



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
held on
TUESDAY 2 MAY 2017
in the CONFERENCE ROOM G202a
at the OSWESTRY CAMPUS**

Present:	Mrs G Richards	GPR	Chair, Health & Safety Lead Governor
	Mrs V Cox	HVC	Safeguarding & Residential Lead Governor
	Mrs W Dakin	JWD	Equality & Diversity Lead Governor
	Mr A Durnell	AD	Business Support Staff Governor
	Mrs F Flack	FF	Academic-Staff Governor
	Mr J Furber	JF	(part)
	Dr E Harrison	EH	(part)
	Mr P McCann	PM	Interim Principal
	Mr J Nicholls	JN	Lead Governor – Quality (part)
	Mr P Polowyj	PP	
	Miss L Smith	LS	Student Governor
	Mr T Trickett	TT	

Attendance: 80 %

In attendance:	Ms K Roberts	KR	Assistant Principal Curriculum
	Ms S Shelston	SS	Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services
	Mr R Ratcliffe	RR	Observer (Chair of Governors, Reaseheath College)
	Ms J Vernon	JV	Observer (Lifelong Learning Manager, Shropshire Council)
	Mr C Dilworth	CD	Project Manager (part)
	Mrs C Thompson	CDT	Governance Advisor

The meeting opened at 17.30

Item	Action
1. Apologies for absence Mr G Casson; Mr P Green; Ms E McQueen. Mr B Deed, interim Finance Director, and Mr M David, Observer, and Reaseheath College Principal could not be in attendance.	

2. Declarations of interest

Mr Furber, Dr Harrison, Ms McQueen, Mr Nicholls and Mrs Richards were also governors at Reaseheath College. Mrs Flack and Mr Durnell declared an interest in item 3.

Mr Furber joined the meeting.

3. Staff terms & conditions - Moved to Confidential

Mr Nicholls joined the meeting.

Mr Dilworth left the meeting.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2017 were approved and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Farm financial plan

The detailed financial plan underpinning the presentation made on 27 March had been sent out to governors. One question had been raised by a governor, which had been answered by email.

5.2 Student survey analysis

Further analysis of the student survey had been sent to governors.

5.3 Access to HE students – tutorial hours

The Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services had investigated and produced a background report and laid out options, one of which had been agreed.

5.4 First Aid

All Duty Managers were required to do a one-day First Aid course. A number had completed to date with new dates having been circulated to those remaining. Almost all had booked their place.

6. Principal's report

The Principal spoke to his paper, highlighting some issues. IR35 was impacting on the College through his employment and that of other consultants, within the College, i.e. the interim Finance Director. The HR Manager and Governance Advisor had assessed the position in respect of the Principal and the Finance Director.

It was essential to keep investing in provision. New courses were being set up. A Curriculum Area Manager position had been advertised, whose responsibilities would include some currently held by the Apprenticeship Manager. This would free up some of her time to focus on this important provision. Achieving good class sizes was key, and also broadening the College's offer. NSC had a number of USPs and building in differentiation to the offer was important in attracting students. Management were also

ensuring the offer aligned with the Marches LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and the Local Authority, e.g. developing further construction courses.

Applications were the same year on year, when taking A levels into account, up from a position of 100 applications behind not long previously. Some key courses had good application levels, including Independent Living. Areas of concern included hospitality, and engineering. Marketing would continue actively for all courses, but particularly focussing on these areas. The new transport strategy was having a positive impact on enrolments, being an important factor in a rural area. Governors asked if management could identify what had driven up the application numbers. There had been strong, positive press coverage consistently over a period of time reflecting the improvements being made, and a new Schools Liaison Officer in place who was very effective. The College's reputation was improving, and the College was building strong relationships with companies/employers. Governors asked if management had in place the measures to convert applications into enrolments given the drop in conversion levels the previous year. There were new "keep-warm" strategies in place to maintain contact with applicants right through to enrolment, including events and activities to which they would be invited. Governors agreed this was a positive change.

Governors asked if the nursery could maintain its improved financial performance, and to sustain it in future. Management thought that it could, but it would continue to be monitored.

Apprenticeships

The Post Inspection Working Group had been monitoring apprenticeships provision and performance. The interim Principal said that hitherto it had not improved as fast as all would have hoped. There had now been further investment in staff resources, i.e. a new Administration Assistant and a Senior Assessor. There had been an increase in the number of enrolments though it was the last month of the old framework. The new apprenticeship levy system was an opportunity. Governors asked whether the assessor caseload was at efficient levels. It was 40. The majority of assessors were part time so had pro rata caseloads: this meant the College could be responsive to employer needs, by increasing or reducing caseloads according to demand.

Employer survey

Governors noted reference in the report on student surveys and asked when there would be an update on the employer survey reported in November. The Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services said the survey was open for months: she was working with the apprenticeships team to encourage employers to complete it. In addition, there were ongoing phone surveys with employers, undertaken always by the same person for consistency. There was a lot of ongoing data. The new Business Development Manager had been working on improving employer engagement. Overall the feedback from employers was that the College was offering the right provision and their satisfaction level had improved. Governors thanked management for this important work.

Students with support needs

Referring to the section on students requiring support, the Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity Governor had attended a meeting with Student Services that morning. There were a large number of students with mental health issues: the numbers with support needs applying to the College had increased hugely, in line with forecasts made to Board in previous years. There were 255 such students in 2016-17, up from 136 in 2015-16. This led to the College having to provide significant extra support. The EDI Lead Governor circulated copies of the College's EDI Charter. Governors asked if funding was available to assist in provision of support: the Principal said that it was not always. He confirmed that the College had high numbers of students requiring support: 10% of 16-18s were on the Safeguarding Register.

Dr Harrison joined the meeting.

Class sizes

Governors asked what was the current average class size and what was being done to increase this. The Assistant Principal Curriculum said that it was currently averaging 10-11. The minimum class size was 8 in the current year for a course to be viable, and would be 10 in 2017-18. Work was ongoing with Reaseheath to increase class sizes further in future years to maximise efficiency.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

7. Data dashboard - KPIs

The interim Principal highlighted some areas on the detailed report. Retention was parallel to 2015-16 at 93%. Attendance was at 87%. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had decided to extend the Learning Walk system, and some areas of focus had been identified which were key themes for improvement. Further CPD was being put on to address these.

Management had looked to improve pass rates, to identify what could be done to assist students. 85% of courses were predicting 100% pass rate which would be outstanding if it could be achieved. SLT and management were discussing and implementing everything that could be done to help students to achieve their targets.

Apprenticeships

The interim Principal had that day met with Sharon Yates and Jacqui Maddox (Apprenticeship Managers- Reaseheath and NSC respectively. Ms Yates had been seconded for part of her time to oversee apprenticeships at NSC). There had been a lot of progress in-year. Some data had still needed to be cleansed, as recognised in the 2015-16 SAR (Self-Assessment Report) and now improvement was showing. The College had invested resources in apprenticeships to raise standards in this important area. Governors asked if the College been challenged by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) on its statistics. The interim Principal confirmed it had, and that the College had suspended

apprenticeships for a period to address the underlying issues. This had been done, and the previous month had been the best performance to date: the College would be subject to some clawback, although it still had achievement to receive and ALS (Additional Learning Support) to claim. There were 8 or 9 claims to add. Governors asked if this had been factored into the financial forecast: it had not yet been added. The College had recognised in its 2015-16 SAR that Apprenticeships had been inadequate, and had had to invest despite the difficult financial situation. This was now impacting, and improvements could be seen. Predicted success rate was 66%. Management now had reports to track the progress and to evidence performance. It had also been a good month for Adult Education enrolments. More was planned in this area for the remainder of the year particularly with the unemployed and care homes..

The Board **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

8. Safeguarding & Prevent Duty risk assessment & action plan update

The Assistant Principal Curriculum spoke to the paper. Five of the 16 key areas had improved from Amber to Green. The remaining Amber areas were subject to review through the year. The Prevent risk assessment and action plan would be incorporated into the regular Safeguarding report to Board, and within the PIAP (Post Inspection Action Plan). Prevent was a key part of all interviews. It had also been highlighted as part of the tutorial process.

Governors **approved** the proposal to include in the Prevent risk assessment and action plan progress in the regular Safeguarding report to Board.

**KR -
ongoing**

9. Quality & Student Performance

9.1 Landex action plan: update

A review was imminent. There had been a great deal of progression on the current action plan and a lot of improvement made. Landex were very supportive and helpful. The peer review was expected to be positive.

The Board **resolved to receive and accept** the update.

9.2 QAA review February 2017/ HE review outcomes

The original grading had been given in January 2016. A great deal of work had been done since then, to address the issues raised. The February review had gone well and the College had been noted as following best practice. The report would not go to QAA Board until June and until then, the recommendation was confidential. It could not be publicised. The HEFCE annual provider review had also been published and NSC had achieved a similarly positive outcome of 'meets UK requirements no action required'.

Governors congratulated SLT on the work they had done to achieve the outcome. They asked what had been the impact on HE enrolments, and if

it would affect the 2017-18 recruitment. SLT confirmed it had impacted directly in 2016-17, and reminded the Board that for 2017-18 the College did not have a HE partner as Staffordshire University had withdrawn their franchise with FE colleges.. The College would seek partnerships with Reaseheath and their partner Chester University but it could not promote the HE provision until the QAA had approved the review recommendation that the judgement be revised that NSC met UK standards. Work was ongoing to arrange the partnership with Reaseheath and Chester starting with Teacher Training. It was important to offer provision locally.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.3 HE student survey

The Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services spoke to the paper. Results were mixed although teaching and assessment scored well.. Staffing changes had had an impact in one curriculum area in particular . There was a 76% overall satisfaction score which was low. Governors asked what action was being taken to address the concerns raised. It had been discussed with the HE student group and an action plan had been drawn up. There were a number of initiatives to implement. There would be a training session in early July. Governors asked if the positive, qualitative feedback could be provided to staff. This was confirmed.

SS - May

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.4 Post-Inspection Working Group action notes

The Group had focussed in detail on apprenticeships at the meeting. The Assistant Principal Curriculum reported that the tracking document previously discussed was now in place.

Governors asked why some courses, e.g. Hospitality & Catering had not been performing as well as planned and what was being done to address it. The Assistant Principal Curriculum said that this was an issue over Functional Skills, where the learners had been less-supported than for their core programmes. These students would be brought into college on day release in future, to have targeted and focussed deliver on Functional Skills. A governor noted that on a Learning Walk she had witnessed assessors being given excellent CPD in delivering maths and English.

Governors **resolved to note** the action notes.

9.5 Student Governor report

The Student Governor spoke to her paper. She had carried out a survey of fellow students. In positive feedback, they were happy with the new seating, and appreciated the meal deals that had been put in place in response to previous comments. However, Walford students were not aware of support in place at The Hub or to assist them with exam stress. SLT would follow this up.

SS - imm

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

9.6 Revised Care Standards

The Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services briefed governors that, at the beginning of April, a new Social Care Common Inspection Framework had come into effect. On the 19 areas covered, it was relevant to the residential provision. She and the Accommodation Welfare Officer had been on training. There was a new overarching evaluation framework. New Care Standards were expected in September. Safeguarding continued to be critically important.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

10. Finance

10.1 Management accounts to March 2017 & cash flow

There was no significant change since the previous month. Income was beginning to improve. The Levy offered an opportunity for increased enrolments, and funding. Cashflow was better than forecast partly owing to clawback not yet having been claimed.

Governors asked if the ESFA (Education & Skills Funding Agency) had agreed to defer the repayment of £500k (Exceptional Financial Support). The interim Principal confirmed that he and the Chair had received verbal confirmation of deferral, and an email had also been received by the Director of Finance. However the Case Conference scheduled for 18 May, where it had been expected the paperwork would have been signed, had had to be cancelled owing to the FE Commissioner stocktake visit. Governors observed that further work on the medium-term cashflow was critical.

Governors **resolved to receive and accept** the report.

11. Any Other Business

There were no items under Any Other Business.

12. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 7 June 2017, at 5.30pm in the Board Room at Oswestry.

Governor challenge and impact	
6.	Questioned whether management had in place measures to convert applications to enrolments. Impact: ensuring the positive momentum is maintained, and converted to enrolments.
	Questioned performance and sustainability of operational area (nursery) Impact: ensuring resources allocated to the correct facilities, able to contribute to the financial performance of the
	Questioned use of resources (assessors) Impact: verifying efficient allocation and use of resources.

	Followed up on an employer voice. Impact: verifying that management implementing strategies to improve employer voice.
	Reported on the levels of students requiring support. Impact: ensuring all governors aware of the high percentage of such students, and the need to for resources to support them.
	Asked about classroom size and measures to increase levels. Impact: focus on a major KPI, and verifying that management addressing the levels.
7.	Sought clarification on data included in financial forecast. Impact: ensuring full understanding of the financial position.
9.2	Asked if the QAA result reduced enrolment numbers.
9.3	Questioned what was being done to address the concerns raised in the HE survey. Impact: ensuring standards and reputation of HE provision maintained, so numbers also maintained and improved: secure the future of the College.
9.4	Questioned why performance variations and actions to address this. Impact: triangulating information and understanding of underlying reasons for performance variation; ensuring that management addressing these.
9.5	Providing a Student Governor report and agreeing resulting action to be taken by management. Ensuring Learner Voice heard at Board and follow up takes place.
10.1	Clarified the position regarding repayment of EFS. Impact: securing the cashflow position up to expected merger.

Chair Date