



Address:
Waterton Academy Trust
The Grove
Walton
Wakefield
WF2 6LD

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE:

6th July 2021

TIME:

6pm

LOCATION:

Held virtually using Microsoft Teams

Attendees

Chair:	S Johnson	
Trustees	S Bates	J Henson
	K Davies	J Shaw
	A Goudie	
Attending:	D Dickinson (CEO)	
	P Knox (CFO)	
Clerk:	L Clark (Governance Officer)	
Apologies:	P Beaman, L Rowlinson-Brown, N Shaw	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>1. Welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.</p>	
<p>2. Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies of absence were received and accepted from N Shaw, P Beaman and L Rowlinson Brown.</p>	
<p>3. Declarations of Interest</p> <p>The standing register of declarations of interest was noted.</p>	
<p>4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 2nd March 2021</p> <p>The minutes were available for review in advance of the meeting. Trustees confirmed they had read the minutes and there were no further questions or points raised.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held 2nd March 2021 were approved, and will be signed by the Chair when it is safe to do so.</p>	Chair
<p>5. Risk Register and Conditions of Care</p> <p>The CEO drew attention to the Conditions of Care set out in the report and confirmed that these continue to be met. It was noted that these remained unchanged, but will be revisited alongside the strategic planning work.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Trustees reviewed the report, confirmed that the Risk Register is up to date, relevant and includes effective risk management of the mitigation of risk.</p>	
<p>6. COVID Update</p> <p>The CEO referred to the report and provided a brief summary. The DfE had just announced an update regarding how class bubbles would not need to be in operation when the restrictions are relaxed. However, the CEO advised that all risk assessments (RA) are in place and a significant piece of work would be required to reshape RA for the final few days of term and the view of the Trust was to keep current procedures in place and then towards the end of the summer holidays review all RA based on the current guidance at the time to have appropriate RA and procedures in place for the return to school in September. The Chair asked for any further comment – Trustees supported the CEO and were in agreement to retain the RA and procedures until the end of term.</p> <p>The CEO highlighted that in recent weeks Wakefield had recorded a surge in covid cases and the Trust had noted a marked increase in relation to the number of bubbles collapsing due to positive cases, with a decision being made last week to close Walton Primary Academy (WPA) for a deep clean.</p>	
<p>7. CEO Update</p> <p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the report and explained that there were currently no conversions, however some early stage conversations were taking place with a group of schools. It was noted that anything which develops further will be brought to Trustees for detailed discussion. It was further noted that academisation is a government priority. The Trust has been successful in being shortlisted for the interview stage of a free school in Barnsley, and another bid is also progressing.</p> <p>An overview of the range of system leader’s duties was provided and the CEO explained he has stepped down as the Chair of the Wakefield System Leaders Network.</p> <p>The Trust has received an email to indicate that a staff member had been appointed as an assistant branch secretary for the NEU. The email additionally requested release time for 1 day a week for this team member to carry out union duties. After consultation, this request has been denied. A meeting has however been set up to discuss union support of Waterton staff, as Trust SLT are keen to establish positive relationships.</p> <p>A recruitment process has been undertaken for the Headteacher role at SKA (South Kirkby Academy) and an interim arrangement is in place for September until a more suitable substantive post holder can be secured. A SENCO has also been put in place for the school.</p> <p>A request had been received around setting up an assessment resource at CPS (Churchfield Primary School). Work was ongoing around this, a capital tender has gone out, and there is appropriate staffing in place. There are children who need this resource, and this would be set up with an aim towards attending children returning to mainstream education. A query was raised by Trustees seeking assurance that this</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>had been planned into the budget and that there was appropriate resources in place. The CEO confirmed that the funding was in place and provided contextual information to newer Trustees regarding a previous arrangement at CTA (Cherry Tree Academy) which was found to be financially unviable.</p> <p>The CEO has met with members of the Walton ASC to discuss concerns raised at previous meetings. All concerns were addressed and a positive outcome was arrived at, with a focus on the future.</p> <p>A brief summary of the development work was provided, and the IT development will be highlighted later in the meeting. The Apprenticeship Project is also going very well with cohort 2 commencing in the autumn term and plans being made for how cohort 3 will be shaped. A question was raised with regards to the levy and ensuring the funds were spent – more detail will be provided on the financial position in due course. It was noted that feedback on the curriculum had been excellent and those individuals participating will be significantly upskilled. It will be available on the local authorities traded services for schools to book on.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for the comprehensive update.</p>	
<p>8. Governance Officer Report</p>	
<p>The Clerk (MAT Governance Officer) provided a brief summary of the report, highlighting the proposed governance schedule for 2021/22.</p> <p>Trustees reviewed and approved the schedule.</p>	
<p>9. CFO Budget Report</p>	
<p>The CFO was in attendance at the meeting and provided an overview of the report. It was highlighted that reserves are strong which provides some assurance to the ongoing financial stability of the Trust. Next year further access to reserves will be looked at to enhance the IT infrastructure.</p> <p>Trustees' attention was drawn to the application from Wrenthorpe (WA) to their own reserves to improve IT provision and to create a library space – this has been approved by the local Hub Board and the process is being finalised.</p> <p>The Internal Scrutiny report has been submitted to the ESFA, and was shared with the group via teams. This process had been very forensic.</p> <p>All outstanding monies in relation to covid claims have now been received. Although covid has brought immense challenges there have been some financial benefits to some schools for example, non-renewal of school absence insurance; school trips have not run (typically not fully funded by fees/contributions by parents); realignment of some SLT roles at a number of schools.</p> <p>Budget setting had been a very detailed process; the finance team met with all heads at least twice to discuss. Some discussions were challenging, with some school specific and some general challenges faced. One of the most significant challenges facing schools at present is the Early Years funding and the significant drop in Nursery placements.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Consolidated budgets and summaries were provided. CI and SCS did not have a surplus budget forecasted, however any increase in numbers would improve the picture.</p> <p>A Trustee asked for more detail to provide a sense of the budget forecast return. The CEO explained that that document will be sent to the ESFA and the 3 year projection and work will be starting on this as soon as the budgets are all approved.</p> <p>Through questions and in discussion Trustees raised the issue of falling numbers on roll and schools which are not full. The lower number in early years and the reasons for it were discussed including, that there has been a low birth rate; some families have had a change in circumstance which means they feel a nursery place is less necessary; and additionally some anxieties around covid remain. In the past SCS have had lower number on roll, and at present KMA is not full. Historically schools will recover in January and April when applications for nursery come through so this will be monitored closely. It was highlighted that this is currently a national issue. Flexibility is also often difficult and schools are competing with private day nurseries offering longer and more flexible arrangements. A question was raised regarding the pre-school / nursery / EYFS models which the Trust are looking at. The CEO explained that the Trust will be putting a marketing campaign in place targeting those schools with lower numbers, and will include working with the schools' local community to raise awareness of the nursery provision and benefits of this. There is also the plan to create further pre-schools across the Trust. However, where it is not financially viable at present to operate a nursery at a particular school then decisions will be made accordingly.</p> <p>The CFO drew attention to the detail included within the report and invited Trustees to ask questions now or following the meeting. An overview of capital updates are included, with further contextual details contained within the COO report.</p> <p>The CFO highlighted the duty to appraise Trustees of the changes in the Academies Accounts Direction (AAD) 2020/21 and Academies Trust Handbook (ATH) 2021 (previously known as the Academies Financial Handbook (AFH)), to provide assurance that the Trust remains compliant. An update will be provided at the next meeting. A piece of work is also being undertaken to look at how Audit and Risk Committee arrangements can be brought within the Hub structure in an appropriate and compliant manner. Through questions it was confirmed that the emphasis is not solely on finance, but spans the work of the Trust as a whole. The steer for the internal scrutiny work should come from the Trust board, based on guidance provided by the CFO, and that an Audit Committee can assist in undertaking the detailed scrutiny. A Trustee highlighted that items such as cyber security should also be considered. A discussion took place around internal scrutiny, policies and procedures, and ensuring compliance.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CFO for her comprehensive report.</p>	
<p>10. COO Headline Report</p>	
<p>Attention was drawn to the detailed report which included a comprehensive HR and Estates update. The CEO provided a brief summary including an update that</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>discussions around the HR system were concluding; reporting is improved and a cost reduction has been secured. Case work is ongoing, and colleagues are being referred to the counselling service as needed, with this service enabling a number of colleagues to feel able to remain in work, and feedback continues to be positive.</p> <p>An overview of staffing re-structures was shared, including the re-shaping of the Estates function and of the role of caretaker. This restructure will also provide resilience and flexibility for Headteachers with regards to key arrangements etc. An internal TUPE arrangement will also be put in place with regards to the pre-school. A recruitment and sickness absence update was also provided.</p> <p>There is a need for significant capital works at SCS (Sharlston), with very high costs. Funding discussions have been underway with the DfE and are moving forwards positively and funding will be in place for a full building project to renovate the school. Work is progressing well with phase 2 of the AMD (Ackworth Mill Dam) capital project.</p> <p>A GDPR update was provided – there had been 6 data breaches during the period of January – April 2021 with only one considered to be reportable to the ICO. A report was made which was resolved with no further actions. MIS migration has gone well and data which was not initially transferred is now being resolved.</p> <p>HR and Estates are both very busy departments at this time, and it was recognised that the Estates team have very much worked very well together during a challenging time and feedback from Headteachers had been very positive.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the disparity between teacher and support staff absences and the reasons behind this. The CEO explained that covid had impacted this, but there was still a need to approach this with rigour. There was support and counselling in place and the well-being group had also been re-introduced. The COO will provide a further detailed breakdown relating to staff absence.</p> <p>There were no further questions on the report.</p>	<p>CEO / COO</p>
<p>11. CESO Headline Report</p>	
<p>The CEO provided an overview of the CESO (Chief Educational Standards Officer) report. It was reported that final assessments were currently taking place across schools. In the autumn term Trustees will receive the range of data, risk banding, and a clear picture of where all the schools are. Outcomes will still be recorded at the end of the year to assess gaps in knowledge and act as a benchmark.</p> <p>As covered previously in the meeting, SKA has moved forwards following concerns. A strong teaching profile has been put in place and the quality of teaching and learning will be the focus for September. Relationships with parents and the community are much stronger.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>A range of system leadership work is ongoing including the partnership working with EEF, Doncaster Research School and the One Wakefield Project. Annual reviews have taken place of schools due to have an Ofsted inspection in the coming months. The Trust review process has evolved to include deep dive activities carried out by senior and middle leaders, alongside SI colleagues evaluating the quality of the curriculum offer. C Davies (SI Reading lead) has carried out reviews which have been very well received and the DfE have requested she complete further work with colleagues in Doncaster.</p> <p>The whole Trust INSET day will take place in September delivered by the School Improvement Team, where key messages will be shared including the new excellence documents. The day will be held remotely in Hubs.</p> <p>There is the expectation on all schools to have added their data to Otrack so it can be analysed to ensure there is a clear picture about the quality of education across all the schools in the Trust.</p> <p>There were no further questions at present.</p>	
<p>12. Policy Updates</p>	
<p>It was noted that the Hub boards had recently reviewed and approved the policies as outlined, and the policies had been available to Trustees on Teams in advance of the meeting, and a table of changes included within the report.</p> <p>There were no further comments and the policies were approved by the Trust Board.</p>	
<p>13. IT Services Manager</p>	
<p>The rationale for the proposal to appoint an IT Manager for the Trust was provided by the CEO which includes the need for a move away from physical servers on sites to enable a more efficient cloud based provision. There is also a need to prepare for the growth which will come from the government's reboot of the academisation agenda. The role has been evaluated by external HR consultants and the cost will be met with the termination of the current IT SLA. Additional recruitment to the IT team will also be required. A Trustee who is the CEO of a MAT highlighted that they had undertaken a similar process and appointment and it had provided a significant positive impact to the Trust.</p> <p>In response to a question raised the CEO explained that a benchmarking process for the role had been undertaken, and technical individuals will be assisting with the interview process (an arrangement has been put in place for the IT lead at another MAT to also be part of the interview panel).</p> <p>Trustees approved the role and commented positively on it.</p>	
<p>14. Strategic Plan Objectives Feedback</p>	
<p>The CEO explained that the draft had been shared with the Hub Boards and feedback had been positive to date. The draft version will be shared with Headteachers later this week. The document will be updated and a version for stakeholders also produced, as</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
previously discussed with Trustees, and these will be shared with Trustees for further feedback and approval.	
15. Any Other Business	
<p>The CEO explained that the central team will be running on a skeleton staff during the summer holidays.</p> <p>A CPOMS agreement has been put in place today for used across the Trust and a consolidated system will now be in place. Detailed reports will be more readily available for Hub/Trust Board which had not previously been available.</p>	
16. Identification of Confidential items	
None.	
22. Confirmation of date and time of next meeting –	
<p>Based on the approved governance schedule meetings of the Trust Board were agreed as follows;</p> <p>Tuesday 12th October 2021 (face to face meeting); AGM w/c 6th December 2021 (date to be agreed); Tuesday 1st March 2022; Tuesday 5th July 2022.</p> <p>Trustees were hopeful to be able to return to some face to face meetings, however, it was noted that virtual meetings had maximised attendance and also had been beneficial in responding with speed and agility during the pandemic. The possibility of hybrid meetings held both face-to-face at the Centre for Excellence and virtually on Teams will also be explored.</p>	

MEETING CLOSED 7:22pm

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 6 July 2021

Agenda Item N°	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
6	Sign minutes when safe to do so.	Chair	Ongoing
10	Detailed breakdown relating to staff absence.	CEO / COO	For next mtg