



## MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

**10 November 2020, 1.00 p.m.**

*Virtual meeting held using Zoom*

### Part A Public

Item	Subject	Action
	<p><b>Trustees present:</b></p> <p>Tom Briant-Evans (TBE)            Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair            Nick Lake (NL)            Keith Tipler (KT)            John Whetter (JW)</p> <p><b>Also present:</b></p> <p>Jem Alder (JA) – Trust Secretary            Mike England (ME) – Finance Director            Simon Hague (SE) – CEO            Tamsin Lamb (TL) – Director of Education</p>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies:</b> none	
<b>2</b>	<b>Conflicts of Interest</b>	
2.1	No additional interests were declared.	
2.2	Trustees agreed to the proposal that their Register of Interests is extended to include any external education / governance interests which governors, Heads and central staff have. This will ensure they have a full picture of potential conflicts of interest across the Trust.	JA
<b>3</b>	<b>Previous minutes</b> of the 15 September 2020 were accepted as an accurate record.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters arising / Tracker</b>	
4.1	Minute 8.3. 1 <sup>st</sup> action - SH reported that following advice from our external auditors it was decided no further action was necessary.	
4.2	Tracker 19.15 – completed by item 6 below.	
4.3	Tracker 20.02 – KT confirmed was covered by Audit Committee.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Delegated Decisions since last meeting</b>	
5.1	Trustees noted the guidelines given to LGBs following the Covid meeting of 30 September.	
<b>6</b>	<b>CEO's update</b>	
6.1	<p>"Monumental achievements" are ongoing in each school every day.</p> <p>Plans have survived contact including phased re-introduction of offering before and after school provision.</p>	

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	<p>Unexpected nature of additional costs need monitoring closely but latest analysis indicates impact less than originally feared.</p> <p>Staff who are pregnant.</p> <p>SH confirmed Trust is adhering to the policy they do not teach in bubbles. The projected additional cost has been budgeted for but this will be monitored closely.</p> <p>HSE visit at Rosemellin.</p> <p>Uneventful and provided no feedback on making anything better. No evidence to suggest school was chosen for a specific reason.</p> <p>SH reported he made a visit himself and was very impressed with how the school is running and how staff are going above and beyond by covering for colleagues and at breaks. This effectively adds to their workload as some tasks need to be done at another time.</p> <p>Confirmed he has raised with Heads these systems need to be sustainable as we have very little spare capacity to respond to sickness.</p>	
6.2	<p><i>Q: How is attendance going?</i></p> <p>High for both staff and pupils. Our data suggests that the Covid hygiene systems we have put in place are also reducing impact of normal bugs with some schools reporting 97/98% attendance.</p> <p>One member of staff off with Covid, 3 told to self-isolate via track and trace.</p> <p>Some pupils have tested positive but in all cases were absent prior to their test and during infection period so we have not needed to close any bubbles.</p>	
6.3	<p>Central services detailed breakdown / Trust expansion.</p> <p>SH explained this had been produced in response to a request from Trewirgie Infants following a presentation to their governors. He felt it reflected a much better understanding at the centre of the scope of support we offer to every school.</p> <p>They have subsequently asked to see our financial scheme of delegation and reserves policy. SH confirmed we do not know which other trusts they are considering.</p> <p>ME has reviewed their last published accounts and confirmed they are in a strong position financially.</p> <p>MH reported he has sent a message to their Chair and we have made the offer of the opportunity to speak direct with a Head or LGB Chair.</p>	
6.4	<p>Update on other plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heads meetings have progressed our work on looking at values.</li> <li>• Charge card controls we put in place have been recognised in this year's audit – but we will continue to monitor closely.</li> <li>• HR – we are approaching the end of pay protection for some staff following the pay alignment process we started 2 years ago. Process is challenging for some individuals and complex to resolve due to decisions taken upto 18 years ago. On track to complete by September 2021.</li> </ul>	
6.5	<p><i>Q: What is the timescale to recruit a third SIP?</i></p> <p>Plan to advertise start of spring term.</p> <p><i>Q: Will there need to be changes to existing trust-wide roles such as Safeguarding?</i></p>	

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	<p>To be decided as we do need to consider individual's workload. SH confirmed the number of Heads offering to take on a trust-wide role is increasing.</p> <p><i>Q: Are there any pay alignment issues to resolve with senior leaders?</i></p> <p>New pay policy will have more pay ranges included and will be a fairer representation of what each school needs. How to address any anomalies which arise from this is a decision for the future.</p>	
<b>7</b>	<b>DoE's update</b>	
7.1	<p>Assessments.</p> <p>TH explained the baseline data already feels out of date as assessments were completed by 30/9. Aim was to look at the impact of summer term closures.</p> <p>TL highlighted that the percentage reaching ARE is lowest in Y2 and increases towards Y6 and this is an unexpected pattern. Staff feel older children can work better independently so younger children were less well equipped when at home to respond to this.</p> <p>SIP visits have shown that Y1/2 children are responding very quickly to our work and we anticipate gaps being closed rapidly.</p> <p><i>Q: Is this replicated elsewhere?</i></p> <p>Yes a national trend – the youngest suffered the most. However probably the easiest cohort for us to close the gap too as the learning process is more complex for older children and impacted by a wider range of issues.</p>	
7.2	<p>Continuity of learning model / online learning.</p> <p>We now have a legal duty to put online learning in place immediately if a child has to be at home so we have put a lot of work into developing our 'continuity of learning' plans. This has been a two stage process:</p> <p>1 – What we could offer and how?</p> <p>2 - Accessibility issues – eg reliance on online.</p> <p>We have now moved onto looking at <i>how</i> the children learn. We are applying our understanding of what happens in school to our online plans – for example the opportunity to practice, get feedback and challenge. So looking very carefully at how we are structuring our home learning and feel we will be better prepared in the future.</p> <p><i>Q: Are some schools doing better than others with supporting online learning?</i></p> <p>Some are looking again at expectations of what they get back and the feedback process – initially had focussed too much on what is delivered.</p>	
7.3	<p>Summary of catchup plans and additional funding.</p> <p>3 termly milestones set by each Head – will be checked at SIP visits. TL reported this was an interesting process as Heads initially found it difficult to break down their plans to have end of term targets.</p> <p><i>Q: Is the income and expenditure being coded separately? Yes.</i></p>	
7.4	<p>SIP reports with example questions.</p> <p>TL explained the thinking behind this as one way to support LGBs in retaining a focus on priorities and make monitoring more effective.</p> <p>Agreed to put on agenda for LGB Chairs and JW will join the meeting too.</p>	JA

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7.5	Confidential item	
<b>8</b>	<b>Finance</b>	
8.1	<p>2019/20 Statutory Accounts. Successful audit and can confirm the benefit of changing provider – shorter process, more flexible approach, better experience overall - but no less rigorous.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reserves over £1.6m</li> <li>• Income pretty comparable to previous years</li> <li>• Main pressure is staff / supply costs</li> <li>• Huge saving on overheads of c£0.5m compared to previous years</li> </ul> <p><i>Q: When can we see benchmarking data?</i> Spring term earliest opportunity for 2019.20 data but DfE publishing historical data. ME suggested Covid issues will make single year comparisons harder – looking at 3 years will be better. ME confirmed all the management letter issues have been resolved.</p>	
8.2	<p>Budget monitoring. Meeting with NL next week to review to end of October. Issues to review include reduction in numbers at nurseries, cleaning costs, upcoming increased pension deficit charge.</p> <p><i>Q: Do we expect reduction to nursery uptake to last the whole year?</i> No evidence yet that it will change so we are looking to realign costs where we can.</p> <p><i>Q: Might we expect a 'bounce back' in the future / post-vaccine world?</i> TL cautioned that safety concerns is not the sole reason for reduced take up. Lots of parents have lost their job so this reduces demand too.</p>	
8.3	<p>Cashflow. Strong position at end of August but need to keep managing this closely. Waiting on final investment proposal but can anticipate interest rates will start going up again. Other projects listed in report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catering – communications improving but we have had to push for this. Training they have provided has been good</li> <li>• Banking – agreed to revisit at future meeting.</li> </ul>	JA
8.4	<p>De Carbonisation Project update. Our LED / solar panel developments were put on hold due to delay in government issuing details of their De-Carbonisation grant scheme. We now understand this scheme presents a much bigger opportunity and our bid-writing partner (a sister company to our energy supplier) have advised us to significantly increase scope of our plans and bid. Currently looking at a bid with a value of £1.5m which would include replacing heating systems at 8 of our schools. Deadline to submit our bid is end of November but if successful would represent a huge 'legacy opportunity' for the Trust and enhance our green credentials.</p> <p><i>Q: How much of a saving on current electricity costs can we expect?</i> £40-60K a cautious figure but could be higher.</p>	

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	Trustees discussed the suggestion of offering up a contribution of £50-100K to demonstrate our commitment and potentially improve chance of a successful bid. Agreed that the Delegated Decision group will make final decision due to deadline.	SH
8.5	<p>Maintenance backlog - proposal to use reserves.</p> <p>SH and ME reminded Trustees that upto £200K of expenditure was included in original budget discussion in the summer, and we now have a system in place to proceed.</p> <p>SH stressed this is a fundamental shift in how we will spend reserves – no longer attached to each school but taking a collective approach.</p> <p>Previously budgets were held by Heads but we want a centrally controlled budget line as this better reflects how we've been thinking and working for a while now.</p> <p>Meeting noted that this new approach and shift from previous policy should be explained to the LGB Chairs at their forthcoming meeting.</p> <p>Trustees suggested the following points should be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Represents a permanent shift from reactive to proactive maintenance</li> <li>• Only phase 1 – being proactive means more to be spent this way in the future</li> <li>• Some of these reserves were effectively created by work carried out by the centre / Trust – not local savings</li> </ul>	SH
<b>9</b>	<b>Audit Committee</b>	
9.1	<p>5 and 21 October meetings.</p> <p>KT highlighted the emphasis on developing an internal scrutiny programme.</p> <p>Confirmed a meeting has been arranged with current provider Cornwall Council to discuss what additional services they can provide and associated costs.</p>	
9.2	<p>Terms of Reference approval.</p> <p>KT requested this be deferred as potentially further amendments to be made.</p> <p>Any feedback to KT please before next Audit Committee on 24 November.</p>	ALL
<b>10</b>	<b>Governance meetings feedback</b>	
10.1	<p>Members 4 November.</p> <p>Draft minutes issued with meeting papers.</p> <p>JW confirmed Members agreed to automatically accept recommendations by the Board to re-appoint an existing Trustee for another term of office.</p> <p>Members asked to be involved in a future strategy day and MH confirmed he felt this would be useful.</p>	
10.2	<p>LGB Chairs 29 September.</p> <p>Notes not yet available but guidance following the Covid meeting next day (item 5 above) reflects much of the agenda.</p>	
10.3	<p>Clerks 6 November.</p> <p>JA gave verbal feedback on topics covered including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Virtual meetings – protocol needed and guidance on recordings</li> <li>• Governors meeting together based on role rather than LGB – trial with Safeguarding</li> </ul>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record keeping – national governor database and school websites as questions raised by external auditors</li> <li>Skills audits / governor terms of office</li> <li>Implications for clerks / local governance of the 'one single organisation' approach</li> </ul>	
<b>11</b>	<b>Governance Recruitment</b>	
11.1	<p>MH acknowledged Trustees may not have had the opportunity to read the paper so requested any comments were fed back by the end of the week as the proposal would be taken to LGB Chairs.</p> <p>He confirmed he wasn't looking to expand the Board beyond 8 Trustees.</p> <p>Opportunity to potentially identify a candidate to fill Member vacancy had been discussed at their recent meeting.</p>	ALL
<b>12</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
12.1	<p>TL invited Trustees to attend a virtual long service award ceremony taking place later in the week. Was originally planned for earlier in the year but the decision had been taken not to delay this further.</p> <p>Trust has over 30 staff with 25 plus years service each. Each school and the central team will be present and Heads will make the rewards.</p>	
12.2	<p>KT fed back from his involvement with a 'Network and Charities Committee' of CEOs and Chairs of large financial organisations.</p> <p>Opportunity to publicise impact of the Trust was discussed as well as potential opportunity to recruit to the Board.</p>	
<b>13</b>	<b>Items for next agenda</b>	
13.1	<p>Budget monitoring.</p> <p>Accounts / audit presentation.</p> <p>Safeguarding.</p> <p>Suggestion Estates Manager attend?</p> <p>Agreed to reschedule DoE update to first spring term meeting.</p>	
	Meeting finished at 3.08	