



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
held on  
WEDNESDAY 7 JUNE 2017  
in the BOARD ROOM  
at the OSWESTRY CAMPUS**

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Mrs G Richards</b>	<b>GPR</b>	<b>Chair, Health &amp; Safety Lead Governor</b>
	<b>Mrs V Cox</b>	<b>HVC</b>	<b>Safeguarding &amp; Residential Lead Governor</b>
	<b>Mrs W Dakin</b>	<b>JWD</b>	<b>Equality &amp; Diversity Lead Governor</b>
	<b>Mr A Durnell</b>	<b>AD</b>	<b>Business Support Staff Governor</b>
	<b>Mrs F Flack</b>	<b>FF</b>	<b>Academic-Staff Governor</b>
	<b>Mr P Green</b>	<b>PG</b>	
	<b>Dr E Harrison</b>	<b>EH</b>	
	<b>Mr P McCann</b>	<b>PM</b>	<b>Interim Principal</b>
	<b>Mr T Trickett</b>	<b>TT</b>	

*Attendance: 64.3%*

<b>In attendance:</b>	<b>Ms S Shelston</b>	<b>SS</b>	<b>Assistant Principal Quality &amp; Student Services (part)</b>
	<b>Mr R Ratcliffe</b>	<b>RR</b>	<b>Observer (Chair of Governors, Reaseheath College)</b>
	<b>Ms J Vernon</b>	<b>JV</b>	<b>Observer (Lifelong Learning Manager, Shropshire Council)</b>
	<b>Mrs J White</b>	<b>JW</b>	<b>Business Development Manager (part)</b>
	<b>Mr G Lavery</b>	<b>GL</b>	<b>Finance Director, Reaseheath College (part)</b>
	<b>Mrs C Thompson</b>	<b>CDT</b>	<b>Governance Advisor</b>

*The meeting opened at 17.30*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>1. Apologies for absence</b> Mr G Casson; Mr J Furber; Ms E McQueen; Mr J Nicholls; Mr P Polowyj. The Student Governor, Miss L Smith had left the Board as she was finishing her studies. Mr B Deed, interim Finance Director, Ms K Roberts, Assistant Principal Curriculum, and Mr M David, Observer, and Reaseheath College Principal, could not be in attendance.</p>	

**2. Declarations of interest**

Dr Harrison and Mrs Richards were also governors at Reaseheath College. Mr Green was a consultant for Reaseheath College.

**3. Business Development - presentation**

The Business Development Manager gave a presentation outlining what she had been working on, and the plans for the coming months. Regarding some of the lettings, governors asked if this would be during term time and if so whether there were any safeguarding implications. The Designated Safeguarding Lead was involved in the process and was ensuring that this aspect was covered off. A profit of £41,600 was expected for the current academic year. A system to book rooms online was being put in place. The College would have the opportunity to review bookings before accepting them. Governors asked about the contract, given the planned merger. There was a two-year break clause. Governors thanked the BDM.

*The Business Development Manager left the meeting.*

**4.. Moved to confidential**

*The Assistant Principal Quality & Student Services (APQSS) joined the meeting during this item.*

*Governors thanked Mr Lavery and he left the meeting*

*The Chair thanked the Board for their commitment to the College in what had been challenging times. It had been noted that often when colleges were approaching merger many governors left the Board, but NSC's had not. She also thanked the Governance Advisor for her support.*

The interim Principal outlined the process from present to merger, should all go to plan and, in response to a question, confirmed that merger could still be achieved by 1 January 2018. A decision had to be made by the Reaseheath College (RHC) Board. Mr Ratcliffe said the RHC Board did want the merger, to make RHC stronger and more resilient however they also were mindful not to take any action that would be to the detriment of RHC's own security.

**5. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2017 were approved and signed by the Chair.

**6. Matters Arising**

**6.1 Student survey**

The qualitative data had been shared with staff. Governors asked how staff had received it, and if it had had a positive impact. The APQSS said

they had focussed on the negatives. In early July there would be an internal conference on HE: staff would analyse the survey and determine an action plan to address issues.

SS - July

## 7. **Principal's report**

The interim Principal highlighted some key issues in the report. Finances remained challenging (see item 10.1) owing to reduced 16-18 numbers. Management would make savings but remained £300k adrift: more cost-cutting was being identified. Governors asked if there would be staffing cuts included. There would, but there was little leeway given previous cuts. If the TU (Transaction Unit) approved the merger funding, RHC would look to put in place a new management structure, removing interim costs. Governors asked about the viability of outreach centres. The interim Principal said he had tasked the Aspire manager with putting a business plan together. This would be considered jointly with RHC.

### *Applications*

At May Board numbers had reportedly improved to match the previous year, but had now dropped back to 100 behind. There had been a strong marketing programme, reflecting the position with Ofsted. Press releases about the inspections would be carefully managed to gain maximum impact. Governors asked why numbers had dropped in some areas, e.g. Hospitality & Catering. The APQSS said quality of Teaching, Learning & Assessment (TLA) had improved and it was disappointing. Governors noted that the school's focus, and the curriculum each followed, were drivers for course selection. Popular culture also impacted. Governors noted that there were two questions: was NSC losing students to other institutions, or were there fewer students. Management said there were 80 fewer students in the Y11 cohorts in the main feeder schools. All courses needed a USP to create differentiation from other colleges. Governors asked if numbers were up in Apprenticeships, compensating for the lower 16-18 numbers: they were not up much. Governors made some suggestions for how to raise the College profile. Governors asked about the media platforms used for marketing; management confirmed all social media was used and the message tailored to suit the platform. Management agreed that this needed to be continually monitored and adjusted.

### *FEC stocktake report recommendations*

There were nine. The main one was to progress with merger quickly. If it did not go ahead, there would need to be swift action on Plan B, including replacing the interim Principal. A financial target was to set a budget in line with the current year's outturn.

### *Apprenticeships*

Some issues in Apprenticeships went back to 2014-15. Data had recently been cleansed. Governors queried whether this had been fully completed as they had been told by previous management that this had been done. This was confirmed. Overall success rates for 2016-17 would be 66%. Governors asked about modes of delivery, the status of off-site training, and whether the fundamentals had been sorted. They requested a

substantive report. The APQSS had drafted a PIAP structure specifically for Apprenticeships and had asked the NSC and RHC Apprenticeships Managers to populate it. This APIAP would enable close monitoring by management and governors. It would come to the Post Inspection Working Group on 27 June. Governors **approved** the approach.

**SS –  
27.6.17**

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

## **8. Data dashboard - KPIs**

There was no major change since the previous meeting. FS (Functional Skills) maths had moved from medium to high risk. Apprenticeships target success rate overall was 70% but predicted at 66%. Retention at L3, and value added, were very good. Retention was poorer at lower levels. Governors asked if this was normal: it was with high needs students of which the College had a high proportion.

The spreadsheet used to give an indication of learner progress on maths and English had a RAG prediction which was an average of all assessments taken. Ofsted had said that this was not sufficiently robust, as a task in class/short assessment should not be given the same weighting as, e.g., a mock exam. Management were looking at systems to report outcomes for maths and English for September 2017.

**SS - Sept**

*Student survey:* governors questioned the low score for learners recommending the college to a friend. It was a key indicator and the underlying reasons needed to be understood. The APQSS had analysed the data and the issues would be raised at upcoming learner voice meetings. Staffing issues was one cause. Governors suggested further analysis, e.g. by campus/ curriculum area/ course.

**SS/PM –  
Jun/Jul**

Income was improving modestly from the level reported previously. Governors noted that, whilst the improvement was small, it showed movement in the right direction.

Staff measures were a concern, i.e. absence and the turnover rates. The interim Principal had been speaking to staff about their grievance over the changed terms and conditions. He had been looking with management into how to invest in nurturing staff. Governors agreed with this approach.

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

## **9. Quality & Student Performance**

### **9.1 Ofsted inspections: Education and Residential**

Residential: had been graded at 2 in all areas. Governors asked about recommendations for improvement. There had been only one, for wifi to be upgraded in one area of the residential block. Governors commended the staff for the work they had done to improve this area.

Education: the report had been published just two days previously and

graded 3 overall, up from 4. Governance had come out positively which was good for the College as a whole. Study Programmes and Adult Skills were at grade 2. A grade 2 for 16-18 Study Programmes had been close but maths and English teaching and results were too inconsistent. Apprenticeships, Teaching, Learning and Assessment, and outcomes in maths and English were the weakest areas, and needed to be addressed. Management were working on an action plan. Governors asked when this would be ready: it would be brought to the PIWG meeting on 27 June, and would incorporate the actions identified in the FE Commissioner stocktake report.

**SS –  
27.6.17**

There remained much work to be done on ProMonitor. The ILT lead now in place had identified that there had been no development on ProMonitor for a significant period prior to his appointment. A system upgrade would be implemented once management had ensured it would provide the necessary reports. Governors asked what was being done to address failure to follow procedures. Management would be taking action to ensure full compliance: the majority were already doing so. Also there would be new CPD to ensure all staff were trained in how to use ProMonitor. It was a balance to ensure there were good records but also to make the system workable.

**SLT – imm  
& ongoing**

Governors noted there were a lot of positive comments about the work done, including on work experience, and thanked management for the progress made. They noted the next steps to achieve further improvements.

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

## **9.2 HE Consolidated course report (Learner Voice)**

The APQSS highlighted key points in the report.

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

## **9.3 Destination report 2015-16**

Overall the report was positive. Some data was still being chased up, from apprenticeships and on Job Centre Plus learners. Governors asked if the report could be provided at an earlier date for 2016-17 data. Governors also asked for further analysis of the data, linking it to aspects of college, e.g. curriculum area; advice and guidance.

**KR –  
Sept/Oct**

**KR –  
3.7.17**

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

## **10. Finance**

### **10.1 Management accounts to April 2017 & cash flow**

The overall position was fundamentally unchanged. The farm was still a concern. Job vacancies on the farm were now filled which would facilitate a fair assessment of performance in future. A consultant, David Hughes, would now be brought in to assess it. Nursery was still not performing though it had been a holiday period. Management had had a meeting to

discuss options: the only way for it to be profitable was to increase fees or to reduce costs. Governors asked if the late-payments had been resolved. Management were working on this.

**SS – imm.**

Governors agreed that the farm remained a serious concern and that the projections seemed to be overly optimistic. They agreed the external consultant would bring a welcome objectivity. A governor suggested that the herd should be organic, giving access to a more niche, and profitable, market. Mr Ratcliffe said it was potentially an excellent farm and a profit centre, if costs were reduced and efficiency increased. Governors requested the consultant's report be brought to Board in the autumn.

**KR –  
2.10.17**

Governors asked about the position regarding Exceptional Financial Support. The interim Finance Director was working on it and the College would make a request at the July Case Conference with the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The College needed £300k cash in the bank on 1 January 2018. ESFA were aware that the request would be made.

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

**11. Residential & Safeguarding Lead Governor's report**

The Lead Governor congratulated the team on the grade 2 achieved for the Residential inspection: Bev Jackson, Imran Khan, Karen Roberts and Mel Wornell had all performed well and achieved an excellent result.

*Complaint*

A parent had made a complaint about bullying of his son. He had asked to see the Board, so the Governance Advisor had met him on behalf of governors. The interim Principal had already met the parent and had asked the Lead Governor to investigate the situation, to ascertain if staff had not acted quickly enough or if any policies needed amending. These would be addressed if the investigation found it to be necessary. The Lead Governor said one of the findings so far was that issues raised had not always been recorded on ProMonitor to ensure transparency to relevant staff of any themes and emerging issues. In response to a question, the Lead Governor confirmed that the learner had not had an Education Health Care Package in place, although an application had been made for one.

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

**12. Any Other Business**

There were no items under Any Other Business.

**13. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held on Monday 3 July 2017, at 5.30pm in the Board Room at Oswestry.

<b>Governor challenge and impact</b>	
6.1	<b>Asked</b> how staff had received the positive HE student feedback. <b>Impact:</b> ensuring rounded feedback provided to staff.
7.	<b>Questioned</b> the viability of some provision. <b>Impact:</b> maintaining focus on the financial performance.
	<b>Questioned and discussed</b> the reasons for the drop in applications in specific areas. <b>Impact:</b> ensuring full understanding of the drivers for application numbers.
	<b>Queried</b> whether apprenticeship data cleansing was now fully complete. <b>Impact:</b> obtaining confirmation that the data was now clear.
	<b>Requested</b> a substantive report on Apprenticeships, and improvement plans. <b>Impact:</b> ensuring governors can robustly monitor progress in this area.
	<b>Questioned</b> how marketing via different platforms used. <b>Impact:</b> verifying that management were using all available means to promote the College and encourage applications.
8.	<b>Queried</b> whether lower retention among L1 and L2 students was more the norm. <b>Impact:</b> checking understanding of the retention figures to ensure full understanding of the position, and the message about the College.
	<b>Requested</b> further data analysis and reporting on poor response in student survey. <b>Impact:</b> ensuring full understanding reached for both management and governors as to the underlying reasons for the low score.
9.1	<b>Questioned</b> management on action to address non-compliance. <b>Impact:</b> ensuring that the reasons for poor performance are being addressed.
9.3	<b>Requested</b> further analysis of destination data, linking to aspects of the College. <b>Impact:</b> to enable meaningful conclusions to be drawn
10.1	<b>Requested</b> that the consultant's report on the farm be brought to the September Board. <b>Impact:</b> robustly monitoring a key area of financial weakness.

**Chair** ..... **Date** .....