



**MINUTES OF THE REIGATE LEARNING ALLIANCE TRUST BOARD MEETING HELD
ON TUESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2020 AT 17.30**

Present: Mr Michael Jones - Chair
 Ms Pat Frankland
 Mr Stephen Hewes
 Mr Richard Stephen
 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)

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES & QUORACY

Apologies were received from Stephen Bowen.

The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.

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 07 July 2020 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting (Paper 1) and the Clerk was authorised to sign the minutes on behalf of the Chair.

5. SUMMARY ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING

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

MIN	ACTION	UPDATE
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	It was AGREED to change the format of the Standing Orders so that they act as a signpost where appropriate to other key documents in order to avoid unnecessary

	Standing Orders. Outcomes of the review to be reported to the Trust Board meeting.	duplication; and to top-up the SOs with those procedures agreed by the Trust that are not covered in other key documents. The Chair will take the lead on this development work and will liaise with members of the working group tasked with updating the SOs
7	Deferred items to the next meeting of the Trust Board: Ofsted Preparation Annual H&S Report 2019-20	Agenda items
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.	Agenda item
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.	It can be confirmed that there is no fixed term of office for Members

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE UPDATE

(i) Covid-19 Arrangements:

The CEO confirmed the following key points, many of which have previously been brought to the attention of Trustees:

- The College has put in place thorough documents and operational plans for the re-opening of the College.
- The operational plans both meet and exceed the DfE requirements as the College operates on a complex site with many separate buildings.
- The operational plans cover students, staff and visitors.
- There has been the need to make significant changes to the timetable to keep the two bubbles separate - Upper Sixth and Lower Sixth. This has involved staggered start times, finish times and meal times.
- Remote learning has been put in place for those students who are self isolating.
- Staff feel safe and the two student governors reported at the LGB meeting held prior to this meeting that the students feel safe and secure and they paid particular thanks to all the staff for making this possible.
- To date there have been four positive cases all involving students. All of these were single isolated cases with no transmission in the College.
- As reported to the LGB meeting, plans are in place in the event of any further lockdown to ensure students can access on-line teaching, learning and assessment.

- The College's internal auditors are going to conduct a desktop review on the College's Covid-19 procedures and arrangements, with outcomes of the audit to be reported to the Audit Committee.
- In terms of the financial impact of Covid-19, additional costs have been incurred and revenue takings in the refectory are down. The extra students recruited this academic year will result in additional funding for 2021-22 due to the nature of ESFA lagged funding arrangements. The DfE Government has not made available any additional financial support for Colleges in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Board agreed to minute sincere thanks to all staff and students for their professional approach in dealing with the changes required as a result of Covid-19. The Executive agreed to pass this on to all staff and students on behalf of the Trust Board.

(ii) Enrolment Numbers:

The number of full-time students on roll was confirmed at 2,602. This is an increase of 77 on the enrolment figure of 2,525 for 2019-20.

A good number of well-established 'Events for Applicants' had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The College responded by putting in place a substantial and comprehensive online transition programme, which kept applicants focused on coming to the College. This worked tremendously well and was further enhanced by a virtual Introductory Day.

The CEO placed on record his thanks to staff for their herculean efforts to maximise enrolment numbers. This was endorsed by Trustees.

Due to Covid-19 the College has been forced to host three Virtual Open Evenings at the beginning of October. The events featured a host of videos and information on the website along with the opportunity to join the Senior Leadership Team for a live Q&A session. All three events were well attended. However, it is difficult to make a comparison to previous years.

Against the backdrop of Covid-19, to increase students numbers by 77 was a tremendous achievement and the Board congratulated all the staff for their professionalism during this difficult time. The enumeration date of 01 November was confirmed and student numbers on this date will generate the funding for 2021-22. With an increase of 77 students there will be a resulting funding increase in 2021-22 and this was welcomed. The expectation is that all, if not most, of the current student numbers of 2,602 will be the confirmed final number on the enumeration date.

(iii) Provisional Student Outcomes 2019/20:

It was reported that on face value, the results for 2019-20 were excellent across all areas of the curriculum. However, as all exams were cancelled, the results were based on Centre Assessment Grades (CAG) following guidelines issued by Ofqual. As results cannot be nationally validated and benchmarked, it was confirmed the DfE will not publish national league tables for 2019-20.

In the absence of the tables, and other objective national measures, there are very few pointers to how the College performed for the 2020 leavers. However, it was noted two key measures can be applied, these being retention and the other on university destinations against students' first choice.

On retention, the College achieved a retention rate of 90.4%, compared against the national rate of 84.9% and 85.9% for all Sixth Form Colleges.

Approximately 70% of students achieved their first place university and there were 170 leavers who joined a university within the Russell Group.

It was reported there was very little parental/student complaint about awarded grades. Before the Ofqual/DfE change of position the large majority of comments were directed at the DfE and not the College. Whilst the total number of calls and emails received was not large, it was considered this was probably due to most students getting their first choice university on the first round of results.

At present, Ofqual have stated that they intend to run the summer 2021 exams as normal, with only limited modifications to subjects with field trips. The announcement was made this week that the commencement of the exam timetable will be delayed by three weeks, with exams commencing after the May half-term. Assurances were given that the College can manage the changes to the exams timetable.

In the event of there being another suspension of exams the College will be using data from Key Assessments and mock exams to provide information for any CAG system.

(iv) Ofsted:

It was reported normal Ofsted inspections remain suspended and will not resume until January 2021 at the earliest, Covid-19 permitting.

Ofsted are making visits to providers during the autumn term. Ofsted will prioritise the following:

- providers with an inadequate or requires improvement inspection grade for overall effectiveness
- providers identified with risks and concerns, in accordance with the indicators set out in Ofsted's inspection handbook
- a sample of 'good' and 'outstanding' providers and newly merged colleges

During an interim visit, HMI will explore the following three themes:

- What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that meets the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances?
- What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners?
- How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

It was reported trustees will not be subject to any interviews during interim visits. However, during the main inspection, interviews will be arranged with a number of trustees. To support trustees, training will be made available.

(v) New Build:

It was reported that planning permission has been approved for the proposed new build. The next stage is to submit a SIF bid for capital funding support. The College is using the services of a bid writer to help with the application. As planning permission has been given this will strengthen the bid. The outcome of the SIF bidding process

is expected next March, whereby the earliest the project could start would be next summer with a year to complete the build, therefore September 2022. If the bid is not successful, alternative funding options would have to be considered. As reported at the July Trust Board meeting, the 2020-21 budget does not include any capital expenditures for the project, as the outcome of the bid application has to be known before final costs can be confirmed.

In terms of the proposed student car park, a separate planning application has to be made and costs for this project would have to be met entirely by the College. The timing of this project is dependent on the new build - if there is no funding to support the new build then the proposed car park will not proceed.

7. **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

At the commencement of discussions, it was **agreed** to change the name of the committee to the Audit & Risk Committee. The Clerk confirmed the terms of reference used for the Committee are taken directly from the Audit Code of Practice, published by the Education & Skills Funding Agency, with relevant sections of the terms of reference covering risk management.

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the minutes of the Audit Committee held 08 September 2020 that were received for information purposes.

The Chair thanked Yvette Robbins and Michael Jones for attending the meeting as observers, and thanked Yvette Robbins for her email sent to all Trustees that formed the basis of discussions at the Audit Committee meeting.

The meeting proposed a new format for the Risk Register and an example was made available for the proposed new format that covered Risk 1.

Following discussions, it was **RESOLVED**:

- (i) To approve the approach and format as shown in the example given for Risk 1:
- (ii) To agree for the Risk Register to be updated in line with the recommendations proposed in paragraphs 9 and 10 in the minutes, with proposed amendments to scoring and mitigation actions for discussion at the November Audit Committee prior to final approval being sought at the December Board meeting;
- (iii) To agree for the consideration of risk exposure and the assurance provided to continue to be undertaken at the end of all meetings; and
- (iv) It was **agreed** to amend the Board Assurance & Risk Management Policy 2020-21 to confirm that cover sheets are no longer required, but for each report presented to begin with a clear explanation of the link between the contents of the paper and the appropriate risk from the Risk Register.

8. **ANNUAL HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT**

The Annual Health & Safety Report covering 2019-20 was received. The report summarised the number of reported incidents which were confirmed at 160, of which 12 related to staff and 148 involved students. The Board noted the following comparison against previous years:

Year	Number of Incidents	Staff	Students
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19/20	160	12	148
18/19	131	7	124
17/18	241	24	217
16/17	143	19	124
15/16	164	18	146

It was reported the most common location for accidents was the Sports Centre, which is to be expected due to the nature of the activities that take place in that venue.

In terms of the structure and format of future Health & Safety reports, the following changes were suggested:

- Need to include assurance statements that the College is fully compliant with required regulatory compliance.
- Need to make reference to Covid-19 compliance in line with DfE guidance.
- Confirmation to be given that required health & safety training has been made available and who has undertaken such training.
- Any consequences arising from having fewer first aiders.
- Fire inspection audit - outcomes to be reported in the annual report
- If the Sports Centre was the main source of reported incidents, an explanation to be given as to why (ie, high use, supported with appropriate data) and the mitigation actions taken to reduce the number of accidents.

9. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

The draft, unaudited Management accounts for 12 months to 31 August 2020 were received. It was confirmed the audit to be conducted by RSM (External Auditors) will commence shortly and the final audit accounts will be subject to review from both the Audit Committee and the Finance Committee before being put to the December Trust Board meeting for approval.

It was reported the MAs were drafted before receipt of the end of year pension adjustment. This has now been received and the adjustment results in a cost to the College of £795k, and this figure will be included in the final set of accounts. The pension deficit is now over £4m.

As per the usual practice, a reconciliation statement will be made available to confirm changes made from these set of draft Management Accounts and the final audited Financial Statements that will be an agenda item for review and approval at both the November meeting of the Finance Committee and the December Trust Board meeting.

In terms of headlines from the draft Management Accounts, the following points were noted:

	August 20 actual Surplus / (deficit) £000	Year to date actual Surplus / (deficit) £000	Year to date Forecast Surplus / (deficit) £000
Before non-cash items	152	1,227	500
Retained surplus / (deficit)	(64)	440	(279)

	Balance at 31.08.20 £000	Balance at 31.07.20 £000	Balance at 31.08.19 £000
Bank & cash	3,056	3,479	2, 503
Net assets	14,178	14,242	13,738

Taking into account year-end capital adjustment of £401k, the operating surplus is £826k which is still in excess of the set budget.

The Management Accounts provided a detailed explanation for any significant variables to budget lines.

As previously mentioned, the cashflow forecasts do not include any costs for the new build as costs cannot be determined until the outcome of the SIF bid is known.

Trustees agreed the year-end position, although still subject to final audit, represents an excellent financial performance and places the College in a strong financial position. This will be further strengthened by the additional students recruited this year that will result in additional funding of circa £300k for 2020-21.

10. DfE GOVERNANCE HANDBOOK AND COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNANCE

The Accounts Direction for the drafting of the Financial Statements 2019-20 has added the following new requirement:

The DfE Governance Handbook and Competence Framework for Governance are not mandatory guidance for Trustees, but Trustees are encouraged to review and take account of these documents as part of their roles. Where they have done this, trustees are also encouraged to include a statement to that effect in the governance statement within the Financial Statements.

All Trustees confirmed, that following a request to do so, they have reviewed and taken into account these documents as part of their roles.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The CEO informed the Committee of the retirement this week of Christine Downton who currently is the longest serving member of staff. The Board asked for the CEO to pass on to Christine the Board's best wishes for her retirement and to thank her for her years of excellent service given to the College.

The Chair held a discussion on the conducting of future meetings as clarity was now given that the 'Rule of Six' does not apply to an educational setting, as long as any meeting involving more than six people adheres to social distancing guidelines and that an appropriate risk assessment has been undertaken.

Following discussion, it was agreed the preferred approach was for meetings to be conducted in person until such time as the Covid-19 regulations make this impossible to do so, whilst, at the same time, enabling any Trustee who was unable to join the meeting to do so via video-conferencing.

There was no other business.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 01 December 2020 @ 17.30

13. 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 carrying forward.

In terms of improving provision, the following positives were noted from discussions held during the meeting:

- Increased student numbers
- Continuing high achievement rates across all areas of the curriculum
- Strong financial position
- Prompt and professional approach taken by the Executive and all staff in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic
- The continued delivery of teaching, learning and assessment during the period of the lockdown
- Students and staff feeling safe on their return to College

The meeting closed at 19.30

Signed: _____ Date: _____

SUMMARY ACTION LIST

MIN	ACTION	REVIEW DATE
5	To change the format of the Standing Orders so that they act as a signpost where appropriate to other key documents in order to avoid unnecessary duplication; and to top-up the SOs with those procedures agreed by the Trust that are not covered in other key documents. The Chair will take the lead on this development work and will liaise with members of the working group tasked with updating the SOs	01/12/2020
6(i)	The College's internal auditors are going to conduct a desktop review on the College's Covid-19 procedures and arrangements, with outcomes of the audit to be reported to the Audit Committee.	01/12/2020
7	To change the name of the committee to the Audit & Risk Committee.	01/12/2020

7(ii)	The Risk Register to be updated in line with the recommendations proposed in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Audit Committee minutes (22/9/20) with proposed amendments to scoring and mitigation actions for discussion at the November Audit Committee prior to final approval being sought at the December Board meeting;	01/12/2020
7(iv)	To amend the Board Assurance & Risk Management Policy 2020-21 to confirm that cover sheets are no longer required, but for each report presented to begin with a clear explanation of the link between the contents of the paper and the appropriate risk from the Risk Register.	01/12/2020
8	In terms of the structure and format of future Health & Safety reports, the following changes were suggested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to include assurance statements that the College is fully compliant with required regulatory compliance. • Need to make reference to Covid-19 compliance in line with DfE guidance. • Confirmation to be given that required health & safety training has been made available and who has undertaken such training. • Confirm any consequences arising from having fewer first aiders. • Fire inspection audit - outcomes to be reported in the annual report • If the Sports Centre was the main source of reported incidents, an explanation to be given as to why (ie, high use, supported with appropriate data) and the mitigation actions taken to reduce the number of accidents. 	For inclusion in the 2020-21 Annual H&S Report
9	A reconciliation statement will be made available to confirm changes made from these set of draft Management Accounts and the final audited Financial Statements that will be an agenda item for review and approval at both the November meeting of the Finance Committee and the December Trust Board meeting.	01/12/2020
13	In terms of training, Ofsted preparation was an area of need and it was noted this is an action point for carrying forward.	Spring term