his recent safeguarding link governor visit to provide assurance that the team are continuing to manage the risk well in this area and that there are good opportunities for staff supervision and support but that the board should recognise the high stakes nature of this work and the need to fully support the team in carrying out their responsibilities in line with the agreed protocols. - MG sought and received assurance that the college engages with other local authorities including Cheshire West and Chester. - PG sought assurance on the approach to allegations against staff, as reported in the data. TM and LWoodman provided detail on how any allegations are dealt with and provided assurance that a very good relationship exists with the local authority designated officer (LADO) and that person is accessible to seek advice when needed. TM provided assurance on the induction and training that staff have in relation to the staff code of conduct which provides assurance to staff that by following the code it will keep them safe. - JC raised awareness of the recent growth of toxic and extreme social media presence of Andrew Tate and TM confirmed that the college team is aware, and the issues are addressed as part of the BeReady programme. GL confirmed that he would check with the IT team that the relevant sites had been picked up to ensure they could not be accessed on college systems. <i>[Post meeting note: appropriate website category filters in place].</i> <p>8.2 RESOLVED: The Young Person Safeguarding Policy and the Safeguarding Adults Policy are approved.</p>
<p>9. 9.1</p>	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>Annual Health and Safety Report: GL presented the annual report for information and assurance. DP and GC provided some comments on use of language in the report to clarify that the loop had been closed on incidents that had been reported to increase assurance levels from this reporting. JC noted that the rise in near miss reporting was positive reflective of work to increase awareness and a culture of near miss reporting. EDJ requested that any personal injury claims be included in the reporting in future and noted that there were not many received, but this would add to the overall assurance level. Discussion followed on the work for the coming year on developing the culture of near miss reporting further. It was also noted that the RSM internal audit on health and safety processes and reporting procedures for apprenticeships and work placements would be reported to Audit Committee this year. GL then presented the reviewed health and safety policy for approval. He welcomed the suggestion by DP to seek to peer review the policy with Landex colleagues on an annual basis going forwards. <i>Actions: Health and Safety Report to increase focus on assurance instead of factual reporting, include any personal injury legal claims and the annual review of the policy to seek peer review with Landex colleges going forwards.</i></p> <p>9.2 RESOLVED: The Health and Safety Policy is approved.</p>
<p>10. 10.1</p>	<p>Strategic Monitoring</p> <p>Strategic Risk Review: MC presented his executive summary of the principal strategic risks to the college. He made it clear that in line with the whole sector, the college faces a challenging environment in relation to increasing costs and staff retention and recruitment ongoing challenges. He confirmed that work on maximising income and setting a solid budget for the next financial year will be key. He also noted the disappointing national student survey results that pose a risk to maintaining the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Silver rating. In discussion, ES confirmed that the university and</p>

	<p>the college have done much work together and she considered that together these results can be improved for next year. In response to JC's query on whether a lower rating would impact student numbers MC said that so far the TEF rating does not seem to have a significant impact on student choice. All acknowledged that the challenge remains for University Centre Reaseheath (UCR) to increase its student numbers. GC confirmed that this had been discussed at the recent Higher Education Committee meeting. He noted a clear need for scenario planning over the next couple of years to manage the potential downside scenario whilst giving UCR the time to bring the current positive work on curriculum offer to fruition. MC confirmed the good news story on apprenticeships. GC provided assurance that the Audit Committee appreciated the amount of work on developing strategic risk reporting and that this would be an area that the committee would be keen to develop further this coming year. The report was received for assurance that the college continues to have in place an effective system to identify and manage the principal risks to the achievement of its strategic objectives.</p>
10.2	<p>Confirmation of strategic key performance indicators (KPIs): MC presented an updated and complete set of KPIs that had been presented in draft at the meeting in November. He highlighted the new sustainability and industry engagement KPIs to the meeting. ES noted that the sustainability KPIs will need to be further informed by the requirements still coming out and will need to be carefully considered again in the light of these requirements. AT noted that there may also be a place for equality diversity and inclusion strategic KPIs at this level for the future. It was agreed that board committees could monitor strategic KPIs in their areas as part of their strategic risk agenda items.</p>
10.3	<p>RESOLVED: The strategic KPIs for 2022-23 as presented are approved.</p>
10.4	<p>Year End Reporting: GL presented the year end reporting. KB and EH confirmed that the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Audit Committee considered the year end reporting at the meetings on 1 December 2022. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Board confirmed that they were present when the Audit Completion Report was presented by external auditor Mazars LLP at the joint meeting and provided assurance to the governing body that Mazars LLP reported a clean audit and strong assurance on the financial statements. GC added that he attended the joint meeting and took substantial assurance from the Audit Completion Report, the quality of the finance team and the good working relationship with the auditors that resulted in an effective and independent process. Following consideration of the Audit Committee Annual Report, the Internal Audit Service Annual Opinion and the Financial Statements Auditor's Audit Completion Report, the meeting was content to approve the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2022 for signature and the submission of the ESFA Finance Record.</p>
10.5	<p>The meeting considered and accepted the recommendation from the Finance and General Purposes Committee to approve the Financial Objectives for 2022-23.</p>
10.6	<p>The meeting received for information the Bridge Report showing the reconciliation of management accounts to statutory accounts at year end and management accounts for period 3 of the current financial year.</p>
10.7	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Financial Statements for the year to 31 July 2022 are approved and the Chair and the Principal are authorised to sign the statements and the College to submit the ESFA Financial Return 2. The terms of the management representation letter are approved.
10.8	<p>Confidential Part B item: Capital Projects and Estates.</p>
10.9	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approval for the college to enter into a new lease arrangement with Crewe Alex for the continuing use of college land for its training facility. 2. Confirmation of approval for the college to join the Cheshire and Warrington Institute of Technology and authority to enter into the Institute of Technology formal agreements consisting of Commercial Agreement, Sub-Licence and Deed of Guarantee at the appropriate time.

10.10	<p>Governance Strategy – Governance Self-Assessment Report and External Governance Review: JS presented an executive summary of the full report. Following consideration and in the context of the forthcoming external governance review members approved the areas of focus for governance development in 2022-23, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the views of employers as a key area on which to develop visibility working with the executive team. • Information on views of learners, with more high-level communication to raise this visibility and understanding at board level, as well as at committee level where much of the detailed monitoring of student voice goes on. • EDI reporting and monitoring of college performance against targets/objectives with the EDI strategy and monitoring identified as a governance focus for 2022-23. • Assurance reporting on health and safety including an internal audit service report on employers/apprentices reporting workplace incidents through, monitored by Audit Committee.
11. 11.1 11.2 11.3 11.4 11.5	<p>Committee Reports items for escalation to the Board</p> <p>The Quality and Standards Committee report and unconfirmed minutes were received for information.</p> <p>The Higher Education Committee report and unconfirmed minutes were received for information.</p> <p>The Finance and General Purposes Committee verbal report was received for information.</p> <p>The Audit Committee verbal report was received for information.</p> <p>The Search and Governance Committee report and unconfirmed minutes were received for information.</p>
12. 12.1 12.2 12.3 12.4	<p>Items for approval</p> <p>RESOLVED: Approval of the College Self-Assessment Report 2021-22.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Approval of the Remuneration Committee Annual Statement 2021-22.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Approval of Governance Documents: Reaseheath College Board Constitution; Governor Code of Conduct; Statement on Staff and Student Engagement; and Statement on Attendance at Board meetings.</p> <p>RESOLVED: Approval of policies:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Student Conduct Policy 2. Complements and Complaints Policy 3. Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy 4. Governor Conflicts of Interest Policy 5. Procedure on obtaining independent professional advice by members of the corporation 6. Procedure for complaints against the corporation, board members and the clerk.
13. 13.1	<p>Any items for escalation to strategic risk register</p> <p>The Chair noted that reclassification of colleges to the public sector needed to be included in the strategic risk register in order to gain assurance on management of any impacts of this change across college functions and compliance. In addition, he summarised from earlier discussion that the EDI strategy was a key area of focus for traction this year on the development of the next stage of EDI strategy and objectives, as well as the continuing monitoring of those risk areas highlighted by the Principal in his strategic risk review report. <i>ACTION: Update strategic risk register</i></p>
14. 14.1	<p>Date of next meetings</p> <p>The dates of the next meetings were confirmed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor strategy day: 26 January 2023 • Board meeting 23 March 2023
15. 15.1	<p>Any other business</p> <p>There were two items of any other business reported to the meeting, received and reported by JS. Members were content to approve the matters of business.</p>

15.2	RESOLVED: Approval of changes to the bank mandate as follows: removal of Mrs Grace Cooke (accountant) and addition of Mr Paul Spearritt (Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality) and Mr Daniel Nicholson (Accountant).
15.3	RESOLVED: Ratification, in accordance with college financial regulations, of the procurement of the firewall upgrade via the Cisco Firepower 3140 (CAE) preferred option.
15.4	The Chair checked that all members had had the opportunity to contribute, and no further matters were raised. He expressed the thanks of all members and the executive team to CB for his service and considerable contribution to the college and the governing body over a number of years and wished him all the very best for the future. He noted that members would be able to thank CB over the lunch to follow the meeting.

The meeting closed at 12.45pm

Confirmed as a correct record: 23 March 2023

David Pearson, Chair