SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 February 2026 2pm
Committee Room, Reaseheath College

Present:	Jane Cowell, independent, chair Marcus Clinton, principal Mike Gorton, independent Elizabeth Harrison, independent
In attendance:	Jackie Schillinger, head of governance Rob Lawson, external board reviewer (observing via Teams)

PART A unless stated

item	Content
1.	**Opening items**
1.1	There were no apologies for absence. Declarations of interest were made in relation to item 2.4 (below) by Jane Cowell due to a personal connection outside of the Board and item 2.5 (below) by Elizabeth Harrison, due to a personal connection outside of the Board and they respectively left the meeting for these items and took no part in the decision-making. The meeting was quorate and remained quorate throughout.
1.2	RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2025 were approved as a correct record.
1.3	Action log items were complete and on matters arising: • The head of governance confirmed that she did not consider the failure to prevent fraud offence required any change to the instrument and articles of government, but that raising its visibility in the scheme of delegation would be helpful to indicate top level commitment to the organisation's counter fraud strategy. An annual counter fraud report is made to the audit committee and this covers training of staff. A committee member recommended that training should also raise awareness of the new failure to prevent fraud offence. It was confirmed that this counter fraud report would come to the Board via the audit committee. ACTION: Scheme of delegation and counter fraud report content. • The chair clarified via these minutes for all members of the Board that it is the Board that makes remuneration decisions for the senior post holders and the head of governance, not the remuneration committee, which makes a recommendation to the Board. This important distinction has been made clear in the scheme of delegation. • The chair confirmed that one to ones with all governors are now being booked in for March and April and she will discuss succession planning to more senior roles in these meetings.

1.4	RESOLVED: The committee business cycle for 2025-26 was confirmed and the recent strategy and development events feedback considered, with content for the upcoming events agreed as: 1. Board strategy day – 22 May 2026 Morning: Excite Enrich and Enable • Stakeholder engagement strategies including Myerscough strategic collaboration ahead of visit to Reaseheath on 10/11 June. • Governance and External Board Review Presentation by Rob Lawson Afternoon: Engage • College approach to Inclusion • Governance and Inclusion in Ofsted framework. 2. Myerscough College Board visit to Reaseheath 10/11 June 2026 • Wednesday afternoon and evening for Reaseheath governors- Myerscough strategic collaboration and signing of MOU/Campus Tour and Dinner. 3. Agri-Food and Sustainability Strategy to September development day due to organisational change on the farm and capacity issues meaning September will be a better time to ensure a valuable session.
2.	**TOR 1 - Recruit and succession plan for board membership and roles** **TOR 2 - Monitor the membership diversity profile**
2.1	Membership and succession planning report: The committee considered recruitment and succession planning for membership and roles, for Board approval. The head of governance reported that progress with recruitment has been made since the last meeting, with the interviews for new members having taken place in the morning. She presented the succession planning summary based on the latest skills audit analysis with recommended areas of focus for its activity going forwards. There were several recommendations made for the Committee to consider: • Existing member re-appointments • New members to fill identified skills gap via the DfE funded FE governor recruitment service, following interviews in the morning. • Updated committee structure with two new external co-opted committee members.
2.2	RESOLVED: Following review of attendance, contribution, skills and experience aligned to skills audit and succession plan, Jan Chillery to be recommended for re-appointment on the expiry of her current first term this year, for a period of three years.
2.3	RESOLVED: Following review of attendance, contribution, skills and experience aligned to skills audit and succession plan, Claire Blanchard to be recommended for re-appointment on the expiry of her current first term this year, for a period of three years.
2.4	*In the absence of Jane Cowell* RESOLVED: Following review of attendance, contribution, skills and experience aligned to skills audit and succession plan, Jane Artess to be recommended for re-appointment on the expiry of her current first term this year, for a period of three years.
2.5	*In the absence of Elizabeth Harrison* RESOLVED: Following consideration by the chair of the curriculum skills and stakeholders committee and review of skills and experience, the committee

	recommends Kate Boundy for appointment as an external co-opted member of the curriculum skills and stakeholders committee for an initial period of one year from 6 March 2026.
2.6	RESOLVED: Following consideration by the chair of the HE committee and review of skills and experience, the committee recommends Janet Lloyd for appointment as an external co-opted member of the HE committee for an initial period of one year from 12 March 2026.
2.7	RESOLVED: Following interviews carried out by three members of the committee and the head of governance, the committee recommends Alan Williams for appointment as an independent member of the Board and a member of finance and general purposes committee and remuneration committee for a period of three years from 1 August 2026.
2.8	RESOLVED: Following interviews carried out by three members of the committee and the head of governance, the committee recommends Carl Thomas for appointment as an associate member of the Board and a member of curriculum skills and stakeholders committee for an initial period of one year from 1 August 2026, with a view to succession planning to a full role.
2.9	RESOLVED: Succession planning priorities are: • Planning for the senior roles needed for end of 2027-28 academic year – chair explore in her one to ones. • Search and governance committee succession planning - in the first instance see if the chair of the curriculum skills and stakeholder Committee is able to join the committee. • Accountancy expertise for FGP by 2028 – advertise • Agriculture/land-based representation needed within 2- 3 years – possible contacts • Aim by end 2025-26 to have further co-opted member to curriculum skills and stakeholders Committee – industry perspective - land-based sector/agri-food - currently contacting several possibles. • Quality improvement FE and Apps - Strengthen as existing terms end with a member to step down March 2027. • Continue to promote opportunities widely and seek to develop a diverse board. Use of paid agencies could be considered going forwards.
3.	**TOR 3 - Develop and monitor induction and on-going development programme for new and existing members**
3.1	The committee monitored induction and on-going development for new and existing members with reference to the induction and on-going training and development that had taken place in the year. The committee noted for assurance: • The induction framework is in place and new governors have been supported this year, with new staff members and further new appointments imminent. The induction includes accessing specific training and resources for staff and student governors • A programme of ongoing training takes place as part of board and committee business cycles. • There are regular opportunities for governors to take up on-going training and support which is signposted via GovernorHub. The

	college supports external training for governors where there is a cost involved. • There is an opportunity for governors to access the college learning management system, which could be piloted with the committee members first to see if they found it easy to use and helpful. • The Board now uses GovernorHub as its portal. This supports induction as it contains the governor handbook with the essential documents in as well as the induction booklet with the links to the essential and on-going training via the Education and Training Foundation. • This year, we have started to use GovernorHub to log compliance, training and engagement/visits. The training and engagement capture is in its early days but will build up and provide a much more comprehensive way of capturing on-going individual training undertaken as well as engagement activities. • Essential safeguarding and prevent training is required on induction and provided annually in-house, and a record kept so that we know that this is covered. This includes the annual update of KCSIE. • Student governor attendance at meetings has been more challenging this year due to the lack of the full-time sabbatical SU role this year, and a particular clash with our daytime meetings that seems worse then usual. The college has started working with Unloc and can link in with induction and on-going development for our student governors going forwards, with the expectation that a full-time sabbatical role can be in place for next year. • On-going development provided within the board cycle of business includes Annual Safeguarding and KCSIE update training; New Ofsted Framework; Safeguarding Prevent and Protective Security; External Policy updates; Quality Assurance and Improvement - What does good teaching and learning look like – the 5PEDs; Staff conferences on teaching and learning, and Inclusion; joint HE and Q&S session on AI use in teaching learning and assessment; Regulatory updates for audit committee and HE committee; weekly college updates and regular governance updates via GovernorHub. • Other external training has included, ETF Chairs' Leadership Programme; ETF Governance development programme online modules; AoC Audit Committee Masterclass; AoC Conference; Landex Conference; Unlocking the White Paper; Fraud Awareness – RSM webinars; Understanding the new approach to inspection – Governors for Schools webinar; AoC Chairs network meetings; Governance professional undertaken several modules of the EFT Governance Professional Development programme.
3.2	RESOLVED: The committee took assurance from its monitoring of induction and on-going training that essential training is covered and on-going support and opportunities are provided and agreed to trial access to the college LMS as another training resource for governors. A training plan for 2026-27 will be considered at the summer term meeting. ACTION
4.	**TOR 4 – Evaluate board effectiveness via an annual self-assessment process**

4.1	RESOLVED: The committee reviewed the progress so far this year on the governance development priorities agreed by the Board in December and took assurance that good progress was being made, with actions on track for target dates, with the need to do more work on the board level external stakeholder plan aligned to college engagement strategies, which is still in its early stage but with time to complete this for the end of the academic year.
5.	**TOR 5 - Monitoring governance policy and process and recommending improvements where necessary.** **TOR 6 - Ensure governance policy and processes have regard to the higher education code of good governance**
5.1	The head of governance provided an update on recent governance policy developments and the committee considered impact and actions needed. The committee noted: • The range of DfE effective practice guides can be referenced by committees and the board as a useful tool and a way of checking we are in line with current practice. These resources include effective practice guides on strategic planning, curriculum planning, estates planning and SPH and chair performance. The board and committees should utilise these in benchmarking our practice going forwards. • The FE Commissioner's letter Feb 2026 that sets out key areas of focus for the FE Commissioner on improving governance in the sector of The Triumvirate; Senior Post Holders; Risk and Board Assurance Framework; and The Governor Journey. • New Office for Students Condition E6: The new condition which came in force in August sets out clear priorities around preventing sexual harassment, protecting freedom of speech, and making all environments safer for HE students. Key aspects to note are the creation and publication of a single source of information for all students around the prevention of sexual harassment which is a mandatory requirement for providers. UCR have created and published this document and delivered required training to support this. This new process is still in its initial stages and further activity needs to be undertaken to ensure governors are fully appraised and that the aspects around freedom of speech include all admissions and recruitment policies. The summer term meeting of HE Committee will consider an Office for Students regulatory risk assurance report to cover E6 and all regulatory conditions but it will be important to bring this work within the overall compliance board assurance framework as part of our governance development plan.
5.2	RESOLVED: The governance development plan priorities already align well with the FE Commissioner's focus areas and the development of the board assurance work should also support coverage of compliance with Office for Students regulations and conditions.
6.	**Closing items**
6.1	RESOLVED: Based on the reporting to and discussion in the meeting, the committee reports substantial assurance on the strategic leadership and governance risk to audit committee.
6.2	The committee considered it had met its remit against its terms of reference and business planned for this meeting. The external board review informal

	feedback will be available for discussion at the next committee meeting in advance of its presentation to the Board on 22 May.
6.3	The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 8 May at 2pm on Teams.

The meeting closed at 4.40pm.

Approved as a correct record 8 May 2026 Jane Cowell OBE, Chair