REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
Minutes of the meeting on Friday 27 March 2026 at 10am
UCR3, Reaseheath College

Present	Jane Artess (independent) Ashley Austin (independent) Nick Blakemore (staff) Claire Blanchard (independent) Jan Chillery (independent) Marcus Clinton (principal) Jane Cowell (independent) (Chair) Gary Crowe (independent) Mike Gorton (independent) Peter Green (independent) Elizabeth Harrison (independent) Martin Mellor (independent) Charlotte Riley (staff) Eunice Simmons (independent) Paul Weston (independent)
Attending	Paul Spearritt (vice principal, curriculum and quality) Graeme Lavery (vice principal finance and resources) Sharon Yates (assistant principal, business hub and apprenticeships) Jackie Schillinger (head of governance) Rob Lawson (external board reviewer) observing

PART A unless stated

General business	
1.	Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Eli Broadhurrt, Atlas Brigden and Charlotte Brooks.
2.	Declarations of interest were made by Jan Chillery, Claire Blanchard and Jane Artess in relation to item 10 in relation to their re-appointment and they left the meeting for this part of the item.
3.	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2025 were approved as a correct record and the action log reviewed and updated.
Strategic Priorities: Excite Enrich Engage Enable	
4.	The Chair's report and governance development plan report were received, with an opportunity for discussion on governor engagement and development activities. The key action points from this discussion were: • Support for the themed and structured learning walks introduced this year, with a recognition that these had rightly focused on teaching and learning quality in further education this year, but with a view to extending themed visits to support areas also in the future. • Support for the 4Es strategic plan following on from the review at the strategic session in January, with the key message being to focus on the core issues and not add too much to the plan as it is working well as a flexible and responsive approach in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment. • Frame scientific knowledge as new knowledge creation and testing new knowledge in curriculum development as this is the key to the skills needed in the future. • Inclusion in culture, ways of working and data reporting will be a key focus for the coming year. • GovernorHub to be used to log governor engagement in college and externally, with

	a short guide of how to do this provided. ACTION. • The staff conference was very well attended with six members of the Board taking part and engaging with staff on the theme of inclusion.
5.	The Vice Principal and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDL) presented the termly safeguarding, prevent and wellbeing report. The main points on which governors sought and received assurance in the discussion in the meeting were: • A high percentage of students continue to report that they feel safe via the student survey data. There is no significant difference between residential students aged 16-18 and non-residential students Standard practice remains that any ‘no’ responses to the feeling safe question, and supplementary comments from students, regarding safeguarding and wellbeing, are followed up immediately by the Deputy DSL. • Outreach work by the wellbeing team to those areas with less uptake, has resulted in a positive response from students, • All allegations of bullying are investigated with appropriate action taken where bullying has occurred, many of the issues are relationship breakdowns between friends which is becoming a growing problem year on year. • The college safeguarding committee met on 6th March with the safeguarding lead governor attending. This ensures the college monitors and responds to key issues. The committee meeting was focused on level of preparedness for the next Care Standards inspection • The RSM internal audit on safeguarding processes has now been completed and provides substantial assurance on the college safeguarding reporting system CPOMs. • There is ongoing training and development in place • The college provided ongoing support for students and staff since the notification of the tragic passing of a student whilst at home, has kept in close contact with the family and engaged with the Cheshire East Critical Incident team. Students have been supported by the Wellbeing team and some external services and have been facilitated to create a small temporary remembrance area on the college grounds • The college maintains and regularly reviews a prevent risk register. The college has a planned lockdown drill using the campus Audiebant (mass communication system) at the June 2026 staff development day. Mock lockdown drills with students will commence from the new academic year. • There have been no Prevent referrals since the last report and previous Prevent reports are now closed with no further action
6.	RESOLVED: The Board received the report for assurance of continued effective controls in place to manage risk, keep students and learners safe and support their wellbeing.
7.	The Vice Principal Finance and Resources presented the termly health and safety report. The main points raised by governors from the discussion in the meeting were: • Agreement that the college Health and Safety Committee is best placed to monitor completion of the health and safety action plan, with the lead governor for health and safety attending this college committee. • Overall, the Health and Safety Manager’s audit findings highlight good practice but also consistent themes requiring action. • Key focus needs to be to improve consistency of the quality of safe operating procedures (SOPs), competence assurance, timely closure of investigations and targeted focus on small number of departments on fire evacuation procedures. • Occupational health risks have been identified and are being actively managed with appropriate controls. • Incident and near miss reporting has identified areas for the next stage of focused work being improved supervision, proactive near-miss reporting, and stronger staff engagement. • The lead governor carried out a link visit in December, with a summary of the visit reporting that he witnessed a strong culture of health and safety in forestry &

	arboriculture which is a high-risk area for the college. Students have a good understanding of safe practise and carry out detailed pre-use checks on equipment e.g. ropes for tree climbing. • All governors to keep aware of health and safety aspects when out and about in college doing learning walks. • The British Safety Council/independent safety consultant to be commissioned to carry out an external review of the college's Health and Safety Framework, in the summer term.
8.	RESOLVED: The Board received the report for assurance and welcomed the further external assurance work planned to provide substantial assurance of continued effective controls in place of managing risk, keep students/learners, staff and visitors safe.
9.	The Principal reported on progress on implementation of the strategic plan priorities 2024-27, including key performance indicators and risks. • Strategic Priority 1 – Excite: Challenge perceptions, promote and showcase the student, industry and staff experiences we deliver that launch, broaden and enhance careers. Highlight the college's USPs, leading edge opportunities and facilities, and celebrate our student, industry and college successes • Strategic Priority 2 – Enrich: Deliver an experience that inspires people to be their best self, launching and shaping careers for both learners and staff • Strategic Priority 3 – Engage: Provide a high quality, robust and responsive curriculum to meet the needs and interests of our students, employers, community, and national skills priorities, supporting people to develop transformational personal, social, and technical skills • Strategic Priority 4 – Enable: Actively drive completion of the Strategic Plan through clear operational actions and deliverables and enhance operational ways of working (processes and systems) to save time, improve efficiency and make life easier for staff.
10.	The main points which governors highlighted in the strategic discussion that followed were: • Good to see that college performance continues to improve, and no strategic risks or in year KPI are currently rated RED. • Good news welcomed on the RCVS accreditation for the Vet Nurse degree and approval from the University of Chester to start the first L7 Masters cohort in September 26. • External environment change requiring strategic responsiveness includes qualification reform and the curriculum offer, devolution, SEN reform, changes to the Ofsted framework and the demographic dip coming down the line in the medium term. • The key areas of focus remain improving the consistency of academic performance in FE and the student experience and ensuring all areas have the staff required to help provide that. • Key challenges remain around staffing, although whilst stabilising generally, there are pressure points in engineering which impacts apprenticeship and full-time student delivery, construction joinery, arboriculture and agriculture. • Whilst a surplus is still expected for this year, this will be reduced due to pressures on apprenticeship income linked to staffing and on the farm linked to increased cost as well as lower milk prices. • The memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Myerscough had been reviewed by the Curriculum Skills and Stakeholders Committee and was supported by members, subject to provision for the inclusion of a board member on the planned steering group, with support for the MOU to be signed on the 10 June when the college hosts Myerscough executive and governors.
11.	RESOLVED: The Board reviewed the progress on implementation of the strategic plan priorities 2024-27, including key performance indicators and risks and confirmed the risk assurance reporting from the committees this term as:

	• SR1: Financial Management and Targets: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance • SR2: Financial Sustainability: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance • SR3: Quality and Student Outcomes: Substantial Assurance: HE and Apprenticeships within risk appetite. Reasonable Assurance: FE within risk appetite tolerance • SR4: Strategy and Leadership: Substantial Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance • SR5: Curriculum Skills and Stakeholders: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance • SR6: Infrastructure and Resources: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance • SR7: People: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance • SR 8 Safeguarding and Wellbeing: Reasonable Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance • SR 9 Health and Safety: Partial Assurance: Awaiting third party audit to increase assurance level. • SR 10 Legal and Regulatory: Substantial Assurance: within risk appetite tolerance
12.	RESOLVED: The Board received unconfirmed minutes from the Search and Governance Committee and approved the recommendations made: 1. Appointment of Alan Williams as an independent member for a period of 3 years from 1 August 2026 2. Appointment of Carl Thomas as an associate member for an initial period of 1 year, as part of succession planning to a full role. 3. Reappointment of Jan Chillery, Claire Blanchard and Jane Artess as independent members for a period of 3 years at the end of their current first terms this year. 4. Committee structure with new committee external co-options (Kate Boundy on Curriculum Skills and Stakeholders Committee and Janet Lloyd on HE Committee. 5. Adding the Counter Fraud Strategy and failure to prevent fraud offence reference to the Scheme of Delegation to highlight Board level commitment to fraud prevention measures.
13.	RESOLVED: The Board received unconfirmed minutes from the Quality and Standards Committee and approved the recommendations made: 1. Record assurance that complaints policy and process was being managed effectively, with themes and actions identified and with the compliments summary welcomed, with it good to see the number of compliments about foundation level provision. 2. Record assurance that progress is being made on the quality of written feedback, the quality of learning support in lessons and that the quality of the ITE provision is strong, but there are challenges in providing sufficient mentor support with so many new teachers. 3. Record positive progress on Key Performance Indicators and improvements in the data reporting as more useful for governors, with assurance that in future actual attendance will be reported 4. Approve the Compliments and Complaints Policy on its annual review with no substantive changes required.
14.	RESOLVED: The Board received unconfirmed minutes from the Curriculum Skills and Stakeholders Committee and accepted assurance provided and approved the recommendations made: 1. Assurance that good progress is being made overall using the employer validation events to help shape curriculum, with evidence of employer-responsive curriculum enhancement in the reporting with a next round of events planned for May with a ‘you said we did’ focus as well as a focus on inclusion. 2. Record that the proposed curriculum developments support the College’s strategic intent to remove barriers to learning, enhance outcomes, improve progression and meet local, regional and national skills priorities.

	3. Recommend the development of the Myerscough collaboration via the MOU, which is reviewed and supported, with assurance that it will include provision for a governor member on the steering group, to be signed in June when the college hosts Myerscough. 4. Support for the development of an overall stakeholder strategy that incorporates all stakeholders, including the college's key external stakeholder groups across Education, Employers, Civic Partnerships and Community, along with the data sources to support and inform strategic decision-making.
15.	RESOLVED: The Board received unconfirmed minutes from the Higher Education Committee and approved the recommendations made: 1. Approval of the University Centre Reaseheath (UCR) tuition fee change to 2026-27 fees and approval of the fees for 2027/28 aligning tuition fees with the OfS fee cap for 2026/27 and 2027/28 and including the Masters provision tuition fee. 2. Record assurance that the Quality Improvement Plan actions are on track and KPI in year indicators are strong. 3. Support for the direction of travel for student engagement and co-creation with students, assurance on how students with additional needs are supported and valuable student forum feedback with the key theme in developing the higher education student voice being one of maintaining distinctiveness whilst being part of the wider college. 4. Record assurance that the UCR quality assurance and enhancement framework provides clear oversight of academic standards, regulatory compliance and strategic enhancement activity and academic governance arrangements remain robust, externally validated and aligned to strategic priorities.
16.	RESOLVED: The Board received the unconfirmed minutes from the Finance and General Purposes Committee, which included the Estates Development and Property Working group report, and approved the recommendations made: 1. Record assurance that expenditure is well managed and income in apprenticeships and adult are main areas behind budget. Core business 16-18 and HE are doing well. The apprenticeship income variance is due to hard to recruit staffing not a lack of demand, which the market supplement policy is intended to mitigate going forwards. No concerns to raise on financial sustainability. 2. Support for workload and wellbeing focus of ongoing work, with the college investing in an employee assistance programme. 3. Record assurance that current estate projects and on-going estate management are effectively managed by the Head of Property and his team. 4. Approval of the Market Supplement Policy 5. Approval of the Reserves Policy 6. Approval of the Estate Strategy (subject to final wording/visuals) 7. Approval of the Bid submission for the DfE post 16 fund for construction.
17.	RESOLVED: The Board supported the construction project as aligned to the government skills priorities and the college estate strategy and approved the submission of the project bid to the Construction Skills Capacity Fund (CSCF) 2026 to 2030 in non-devolved areas.
18.	RESOLVED: The Board received the report from the Audit Committee including the Annual Counter Fraud Report, and with unconfirmed minutes available on GovernorHub, and approved the recommendations made: 1. Record substantial assurance on the Safeguarding process CPOMs audit that the framework, control design and CPOMs system are all sound, with Staff CPD an ongoing piece of work. 2. Record partial assurance on the IT Cybersecurity audit, which is not unusual for this area, with assurance sought and received that the implementation of the actions is given high priority by management with a follow up in the summer term.

	3. Support the approach to risk categories and assurance taken from mapping against Orange Book with expectations set out for content of annual risk management report and risk review session at the summer board meeting. 4. Approval of the reviewed and updated Whistleblowing Policy 5. Approval of the Counter Fraud Strategy and Policy 6. Approval of the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy 7. Approval of the Counter Fraud Plan.
Concluding business	
19.	A member raised an item of business in relation to oversight of the farm, with recent change in leadership and it was agreed that a deep dive into this function area would be appropriate at a future meeting. ACTION.
20.	The next meetings/activities were confirmed as: • Morning learning walks 7 May 2026 • Strategic Development Session 22 May 2026 • Myerscough visiting 10 June 2026 • Board meeting 17 July 2026.

The meeting closed at 12.50pm followed by lunch in the new café area of the student restaurant.

Approved as a correct record17 July 2026 Jane Cowell OBE (Chair)