REASEHEATH COLLEGE BOARD
FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING
Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2026 12.30pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath College

Present:	Marcus Clinton (principal) Jane Cowell (independent) Jared Erskine (independent) Martin Mellor (independent) Paul Weston (independent, chair)
In attendance:	Graeme Lavery (VP finance and resources) Vanessa Rhodes (director of people and culture) *(items 1 and 2 only)* Rob Lawson (external board reviewer) via teams Jackie Schillinger (head of governance)

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	**Opening items**
1.1	Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Elizabeth Harrison, due to the change of the date of this meeting. The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout.
1.2	There were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda items.
1.3	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2025 were approved as a correct record.
1.4	The action log was reviewed. Under matters arising it was noted that a search for an additional finance person on the committee was ongoing, with the other actions complete or on the agenda for the meeting.
1.5	RESOLVED: The committee cycle of business was confirmed for 2025-26, with the change from ‘not applicable’ to ‘where appropriate’ on some items.
2.	**TOR 2 People strategy** Review the framework of terms and conditions/professional development/EDI strategy and policies
2.1	The committee reviewed the director of people and culture’s report on strategic themes and performance against key performance indicators (KPI). Points discussed in the meeting were: • The people challenges that have been presented during this period, such as the turnover of staff within the farm and the response from the HR team to support recruitment in this area. • The college has recently taken part in a regional data collection exercise to enable benchmarking of numbers of support staff and pay details, to support the college’s scrutiny of the number and designation of business support contracts. Support staff Benchmarking is difficult, but this work will give a good sense of how the college compares because the roles in the project align well with the college roles. There was a sense that the college was not over staffed from the data provided, and it was noted that support staff in student services, catering and domestic will be larger due to the residential provision.

	• The new project which is underway to move to the 'People First' HR and Payroll system, which unites employees' data and daily tasks, making it easier to manage HR functionality and provide real-time HR and payroll reports. • The forthcoming wellbeing pilot and the 'Reaseheath RIPE leadership programme'. • Review of staff voice group activity and feedback. • Key developments in employment law arising from the Employment Relations Act 2025 and the college response to these developments. • The Market Supplement Policy which outlines the approach the college will take when faced with perennial hard-to-fill roles, for approval. • The risks in relation to the current complex case management, the prevalence of data protection subject access requests, and the escalation to early conciliation. • KPI picture was considered. In line or within KPI were 'failure to recruit', 'benchmark pay', 'annual staff turnover' and 'sickness absence' providing assurance that the college was managing the risks well. Survey or PDR compliance data was not yet available.
2.2	The committee went on to raise questions for assurance and to consider the market supplement policy for approval. Points raised included: • Assurance sought and received on the preparation for a smooth roll out of the new HR system, with a backup position available if any issues are encountered. • A request for feedback on the workload benefits for staff as the HR system moves forwards, with some data analysis, for example, it is expected that the system will save 5 days on payroll and 2 to 3 days on onboarding processes. ACTION. • Assurance was sought and received on the college approach to staff workload and wellbeing. Members welcomed the pilot project on taking on wellbeing champions as part of a holistic approach to supporting wellbeing and managing stress. Staff continue to access the college wellbeing service, and the new employee assistance programme provides this support which is being promoted to staff. The leadership piece was welcomed, and it was confirmed that is was available to support staff as well as teaching staff, with a careful approach needed to communication to ensure it is received as intended to support leadership development rather than adding to workload. • The committee asked to have a closer review on the theme of staff workload and wellbeing at the next meeting. ACTION. • Staff voice is working well with a 'stop start continue' approach to staff feedback and a 'you said we did' campaign about to launch • Farm staffing assurance with new starters supported in terms of training on automation on the farm, supported by employer partners. • The market supplement policy was considered including risks and benefit and supported as necessary to mitigate risk to recruitment and retention of staff in hard to recruit areas. It was noted that the current impact is seen in the adverse variation to budget on income in apprenticeships due to staffing capacity versus demand so the policy is necessary though a careful communication approach will be needed. Assurance was provided on clear criteria for it to apply.
2.3	RESOLVED: The committee recommended the market supplement policy for approval
3.	**TOR Estates Strategy**
3.1	The chair of the estates development and property working group reported the outcome of the group's recent meeting including that the group:

	• Reviewed the draft estate strategy. The group welcomed the outward facing document, the structure of the vision and the current prioritisation of the projects and it supported the commissioning of a carbon audit to support the strategy, which can also help to align the estate and sustainability strategy. • Considered capital projects progress and existing estate management. This included checking completion of the football club and farmland lease arrangements now in place. It also welcomed progress on the key project to unlock further sustainability work, the ring main project, with consultants now appointed to support the college to progress this. • Noted the likely timeframe for the completion of the new road as the end of June, which then allows the consideration of the sale of the parcel of land as part of the capital financing options. • Took note of the Department for Education guidance on estate management, noting it as a useful sense check resource as the group undertakes its work. The group wanted to make the point that the college has expertise in-house in the Head of Property, which may not be the case in other FE colleges and so it was important to refer to the guidance with this in mind and not stray into operational matters. The current projects and on-going estate management effectively managed by the Head of Property and his team. • Recommended the estate strategy and for the working group to remain involved in regular review of the strategy as part of its business cycle and on any refresh by the executive team. • Recommended support for the bid for the Post 16 fund for construction to provide a new resource at Construction, with planning permission already obtained, with approval wording in line with bid requirements for Board approval in March.
3.2	The committee supported the construction fund bid, as aligned to the government skills priorities and the college estate strategy with the bid for approximately £650,000 supporting bricklaying and plastering with additional space and supporting the move of English and maths into the construction curriculum area. Furthermore, the bid related to a full grant, with no match funding requirement and the college had secured the employer in kind support to fulfil the bid requirements. The committee also supported the estate strategy to go forward to the Board as an important public facing document to support the college in its communications with funding bodies as well as ensuring that the college listened and responded to student feedback. For example, on accessibility of the college campus and incorporating sustainability of the estate.
3.3	RESOLVED: The committee supports the estate strategy, with suggestions incorporated into the final document and recommends approval for the strategy and for the college to submit a bid to the Department for Education post 16 fund for construction.
4.	**TOR Financial Strategy** Monitoring of monthly management accounts and the College's cash flow, forecasts and financial key performance indicators.
4.1	The committee reviewed management account reporting for the year, the RAG rated report on student recruitment and funding as well as the proposed reserves policy and an update on changes to accounting standards. Key points made in discussion were: • Current year outturn expected around £250,000 surplus, which is behind budget. • The committee noted the Board decision made to pay staff vouchers at Christmas to support cost of living pressures at a cost of £200,000 reduced the original expected outturn. • Expenditure managed well, however emerging risk around price of utilities due to external environment raised. Main utility contract in place for another year, but LPG

	costs may be impacted in the shorter term. Fertilizer is another area that could be impacted and the college would need to manage stocks to minimise impact. • Income in apprenticeships and adult the main areas behind budget. Apprenticeship income issue is due to hard to recruit staffing not a lack of demand. The market supplement policy is intended to mitigate this risk going forwards. • New business and professional services curriculum area meets local skills improvement plan (LSIP) and has potential to grow adult provision. • Core business 16-18 and HE is doing well. The level 7 provision has just been approved and should be ready to enrol students in 2026 – 27. • College debt transfer to the public sector is likely to reduce the cost of finance, with the committee to be kept updated as this process commences and progresses this year. • Support for the Reserves Policy and the receipt of any proceeds from sale of land to be designated as restricted funds in the policy.
4.2	A report on the changes to accounting standards by the vice principal finance and resources provided assurance on preparedness for upcoming accounting standards changes and managing any impacts.
4.3	RESOLVED: The Reserves Policy is recommended for approval with the receipt of any proceeds from the sale of land to be designated as restricted funds in the policy.
5.	**TOR 5 Risk Review** To review sections of the risk register within committee remit
5.1	RESOLVED: following consideration of reporting to the meeting, the committee reports: • SR 1 – Financial Targets and Budget: Reasonable assurance. Behind budget, mitigations in place, outturn expected as a reduced surplus against budget due largely to apprenticeships and adult income variances as well as approved management action on cost-of-living support for staff via voucher paid at Christmas. • SR 2 – Financial Sustainability: Reasonable assurance. No concerns on underlying financial sustainability. • SR 6 – Property Infrastructure and Resources: Reasonable assurance. Good progress and estate strategy developed. • SR 7 – People: Reasonable assurance. Remains highest risk area. Mitigations in place to manage hard to recruit areas.
6.	**Closing items**
6.1	There was no other business reported to the meeting.
6.2	The date of next meeting was confirmed as Monday 6 July 2026 at 10am

The meeting closed at 2.20pm**.**

Approved as a correct record 6 July 2026 Paul Weston, Chair