

**MINUTES OF THE REIGATE LEARNING ALLIANCE TRUST BOARD MEETING HELD
ON TUESDAY 21 MARCH 2023**

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

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

1. WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Richard Stephen, Gerard Weide and Kate Fulker.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There was no declaration of interest against any of the agenda items.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the Trust Board meeting held 06 December 2022 (Paper 1) were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. SUMMARY ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING

The '*Summary Action List*' (Paper 3) provided the meeting with the following progress updates against action points agreed at the last Board meeting:

MIN	ACTION	UPDATE
Safeguarding Training	To include in the Board's Annual Safeguarding Report a summary on how the Board discharges its statutory & regulatory responsibilities.	To be included in the Safeguarding Annual Report – agenda item at the summer term Trust Board meeting
5	The AGM scheduled for 17 January 2023 to be used for both the Board and Members to approve the Articles	It was confirmed Members will be issued with written resolutions to adopt the Articles
8	Risk Register: Data, whether positive or negative, to be made available to show if mitigation actions for those	Agenda item

	risks outside of tolerance are having any impact	
10	KPIs: final version, including a reporting schedule/timetable to Trust Board meetings, to be made available at the spring Trust Board meeting.	Agenda item
12	Review of Governance Recommendations: Working Group to report on progress at each Board meeting.	Agenda item
18	Student appeals - the procedure covering student appeals to be subject to further review with a revised policy being subject to approval from the appropriate committee (LGB)	It was confirmed this will be an agenda item at the May LGB Meeting
Confidential minute 7	Car Park: Capacity to make available additional electric charging points in the future without the need for additional cabling - the CEO agreed to seek further information on this from Stanton Construction	A progress update was received that confirmed installing additional charging points was not feasible due to a) prohibitive costs and b) lack of infrastructure to provide the necessary electricity supply
Confidential minute 7	To add to the Financial Regulations the requirement to employ a QS from outside the local area when reviewing quotations received from any construction company based in the local area.	Agenda item

6. RISK REGISTER

The 'Risk Register 2022/23' was received (Paper 5). The Risk Register was subject to review by the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 02 March. The Trust Board is asked to note the Risk Register.

It was confirmed four risks were outside the agreed tolerance parameters.

The first related to the recruitment of teaching staff which remains an area of high risk (Risk 4). The shortage of people applying to PGCE courses remains a problem and there is no sign of this improving. For 2021-2022 the number of new entrants to teacher training was 82% of the target. The quality of applicants has also declined. The College continues to invest in its own teacher training programme and to pay slightly higher than the national average for SFCs. As the risk remains unaltered, to amend the down arrow to an equal sign.

The second related to the drafting of the strategic plan that is still work in progress with work progressing on KPIs (Risk 7). The SWOT analysis was approved at the December Trust Board meeting. The Annual General Meeting held in January 2023 agreed the strategic direction 2023/24 for the Reigate Learning Alliance. The final format for reporting against the agreed KPIs is a scheduled agenda item at the March Trust Board meeting. Once the format for KPI reporting is approved, this risk will be

reassessed with the expectation that it will then fall within agreed tolerance parameters.

The third risk related to the EHCP reviews issue which will remain outside of appetite until it is subject for review by Ofsted when their monitoring visit takes place (Risk 18).

The fourth risk was a new risk that was brought to the attention of the Local Governing Body when it met in January. The risk related to the DfE announcement on vocational qualification reforms (Risk 19). As the proposed vocational qualification reforms will have a significant impact on the College, it was agreed at the LGB meeting to add this risk to the Risk Register. It was confirmed the College will prepare for any changes arising when the DfE publishes final details of their proposals.

Trustees questioned the format of the Risk Register when agreement has been reached that evidence to substantiate real risk would be included e.g. survey, actual data, etc, and yet no actual evidence is documented in any of the risks. One of the examples referred to related to the risk on staff vacancies, but no evidence or actual data, such as current staff vacancy numbers, was made available to support the risk score. It was **AGREED** to update the Risk Register to include a commentary on any evidence referred to that indicates how the risk has been or is being addressed. It was **AGREED** to make the updated Risk Register available for the next meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee.

On some risks, a lot of work has been undertaken to reduce the risk, but this is not reflected in the commentary or the current risk score. For example, a lot of work has been done to address the issues relating to EHCP, but the risk score and commentary does not reflect this. This can be viewed as being particularly harsh on the EHCP team who have worked hard to make the required improvements. In response it was noted the College is waiting on the outcome of the scheduled internal audit on ECHP that is being undertaken next week. Once the outcome of the audit is known, the risk score and commentary will be subject to further review. It was **AGREED** to inform Trustees on the outcome of the audit.

Similarly, the risk score and commentary on the risk relating to the Strategic Plan does not confirm that the College's Strategic Plan was approved at the December Trust Board meeting, that the SWOT analysis was also approved, and the AGM held in January agreed the strategic direction of the Trust for the year ahead. The only matter outstanding is to agree the KPI monitoring framework, an agenda item at this meeting. The commentary should reflect the current position to show the actions that have been taken.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the '*Risk Register*'.

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATE

The report from the CEO (Paper 6) provided the following updates:

Funding

- Funding for 23/24 has been increased by approximately 2%.
- ESFA proposing to require all schools/colleges to move to an end of March financial year.
- DfE looking at increasing the contribution rates for the Teachers' Pension Scheme.

Exams

- Appears they will progress as planned, but the DfE have made some contingencies in case of any covid related issues.
- Grade boundaries are to be moved in the direction of the 2019 exam series, but with an option to decide, at a later stage, how far this move should be.
- Expectation that overall grades will move down – main concern remains the least able students.
- AAQ and curriculum reform

DfE Policy

- Main drive is for vocational education reform.
- Consultations taking place on SEN reform but no policy statements.

Student recruitment for September 2023

- Progressing on track, interviewing finished
- Numbers on target at the moment

Staff recruitment for September 2023

- Staff recruitment underway for September
- Progressing well but from a very limited pool of applicants
- Looking at new entrants to the profession

Pay negotiations and industrial action

- Dispute on going and unresolved
- New ballot to take place for further strikes after 08 May
- Modelling different scenarios for next year

Ofsted

- It was reported East Surrey College was recently subject to an Ofsted inspection and the overall judgement from Ofsted was the College 'requires improvement'.

Gender Pay Report

- The CEO confirmed work is nearly completed on finalising the annual Gender Pay Report that is required to be published by every college. The CEO reported the mean/medium data confirmed that females are paid more than males.

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

8. KPI MONITORING REPORT

The '*KPI Monitoring Report*' was received (Paper 7).

Following the approval of the College's Strategic Plan and the agreed KPIs against which the Trust Board can monitor the implementation of the ten strategic aims from the Strategic Plan, it was agreed to receive at this meeting the final version of the KPI monitoring framework including a reporting schedule/timetable for each Trust Board meeting.

Trustees welcomed the format that provided the Board with a summary on the progress being made against agreed KPIs.

There were no issues of concern on the progress being made against any of the KPIs and Trustees were satisfied with the overall progress.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the '*KPI Monitoring Report*'.

9. GOVERNANCE REVIEW ACTION PLAN

The December Trust Board meeting approved the '*Governance Review Report 2021/22*'. Arising from the review was an agreed action plan to implement a range of actions to enhance further the Trust's governance arrangements.

Received for review was the '*Governance Review Action Plan*' (Paper 8).

Other than the action points on succession planning for the Clerk and Executive that are scheduled for completion in the autumn term, the Clerk confirmed all the remaining actions listed should be fully implemented by the July Trust Board meeting.

It was noted the review of governance for 2022/23 will be done through an external review of governance. The details as to how the external review will be undertaken have yet to be confirmed.

Trustees welcomed the excellent progress made in the implementation of the agreed actions that will further enhance and strengthen current governance arrangements.

10. SAFEGUARDING/PREVENT EXCEPTIONAL REPORTING

To receive confirmation of any significant Safeguarding/Prevent referrals that need to be brought to the attention of the Trust Board, with the substantive agenda item to receive the Annual Safeguarding Report at the July Trust Board meeting.

A confidential matter relating to a member of staff that is now concluded was noted.

11. REPORT FROM THE REIGATE LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

The minutes from the Reigate Local Governing Body meeting held 31 January 2023 were received for information purposes (Paper 9). The substantive agenda items for the meeting were as follows:

- SENDCO Progress
- Work Experience
- Development Plan
- Curriculum Update
- Student Voice
- Staff Voice
- Board Assurance Assessments

The Chair commented positively on the two staff presentations received on SENDO and work experience. This was a good example of two members of staff showing their skill and expertise and was an excellent way for Trustees to learn more from staff.

It was reported the College has been re-awarded 'Investor in Careers' with all the standards having been fully met. Trustees welcomed this excellent outcome and asked for the minutes to record thanks to all those involved in achieving the award.

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

12. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The following papers were received:

- Minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee held on 28 February 2023 - Paper 10
- 'Management Accounts up to 31/1/23' which have been previously circulated to all Trustees - Paper 11a & Paper 11b
- The 'Charging & Remissions Policy 2023/24' that was subject to review from the Committee and is recommended to the Trust Board for approval- Paper 12
- The updated 'Financial Regulations' that were subject to review from the Committee and is recommended to the Trust Board for approval- Paper 13

The *Management Accounts* for five months of the financial year up to 31 January 2023 were subject to review. The following headlines were noted from the review:

	January 23 actual Surplus / (deficit) £000	Year to date actual Surplus / (deficit) £000	Year to date Budget Surplus / (deficit) £000
Before non-cash items	(1)	608	152
Retained surplus / (deficit)	(1)	348	(129)
	Balance at 31.01.23 £000	Balance at 31.12.22 £000	Balance at 31.08.22 £000
Bank & cash	3,729	4,059	4,041
Net assets	20,473	20,474	20,125

No substantive material changes were proposed to the 'Charging & Remissions Policy 2023/24'.

The proposed changes to the 'Financial Regulations' were noted as follows:

- Investment Policy – as recommended by the external auditors, it was agreed to add to this section that, in accordance with the Academy Trust Handbook, the exposure to investment products is tightly controlled so security of funds takes precedence over return maximisation.
- Reserve Policy – the current policy requires a minimum cash reserve of £1m to be held. It was agreed to change this to a new requirement for the academy trust to aim to maintain minimum cash reserves equivalent to the average cost of two months payroll in the previous financial year (for 2022/23 the minimum cash reserve is £1.8m).
- As requested at the December Trust Board meeting, added to the 'Financial Regulations' was the requirement to employ an independent Quantity Surveyor from outside the local area when reviewing quotations received from any construction company based in the local area.

During the review of the 'Financial Regulations' it was AGREED:

- (i) On page 2, against the policies referred to, to indicate which Trust Committee would be appropriate to review the policy, and when would such reviews be undertaken.
- (ii) Under 7.1, second bullet point, replace 'BAC' with 'Electronics'.
- (iii) To issue monthly Management Accounts to all Trustees over and above the requirement to issue these to Trustees six times a year.

It was **RESOLVED** to:

- (i) Note the minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee meeting held on 28 February 2023
- (ii) Note the '*Management Accounts up to 31/1/23*';
- (iii) Approve the '*Charging & Remissions Policy 2023/24*'; and
- (iv) Approve the updated '*Financial Regulations*'.

Following a tendering exercise, the Board received, for information, confirmation from the Chair and CEO on the use of the Financial Regulations to approve a spend of £92,722 for the installation of solar panels. It was confirmed the expenditure is covered by the Energy Efficiency Grant of £117k received last December from the ESFA.

13. **REPORT FROM THE AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

The '*Minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee held 02 March 2023*' were received (Paper 14). The substantive agenda items were as follows:

- JISC IT Penetration Report
- Budgetary & Financial Reporting Internal Audit Report
- Payroll Internal Audit Report
- School Management Checklist
- College Policies
- Board Assurance Assessments from Committees
- Risk Register
- Board Assurance Assessments

It was noted, and welcomed, that a 'Substantial Assurance' was received on the two internal audit reports covering budgetary and financial reporting and payroll.

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

14. **BOARD ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK**

The following papers were received:

- Termly report on assurance assessments conducted by Committees - Paper 14
- Board assurance assessments for reports considered at this meeting – Paper 15

The following assurance assessments conducted by Committees were **NOTED**:

- (i) **LOCAL GOVERNING BODY MEETING 31 JANUARY 2023**

Agenda Item	Subject	RAG rating	Any Committee Recommendation(s)
6	SENDCO Progress Update	Amber	Excellent progress has been made and the LGB was assured on the progress made to date, but the Ofsted monitoring visit, when it takes place, will confirm if areas of concern

			identified at the inspection have been addressed to the satisfaction of Ofsted.
7	Work Experience	Amber	Excellent progress has been made and the LGB was assured on the progress made to date, but the Ofsted monitoring visit, when it takes place, will confirm if areas of concern identified at the inspection have been addressed to the satisfaction of Ofsted.
8	Curriculum Update	N/A	Not possible to give an assessment as the DfE will be the driving force for any vocational qualification reforms. The College will prepare for any changes arising when the DfE publishes final details of their proposals. Risk to be added to the Risk Register.
9	Development Plan	Green	No recommendations
10	Student Voice	Green	No recommendations
11	Staff Voice	Green	No recommendations

(II) FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING 28 FEBRUARY 2023

Agenda item	Subject	RAG rating	Any Committee Recommendation(s)
6	Management Accounts	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
7	ILR Building Costs	Amber	Further action being taken before the matter proceeds to the Trust Board for decision making
8	Funding Factors	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
9	Financial Regulations	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
10	Charging & Remissions Policy 2023/24	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
11	Review of Contracts	Green	No concerns/no recommendations

(III) AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE MEETING 02 MARCH 2023

Agenda item	Subject	RAG rating	Any Committee Recommendation(s)
7	JISC IT Penetration Report	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
8	IA Report – Budget Setting Reporting	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
8	IA Report - Payroll	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
9	School Resource Management Checklist	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
10	College Policies	Amber	No concerns but the recommendation was for further work to be done on the table of policies for review at the next meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee
11(i)	Risk Register	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
11(ii)	BAF Assessments conducted by Committees	Green	No concerns/no recommendations

The Trust Board agreed the following assurance assessments for papers received at this meeting:

Agenda item number	Subject	RAG Rating	Any Committee Recommendation(s)
5	ILC Claim	Amber	Proposal to be made to the contractor
6	Risk Register	Amber	Amendments to be made for consideration at the next meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee
7	Chief Executive Update	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
8	KPI Monitoring Framework	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
9	Review of Governance Action Plan	Amber	To review at the July Board meeting when the majority of actions should have been fully implemented
10	Safeguarding Exceptional Reporting	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
11	LGB Minutes	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
12(i)	Finance & Resources Minutes	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
12(ii)	Management Accounts	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
12(iii)	Charging Policy	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
12(iv)	Financial Regulations	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
13	Audit & Risk Minutes	Green	No concerns/no recommendations
14	BAF assurance assessments from Committee	Green	No concerns/no recommendations

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 11 July 2023 @ 17.30

The meeting closed at 19.10.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

SUMMARY ACTION LIST

Min	ACTION	REVIEW DATE
5	ILC Claim – to inform Trustees of the outcome	11/7/23
6	Risk Register It was AGREED to update the Risk Register to include a commentary on any evidence	11/7/23

	<p>referred to that shows how the risk has been or is being addressed.</p> <p>It was AGREED to make the updated Risk Register available for the next meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee.</p> <p>Commentary should reflect the current position of the risk to show the actions that have been taken to mitigate against the risk even if the risk score remains unaltered.</p>	
6	Internal Audit of EHCP – to inform Trustees of the outcome of the audit	11/7/23
9	Governance Review Action Plan	11/7/23
12	<p>Financial Regulations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) On page 2, against the policies referred to, to indicate which Trust Committee would be appropriate to review the policy, and when would such reviews be undertaken. (ii) Under 7.1, second bullet point, replace 'BAC' with 'Electronics'. (iii) To issue monthly Management Accounts to all Trustees over and above the requirement to issue these to Trustees six times a year. 	11/7/23