CROFTY EDUCATION TRUST

MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

1 April 2025, 1p.m.

Part A   Public

Item	Subject	Action
	Trustees present: *V = virtual* Matt Brierley (MB) Amy Claridge (AC) Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair Nick Lake (NL) Deborah Richards (DR) *V* Peter Sheppard (PS) *Also present:* Jem Alder (JA) – Trust Governance Lead Cathryn Andrews (CA) – Director of Development Simon Hague (SE) – CEO Jess Hutchings (JH) – Governance Co-ordinator Tamsin Lamb (TL) – Director of Education Sean Pinhay (SP) – Chief Finance and Operations Officer [CFOO] Vanessa Schreiber (VS) – Executive PA	
1	**Welcome and Apologies**	
	Karen Brokenshire (KB), Rob Gasson (RG), Karen Harris (KH), Ross Schreiber (RS)	
2	**Conflicts of Interest:** JH reminded the meeting she is clerking for Marazion School.	
3	**Minutes of the meetings** of 11 February, 3 March and 10 March 2025	
3.1	Minutes from all three meetings were accepted as accurate records subject to the following amendment to 11 February item 6.2: – to name the two schools.	JA
4	**Action Tracker / Matters arising:** none.	
5	**STRATEGIC / OPERATIONS**	
5.1	**Risk Management Update**	
5.1.1	SH reminded Trustees they had previously agreed the purchase of a software system to help manage risk, and then completed questionnaires to assist with populating the system with our own data. SH demoed the system to highlight functionality and how a risk register is produced. • Generates 8 areas of strategic risk • Records causes and effects, mitigations, controls • Impact / Likelihood assessment – 5 levels to choose from • Generates a RAG matrix score – both inherent and residual • Risk Action column – what we plan to do to further reduce residual risk	
5.1.2	Trustees role is to oversee the register then to check on what is being done – will primarily be the FAR Committee. System uses 3 lines of checking / approaches to effectiveness of controls:	

Item	Subject	Action
	1. Delivery eg set up training courses. 2. Scrutiny by Trustees eg at committees 3. Independent third parties – 'assurance'. Third is based just on 'directed' areas – for example those we have asked Internal Audit to review. So we have decided to add a fourth where external statutory agencies are involved eg Ofsted or the LA.	
5.1.3	*Q: How will we as Trustees get involved?* To be decided but we need to start using it soon. *Q: Can Trustees get a summary of key changes from the system – new risks / updates / trends etc?* Yes system has a built in audit trail of all changes and who made them so we can use this as basis for future reporting.	
5.2	**CEO's update**	
5.2.1	Nuffield annual workforce report. • New areas include Behaviour and using AI for planning • Demand for more flexible working practices. Our sector often seen as less flexible than many other professions – which in turn may be a factor impacting recruitment • Curriculum review needed - "system not working well for all"	
5.2.2	Finance. Spring Budget Statement did not include any extra funding for schools. Trust has had an increase in funding – better than our predictions but still will not match cost increase. Predicting In year overspend including using 200K from reserves. 25-26 budget preparation: • Re-allocation of support staff hours to better represent deprivation factors is underway – with hubs lead involved • NI additional funding falls short of increased costs by 18K • Initial projected overspend for next year – without any action taken -is 387K. Comparable figure last year was c£1.5m. • Without any further changes this would leave reserves of c1.5m by August 2026.	
5.2.3	• Other updates: • RDD regional briefing from last month indicated nothing has really changed • Our approach to managing attendance is being copied both within and outside the county • We have gone back to the drawing board with regard to our plans for stimulating a culture of innovation due to a lack of budget – but several projects being developed including mixed age planning for Maths and oracy project at Lanner • Five year estates strategy being developed • Expansion at Portreath suggests they will become a net contributor in the future • Training centre plans being developed to meet increasing hiring demands	
5.2.4	Growth. • Marazion joined the Trust today	

Item	Subject	Action
	• Optimistic that Penpol will be approved by RDD – we will follow same process as regards final approval by Trustees and try to fit this into existing meeting schedule wherever possible	
5.3	**People Strategy update** CA presented an update which covered the following: • Our strategy goes beyond the traditional HR perspective – we want greater ownership across the whole organisation • Our own self-assessment against the Trust Assurance Framework and results of CST's survey of current priorities for all trusts suggest it is a common concern • No single reason for why we need one – but staff retention and recruitment issues a big factor • We already do a lot but haven't been collecting them together • A cohesive strategy with a shared understanding means people feel safer and can assist with implementing change • Studied a wide range of strategies from elsewhere – both education and corporate sector • Many are very complicated and long so feel clarity comes when you narrow your focus • 'Connect – Care – Grow' is our chosen approach - current focus is on staff but we could widen this to all the other groups • Have a four stage priorities framework – explore, prepare, deliver, sustain CA concluded her presentation with a customised grid showing a snapshot of where Heads have assessed their own staff in terms of leadership potential and performance. Trustees noted that this was potentially quite subjective and possibly over-reliant on individual Headteacher's views? CA acknowledged that leadership is aware of this potential bias.	
5.4	**Policy approvals**	
5.4.1	Complaints. No changes but not been presented previously. Approved.	
5.4.2	School policy for handling unreasonably persistent, harassing or abusive complainants No changes – approved.	
5.4.3	Executive Pay. Draft discussed at October Board. Approved.	
6	**SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**	
6.1	**Director of Education's update**	
6.1.1	Peer Review partnership with GLA. TL gave a summary of the visit – written report to be shared. Two foci: • Inclusion – an emerging focus the previous year • Maths – not reviewed by ourselves recently Process allows both parties to have a professional dialogue and be very honest. Very positive overall – following were highlighted: • Inclusion is very positive in all schools plus our 'success for all' approach • Kernow partnership at Illogan	TL

Item	Subject	Action
	• TAs mainly work with higher level students • Half termly Inclusion Clinic which has proved highly successful *Q: Should we be saying more about our inclusion clinic?* Yes – not a 'rescuing forum' but an approach to problem solving.	
6.1.2	Report to SIG Committee. Trustees noted the report. *NL asked if there was any update regarding the Small School Hub?* Options were discussed and each HoS can choose to remain in post or become a Headteacher. Two have decided to take the latter option, two more are deciding and fifth is off sick so there will be a delay here.	
6.2	**SIG Committee** 10 March Trustees noted the minutes of the meeting. AC highlighted the following: • Schools awaiting reinspection by Ofsted in a strong position • Positive feedback from Headteacher at Parc Eglos on level of support from the Trust • Committee members visited virtually every school in March • Significant progress made in managing policies and improved monitoring system for LGCs being developed	
7	**FINANCE**	
7.1	**Budget Monitoring** SP provided a brief update to support his written report: • We are 'moving in the right direction' eg the additional £240K income is not included in these projections • Notable increase in EHCPs brings some funding but in turn increases staffing costs • Support staff budget on track • No significant issues for any individual schools. • Main overspend shows at the centre – but most of this is decision to increase our capital spend	
7.2	**FAR Committee** 18 March Minutes and SRMS return were noted. NL reported that ICT capital spend proposals had been discussed in detail and the committee were supportive of them – noting in particular that officers had obtained additional local grant funding to support their proposal. Before making a formal recommendation the committee would welcome wider input from officers – in particular the school improvement perspective. Discussion noted the following: • Volume of IT is suitable – but extending lifespan of some is not recommended • Possibly reduce the 'pump priming' amount? • Heads and schools will say more is preferred Chair proposed making a decision now to avoid further delay. Trustees confirmed they would support the full amount but 'fine tuning' and final decision to be delegated to officers.	SH

Item	Subject	Action
7.3	**Letter to Accounting Officers** Meeting noted the closure of ESFA and transfer of responsibilities to DfE.	
8	**GOVERNANCE**	
8.1	**Members AGM** 7 March Minutes of this meeting were noted.	
9	**AOB**	
9.1	Decision on outstanding Governance Professional vacancy to be made at next Governance Planning meeting.	JA
10	Confidential item	
	Meeting finished at 15.16	

Dates of next meetings	
29 Apr	LGC Chairs
6 May	FAR
15 May	SIG
20 May	**BOARD**
10 June	LGC Chairs
13 June	Members
1 July	FAR
7 July	SIG
9 July	Strategy Day
15 July	**BOARD**