



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

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE:

1 March 2022

TIME:

6pm

LOCATION:

Held virtually on Teams

Attendees

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

ITEM	ACTION
1. Welcome	
The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.	
2. Apologies for Absence	
Apologies of absence were received and accepted from N Shaw.	
3. Declarations of Interest	
The standing register of declarations of interest was noted and no further declarations were made.	
4. Appointment of Vice Chair of Trustees	
The Clerk updated Trustees that formal expressions of interest had been requested but there had been none received. The Chair asked if there were any expressions of interest at this time and none were received. It was agreed to re-visit this ahead of the next Trust Board meeting.	LC
5. Minutes of the previous meeting held on October 2021 and December 2021	
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. The minutes of the meeting held October 2021 and of the AGM held on December 2021 were approved, and will be signed by the Chair.	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The Clerk will arrange for the approved minutes of meetings held virtually on Teams during the covid pandemic to be signed by the Chair (S Johnson).</p>	<p>Chair</p>
<p>6. Safeguarding, Risk Register and Conditions of Care</p>	
<p>Trustees were alerted to an amendment to this standing item; this item will now also include safeguarding (a standing item on agendas for meetings at all levels). It was noted that the Board should have an oversight of any issues of significance which are not dealt with under usual in-school procedures. This may include audits, interactions with the Local Authority Designated Officer or very high-level incidents. Having this item on the agenda affords an opportunity for conversation around safeguarding to be ongoing and meaningful.</p> <p>The CEO drew attention to the Conditions of Care set out in the report and confirmed that these continue to be met. Trustees were updated that the Audit and Risk Committee had met for the first time directly before this meeting, and a key focus of the meeting had been on the Risk Register and ensuring it was relevant, up to date, and focussed. The committee had discussed and agreed that the risk register be aligned to the Trust's key objectives with risks grouped within these, and ownership allocated. It was confirmed that the new Risk Register will be brought to the next Trust Board meeting.</p> <p>In response to a question, the CEO confirmed that a safeguarding audit is completed across all schools, and all safeguarding incidents reported on the 'Every' system.</p>	
<p>7. COVID Update</p>	
<p>The CEO referred to the report and provided a brief summary. The numbers of cases are reducing, and a letter has been sent out to all parents/carers and staff in the past few days in relation to the new national rules. The Trust continue to work closely with the DfE and public health and have utilised the support and advice available. A further letter will be sent out based on the updated clarification from the DfE around testing.</p> <p>The Trust continues to manage staff absence well, but there have been some difficulties as a high percentage of staff have now been affected, with some cases of second infections. The five-day isolation period remains in place. It was confirmed that the Trust will continue to record covid cases to remain knowledgeable of any impact covid continues to have operationally across the Trust.</p>	
<p>8. CEO Update</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the report and explained that there were currently no ongoing conversions, however some ongoing conversations were taking place which are positive. The government agenda is focussed on academisation and the growth of MATs. There has been a letter from the RSC which the Chair was aware of, and which had been shared with Trustees in advance of the meeting. There is also a conversation regarding setting up an arm within the Trust for SEND provision, where the pupils would be included on a different roll. An update will be provided if these conversations progress.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>There was no change to the CEOs system leader duties, with the exception of joining the Strategic Board of the Doncaster and Barnsley Teaching Hub.</p> <p>There is a significant piece of work ongoing with Cherry Tree Academy (CTA). There are plans for investment at Cherry Tree Academy via funding reserves, with an intention of improving the learning environment. Other school improvement plans are in place with a view to ensuring the school secures a 'good' judgement at the next inspection. The CEO is working closely with the school to provide a fresh perspective and work towards securing a good judgement. Trustees commented positively on this.</p> <p>In addition to this work, the CEO provided an update on the new, Future Leaders Initiative with an initial cohort to be deployed at Cherry Tree. This will place ambitious and talented staff in a school in need and will provide a significant opportunity for these staff. All Teachers have been written to, to alert them to this opportunity. Several staff have already approached the CEO around this. There will not be a formal interview process but will be robust discussions with current school leaders and a need for suitable references. The initiative will be a 3-year programme. After the 3-year programme the future leaders will be auto-shortlisted for internal leadership roles or will be provided with excellent references for any external positions. There was conversation around the recruitment challenges in deprived areas compared to affluent areas, and the need to attract quality staff to all schools. This is a pilot strategy, which will be repeated if successful.</p> <p>Trustees were updated on the Ackworth Mill Dam Ofsted visit, as the report had been published yesterday. The school had achieved a judgment of 'Good.' This was commented positively on, and the CEO explained that the focus is now on moving this school to Outstanding There will be a reshaping of leadership when the interim Headteacher at SKA retires and The AMD Exec Headteacher oversees both settings.</p> <p>An update was provided on the range of activities and events taking place across the Trust, including the Rob Burrow charity event. An invite was extended to Trustees and a calendar of events will be collated for ease of reference.</p> <p>The CEO invited any further questions, but there were none at present. Trustees thanked the CEO for the comprehensive update and commented positively on the breadth of ongoing projects.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>9. Governance Officer Headline Report</p>	
<p>The Governance Officer provided a brief summary of the work undertaken towards the undertaking of an external review of governance. Proposals had been sought for the review and the Chair, Governance Officer and CEO had met with the NGA (National Governance Association) and the CST (Confederation of School Trusts). Trustees commented on the recommendations report and all were in agreement to commission the CST based on their proposal which was detailed, robust and well researched. It was noted that CST are at the forefront of MAT policy and procedure. Furthermore, it had been the NGA who had carried out the external review in 2017/18, so it would work well for another organisation to undertake this review.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Assessment Centre are also included. However, these children will not be included within the KS2 outcomes as the centre is for KS1 children only. The school and Trust were aware of this in terms of the figures when the centre was set up.</p> <p>In response to a question, it was noted that the data at Kings Meadow (KMA) was not as strong as had been anticipated, however, a detailed action plan is in place and improvement is being seen. The impact of the covid pandemic has been felt across all of education, however it was noted that those within KS1 have been heavily impacted, and particularly those who are disadvantaged.</p> <p>Teachers are working hard following the first set of assessments to identify gaps in learning and to address these gaps. Headteachers remain confident that outcomes will be close to targets set and all are working collectively to achieve this, with a focus on children to be in the best position they can be. It was noted that whilst SATs will be taking place, these will not be published in tables.</p> <p>Trustees commented positively on the two recent Ofsted inspections; LBIS (Lee Brigg Infant School) remained 'outstanding' which, within this framework is difficult to achieve, so this was extremely positive for the school and the Trust. AMD (Ackworth Mill Dam) remains as a 'good' school, which again, was a positive outcome. Trustee, L Rowlinson-Brown who is a parent at AMD thanked the school leaders and staff for the wonderful work they do at the school and for the excellent Ofsted report. In response to a question, the CEO explained that leadership is being reshaped, to now move the school towards Outstanding, and a Head of School at AMD will be recruited for, working alongside the Executive Head. It was noted that the Executive Head is on a central contract (but paid for within the budgets of the schools she is working with) rather than allocated to specific schools to allow flexibility of support.</p> <p>The attendance picture is positive across the Trust when compared to local and national figures. The work of the EWO is having a positive impact, and schools continue to have high expectations for attendance. Persistent absenteeism (PA) is high, and these are often families in crisis who have then fallen into PA. The EWO works very closely with these families. It was also confirmed that as it is the mid-point of the year there is still scope for these numbers to reduce significantly as each missed session will be a lower percentage of the total.</p>	
<p>11. COO Main Report</p>	
<p>Attention was drawn to the detailed report from the COO (Chief Operating Officer) which had been shared in advance of the meeting and included a comprehensive HR and Estates update. The CEO also provided a brief summary of key points.</p> <p>There have been some central staffing challenges, including difficulties in recruitment and a long-term sickness absence. The Estates Operations Manager role was offered to the successful candidate. This role was reviewed at the request of the candidate, and a larger role including some services which are currently externally procured was offered to the candidate. Ultimately, the role was declined but has now been readvertised as the higher level 'Head of Estates' role. Equally, as a result of a number of failed recruitment attempts the Procurement Officer role has been reviewed and changes will be implemented. The procurement responsibility will be held by the relevant manager, with a Business Support Officer role to be recruited</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>to in order to provide the additional capacity and support required. The CEO has been working closely with the COO and taking a lead on some of the Estates responsibilities.</p> <p>Trustees commented that from a HR perspective the market is currently extremely candidate driven, with many areas being subject to role inflation and recruitment difficulties. The CEO explained that the Trust work with a HR partner to evaluate job roles within a set of criteria and pay scales to ensure objectivity and transparency.</p> <p>Trustees commented positively on the comprehensive report and there were no further questions at present.</p>	
<p>12. CFO Headline Report</p>	
<p>The report was shared with all in advance of the meeting. An opportunity was provided for Trustees to ask questions or submit comments in relation to the report.</p> <p>The Trust remains in a healthy financial position, with documents in the Teams file shared to support this statement, however it was noted that there will be budget pressures moving forwards. Savings have been made during the pandemic, and reserves have increased to £2.25million, with £300,000 ringfenced for Pre-Schools. The Trust reserves policy, in line with ESFA guidance is c£1m and therefore investment in buildings will be proposed, in particular the Lee Brigg and Crofton roofs and Sharlston boiler (this will be transferrable should the Trust be successful in securing funding to rebuild). There are other planned investments in ICT infrastructure. Walton is the only school in a deficit position; however, this has reduced from previous outturns.</p> <p>In response to a question from a Trustee regarding the reserves and which schools are in need of capital spends, the CEO indicated that there is a challenge on the reserves and potential clawback from the ESFA, but the Trust have communicated that the reserves have been allocated to specific significant capital projects. The CEO gave assurances to Trustees that the key criteria in SLT proposals and decision making is that this money should be spent at locality for the benefit of the children. A question was raised regarding whether the capital projects had already been booked in to ensure that any repairs do not get to a critical point – it was confirmed that tenders are out and work will be commissioned as soon as possible.</p>	
<p>13. Reserves Commitment</p>	
<p>This was covered above within the CFO report.</p>	
<p>14. IT Services Report</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the report. There has been a range of IT development work including a strong focus on cybersecurity.</p> <p>The Head of IT Services has also worked to review and reduce the number of licenses in place, as an example it was found that the Trust have more licences for smart boards than there are boards. There has been other work around phones, printers, remote access software, compliance, GDPR and future planning. The Head of IT Services has secured around £50,000 in savings to date.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Having an ICT team, and support for the Digital Support Officer has resulted in savings and improvements in the short period since implementation of this role. There is also now a hot desk space in Barnsley.</p>	
<p>15. Union Agreement</p>	
<p>The CEO provided an overview of the work which has been undertaken to date, explaining that further communications had been received since the paperwork was submitted. The NEU had requested to send a representative on a lengthy training course but there is not a facilities time agreement in place, and therefore the Trust had refused the request as it was not reasonable. The unions have put a clause in the contract that they want the right to challenge if a request is deemed unreasonable. Trustees discussed what the challenge may be and how this would be dealt with, and asked the CEO for further clarity if available. There were no further comments and the agreement was ratified.</p>	
<p>16. Policy Updates</p>	
<p>It was noted that these had been approved by the Hub Boards. The inclusion of the pay scales within the Pay Policy was approved. Trustees had reviewed and there were no further questions and all policies were approved.</p>	
<p>17. Any Other Business</p>	
<p>The CEO asked if Trustees request that the member of SLT providing the main report (rather than headline reports) should attend the Hub Boards and the Trust Board. This was agreed by Trustees. The CFO will attend the summer meeting regarding budget setting, the CESO the autumn term meeting, and the COO the spring meeting.</p>	
<p>18. Feedback to/from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Comments and Concerns</p>	
<p>The Chairs commented there were no specific points raised by the Hub Boards for the Trust Board to comment on.</p>	
<p>19. Identification of Confidential items</p>	
<p>None.</p>	
<p>20. Confirmation of date and time of next meeting –</p>	
<p>The Clerk indicated that based on the approved governance schedule of meetings the summer term Trust Board meeting will be held on 5th July 2022. Trustees will be contacted to confirm that this date remains suitable for all. It was confirmed that the meeting will be held in person at the Centre for Excellence, Walton.</p>	LC
<p>21. Walton 2 x requests for land</p>	
<p>The CEO provided an update the requests for land that Walton Primary Academy had received (WPA). The first request was from an individual to buy a section of the school's land to extend the individuals plot – the individual had been written to, to state that the school wished to retain the land.</p>	

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<p>A request had also been received from Walton Parish Council, requesting a section of land be gifted for a village green. The complexities of the lease agreements were discussed and the difficulties of selling or gifting pieces of land which were part of the school. There was also a reputational risk of selling green areas connected to the school. Trustees were absolute in their discussions that the green areas which the children have access too are fundamental in creating a fun outdoor learning environment, which promotes health and wellbeing, and respect for nature and the environment. All were in agreement that the benefit the children gain from access to such areas should be at the forefront of all decision making.</p> <p>In conclusion, Trustees declined the requests for land. Trustees commented that positive relationships and an ongoing dialogue with the local community and parish council were important and that communications should reflect that the school and Trust remain supportive of the community and their endeavours, despite not approving the requests for land.</p> <p>The CEO confirmed he will write to the parish council to this effect.</p>	CEO

MEETING CLOSED 7:35pm

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 1st March 2022

Agenda Item N°	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
4	Re visit Appointment of Vice Chair of Trustees	Clerk	Before next mtg
5	Sign minutes of all meetings held virtually during the pandemic	Chair	Next mtg
8	calendar of events for Trustees	Clerk	ongoing
9	Trustee skills audit to be completed	Clerk	asap
9	Explore technology for hybrid meetings	Clerk / CEO	asap
20	Confirmation of date and time of next meeting	Clerk	asap
21	CEO confirmed he will write to the parish council to this effect.	CEO	asap