



**MINUTES OF THE REIGATE LEARNING ALLIANCE TRUST BOARD MEETING HELD
ON TUESDAY 07 JULY 2020 AT 4PM**

Present: Mr Michael Jones - Chair
Ms Pat Frankland
Mr Stephen Hewes
Mr Richard Stephen
Mr Spencer Bowen
Mr Farouk Durrani
Ms Yvette Robbins
Mr Gerard Weide
Mr Chris Whelan - Chief Executive Officer
Mr Nick Clark - Principal

In attendance: Mr Jon Allen (Clerk)
Ms Kim Saw (Director of Finance)

(The meeting was held via Zoom conference call due to the Covid-19 pandemic)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Michael Jones declared his interest in being a Member of the Trust.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the Trust Board meeting held 03 December 2019 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting (Paper 1).

5. WRITTEN RESOLUTION

The Trust Board noted and confirmed the written resolution agreed by Trustees dated 31 March 2020 (Paper 2).

6. CHAIRS ACTION

It was reported for recording in the minutes Chair's action was taken to cancel the Trust Board meeting scheduled for 31 March 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and resulting closure of the College. The Clerk confirmed agenda items scheduled for the March meeting are agenda items at this meeting.

It was reported for recording in the minutes Chair's action taken to cancel the Local Governing Body meeting scheduled for 09 June 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic and closure of the College.

7. SUMMARY ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING

The 'Summary Action List' (Paper 3) was received and the following updates were noted:

MIN	ACTION	UPDATE
8	As the Standing Orders had not been subject to a review prior to being submitted to the Trust Board, it was AGREED to form a working group to review the Standing Orders. Outcomes of the review to be reported to the Trust Board meeting.	To be an agenda item at the next Trust Board meeting
13(II)	To add two additional risks to the Risk Register 2019/20. The first being around the strategic risk of being a Multi Academy Trust but only having one educational institution (Reigate College) in the MAT. The second is on the mental health issues being seen amongst the student body.	It was confirmed this has been added to Risk Register which is a later agenda item at this meeting
14	Outcomes arising from the completion of the feasibility studies on different possible building projects will be reported to the Board	A progress update to be given when discussing the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting.
14	Progress updates on the planning application will be made available to the Board	A progress update to be given when discussing the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting.
	Deferred items to the next meeting of the Trust Board: Ofsted Preparation Annual H&S Report 2019-20	Next Trust Board meeting

8. COVID-19 REPORT

The report from the CEO was received (Paper 4). The reported provided Trustees with updates on:

- Situation prior to the lockdown
- Course delivery during the early phase of lockdown
- Course delivery during the more recent phase of lockdown
- Impact on the College budget

- Student results
- Course delivery from September 2020
- Possible national amendments to education next year
- Site Management
- Staff line management and morale during the lockdown
- Staff Recruitment
- Student Recruitment from September
- Safeguarding and vulnerable students during lockdown
- Communication with students and parents

Trustees asked what were the key risks in the current phase of the pandemic, especially on course delivery? As confirmed in the report, a lot of work has been undertaken to ensure that all students can access a blended learning experience - through a combination of face -to-face learning with a teacher and on-line learning. Guidance issued by the DfE last week has made it clear that Government expects all students to be able to learn full-time in College from September and the Executive has been working hard with College staff to draw up plans to meet the new guidance requirements.

In particular, 'Bubbles' have to be put in place and for 'Bubbles' to remain separate from one another. This is particular difficult for 6th form colleges to put in place as students study a range of subjects with different teachers. For Reigate, two 'Bubble' groups will be put in place. One 'Bubble' group will consist of all lower 6th and intermediate students and the second 'Bubble; will consist of all upper 6th students. Both 'Bubbles' must be kept separate from one another with separate refectory and learning resource centres. Each 'Bubble' group will have their unique ID badge identification so that staff can ensure there is no mixing. To facilitate the timetables, contact time with teachers per student per subject has had to be reduced by 20 minutes to 4 hours.

Trustees asked what would be the size of the 'Bubbles' and would their size be in line with government guidance? It was confirmed the 'Bubble' size would be circa 1,300 students. In terms of Government guidance, a minimum size has been set for a 'Bubble' but no maximum size has been set and the guidance on this aspect is vague. However, if the size of the 'Bubble' has to be reduced then the College could only make available part-time learning which would go against the guidance issued by the Government for all students to have access to full-time learning in the College.

Trustees asked what would be the outcome if there were confirmed student and/or staff Covid-19 infections? It was confirmed if any 'Bubble' has 2 or more confirmed cases of Covid-19 then the College would need to liaise with Public Health on the actions to be taken. This could include testing for all those in the 'Bubble' and possible lockdown of the 'Bubble'. Learning would still continue in any lockdown situation as the College can quickly revert back to on-line teaching.

Trustees asked if students and staff will be required to wear masks or face coverings? In response it was confirmed Government guidance does not require the use of PPE, but with the 'Bubbles' being large, and to mitigate the risks of infections, the Executive are considering plans to require face covering by staff and students when not in lessons. In addition, employing additional cleaning staff during the day is being considered.

Announcements have just been made on the plans to hold examinations later in the academic year to allow for more teaching time, with exams starting after half term

week as against the usual arrangement for them to start before the half-term week. A partial refund of examination fees is expected but this could be on the basis of awarding bodies issuing credit notes.

It was reported the majority of student results submitted are in line with previous years results and assessments. However some courses have a higher positive student assessment and results compared with previous years due to improvements arising from the benefit of staff changes made during the course of the academic year. The assessments and results will be subject to moderation from awarding bodies but no guidance has been issued on the criteria to be used for moderation. As a result the expectation is for many appeals to be logged.

The impact on the College finances was noted and was discussed in detail at the recent finance meeting as recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

The Principal placed on record his thanks for the hard work of the marketing team and College teaching staff in organising various marketing activities aimed at maximising student enrolments for September. The expectation is for the College to be fully operational from September, and although there is no evidence of any less take up, actual enrolments in September could be lower than expected as some students may decide to stay on at school. To address this a range of marketing activities have been undertaken supported with regular contact with potential students and their parents. For new students, a substantial amount of work has been undertaken in developing a new area of the website to maintain interest in the College. In addition to the content that has been posted on the website specific videos for Year 11s (and their parents) have been produced that is designed to get September starters to engage with the website content. The films are available on both Instagram and Facebook.

The introductory day for new students that takes place annually in July had to be cancelled. The introductory day is a key tool in helping students to make up their minds about becoming a student of the College. Although some areas have conducted a virtual introductory day, and other areas plan to run small groups during the summer, it is at this stage impossible to assess if the lack of an introductory day will have a negative impact on enrolments.

Safeguarding has been a critical area with pastoral staff regularly keeping in contact with vulnerable students. In terms of mental health it was noted mental health issues will not just be what students are facing currently but also their families, such as the threat of redundancies and uncertain futures.

The Trustee with safeguarding responsibilities reported that she has been in contact with the College's Safeguarding Manager during the pandemic and was pleased to report to the Board that Surrey's Children Services has been more proactive and responsive in when dealing with referrals made from the College. The Board welcomed the improved service being provided by Children Services.

Since the report was issued further developments have since taken place that need to be brought to the attention of Trustees.

Ofsted has announced full inspections will not resume until January 2021 at the earliest. During the autumn term Ofsted will conduct visits to ask about the arrangements made to provide learning and support to students during the pandemic. The visits will not result in a published grade but a letter will be issued which will be published on the Ofsted website.

The outcomes of the DfE consultation on 'T' Levels has yet to be made available and there is no indication when it will be published. The CEO reported that the College was intending to participate in development work for these new qualifications but has now decided not to do so as it would not be the best use of staff time. The priority has to be dealing with the current situation and planning for September and beyond. The Board endorsed this approach.

9. ANNUAL SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The Annual Safeguarding Report was received (Paper 5) and the report provided Trustees with updates on the following:

- Safeguarding statistical data
- Looked After Children
- Training
- Staff
- Emerging Issues
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020
- COVID-19 & Supporting Vulnerable Students
- Well-Being & Mental Health

It was **RESOLVED** to note the report.

10. LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MEETING

The minutes of the RLA Local Governing Body meeting held 03 March 2020 were received and noted (Paper 6). The meeting covered the following;

- Ofsted Preparation
- Self Assessment Report & Development Plan
- Safeguarding
- Careers Programme
- Student Discussion Groups
- Staff Discussion Groups
- Board Assurance Assessments

It was **RESOLVED** to note the minutes.

11. FINANCE

(i) Meeting Held 10 March 2020

The minutes of the Finance Committee held 10 March 2020 were received and noted (Paper 6). On the recommendations arising from the meeting, the Trust Board **RESOLVED** to **APPROVE**:

- Updated Financial Regulations (Paper 7)
- Charging & Remissions Policy 2020-21 (Paper 8)

(ii) Meeting held 16 June 2020

The minutes of the Finance Committee held 16 June 2020 were received and noted (Paper 9).

The Management Accounts up to 30 April 2020, previously circulated to Trustees and Members, were received and noted (Paper 10).

(iii) College Budget 2020-21

The College Budget 2020-21 was received for Board approval following the review and recommendation from the Finance Committee for the Trust Board to approve the budget (Paper 11).

It was noted the budget has been prepared under the assumption that the College will be operating as normal from September 2020, but this could be subject to change depending on any further impact arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The following budget headlines were noted:

- Surplus before non cash items £402k
- EBITDA £399k, 2.97% of income
- Retained deficit £(368k)
- Cash balance at 31.08.20 £2,658k
- Cash balance at 31.08.21 £2,910k

As an academy, the College is no longer required by the ESFA to calculate a financial health grade. The only measure required is that an academy sets at a minimum a balanced budget for each financial year (although it can draw on unspent funds brought forward from previous years). The proposed budget 2020/21 forecasts a positive budget with a surplus of £402k before non cash items.

In terms of risks to the budget, it was noted, as previously discussed, the key risk is around student numbers in September due to Covid-19. The expectation is for the College to be fully operational from September, and although there is no evidence of any less take up, actual enrolments in September could be lower than expected as some students may decide to stay on at school. Should student numbers be lower in September the impact will not be on the budget for 2020-21, but would instead impact on income in 2021-22 due to lagged funding.

It was confirmed the budget does not include any expenditures relating to the proposed capital project as any costs would be capitalised with no impact on the income and expenditure elements of the budget. The impact would be on the College reserves but it is still unknown what, if any, impact there would be as the College plans to seek capital grant funding for the capital project.

It was confirmed the detailed planning application has been submitted for local authority approval.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the College Budget 2020-21.

(iv) Discretionary Bursary Fund Policy for 2020/21

Trustees asked if there were sufficient funds available should demand for bursary funding be higher than normal due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In response it was reported the College should be in a position to provide support.

Following review and the recommendation from the Finance Committee for the Trust Board to approve, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Discretionary Bursary Fund & Policy for 2020-21 (Paper 12).

12. ACADEMIES FINANCIAL HANDBOOK SEPTEMBER 2020

Trustees received for information purposes the Academies Financial Handbook 2020-21 that comes into effect from 01 September 2020 (Paper 13). The Clerk confirmed the Handbook will be added to the 'Publication' section on the RLA website.

13. AUDIT

The minutes of the Audit Committee held 23 June 2020 were received (Paper 14) for information purposes. The meeting covered the following:

- Audit Progress Update
- Internal Audit Report on Funding Audit – ESFA approach
- Internal Audit Report on Key Financial controls – Central Nominal ledger and Suppliers & Purchasing
- Scope of internal audit for 2020-21
- Audit plan for the Financial Statements year ended 31 August 2020
- Board Assurance Assessments
- Review of the performance of auditors

Also made available was the audit plan for the Financial Statements year ended 31 August 2020 that the Audit Committee recommends the Trust Board to approve (Paper 15).

Following review of the minutes, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) To approve the audit plan for the Financial Statements year ended 31 August 2020; and
- (ii) To note the minutes.

14. RISK REGISTER & BOARD ASSURANCE

Trustees received for information purposes the Risk Register 2019-20 and Risk Management Action Plan 2019-20 that was considered in detail by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 23 June 2020 (Paper 16).

The termly report on assurance assessments conducted by Committees since the last meeting of the Trust Board was received for information purposes (Paper 17).

Trustees asked why the Disaster Recovery Plan has not been updated to include references to Covid-19. It was confirmed that the plan will be updated, and, as discussed and agreed at the Audit Committee meeting, the internal auditors will undertake an audit review of how the College responded to the unique demands arising from the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Audit Committee also agreed there will be the need to have a disclosure in the Annual Report (Financial Statements) on any financial impacts of Covid-19 and any financial risks arising. There is also a need to disclose the operational impact of Covid-19, outlining how the College has responded, the

arrangements that have been put in place to ensure students can continue their learning, the arrangements being put in place from September, and how the College can best respond should there be a re-occurrence of the virus.

It was noted that the Risk Register made no references to the impact of Covid-19 and it was explained this was because the last review of the risks was undertaken just prior to the outbreak of the pandemic. It was proposed amending some of the risks in the Risk Register to include references to Covid-19 and Black Lives Matters, in particular, R1, R2, R9, R11 & R16. It was **AGREED** to submit suggested changes to the Executive for review.

15. ANNUAL ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR

The Clerk confirmed Clause 83 from the Articles states '*The Trustees shall each school year elect a chairman and a vice-chairman from among their number. A Trustee who is employed by the Academy Trust shall not be eligible for election as chairman or vice-chairman*'.

It was **RESOLVED** to appoint Michael Jones to be the Chair for the academic year 2020-21 and to appoint Pat Frankland to be the Vice Chair for the academic year 2020-21.

16. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2020-21

The report confirming committee membership, including Chair of committees, was received and noted (Paper 18).

The Chair asked Trustees to make contact with the Clerk should they wish to change their proposed committee membership.

The Chair raised a query on the term of office for Members and asked the Clerk to ascertain if there is a fixed term of office for Members as stated in the paper.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The meeting schedule for 2020-21 was received and noted (Paper 19).

19. MEETING REVIEW

At the conclusion of all Trust Board meetings, it has been agreed for Trustees to consider the following questions:

- (i) Were there any training needs identified for Trustees?
- (ii) What, if any, contribution has the meeting made to improving provision?

In terms of training, Ofsted preparation was an area of need and it was noted this is an action point for the next Trust Board meeting.

In terms of improving provision, with the impact of Covid-19, the meeting discussed in detail the arrangements that are to be put in place from September to ensure that all students can access the full learning experience in the College.

20. VOTE OF THANKS

Trustees placed on record a sincere vote of thanks to the Chief Executive Officer, the Principal, the Director of Finance, College managers and all staff on their professionalism and hard work in dealing with the unique challenges faced by the Covid-19 pandemic.

21. CONFIDENTIAL AGENDA ITEM - MINUTES

(College staff withdrew from the meeting for this agenda item).

The confidential minutes of the Trust Board meeting held 03 December 2019 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting (Paper 20).

The meeting closed at 17.50.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

SUMMARY ACTION LIST

MIN	ACTION	REVIEW DATE
7	As the Standing Orders had not been subject to a review prior to being submitted to the Trust Board, it was AGREED to form a working group to review the Standing Orders. Outcomes of the review to be reported to the Trust Board meeting.	22/9/20
7	Deferred items to the next meeting of the Trust Board: Ofsted Preparation Annual H&S Report 2019-20	22/9/20
14	It was proposed amending some of the risks in the Risk Register to include references to Covid-19 and Black Lives Matters, in particular, R1, R2, R9, R11 & R16. It was AGREED to submit suggested changes to the Executive for review.	22/9/20
16	The Chair raised a query on the term of office for Members and asked the Clerk to ascertain if there is a fixed term of office for Members as stated in the paper.	22/9/20