



MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

8 February 2022, 1.00 p.m.

Part A Public

Item	Subject	Action
	<p>Trustees present: (V = virtual attendance)</p> <p>Tom Briant-Evans (TBE) Karen Brokenshire (KB) Nik Butcher (NB) Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair Nick Lake (NL) Keith Tipler (KT) John Whetter (JW)</p> <p><i>Also present:</i></p> <p>Jem Alder (JA) – Trust Secretary Mike England (ME) – Finance Director V Simon Hague (SE) – CEO Tamsin Lamb (TL) – Director of Education</p>	
1	Apologies: none.	
2	Conflicts of Interest	
2.1	Trustees noted NB had a conflict of interest with item 11. No other additional interests were declared.	
3	Previous minutes of the 7 December 2021 were accepted as an accurate record.	
4	Matters arising / Tracker	
4.1	Action tracker: 20.35 Budget reports – still being improved.	
4.2	20.43 Safeguarding reporting. SH shared a proposal for revised termly reporting to both the Board and LGCs – covering action plans, s.157 returns and external review results. Agreed SH would share and invite any further feedback.	SH
4.3	20.69 Revised pay policy. SH will now share additional text.	SH
5	Delegated Decisions: none	
6	Covid update	
6.1	<p>SH gave Trustees a summary report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peaks and troughs pattern of attendance continuing for all schools – too soon to say if on a downward trend • Today 19 staff absent and 45 children – a week ago was 35 and over 100 • Keeping all classes open has been a challenge – but with staff off there would be no one available to deliver the online learning if children were sent home • Non-Covid related absence has increased 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE expecting schools to still look at this and pursue ongoing attendance issues - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – some negative feedback in response to statutory attendance letters <p><i>Q: How does this compare to last year?</i></p> <p>Very hard to compare this with last year as coding requirements changed – so last year some Covid-related absence was discounted. TL confirmed Heads are monitoring the families who still have poor attendance.</p>	
7/8	Confidential items	
9	Director of Education's report	
9.1	<p>Trustees noted TL's report and the notes from the School Improvement meeting of 10 January. TL confirmed her report included a response to questions raised by Trustees at this meeting.</p> <p>The whole trust data tables for Age Related Expectations (ARE) have been shared with local governors (albeit as anonymised data at present).</p> <p>TL confirmed that work is underway to investigate why Y1 overall results are the best of all year groups. There are several possible reasons including just being a stronger cohort, moderation process could have been more robust, first year of transition from new EYFS framework.</p> <p>Trustees supported this approach of ensuring our assessment data is reliable before further analysis. They also welcomed the suggestion to introduce a traffic light system to help highlight issues.</p>	
9.2/3	Confidential items	
9.4	<p>Writing.</p> <p>Overall results lower than Reading and Maths. TL highlighted that at present 4 different schemes are in use across the 9 schools – in contrast to Reading and Maths. Discussion of whether moving everyone to the same scheme was the answer identified a range of factors to consider including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase moderation more sharing of best practice and visits to other school lots of our children lack the experience to base writing on should we have a Lead Teacher or an ambassador role? could we offer some sort of incentive? a competition? <p>TL confirmed that historically primary schools have given less priority to writing and this does need addressing. Trust is aiming to develop a set of principles for all schools to apply regardless of the scheme they use.</p>	
10	Finance	
10.1	<p>Budget monitoring.</p> <p>ME explained this budget report was to the end of December – January's report would be circulated separately once available.</p> <p>He highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income trending ahead of budget – mainly due to extra SEN funding Staffing incurring additional Covid-related costs but we are still below budget Latest news from our insurer suggests we can plan for reclaiming upto 90% Overheads – reactive maintenance overspent but do not expect to spend the allocated £280K for backlog maintenance due to Covid-related issues 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Catering – uptake for Free School Meals is challenging. Aware that our supplier might seek to raise price of current contract but we will challenge this <p><i>Q: Is catchup funding being used to cover some of these additional staffing costs?</i> Potentially yes – further checking of coding will take place.</p>	
10.2	<p>Capital projects.</p> <p>Trustees noted the Midas Group had gone into administration and they were the contractors for the building work at Pennoweth.</p> <p>SH confirmed this project is managed and funded by Cornwall Council and he understood they have already started finding a replacement to complete the work – but a delay to existing timetable is inevitable.</p>	
10.3	<p>Cash flow position.</p> <p>Trustees noted the report. ME confirmed work is underway to review where our position can be improved by delaying payment to selected suppliers.</p>	
10.4	<p>Investment update.</p> <p>Currently Flagstone have not made any changes to their scheme despite a rise in interest rates – possibly because they are anticipating further rises?</p> <p>NL confirmed the Trust is looking to invest upto another £0.5m. To take account of the expectation of rising rates we will look at shorter investment periods to be more flexible. He confirmed that any further investment will not compromise retaining the necessary cash balances.</p>	
11	Employee Benefits proposal	
11.1	<p>NB confirmed he had a conflict of pecuniary interest in this item and would not participate in any vote.</p> <p>Trustees requested he remain in attendance to answer any questions.</p>	
11.2	<p>SH reminded Trustees that although an existing scheme was in place (Option A) it could be promoted more effectively to staff.</p> <p>Option B expanded on our current scheme – notably by introducing the option of leasing electric vehicles via a salary sacrifice scheme – and has the potential to be expanded further in the future.</p> <p>Officers had researched alternative providers and these were summarised in Option C.</p> <p>SH highlighted the benefit to the Trust in any scheme which made a positive contribution to the recruitment and retention of staff, and how option B also contributed to our emerging green strategy.</p>	
11.3	<p><i>Q: Do we mention this when we advertise?</i></p> <p>Not currently but we want to include this in future. We recognise it should be part of our wider strategy to offer further incentives to staff beyond just pay. This in turn can potentially reduce our recruitment costs.</p> <p><i>Q: Does HMRC approve of such schemes?</i></p> <p>Yes.</p> <p><i>Q: Are current government subsidies for electric vehicles part of this scheme?</i></p>	

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	<p>Yes – this is reflected in the cost of leasing. NB provided a further update that suppliers have promised an additional 20% discount to reflect the Trust’s charitable status.</p> <p><i>Q: Will there be restrictions in place to protect low paid staff from putting themselves in financial difficulty via salary sacrifice?</i></p> <p>Yes – the system reviews and checks for this automatically.</p>	
11.4	<p>Trustees noted the cost analysis of the 3 options, the detailed risk analysis and confirmation that all financial risk regarding leasing is met by the supplier not the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed their preference for the Trust to adopt Option B.</p>	
11.5	<p>Trustees noted the involvement of NB in the preferred scheme equated to a Related Party transaction and requested SH ensure the Trust complied with all of the ESFA’s requirements for this before proceeding.</p>	SH
12	Admissions Arrangements 2023.24	
12.1	<p>Trustees noted the minor changes required by the latest Admissions Code and the increase in PAN for Pennoweth. Arrangements were approved.</p>	
13	Executive Pay update	
13.1	<p>MH reported it had been agreed with SH to defer any decision until we have a clearer picture regarding growth of the Trust.</p>	MH
14	Governance	
14.1	<p>Committee proposal.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the pros and cons summarised in the briefing paper – including recognising that unless a committee had delegated decision making responsibilities it inevitably led to duplication of work / agenda time.</p> <p>Given the potential for growth of the trust (discussed earlier) it was agreed to retain the current arrangements where Lead Trustees meet regularly with officers and report back.</p> <p>Formal committee option could then be re-visited as part of a wider review of governance arrangements when growth takes places.</p> <p>Trustees requested notes from Finance meetings are circulated in future.</p>	JA
14.2	<p>Trustees supported TBE’s offer to remain a Trustee when his term of office completes next month.</p>	JA
15	AOB	
15.1	<p>Agreed date of next Audit Committee will remain as 8th March but start at 1.30 – MH gave his apologies.</p>	
	<p>Dates of next meetings:</p> <p>8 Mar Audit Committee</p> <p>11 Mar Members AGM</p> <p>22 Mar Board</p> <p>5 Apr LGC Chairs</p>	
	<p>Meeting finished at 4.15</p>	