

REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
CURRICULUM SKILLS AND STAKEHOLDERS COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 7 March 2025 at 1pm – 4pm
Committee Room Reaseheath College

Present: Jane Cowell (independent, chair)
Jan Chillery (independent)
Marcus Clinton (principal)
Mike Gorton (independent)
Sean Houlston (independent)
Liz Watts (staff)

In attendance: James Eagney (assistant principal performance and progress)
John Kendal (assistant principal student experience and support)
Jane Nickisson (assistant principal and dean of higher education)
Paul Spearritt (vice principal curriculum and quality)
Sharon Yates (assistant principal apprenticeships and business hub)
Jackie Schillinger (head of governance)

PART A unless stated.

item	Content
1.	Opening items
1.1	Apologies and Declarations: Apologies were received and accepted from Eli Broadhurst and Summer Lakin. No declarations were made to the meeting.
1.2	Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.
1.3	Matters arising: Delay to the college's industry engagement strategy until the government industrial strategy is published, which is expected shortly and also in order to consider the devolution impact, and the aim will therefore be to bring this strategy to the summer term meeting.
Engage - Responsive Curriculum that meets needs. Excite - Tell the Story	
2.	TOR 1: Curriculum Intent and Impact - To understand, review and advise the Board on the intent and impact of the College's curriculum
2.1	Meeting Skills Needs Review: Review progress on accountability statement priorities and KPI 2024-25: The principal presented the report evidencing progress on the skills priorities in the accountability statement including reporting on KPI at this stage in the academic year. In summary, he noted the good progress and impact evidenced in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing full-time student and apprentice numbers and maintaining total numbers of UCR students. Apprentice numbers would have increased further were it not for staffing gaps, which required a pause in recruitment. This picture points to a curriculum offer that is attractive and meets needs of employers and customers. Increasing numbers of students engaged in wider learning that develops high-impact skills required by employers. This has mainly been achieved through the redesign of the Career Ready programme (re-branded from Be Ready), to include more emphasis

	<p>on the development of essential career ready skills, and the addition of the digital skills and sustainability school enrichment hour into all courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfiguration of the academic year to enable significant increases in engagement with primary and secondary school aged children, and approval of the 'Education Partnerships Manager' role which, when appointed, will significantly increase partnerships and engagement. • Further development of the T-Level portfolio with Animal Management recruiting over 200 T-Level/T-Level Foundation students in September. • Ongoing progress with the higher-level skills offer, with the degree apprenticeship programme (Environmental Practitioner and Food Industry Technology Progressional) continuing to be developed, whilst several Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) applications have been submitted to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). Whilst the change of Government has potentially impacted the future of Institutes of Technology (IoTs) in the longer term, the offer would have met the KPIs set as part of the IoT approval. • Development of our leadership teams and wider staff skills through the skills matrix to ensure CPD maintains currency, completion of the 'Aspire' leadership programme for staff just below Curriculum Area Manager (CAM) level, and delivery of the 'Masterclass Series' for the College Management Team (CMT). <p>He noted areas where there has so far been less impact are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress with our Lifelong Learning offer, whilst Multiply participant numbers have hit targets, we have only been able to realise the potential of 2/4 Skills Bootcamps and we are yet to initiate the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) digital courses, the simulator training and the Electric Vehicle (EV) specific training. • Failed to achieve the 'strong' rating for Ofsted Skills Measure. • Development of partnerships as part of Excite agenda to establish employer sponsored award and research project.
2.2	<p>Questions and challenge raised by the committee on reviewing progress on the accountability statement priorities and KPI 2024-25 included:</p> <p>How is the evidence of progress used in the strategic conversation by the Department for Education (DfE) in terms of impact?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DfE want to know how the college is progressing on the accountability priorities and if the college is using the new performance dashboard. This dashboard enables national benchmarking. The DfE confirmed that the college is benchmarking acceptably nationally on the dashboard measures, except that the college is slightly lower nationally on the skills measure because there are known challenges for the land-based sector in terms of how the destination outcomes are categorised with lower graduate level destinations. <p>How well does the college currently align with the emerging government skills priorities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The government focus in land based is on agrifood and sustainability. Feedback from the Landex conference supports this with the need to focus as a sector on the Excite strand of the college's strategic plan to increase sector visibility in schools. <p>How well is the work on degree apprenticeships progressing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The bid funding secured was to assess the feasibility of a degree apprenticeship in two potential areas. This feasibility work is ongoing and this means there will be an aim to commence in September 2026 rather than 2025, as the college would need to seek a

	<p>validating partner other than the University of Chester. It is looking most likely that the food industry technical professional programme has some potential. The timeline for concluding the feasibility work is July 2025.</p> <p>What impact has the college seen from the Aspire leadership development programme?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a programme leader level, there is evidence of increased understanding of the business, which is strengthening the pipeline for those coming through. There are several examples of staff who have progressed and those who will join the new teaching excellence group. There has also been evidence of more collaboration between managers and improved business planning information coming through this year. <p>Is there any risk to the employer partnership work if the college cannot meet the volumes wanted by the key employers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employer partnership work remains very strong with effective trusted and open relationships, with JCB commitment to continue with their support and as a key part of their plans moving forward. However, the college must continue to work hard to find solutions to the staff challenge in this area of expertise. <p>How successfully has the student enrichment priority been developed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The digital and sustainability enrichment provision which is mandatory has been progressed very well. On the wider enrichment analysis, the committee asked for an idea of penetration not just volume, for example can we say that 1 in 5 animal management students are accessing the wider enrichment opportunities for example? One way of evidencing enrichment impact is to consider the skill scan data to evidence progression around the 5 career ready behaviours. <p>How are you responding to the loss of the T level in onsite construction?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is disappointing as the numbers and results are strong on this programme however it has been withdrawn due to the sector not being behind it. Currently there is no replacement level 3 programme, so the college is looking at the best option for a level 2 alternative. There is the progression route to a level 3 apprenticeship if the learner is employed, but this is one of the challenges in the sector as many are self-employed contractors. There is a Level 3 in carpentry and joinery, but not in brick or plastering. The design and planning T level is still running. Committee members recommended the college seek to engage with the more regional size housebuilders to support this area of curriculum development and to consider influencing housing associations on this skills issue, with committee members able to provide some helpful links to support this engagement.
2.3	<p>RESOLVED: The committee reports good progress on the 2024-25 accountability statement priorities and KPI at this stage of the year with several recommended actions for the college to take forwards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of the performance dashboard, with this shared with the Board at a strategy/benchmarking session later in the year. Link up with regional house builders and housing associations on the construction offer. When reporting on impact of the enrichment priority, provide an idea of penetration within subject areas not just overall volume and use skill scan data to measure progression around the 5 career ready behaviours.
3.	<p>TOR 2: Source Material and Evidence for Curriculum Intent - To scrutinise the information used to decide the direction and delivery of the College's curriculum</p>

3.1	<p>The committee undertook a review of source material used to decide the direction and delivery of the college's curriculum, based on the principal's written paper setting out the external skills environment, employer skills boards and labour market intelligence used to develop the curriculum. This review included key points made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External skills policy environment including Skills England Report, with recent confirmation that Institutes of Technology will continue until at least 2028. • Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), the new growth strategy and industrial strategy need to be triangulated and alignment with food security and sustainability the key focus. LSIP national groups show where they do reference rural but, in this area, there has been a gap so that the college is more directly aligned with the national LSIP for agriculture rather than the Cheshire and Warrington LSIP. Going forwards there is the need to influence the new LSIP in this area to include rural industry skills needs more directly. • Post 16 skills strategy (national strategy) will be published by the summer. • Timeline of devolution funding is likely to be from 2027-28 for adult funding but there may be a staged approach with some funding coming through earlier than that. • Devolution should present a good opportunity for the colleges to work together to develop the adult offer and build on the existing collaboration model. • Agrifood conference feedback indicated the need for the Department for Food Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to be involved for our area. All party parliamentary group on food security.
3.2	<p>Challenge raised by the committee on reviewing the source material used to direct the curriculum included a challenge on whether governors are sufficiently up to speed on the story to tell the Excite strategic strand to internal and external stakeholders. The committee requested a session on a development day on the college's story on this to understand the agrifood agenda.</p>
3.3	<p>RESOLVED: The committee considered the college is well sighted to the national and local skills strategy policy developments to support decisions on the direction and delivery of the college's curriculum and recommended that the full board be brought up to speed on the agrifood and sustainability Excite strand of the strategic plan to fully understand and be able to support the promotion of the college's Agrifood skills strategy.</p>
4.	<p>TOR 1: Curriculum Intent and Impact - To understand, review and advise the Board on the intent and impact of the College's curriculum</p>
4.1	<p>Accountability Statement Priorities 2025-26: The Principal outlined the initial proposals for the 2025-26 Accountability Statement priorities and the executive leads provided the committee with details of curriculum development, and offerings, across the college's provision types, including initial thinking on the review of foundation level provision as part of a wider high needs curriculum review. The committee considered and provided feedback on the proposed priorities considering the college's land-based status and the relevant source material. Key points highlighted included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Education curriculum development will focus on the core business and bring in the higher technical qualifications, with level 5 curriculum developed for 2026-27 due to validation requirements. Some efficiency across the provision has been realised and the curriculum structure enables significant shared delivery with a manageable impact on staffing resource.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High Needs Review includes the foundation offer and the initial thinking suggests three pathways, which reflects Ofsted feedback that the current approach is overly qualification driven. The supportive internship is working well. The end point of the review will be to clarify what provision is in the curriculum area what is in the foundation department, with a curriculum not overly qualification driven but which still provides appropriate recognition on each pathway. Assurance was sought and provided that the college had already taken steps to ensure that students do get the opportunity to join curriculum areas if they have the potential and curriculum areas are not being too strict on entry requirements.
4.2	<p>Questions and challenge raised by the committee included:</p> <p>What are the risk areas with recruitment on the new T levels?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are some challenges, indications suggest the ornamental horticulture and landscaping T level and Food Science are risk areas on recruitment. <p>How is the college seeking to promote the courses in terms of clear advertising?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The marketing strategy agenda item was considered later in the meeting, but the approach is to use different types of open days, for example science open days, geography open days to link more to the school curriculum and to focus on industry collaboration in school engagement and careers fairs for careers officers with industry involved. <p>With the priorities in the statement does the college consider it has sufficient resources to drive these strategic priorities forward.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The annual accountability statement and governor review is a statutory duty, but it is essentially part of our strategy, therefore resourcing the priorities is our core strategic focus. There will be choices within this and where resource is targeted. The accountability statement process has been useful in focusing strategic development and planning and helps to drive that skills conversation.
4.3	<p>RESOLVED: The committee supported the aim to ensure the priorities link to the college's strategic plan, whilst also fulfilling key sector priorities, in the proposed priorities which are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> In line with our curriculum intent, continue to deliver an inclusive curriculum offer to address Government priorities, remove barriers to progression, and develop essential work readiness skills. Develop a more extensive adult skills offer, with a specific focus on addressing industry skills gaps and green skills, whilst also supporting local needs and the devolution process in Cheshire and Warrington. Carry out a High-Needs review, working closely with key partners to address local needs, implementing all necessary changes to maximise outcomes and increase opportunity. Promote the development of higher-level skills, with an emphasis on science related content, through the use of HTQ's along with higher-level apprenticeships. Develop Agri-Food provision to meet, and influence, key national strategies that align to our specialism. Develop a strategy to increase the College's green skills offer, specifically focusing on the expected growth brought about by the net zero transition
5.	<p>TOR 3: Stakeholder Engagement Strategies - To maintain an overview of the College's marketing strategy and develop an understanding of perceptions of the College</p>

5.1	<p>Review Marketing Strategy Development: The Head of Marketing presented the strategy and took questions. Key areas of question and challenge were:</p> <p>How influential are parents on this, yet the strategy does not look at this audience in as much detail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A key area to focus on, the college has not previously focused on marketing more visibly to parents before but it will be important to include this in the strategy with a member of the committee who is a parent of a current T level student offering to provide some feedback to the Head of Marketing to support this aspect of the strategy. <p>Is the college marketing function sufficiently resourced with the right capacity and capability to deliver the strategy?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a sufficient resource in place with the right people in the right roles, and the focus is also on building the relationships with the academic teams to obtain content at the right times. <p>How will you measure success?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key will be to look at impact of what we are doing and where we are on our marketing funnel targets and include performance metrics where possible such as in social media engagement. In terms of use of AI, it will be important to ensure the college has a governance of AI policy with reference to good practice in the sector such as the ETF course and work already done by Activate and Windsor group. <p>Challenge for the Head of Marketing to consider was to include the use of more supply side data to consider changes student cohorts coming through not only in numbers but in diversity and what this means for Excite and increasing market share.</p>
5.2	RESOLVED: The committee welcomed the development of the marketing strategy, had provided feedback to support further development and requested that it be presented to the Board at a future meeting.
6.	TOR 5: Strategic Risk Review
6.1	RESOLVED: SR5 Curriculum, Skills and Employers/Stakeholders review of risk appetite and current risk position reports that the committee takes reasonable assurance on the management of risk in this area recognising that the college needs to take a level of risk in what is an uncertain environment with new government strategies coming through.
7.	Closing items
7.1	RESOLVED: The committee was satisfied that it had met its terms of reference and planned cycle of business for the meeting.
7.2	There was no other business reported to the meeting.
7.3	The date of the meeting was agreed as 19 June 2025 at 2pm

The meeting closed at 4.15pm

Approved as a correct record 19 June 2025

Jane Cowell OBE (Chair)