



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

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE: 2 nd March 2021	TIME: 6pm	LOCATION: Held via video conferencing (Microsoft Teams)
--	---------------------	--

Attendees

Chair:	B Cook	
Trustees	S Bates	J Henson
	K Davies	S Johnson
	D Dickinson (CEO)	L Rowlinson-Brown
	A Goudie (<i>arrived at 6:45pm</i>)	J Shaw
		N Shaw
Clerk:	L Clark (<i>MAT Governance Officer</i>)	
Apologies:	P Beaman	

ITEM		ACTION
1.	Welcome and confirmation of appointment of new Trustees	
	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Introductions were made to newly appointed Trustees K Davies and J Henson, who had been appointed by Members at the meeting they held on 22 nd February 2021.	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
	Apologies of absence were received and accepted from P Beaman. It was noted that A Goudie would be joining the meeting late.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	The standing register of declarations of interest was noted.	
4.	Appointment of Chair of Trustees	
	The Clerk outlined that expressions of interest had been requested for a new Chair of Trustees, and one had been received from S Johnson.	
	The Chair explained that due to a change in role, whereby she would be joining the Trust as an Executive Headteacher for pre-schools, she was resigning from her roles in governance with the Trust (as Chair of Trustees and as a Member). The CEO indicated that an external consultant had lead the recruitment process for this role.	

ITEM	ACTION
<p><i>(S Johnson left the meeting at 6:10)</i></p> <p>Trustees discussed S Johnson’s expression of interest, noting the skills and expertise he would bring to the role, along with his dedication, commitment and passion for the Trust and achieving the best outcomes for children. He had been involved in governance with the Trust for a number of years, and had a breadth of experience of the Trust as a governor, director, Trustee and parent, and understands the ethos and values of Waterton. Trustees unanimously voted to appoint S Johnson as Chair of Trustees.</p> <p><i>(S Johnson returned to the meeting at 6:14)</i></p> <p>The Clerk updated S Johnson, and he was congratulated by Trustees on his appointment. It was agreed that B Cook would continue as Chair of this meeting, and would in effect resign at the end of the meeting. S Johnson thanked Trustees.</p>	LC
<p>5. Role of CEO as a Trustee</p>	
<p>The Clerk provided an update that a best practice recommendation from the DfE is that the CEO is not a Trustee, but instead attends all Trust Board meetings as an officer of the Trust. The Articles of Association in place at the Trust allow for this. The Governance Officer and CEO had put forward the proposal that the CEO is no longer appointed as a Trustee at the recent Members meeting and Members were in agreement of the CEO no longer holding the role of Trustee.</p> <p>Trustees resolved that the CEO would no longer hold the role of Trustee, but would continue to attend all Trust Board meetings in his capacity as CEO and Accounting Officer.</p>	
<p>6. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 13th October 2020, 5th January 2021 and the AGM held on 13th January 2021</p>	
<p>All 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 on 13th October 2020, 5th January 2021 and of the AGM held on 13th January 2021, were all approved, and will be signed by the Chair when it is safe to do so.</p>	Chair
<p>7. Conditions of Care</p>	
<p>The CEO drew attention to the Conditions of Care set out in the report, particularly for the new Trustees, 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>	
<p>8. Risk Management</p>	
<p>The CEO explained that guidance from the ESFA is that Trustees look to oversee the top ten risks identified, with operational risks being a devolved responsibility of the SLT.</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. At present, covid-19 remains the most prominent risk.</p>	
<p>9. COVID Update</p>	
<p>The CEO referred to the report and provided a brief summary, explaining that schools will be opening to all pupils on 8th March. All risk assessments are in place and communications with parents has been enhanced and it is strong and consistent across the Trust. Laptops had been secured from the DfE and all children have had access to appropriate devices. Staffing arrangements remain context driven and where possible staff have worked from home, particularly those in the central team where remote working is much more feasible. Lateral flow testing is in place across all academies and a high proportion of staff are engaging with this. Parental survey feedback on the blended learning and curriculum offer has been extremely positive with the majority of parents indicating that the offer is significantly stronger.</p> <p>A question was asked regarding the readiness to return, what direction the Trust had given, and where curriculum modifications are to be made. The CEO explained that the SLT had met with Heads, and whilst there will be no formal assessment a range of benchmarking exercises will be undertaken. It will be important to gain an overview of where the children are, and any gaps will be identified. It will be a significant piece of work and by the summer term there will be a greater understanding. The well-being of the children will be prioritised in terms of assisting them settle. It was noted that context is important, as some children will find it much more difficult than others, and some will have blossomed in the home learning environment. Therefore, any curriculum modifications will be looked at in a targeted and specific way, with support for Heads from the School Improvement team. The focus is on quality first teaching, and not ‘catch-up.’</p> <p>Through questions from Trustees and in a detailed discussion the well-being survey was considered. The CEO explained that one of the key aims is to reinstate the well-being group, which is Trust wide and includes representatives from all levels of staffing, and a piece of work will be to further communicate to staff the support available such as the counselling service. There will also be mental health training for all senior leaders, and work on the communications strategy to ensure signposting is strong. HR will produce a synopsis of the survey, which showed that some staff have struggled based on external factors, and this will be reviewed in more detail and an action plan in place. Mental health first aiders will proactively deal with any issues and more staff will be trained in this role across the Trust. The Trust will provide a range of CPD, and well-being continues to be a key focus. The monthly Headteacher/CEO meetings have a standing agenda item on wellbeing which also covers staff absence and whether any referrals have been made or are required to be made. HR provide regular communications to staff.</p> <p>Through questions and further discussion the lessons learnt during covid were revisited in relation to aspects such as well-being, risk management and IT. The importance of continuing the conversation on well-being and mental health was reiterated by all to ensure it is embedded in the culture of the Trust. The CEO confirmed that the well-being group will continue the work on this. In addition, the</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>well-being of children will continue to be a key focus. There is a teacher who is specifically tasked with this work across the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for the comprehensive update on well-being and commented positively on the work to date.</p>	
<p>10. Strategic Planning</p>	
<p>The CEO explained that the Trustees had begun work on this just prior to covid-19, but now was the time to pick this up and develop the work further. An outline planning session would be extremely beneficial to the Executive prior to bringing the draft objectives to the Autumn term Trust Board meeting. Trustees were asked to contact the Clerk should they wish to be part of this work. It was noted that J Shaw had been actively involved with the first piece of work and would continue to be part of the strategic planning group.</p> <p><i>(A Goudie joined the meeting at 6:45)</i></p>	All
<p>11. CEO Update</p>	
<p>The CEO provided an overview of the report.</p> <p><i>(A discussion was deemed as confidential and was moved to the confidential set of minutes [1])</i></p> <p>There had been some issues with the unions around communications which the CEO has addressed with the unions and this particular activity has now ceased. Recently there have also been communications from the unions with regards to staff wearing facemasks in the classroom. The CEO had reiterated the stance of the Trust Board that government guidance will continue to be directly followed and this does not include staff wearing facemasks to teach. Trustees reiterated the position of following the national guidance in order to protect the Trust. The CEO confirmed that all risk assessments were up to date and had been communicated to the unions for comment, but there had been no further comment received.</p> <p>Through questions and discussion it was concluded that a line ought to be drawn under the correspondence to the unions on this matter as the Trust stance is clear in that national guidance will continue to be followed and this does not include the wearing of face masks to teach in the classroom.</p> <p>In relation to a dismissal a governance panel had been convened, which met and upheld the decision of the HR panel. It was identified that guidance of the external HR advisor had varied from policy and this had been addressed with the organisation.</p> <p>The CEO updated the Trust Board that three senior level roles have been recruited to with very strong individuals: Headteacher at Normanton Junior, Headteacher at Churchfield, and Pre-School Executive Headteacher. At Normanton Junior, an excellent external candidate had been appointed, and at Churchfield the current Head of School had been appointed to the Headteacher position. The CEO provided feedback that this was an exceptionally strong interview.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>There are significant premises concerns at Charlston following movement in the building with c£300k having been spent to date which had not been budgeted for. The Trust have taken advice from structural engineers and have identified that the most cost-effective solution would be for a new building for the school. Conversations with the DfE were ongoing with regards to the spending of reserves, and in the meantime a safe and temporary solution is in place which is checked and signed off on a daily basis. A modular learning environment is likely to be needed in the short to medium term. The Trust has a number of estates projects which require use of reserves, and therefore it is not feasible to spend all of the reserves on the repairs at Charlston. This conversation with the DfE will be continued, and the CEO will update Trustees.</p> <p><i>(A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes [2])</i></p> <p>Trustees engaged in a robust and detailed discussion asking a range of questions about the premises concerns and the options for the future. It was identified that there was no recourse from the coal board, as the issues stem from sulphur, and the age and design of the building. The complex projects team are being met with on a regular basis, but the stance remains that a costly temporary repair which utilises a high proportion of the Trust's reserves would not be a the best solution, nor an equitable option for the schools within the Trust. A query was raised whether ESFA rules would be contravened if all the reserves were spent on this, but the CEO highlighted that the ESFA have stated that these are guidelines rather than rules regarding the spending of reserves. Questions were also asked regarding whether parental concerns had been raised had what had been done to address these. The CEO confirmed that communications are strong and parents are aware and understanding of the situation. When the modular classrooms are in place there will be further communications, and a meeting if possible, within covid guidelines.</p> <p>The CEO also summarised to Trustees that he has agreed to a meeting with MP Yvette Cooper to discuss wider reopening and any other issues; a range of development work is still underway; the first phase of the AV rollout is going well and is on track, and will bridge with the IT development work with the move to the single tenancy and the next phase of the move to a cloud based system; and the apprenticeship project has been delayed slightly due to current context, but the LA have contacted the trust in relation to rolling the apprenticeship offer across the city which is a very positive piece of work. An update will be provided on all of the above at the next meeting.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the CEO for the comprehensive report.</p>	
<p>12. Governance Officer Report</p>	
<p>The Clerk (MAT Governance Officer) provided a brief summary of the report, highlighting the key piece of work undertaken by the Governance Officer – a self-assessment of the NGA external review of governance and its recommendations. The Chair and CEO had provided further input, and a number of actions will be implemented with the new Chair.</p>	
<p>13. CFO Headline Report</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The CEO provided a brief overview of the report, highlighting that the accounts were presented at the AGM on 13th January 2021 and the auditors had provided comment at the meeting on the key points for Trustees. It was confirmed that the Chair receives the monthly accounts report.</p> <p>The report provided context on the national picture, and a summary of income and expenditure, highlighting that, although reserves have increased there are still significant challenges, and a range of capital works which have been discussed previously at the meeting.</p> <p>In response to a question, it was noted that the estates team is linking well with the finance team in terms of processes and procedures, and appropriate staffing has been put in place for specific pieces of more technical work on an interim basis. Compliance work continues to be monitored and managed effectively by the estates team.</p> <p><i>(A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes [3])</i></p> <p>A question was asked regarding differences in the level of reserves between schools and whether there was any correlation relating to amount of reserves and outcomes of children. The CEO explained that in particular South Kirkby Academy (SKA) have higher reserves but that outcomes which have been historically below national, have dropped slightly, but it is not through a lack of investment. The school is funded more highly than others due to the socio-economic context of the community. The CESO has a focus on this school, and a more consistent approach is in place around staffing and delivery of provision.</p> <p>There were questions and discussion around the reporting and how further information on the context of the academies could be shown.</p>	
<p>14. COO Headline Report</p>	
<p>Attention was drawn to the detailed report which included a comprehensive HR and Estates update.</p> <p>There were no further questions on this.</p>	
<p>15. CESO Headline Reports</p>	
<p>The CEO provided an overview of the CESO (Chief Educational Standards Officer) report highlighting how all national curriculum tests and assessments planned during the summer term were cancelled and schools advised that LA would not undertake monitoring and moderation activities. Once pupils have returned to school, work will be undertaken to look at pupil progress and attainment.</p> <p>It was highlighted that exclusions were predominately confined to NJA and CTA. In relation to CTA, the school has a number of children with behavioural needs requiring additional support, and some have moved to alternative provision (AP) which was more suited to them. It was confirmed that leaders have a strategy in place and work is progressing rapidly in both settings to address issues, and it was noted that</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>behaviour is much improved from historical positions and is anticipated to reduce further over time.</p> <p>The Ofsted position was reviewed, which overall is a positive picture, particularly in the West Hub. In response to a question it was confirmed that in the main, the West Hub schools have been part of the Trust for longer. The main focus of the work of the School Improvement Team is on the East Hub where significant work is underway. The only slight regression is SKA, and whilst it is difficult at present to make a judgment on this, with the focussed work in place, it is anticipated that the school would be judged as a 'good' by the end of the calendar year. In response to questions it was noted that Kings Meadow (KMA) had historically achieved extremely low outcomes but with the support of the Trust, the provision had improved significantly, as had the pastoral support and work with the community. The school had hugely improved and although inspection is not imminent, when it is next inspected in the future the Trust would hope that the inspection would recognise the significant improvements delivered.</p> <p>An update on phonics was provided including that options for Walton Primary (WPA) and Ackworth Mill Dam (AMD) are being explored as the schools meet the criteria for targeted support because a lower than average percentage of pupils met the expected standard in 2020. CTA and KMA are already receiving support from trust central teams and the Literacy Hub and improvements have been made.</p> <p>The partnership working was commented very positively upon by Trustees, including the work with the Doncaster Research School, and the Evidence Based Education (EBE) Project. The SI team are very strong and their work is making a real difference across the Trust and provision is significantly improved.</p>	
<p>16. Staff Wellbeing</p>	
<p>It was noted that this had been covered in detail under agenda item 9.</p>	
<p>17. Trading Arm proposal</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the work that he and the CFO had undertaken with the auditors and legal representatives, to discuss the option of setting up a trading subsidiary to deal with all the Trust's trading activities outside of the core business (i.e. apprenticeship delivery, consultancy work and supply services). Trustees discussed and a question was raised whether there was sufficient capacity in current workloads for this to be undertaken. The CEO confirmed that much of the work will be done through the auditors and legal representatives, but that there is the capacity to progress this. The potential tax efficiencies were discussed. A question was raised in relation to the contract of the delivery of apprenticeships and it was confirmed that the timeframes within any contracts will be adhered to and there would be no breaches of any contractual arrangements.</p> <p>Trustees approved the progression of the work towards the setting up of a trading subsidiary.</p>	
<p>18. Policy Updates</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>An overview was provided on the policy updates with attention drawn to the summary table of changes. It was noted that all policies are available on Teams. The Hub Board had reviewed at their recent meetings, and any comments incorporated in, and had been approved.</p> <p>The Trust Board had no further questions and ratified the policies.</p>	
<p>19. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>It was noted that the item of AOB had been covered under item 11.</p>	
<p>20. Feedback to / from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions / Concerns / Comments</p>	
<p>Specific feedback to the Hub Boards will include the ratification of the policies, and that a new Chair of the West Hub Board will be appointed due to their current Chair's (S Johnson) new role as Chair of Trustees. Expressions of interest will be sought from the Trustees.</p>	LC
<p>21. Identification of Confidential items</p>	
<p>Three discussions were deemed as confidential (two in item 11, and one in item 13) and were moved to a separate set of confidential minutes.</p>	
<p>22. Confirmation of date and time of next meeting – 6th July 2021</p>	
<p>Thanks were recorded from the CEO and Trustees, for the commitment and support that B Cook has provided over the years in the governance roles she has held, latterly as Chair of Trustees for the past two years.</p> <p>Consideration will be given in the summer term to meeting face-to-face depending on the guidance in place at that time.</p>	

MEETING CLOSED 19:50

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 2 March 2021

Agenda Item N°	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
4	Update relevant organisations regarding the new Chair of Trustees	LC	asap
6	Sign minutes when safe to do so.	Chair	ongoing
10	Contact the Clerk to express an interest in being part of the strategic planning work	All	asap
20	Expression of interest sought for the role of Chair of the West Hub Board	LC / All	asap