



MINUTES OF THE REIGATE LEARNING ALLIANCE TRUST BOARD MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2023 @17.15

Present: Ms Pat Frankland – Chair
Mr Stephen Hewes
Ms Christine Downton
Mr Spencer Bowen – Vice Chair
Mr Farouk Durrani
Mr Gerard Weide
Ms Kate Fulker
Mr Chris Whelan - Chief Executive Officer
Mr Nick Clark – Executive Principal

In attendance: Mr Jon Allen (Governance Professional)
Ms Kim Saw (Director of Finance)
Ms Fiona Chalk – Observer

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Prior to the start of the Board meeting, Trustees received from Mel Pearl annual safeguarding training/updating on the recently updated publication '*Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023*' with specific reference to the safeguarding duties and responsibilities of the Board and Trustees.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Mel Pearl for the training received.

SECTION 1: FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS

1. APOLOGIES & WELCOMES

Apologies were received from Ms Yvette Robbins.

Christine Downton was welcomed to her first meeting and introductions were made.

Fiona Chalk from FE 4 Governance was welcomed to the meeting. Fiona has been commissioned to undertake an external review of governance and was attending the Board meeting as an observer. Fiona outlined the scope of the external review.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declared interests against any of the agenda items.

3. MINUTES

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the minutes of the Trust Board meeting held 11 July 2023 (Paper 1).

4. SUMMARY ACTION LIST

The ‘*Summary Action List*’ (Paper 2) was received, and the following updates were noted:

MIN	ACTION	UPDATE FOR MEETING 19/9/23
8	Trustees asked on KPI 5 for the wording of holding cash reserves of at least £1m be amended to be in line with the approved Treasury Policy of holding in reserves an equivalent amount to meet two months payroll	Completed
8	In future KPI monitoring reports, a colour coding system to be used to indicate which KPIs are either on track or achieved, and which KPIs are performing below set targets.	Completed and agenda item (Paper 6).
18	A review is taking place on the supply of food and drinks in the refectory and any changes arising from the review will be introduced from September.	Update provided in Paper 8 (KPI 8).
22	Cintra Contract – adding a longer notice period over and above 3 months	Completed

A further progress update was made available on the transfer of the payroll from Surrey County Council (SCC) to Cintra and the issues arising from the poor service from SCC. The aim remains for the transfer to be completed to enable Cintra to run the payroll from this November, but this remains a risk due to the delay from SCC in transferring required data to Cintra. It was **AGREED** to keep this risk under review by both the Finance & Resources Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee.

It was discussed and agreed at the July meeting to prepare a year-end financial forecast covering the period required for audit, i.e. to December 2024. An update on this was requested. In response the Director of Finance confirmed the financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2023 are due to be signed at the December Trust meeting. Before the auditors sign the financial statements, they will seek assurance that the RLA is a going concern for the period of 12 months from the date of signing i.e. to December 2024. As in previous years, cashflows and budgets which cover this period will be available to the Board and the auditors prior to the signing of the financial statements.

The College has been notified of an additional £500k of ESFA funding for 2023/2024. However, the College is still waiting on details from the SFCA on the final pay settlement for 2023/2024. The expectation from the combination of these two factors should significantly reduce the 2023/2024 forecast budget deficit, possibly resulting in a small operating surplus.

The Director of Finance confirmed she will update the forecast on the monthly management accounts as and when more information becomes available, and these accounts are distributed to all trustees and members each month.

SECTION 2: MONITORING OF RISK, STRATEGIC MATTERS & MONITORING OF COLLEGE PERFORMANCE.

5. RE-CAP ON THE ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES OF TRUSTEES

Trustees received a report from the Governance Professional incorporating the DfE Academy Trust Handbook 2023 (Paper 3).

The recent review of governance identified an action point for the Board to receive at its first meeting in the academic year a re-cap on the roles and responsibilities of Trustees. Included in the report was the annual cycle of Board and committee business for the year ahead, the Board Assurance Framework (BAF), and the DfE publication '*Academy Trust Handbook 2023*'.

The report was **NOTED**.

6. RISK REGISTER

The '*Risk Register 2023/24*' was received (Paper 4).

As there has been no meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee since the last meeting of the Trust Board, there have been no substantial changes made to the Risk Register. An update was provided on RAAC concrete matters over and above what had already been communicated to Trustees. It was reported a building surveyor has visited the College to carry out an inspection and the surveyor reported there were no issues of concern. A report confirming this will be sent to the College and would be made available to the Audit & Risk Committee. Trustees welcomed this update and the assurances provided.

Trustees requested that consideration be given to presenting the Risk Register in a format that puts any 'Red' risks at the forefront of the Register. The CEO stated the Risk Register is a Word document so formatting as requested may prove difficult to do but he would look into this further.

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

7. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER UPDATE

The report from the CEO (Paper 5) provided updates on the following:

- Funding.
- 2022/23 student Outcomes – provisional.
- DfE policy.
- Student recruitment September 2023.
- Staff recruitment September 2023.
- Pay negotiations and industrial action.
- RAAC concrete issues.

As previously discussed, the forecast year-end deficit could be offset through extra financial support from the ESFA.

It was confirmed student outcomes are provisional at this stage as more results have yet to be announced.

Trustees had been made aware at previous Board meetings of the concerns of managers on the possible negative impact on A level results this year due to current A level students not undertaking GCSE examinations and relying on teacher grade assessments. The concern was that, as there was a degree of grade inflation, this could have resulted in many students not being able to cope with the rigours of A levels. With a 45% increase in the number of College students undertaking A levels since 2019 there was a real concern that some of these students could have been on courses that did not suit them academically. However, although the number of U grades increased to 27 (from 8-12 normally), the increase was not as serious as feared.

The overall College A level pass rate was 99%. A Level A*/A/B grades were at 57.2% compared against a national rate of 52.2%.

A total of 102 students scored 3 or more A/A* grades and 252 students gained Russell Group places.

Trustees welcomed the positive outcomes being reported on A level results.

A full report on student outcomes will be made available at the next meeting of the Local Governing Body.

It was confirmed, and welcomed by trustees, that student recruitment is progressing on track, with numbers for enumeration on target at the moment.

It was confirmed all newly recruited staff started as scheduled and there are no additional staffing needs as a result of enrolment. New teaching staff will be subject to observation from next week.

The CEO provided an update on the use of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete - otherwise known as RAAC – which is a lightweight building material used from the 1950s up to the mid-1990s. The DfE issued a questionnaire in 2022 regarding the use of this material and no issues arose following the instructions provided at the time. However, following a recent ceiling collapse at a school, the DfE issued revised instructions in August. In response to the revised instructions the college commissioned a structural engineer to perform the required checks. The CEO reported checks have been conducted and the Building Surveyor confirmed there were no use of RAAC in any of the College buildings and this will be confirmed in the written report from the Building Surveyor. It was **AGREED** for the report to be made available at the next meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the '*CEO Report*'.

8. KPI MONITORING

The '*KPI Monitoring Report*' was received (Paper 6). As requested at the last meeting, the report included tracking showing progress being made against set targets. Where available, the report also included year-on-year comparisons between this year and last year. Trustees welcomed these new inclusions and again re-emphasised the importance in the use, where available, of benchmarking data and year-on-year comparisons.

One 'Red' was noted that related to the target of 70% for students on employment pathway to attend a careers interview. Against the target, 67% of students had attended a careers interview. Trustees asked what actions were being taken to meet the target? In response it was stated that consideration was being given to using new approaches to invite students to attend careers interview, such as the use of text messages.

The CEO asked trustees if the monitoring report should continue to be a rolling forward document or a brand new document as we are now entering into a new academic year? The consensus view was for the document to remain a rolling forward document as the report enables trustees to monitor progress against the strategic aims from the College's Strategic Plan.

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

9. COLLEGE STAFF ORGANISATION CHART

Arising from the recent review of governance was the request from trustees to receive, at the first Board meeting in the academic year, a staff structure/organisation chart (Papers 7a & 7b).

The report outlined the key responsibilities of each member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and College Board. Also made available was a spreadsheet that provided additional information on the staffing structure.

Trustees were reminded that their responsibilities lay with the two senior postholders – The Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Principal. All other posts listed were the responsibilities of the senior post holders.

The governance review action plan, a later agenda item (Paper 10), confirmed the action point for the Executive to present a succession plan covering senior executive positions and this is scheduled to be an agenda item at the December Board meeting.

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

10. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS & PAY AWARD

The Management Accounts up to 30 June 2023 previously circulated to trustees were noted (Papers 8(i) & 8(ii)).

Updates on the year-end forecast and pay award were covered in earlier discussions under the agenda items '*Summary Action List*' and '*CEO Report*'.

11. ANNUAL HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT 2022/23 (CONFIDENTIAL)

Due to the report covering personal information relating to the College staff, it was **AGREED** for the report to be declared confidential and not to be made available in the public domain.

It was noted and welcomed that this was the first time in several years that an annual HR report was made available to the Trust Board. For future reports it was **AGREED** to include more benchmarking data and year-on-year comparisons with 2022/23 setting the benchmark data against which comparisons can be made in future reports.

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

SECTION 3: NON-DELEGABLE DUTIES (ARTICLE 3.1) AND STATUTORY AND/OR COMPLIANCE DUTIES

12. GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Trustees received for review the current version of the '*Governance Review Action Plan 2022/23*' (Paper 10).

It was noted the two remaining action points related to succession planning for both the Governance Professional and Executive Team.

It was noted the two remaining action points are scheduled for completion at the December Trust Board meeting.

Recommendations arising from the external review of governance will be incorporated within the Governance Action Plan.

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

13. MEMBERSHIP ATTENDANCE 2022/23

Paper 11 confirmed details of trustee, governor and members' attendance during 2022/23. The following headline data was noted:

- Overall Trustee attendance for 2022/23 was 90.67% against the agreed target of 75%.
- Overall Governor attendance for 2022/23 was 85.71% against the agreed target of 75%.
- Four of the five Members were in attendance for the Annual General Meeting, giving an attendance of 80% against the agreed target of 75%.

It was confirmed the attendance data has been published on the College website.

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

14. TRUSTEE TRAINING LOG 2022/23 AND TRAINING SCHEDULE 2023/24

Paper 12 outlined the training made available during 2022/23 with details of trustee attendance at the various training events.

The paper confirmed the following training events for 2023/24:

- Trust Board Meeting September – Safeguarding Training Update
- Trust Board Meeting December – Review of Governance Outcomes (Fiona Chalk)
- Trust Board Meeting March- Understanding the role of the classroom teacher, Understanding the role of the senior tutor, Timetabling.
- Trust Board Meeting July – Understanding the role of Head of Department; timetabling & admissions.

In addition, it was **AGREED** to continue with the practice of inviting trustees to attend staff INSET training days.

15. SUSTAINABILITY

The Director of Finance delivered a presentation covering the proposed application to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund Phase 3c for the replacement of end of life boilers. The proposal is to seek funding to replace gas boilers in Rushworth and Enhancement. The total cost is estimated at £227,500. The College is required to contribute a minimum of 12% of the costs. The proposal is for the College to contribute £97,500 and to seek a grant of £130,000. The application portal opens on 10 October.

At this stage, the Board is asked to approve making the application as this will demonstrate Board approval for the project. Should the application be approved, the Board will then be asked to approve the capital expenditure associated with the project.

It was unanimously **RESOLVED** to approve the application to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund Phase 3c for the replacement of end of life boilers in both Rushworth and Enhancement.

16. ADMISSIONS POLICY 2024

The '*Admissions Policy 2024*' was approved at the July Trust Board meeting. An amended policy was proposed for the Board to approve (Paper 13). The proposed amendment ensured the policy was in line with the admission requirements published on the College website.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the amended '*Admissions Policy 2024*'.

SECTION 4: COMMITTEE REPORTING

There have been no Committee meetings since the July Trust Board meeting.

17. BOARD ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

The Board agreed the following board assurance assessments for agenda items/reports considered at this meeting (Paper 14):

Agenda item number	Subject	RAG rating	Any recommendation(s) or action(s) arising from discussions on the agenda item; Any comment(s) on the quality of the paper(s)/presentation(s) made available for the agenda item.
3	Summary Action List		Payroll transfer – for the risks associated with the transfer to the new provider to be kept under review by both the Finance & Audit Committee.
4	Roles & Responsibilities		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
5(i)	Risk Register		Consideration to be given to reformatting with 'Red' risks presented first

5(ii)	CEO Report		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
5(iii)	KPI Monitoring Framework		To incorporate more use of benchmarking data and year on year comparisons where available.
5(iv)	Staff Organisation Chart		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
6(i)	Management Accounts		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
6(ii)	Year-end Position		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
7	Annual Human Resources Report		To incorporate more use of benchmarking data and year on year comparisons where available.
8	Governance Review Action Plan		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
9	Attendance data		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
10	Training Log 2022/23 & Scheduled Training Programme 2023/24		To add staff inset days to the training programme with invitations to attend to be issued to Trustees
11	Sustainability		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.
12	Admissions Policy 2024		No Recommendations/Actions arising from discussions.

18.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- (i) Review of governance outcomes with Fiona Chalk: 05 December 2023 @ 16.30
- (ii) Board Meeting: 05 December 2023 @ 17.30
- (iii) Annual General Meeting with Members to discuss strategic direction: 23 January 2024 @16.30

The meeting concluded at 19.10.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

SUMMARY ACTION LIST

MIN	ACTION	REVIEW DATE
4	Risk relating to the transfer of the payroll contract from SCC to Cintra - to keep this risk under review by both the Finance & Resources Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee	5/12/23
5	Trustees requested for consideration to be given to presenting the Risk Register in a format that puts any 'Red' risks at the forefront of the Register.	5/12/23
7	Building Surveyors Report on RACC to be made available to the Audit & Risk Committee.	5/12/23
11	Annual HR Report - to include in future reports more benchmarking data and year-on-year comparisons.	On-going
12	Governance Review Action Plan - succession planning for both the Governance Professional and Executive Team, and to arrange a Stewardship Day for trustees to visit the College.	5/12/23
14	To add staff INSET days to the training programme with invitations to attend to be issued to Trustees	5/12/23