



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

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of an Trust Board Meeting

DATE: 14 th July 2020	TIME: 6pm	LOCATION: Held via video conferencing (Microsoft Teams)
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Attendees

Chair:	B Cook	
Trustees	S Bates	A Goudie
	P Beaman	S Johnson
	D Dickinson (<i>CEO</i>)	J Shaw
Clerk:	L Clark (<i>MAT Governance Officer</i>)	
Apologies:	S Johnson	
Attendees:	P Knox	

ITEM		ACTION
1.	Welcome and confirmation of appointment of A Goudie	
	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, including A Goudie who has now been formally appointed by the Members of the Trust as a Trustee. All were in agreement that meetings should continue to be held using Microsoft Teams in the current circumstances, and the positives of video meetings were highlighted.	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
	There were apologies of absence received and accepted for S Johnson.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	The standing register of declarations of interest was noted.	
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th May 2020 and matters arising	
	Trustees reviewed and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 29 th May 2020. It was agreed these would be signed in person by the Chair once restrictions had been lifted. Actions from the meetings had been undertaken and it was agreed that all had been completed in a timely manner.	LC
5.	Conditions of Care	
	The CEO drew attention to the report, outlining how all of the Conditions of Care continue to be met. Work had been undertaken on adding additional detail to a	

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<p>number of the conditions, and Trustees were updated particularly on the 'capacity ratio' condition. Trustees confirmed that the Conditions of Care continue to be met.</p>	
<p>6. Risk Management</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the report, highlighting that the Covid-19 pandemic continues to be the focus. All schools and staff are working with the Trust central team, in particular the Premises Team to ensure all preparations, procedures and risk assessments are in place for September (including from catering and cleaning providers), and are in alignment with the current government guidance. It was noted that this guidance may change throughout the summer depending on the national data for covid-19 and therefore a Trust Board readiness meeting for September schools opening was agreed and scheduled for 25th August at 6pm.</p>	LC
<p>7. CEO Update (including Governance Report)</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief update on conversations, conversions, and system leaders' duties. The update on provision was expanded upon in more detail and the CEO highlighted the exceptional effort and hard work from all staff across all schools and the central team on providing provision throughout. An update on attendance numbers for the summer term was provided.</p> <p>There had been a boiler issue at Normanton Common (NCPA) which had resulted in the school closure for 3 days but this has now been resolved. During school closures the contact and communications with vulnerable pupils across the Trust has been very good, but there had been some inconsistencies with communications to all other pupils. The Local Hub Boards (LHB) had requested a detailed overview regarding telephone contact with pupils and this has been provided to the LHB and Trustees. The Trust website continues to be updated and the work is ongoing towards the move to the Office365 single tenancy for which a grant had been obtained. Government guidelines include the ability for remote learning should there be a spike in coronavirus cases which results in further school closures. Each child will have a personalised account and will be able to access and upload work. An update will be provided to Trustees once this has been put in place. Feedback from the hamper system has been excellent – thanks were reiterated to P Knox (CFO) for her work on this. A decision has been made to utilise the voucher scheme during the summer as although it is felt to be an inferior offer to the hampers it is the only viable option for the summer holidays.</p> <p>As discussed earlier at the meeting a significant piece of work is being undertaken on the preparation for the return to school in September, and this will be discussed in more detail at the Trust Board readiness meeting.</p> <p>Work towards the Centre of Excellence is continuing and is going well, however, there have been some issues with the library moving out in that the condition of walls, floors, and toilets are considerably worse than anticipated and more work will be required than originally planned. The CEO is overseeing works and the scheduled opening remains as September. The Guides to Excellence produced to date have been shared with Headteachers and have been well received.</p>	

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<p>The apprenticeship provider status has been approved – thanks were recorded to S Bates (Trustee) for his work on this. Provider status will allow the Trust to deliver accredited courses to staff and staff of other trusts, which will in turn generate revenue and improve quality of provision. The CEO has received very good feedback from other trusts on this. Work is also continuing on the range of IT projects across the Trust.</p> <p>An update was provided on outcomes as all schools have been asked to upload the latest data that they hold regarding assessments – baselines will be completed in Autumn 1 but this end of year data drop will at least ensure a reference point to close this year albeit under the challenging circumstances. Outcomes are unknown and will vary hugely across schools and children.</p> <p>Two Ofsted reports have been published since the last meeting; Wrenthorpe (WA) retained a strong Good, and Cherry Tree (CTA) have been moved from a category and is now Requires Improvement. Ofsted identified that the work undertaken by the Trustees to reshape the leadership team at CTA had been pivotal in relation to being removed from a category. There had been some concerns flagged by the Governance Officer with regards to the recent ASC minutes of Walton (WPA), but the CEO has met with the Headteacher to address this. The policy work is ongoing and will be prepared for the LHB for review and approval where appropriate.</p> <p><i>(A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to confidential minutes).</i></p> <p>The MAT Governance Officer drew attention to the governance update contained within the report, highlighting the work which had been undertaken on reviewing and updating the WAT Governance Handbook to align with the current governance arrangements, notably the move to two LHBs. Trustees confirmed approval of the updated handbook.</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the expression of interest and CV of a potential new Trustee following the engagement of Academy Ambassadors. The Chair confirmed that the video meeting with her had been positive; she was enthusiastic and has a strong skillset in HR and change management. Trustees commented on her strong CV and that HR expertise would strengthen the Trust Board further. Although the individual did not have experience of governance, it was confirmed that an appropriate induction process would be in place. Trustees recommended appointment to Members. The MAT Governance Officer will liaise with all and update Trustees.</p>	<p>LC</p>
<p>8. Budget Approval</p>	
<p>The CFO drew attention to the report and gave a brief summary to Trustees, highlighting the continuing challenges faced in light of stagnated education funding. A headline report was provided along with a detailed suite of reports should Trustees wish to scrutinise further. The reshaping of the mechanism for budget setting which had been previously considered in detail by the Trust Board was highlighted along with the research and training undertaken by the SLT, in particular the CFO, to explore and refine alternative funding strategies. The methodology for this year was to deliver an operational budget for each school based on perceived need, and for the central Trust team. As this is the first year applying this methodology there have been some very challenging discussions. Moving forwards it is anticipated that</p>	

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<p>financial reporting will be more efficient and reports will be able to be pulled off rather than require as much manual input. The CFO confirmed that the Trust are confident that an operational budget can be delivered across the Trust which will be monitored in detail.</p> <p>It was noted that during the covid pandemic, under the Government notice, invoices must continue to be paid, which has presented as a challenge. Initially it was stated that these costs would be covered but that will now only apply in situations where there are no reserves. In response to questions and through discussion with Trustees, the CFO confirmed that she is looking into a range of creative solutions such as whether claims can be made for specific schools rather than a trust-wide claim, or what can be claimed for in terms of PPE and equipment necessary under covid guidelines. The reduction in income streams such as breakfast clubs, after schools clubs and school meals have been vast due to school closures and compliance with covid guidelines. Staffing roles funded by income generation (e.g. afterschool, breakfast and pre-school staff) and not grant funding have been furloughed which has resulted in significant savings.</p> <p>The Trust central budget has changed from the original estimate as there have been a number of staffing changes, job re-evaluations and investment in software. An optimistic level of growth had been included but this has slowed due to the current situation. The Trust are confident that an operational budget will be achieved particularly with the additional income stream of the Centre of Excellence. A move towards one bank account will also be explored – although politically sensitive in nature it would still require each school to have a specific profiled budget as should a school leave the Trust then a figure must be available. Further collaboration between schools and leadership including the role of Executive Headteacher will also be implemented and this joint working will also realise efficiencies.</p> <p>The CEO highlighted that a slight amendment to the Conditions of Care had been made in relation to growth due to this slowing at present. It was also noted that as conversions are not in the pipeline, not all grants from the RSC have been achieved. A significant piece of work is the Centre of Excellence as a revenue source and the apprenticeship levy funding which can be achieved through the CPD work of the Centre and through other Trusts using the services provided. As well as income generating, this work will also upskill staff which will improve provision. A range of partners have already indicated their interest in buying into the training on offer. L Cavell is working closely with One Wakefield. Some capital outlay and purchasing of software will be required but this is projected to be clawed back. In response to further questions the CEO confirmed that a detailed presentation will be provided to Trustees in the Autumn Term. The CFO also explained that the relationship with the Local Authority has strengthened significantly and this has helped secure grants and there are some exciting opportunities to be further explored.</p> <p>The Chair made an observation in relation to IT costs detailed within the report and through discussion it was noted that costs had been higher than initially budgeted for due to renewal of licenses and investment in smartboards (many of these are leases however). The comparison was with the original budget but revised budgets had</p>	

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<p>been produced throughout the year and there had been changes, for example, to the purchasing and leasing of further laptops and smartboards.</p> <p>The CFO outlined that teaching supply costs have been significant this year. Following a review of this and the subsequent implementation of a teaching pool, 15 teachers have now been recruited for this pool following a robust process. Significant cost savings will be achieved in addition to improved quality of supply staff. Headteachers have been challenged with ensuring all staffing options have been explored within the school before turning to supply staff, and a process through the central HR team is now in place to request supply staffing for that day /period of time. It is anticipated that this will further reduce costs and ensure that schools have a thorough understanding of their staffing levels and staffing contracts.</p> <p>In response to questions and through robust discussion the CFO outlined that the finance team will working extremely closely with Headteachers to monitor spending against the operational budget to ensure that the budget is met. Headteachers understand that all review of leases, contracts, utilities, licenses and such like, are done in conjunction with the finance team and efficiencies will be secured wherever possible. Schools have a range of budgets due to various levels of deprivation and funding associated with this, but the move towards GAG pooling is continuing. The CFO has attended a range of webinars and will continue to look at ways to be more innovative and creative. It is important to balance this with not being dictatorial, but Headteachers are fully understanding of the challenges of stagnated education funding against a backdrop of rising costs. There is a direction of travel by the government to push growth and for small MATs to join larger MATs in an attempt to increase efficiencies, however Trustees were in agreement that the Conditions of Care will always be reviewed and followed closely and any growth considered will include significant due diligence. It was confirmed that this has also been discussed at Hub Board level.</p> <p>The CFO also confirmed that the finance team were looking further into benchmarking as well as a 'per pupil cost' and the team have been reviewing models shared from other Trusts in order to streamline further the work which is being undertaken. The CFO indicated that there had been some challenging discussions with Headteachers but overall they understand the model and what the Trust are looking to achieve. The CEO highlighted that the progress in the past five years has been significant and the Trust have created a change in culture with regards to finance along the way, however, there is still much to learn about the granular approach to finance and how to challenge further with regards to spend.</p> <p>A Trustee asked if there were other things which the Trust should be doing in respect of finance which they aren't currently. The CFO highlighted that the finance reports require improving and should be achieved more efficiently. A maintained school has a specific report, but academies do not have to follow this. The DfE have published a report which the Trust can now use to benchmark against a national picture. Work has begun on this and this will be brought to the Hub Board and Trust Board in due course.</p>	

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<p>Trustees discussed the continued challenge of budgets and spending and how this varies across the schools in the Trust based on funding variables. Some schools will benefit greatly from the move towards GAG pooling such a WPA. It was noted that some schools such as Wrenthorpe (WA) do not achieve EYFS funding as there is a pre-school, but it was also highlighted that equally EYFS funding has its own challenges and can be a loss leader.</p> <p>Reserves were discussed and how the challenges of covid-19 has meant that projecting outturn and final reserves for the year is extremely difficult, and has been impacted on by a range of factors. There have been a number of income streams lost, however, on the positive side supply costs came to a halt (only those who had been contracted for a long term cover were paid) and the staff absence insurance was not renewed at present. It has been reiterated to Headteachers that moving forwards reserves will be profiled to each school and formal applications to spend reserves will be made to the relevant Local Hub Board. Communication from the finance team is crucial to ensuring that Headteachers correctly understand terminology and methodology.</p> <p>The CFO explained that a key question for the Trust Board moving forwards will be with regards to remaining with the current position of holding one month's costs as per EFA guidance, or reducing this in order to effectively meet the needs of the children and suitably resource schools should they be lacking. The Trust Board is accountable for the outcomes of pupils, and a detailed, robust discussion will be required on the management of reserves. A revised reserves policy is in production and will be reviewed further by the Trust Board in due course.</p> <p>Capital projects were discussed, notably the extension at Ackworth Mill Dam (AMD) to accommodate the increase in PAN. The Trust secured a grant for this and building work is well underway. The premises team have worked well and efficiently with the contractors. The Chair reiterated that the CEOs endeavours in developing positive relationships with the LA and in securing such grants shows how far the Trust has come over the past few years.</p> <p>The CFO drew attention to the requirements set out in the Academies Financial Handbook with respect to internal scrutiny. Whilst there is an expectation for MATs to modify their approach to allow internal auditors to access records remotely, Trustees considered how this could be achieved. It was noted that the work of a consultant last year as part of the review of internal controls had been well received and progress on actions had been achieved. The agreed work schedule had been to review HR and payroll systems and to review the risk register. It was agreed that the piece of work need to be meaningful and it was approved by Trustees that these remain the key areas for review. The CFO was tasked with liaising with the consultant to consider and agree upon a methodology which includes remote access.</p> <p>A question was asked about the work towards a central communications system across the Trust. The CEO reiterated that the covid-19 pandemic had highlighted the differing communications systems in place at schools. The work towards the office 365 single tenancy, school websites, and MIS is moving forwards positively and will</p>	

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<p>streamline and enhance communications. Trustees were pleased with the work undertaken to date on this project.</p> <p>Trustees recorded their thanks to the CFO and Finance Team, and approved the budgets.</p>	
<p>9. Trust Officers Headline reports</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the COO report including the HR update, HR SLA, Estates and compliance work, and GDPR. Trustees noted the report and the assurances provided with regards to the employee hearings.</p> <p>The estates team are working exceptionally hard and have completed significant work throughout school closure and reopening to ensure compliance with covid guidelines. The team works closely with finance and procurement. Many of the central team are remaining working from home at least part of the time and this is something under continual review by the SLT.</p> <p>Trustees put on record how the Trust have reopened schools more widely in careful and safe manner to a high number of pupils in what have been challenging circumstances. There has been excellent work from all staff and a real collective effort. Thanks were recorded.</p>	
<p>10. Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft Equality statement and objectives <p>Trustees attention was drawn to an email sent out earlier this week to Trustees with regards to ensuring the Trust have an appropriate Equality Statement and Objectives. Work has begun on this which has been circulated, but wider review is required and this will be brought back to the Trust Board. In response to a question it was confirmed that the collection, collation and publication of sensitive and personal data will always be dealt with in line with GDPR.</p>	
<p>11. Feedback to / from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Concerns, Comments</p>	
<p>The CEO confirmed he will be writing to the Walton ASC following the concerns raised.</p> <p>A question was asked whether there have been any issues in relation to things such as Safeguarding reporting in the East Hub due to working across different LAs? The CEO confirmed that the Trust and schools work closely with both safeguarding boards. Next academic year further work will be undertaken to build the relationship with Barnsley LA and replicate the work and relationship that the Trust have built with Wakefield LA. There are opportunities for growth, and also for increasing SEND support. For example, Churchfield (CPS) work well with Barnsley LA and achieve additional funding for SEND. This is a piece of work across the whole Trust.</p> <p>In response to a question it was confirmed that although schools in Barnsley / Pontefract return in September on different dates compared to Wakefield schools this is not an issue in terms of preparing for the return. The CEO also explained that the Trust feels that it remains the most appropriate option to ensure that schools in a</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
locality align with their holidays schedule as this then then ties in with secondary schools in each area and ensures continuity for families in each geographical area.	
12. Identification of Confidential Items	
A discussion under item 7 was deemed as confidential and moved to the set of confidential minutes.	
13. Confirmation of Date and Time of Next Meeting	
<p>25th August 2020 6pm – Extraordinary Trust Board meeting (readiness for September)</p> <p>13th October 2020 6pm – Autumn Trust Board meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed that both of these meetings will be held using Microsoft Teams.</p> <p>The CEO recorded thanks from himself and from the Trust to Trustees and Members for their continued commitment, dedication and expertise provided throughout what has been a very challenging year.</p>	

MEETING CLOSED 8:15pm

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 14 July 2020

Agenda Item N°	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
4	Sign previous minutes – clerk to arrange	LC	In due course
6	Schedule the additional Trust Board meeting – 25 th August	LC	asap
7	Progress the Trustee expression of interest	LC	asap