

REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025 at 9.30am in the Committee Room

Present: Jane Cowell (independent) *(items 1 – 4 inclusive)*
 Marcus Clinton (principal)
 Elizabeth Harrison (independent)
 Martin Mellor (independent)
 Angela Potter (independent, chair)
 Paul Weston (independent)

In attendance: Graeme Lavery (VP finance and resources)
 Vanessa Rhodes (director of people and culture) *(items 2 and 3)*
 Charlotte Riley (head of finance) *(items 4 and 5)*
 Jackie Schillinger (head of governance)

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	Opening items
1.1	Apologies were received and accepted from Malcolm Burns and Jared Erskine.
1.2	There were no declarations made to the meeting.
1.3	RESOLVED: Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.
1.4	On matters arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue of the transition to T levels was raised. The Principal reported that this route to T levels is a challenge due to the maths and English requirements of T levels and whilst it is not yet clear how many will progress on to T levels, the college is currently considering alternative programmes for those students who will not be able to progress to a T level. The committee followed up on the letter of comfort from the bank. The VP Finance and Resources confirmed that waiver for breach of debt service cover covenant agreed by the bank would be reported through to the board once written confirmation received. Assurance was provided from the recent meeting with the bank that that there would be no impact on the college.
Corporation Core Function Accountabilities	
2.	Determining and developing college educational character
2.1	Equality Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report: The committee reviewed the amended EDI Annual Report (as agreed in the December board meeting to be delayed to the spring term). Questions and challenge followed in discussion with the key points noted as: What is the context around the age demographic and how can the college influence this?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context is important on the age demographic, with clarity that the workforce is aging with the college as staff stay for a long time, but also because the college attracts industry experts towards the end of their careers, rather than a younger workforce. Build into the people strategy what the college is aiming to do in terms of how this impacts the technical skill set needed, training for teaching and learning and digital skills in the college's teaching staff and also the generational gap potentially impacting how staff manage the student experience, behaviour and teaching and learning. <p>Disability should be refined into learning and physical in the strategy going forwards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This will be rewritten in the action plan and there will also be separate staff and student action plans, with recent sharing of best practice where which will be useful to incorporate. <p>Check on gender pay figures in each report to ensure quoting the correct figure.</p> <p>Confirmation that the report is published on the website, but the action plan is for internal use.</p>
2.1	<p>RESOLVED: The committee reports that it is satisfied that the EDI annual report is acceptable for publication this year and recommends it to the board for approval, with recognition that there is more work to do in the coming year to produce more impactful reporting to the board going forwards, which will include a clear link to the 4Es of the strategic plan.</p>
2.2	<p>Gender Pay Report: The committee reviewed the report for submission and publication on the college website by the end of March 2025. The report set out, in summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reaseheath College's Mean Gender Pay Gap is 16.96% in favour of males, similar to last year which was 16.2%. The College has continued to struggle to fill specialist roles and in line with the rest of the sector has experienced reasonably high turnover, this is now starting to slow. It has managed to retain staff in the more generalist roles of Administration and Domestic, and in fractional and term time only roles which are predominately occupied by females. Reaseheath College's Median Gender Pay Gap is 12.44% in favour of males, a significant increase from the previous year's median of 4.8% in favour of males. This is because the median gender pay gap is affected by a small number of very high earners. Currently our three senior paid positions within the College are male, which impacts on the mean and median calculations. The initiatives and changes to address its pay gap: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> drive gender pay and gender equality through the Diversity and Inclusion working group review and benchmark our salaries and improve them where identify particular gaps ensure that the college offers options such as part-time work, job share, term time working and other flexible options promote opportunities for lateral and progressive moves within the organisation whilst retaining part time and flexible working options. promote internal progression opportunities promote flexible working arrangements positively market gender dominated roles to increase representation. re-skill and upskill within the College to encourage progression and movement into other roles

2.3	RESOLVED: The committee recommends the publication of the report as required, noting that that it will be important to ensure the context is made clear and the factors that impact on the college's gender pay gap explained.
3.	Holding executive leaders to account for the performance of staff
3.1	<p>Part B confidential Human Resources Report: The Director of People and Culture presented the Human Resources report including key performance data and progress against the 4Es of the strategic plan. Key points and challenge from the meeting discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest piece of work is needed on absence which remains high. Benchmarking the lost time percentage with AoC and public sector data shows that the college is currently running high. Sickness absence reporting has been brought back into the HR team to ensure an accurate data set. • Stress cases seem low, which is positive. However, it will be key to keep a close eye on this due to the changes for example on the teaching and learning quality improvements actions in the Reaseheath way. The committee will want visibility of any disquiet and how the changes are being managed as to staff wellbeing and stress. • The committee will deep dive into two areas at its next meeting - short term sickness and impact of actions taken at its next meeting; overview of stress cases and any impact of the implementation of the Reaseheath Way. • Staff voice mechanism effectiveness needs to improve based on staff survey feedback that the current system is not active enough or effective, so the HR team has responded to this. • Professional standards is an area needing reinforcement as the college has seen a rise in concerns coming through to HR in relation to professional standards. • Starters and leavers – more leavers than starters, which is in line with the Save Invest Grow strategy. Resignations seem low compared to leavers, but the number is skewed by casuals so prefer to see this separately in future. • Exit interviews seem low, this is being brought back into the team so this should increase this data.
3.2	RESOLVED: Review of the HR reporting shows a generally stable picture on key data, though with absence levels high and action on sickness absence reporting process taken to ensure a more accurate picture on data and management control of this key area achieved.
4.	Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, your organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met
4.1	<p>Student Recruitment and Funding Report: The VP Finance and Resources presented the in-year monitoring report of progress against budget. Mitigation in year on several income streams as well as in year funding increase was considered. Questions and challenge from the committee included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist sector funding split of provision at 60% number of students set as target. This year the college is below this, but it will flux form year to year, there is no danger in relation to the college's specialist status, but the mix needs to be monitored. It is a helpful guide and so should be retained. • HE income risk has stabilised but unlikely to see increase in level 4 this year but looking similar on last year stable and a little bit of movement positively in 2025-26 with more impact in 2026-27. Chester relationship change will bring in charging over the next 4 years and the committee noted that it supports the intention to continue to work with

	<p>the University provided the issues around curriculum development and potential competition can be resolved for the future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the next meeting, the committee will consider reporting on the trend for last few years and projection for next year based on business planning. • External environment influences – construction growth – they are forecasting growth within the current resources. The college has invested in resources in construction with this in mind. Moving into level 4 HNC in construction. Main limitation is securing the staffing to deliver to demand. • Government action for example on inheritance tax, compulsory purchase, etc, family farm impacts and so concern may be felt which could be a risk to pipeline of students, but the college is currently seeing a good interest in agriculture programmes. • Next meeting will see outcomes of business planning linked to the finances in the budget commentary and in principal's report.
4.2	RESOLVED: On student recruitment green shoots going into next year on FE full time and adult, with a strengthened curriculum development team which will help into the following year and beyond. On HE income, the committee supported the aim to continue to work with the university but provided the competition issue on curriculum development can be resolved to enable the college to secure the HE income growth it needs.
4.3	Part B item.
4.4	RESOLVED: Partial assurance reported on meeting budget targets with risk exposure remaining high in the current year, and partial assurance on financial sustainability due to this elevated risk exposure with the need to secure growth to maintain EBITDA in the medium to longer term.
4.5	Part B item.
4.6	RESOLVED: The committee welcomed the valuable governance test and challenge on the commercial lease matter, which will require an additional committee meeting as soon as practicable and a report through to the Board on this matter.
5.	Closing items
5.1	<p>RESOLVED: The committee reports to the audit committee on its review of strategic risk assurance within its remit as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SR1 Risks arising from weaknesses in the management of business planning, budgeting and income/commercial targets resulting in poor performance, inefficiency, poor value for money and/or failure to meet business requirements/objectives. • The committee takes partial assurance on the management of risk in this area based on period 6 with impact of in year mitigations not yet clear but expected to improve the year end outturn to closer to break even. • SR2 Risks arising from not managing finances in accordance with requirements and financial constraints resulting in failure to manage assets/liabilities or to obtain value for money from the resources deployed, and/or non-compliant financial reporting. • The committee takes partial assurance on the management of risk in this area based on period 6 and planned mitigations with the funding environment for next year not yet clear and an uncertain environment with new government strategies coming through • SR6 Risks arising from a failure to manage property and resources to support strategy and exploit to full potential and to maintain business continuity; a failure to produce robust and appropriate data/information and to exploit data/information to its full

	<p>potential; technology not delivering the expected services due to inadequate or deficient system/process development and performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The committee takes partial assurance on the management of risk in this area recognising that whilst the infrastructure projects have progressed very well, the funding environment is less certain going forwards due to government capital funding policy and the need for action on the ring main project before further significant campus development. • SR7 People risks arising from the unavailability of sufficient capacity and capability, ineffective leadership and engagement, suboptimal culture or HR policies resulting in negative impact on performance. • The committee takes reasonable assurance on the management of risk in this area recognising that leadership needs to keep an eye on the embedding of the Reaseheath way.
5.2	There was no other business reported to the meeting.
5.3	RESOLVED: The committee was satisfied that it had met its terms of reference and planned cycle of business for the meeting.
5.4	RESOLVED: The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 3 July 2025 9.30am, with an additional Teams meeting called before then, as needed.

The meeting closed at 12.20pm

Approved as a correct record 3 July 2025

Angela Potter, Chair