



Address:
 Waterton Academy Trust
 The Grove
 Walton
 Wakefield
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Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE: 11 July 2023	TIME: 6pm	LOCATION: Centre for Excellence, Waterton Academy Trust
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Attendees

Chair:	S Johnson	
Trustees	K Davies	J Shaw
	L Harrison	J Wathen
	A Goudie	
Attending:	M-C Bretherton (DCEO)	P Knox (CFO)
	D Dickinson (CEO)	
Clerk:	L Clark (Head of Governance)	
Apologies:	S Bates, J Henson	

ITEM	ACTION
1. Welcome	
The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made for L Harrison (Trustee) and M-C Bretherton (Deputy CEO) as it was their first trust board meeting.	
2. Apologies for Absence	
Apologies of absence were received and accepted from S Bates and J Henson	
3. Declarations of Interest	
The standing register of declarations of interest was noted and no further declarations were made.	
4. Appointment of Chair	
<i>S Johnson left the meeting at 6:03pm</i>	
The Clerk provided an update on good governance practice regarding appointment of the Chair, and it was agreed that a 2-year term of office ensured transparency and objectivity. Expressions of interest for the role of Chair had been sought in advance of the meeting, and only one received – from the current Chair S Johnson. Trustees were in unanimous agreement to re-appoint S Johnson for 2 years.	
<i>S Johnson returned to the meeting at 6:05pm</i>	
Resolved: Trustees re-appointed S Johnson as Chair until 31 July 2025.	
5. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising	
The minutes of the meeting held on 28 th February 2023 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.	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>An overview of the actions was provided including that the Financial Management Policy had been completely rewritten and reviewed by the auditors. Given his expertise, it was agreed that J Wathen would review the policy on behalf of trustees and direct any queries to the CFO.</p> <p>There had been a delay in sharing the monthly management accounts with Trustees due to the work required to revise the budget – the auditors had been updated and were content with this. There had been an action regarding the cleaning and catering contracts which had now been resolved and contracts in place.</p> <p>It was confirmed that all actions had been undertaken.</p> <p>The minutes and confidential minutes were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.</p>	<p>JW / PK</p>
<p>6. Safeguarding, Risk Register and Conditions of Care</p>	
<p>Trustees were updated that there are no qualifying safeguarding issues to report to trustees. Safeguarding is considered to be effective at Waterton, with audits currently ongoing across the trust.</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a brief summary of the committee meeting which had taken place prior to this trust board meeting. The focus of the meeting had been on the risk register. It had been agreed that the ELT (Executive Leadership Team) will produce a policy statement on risk to be implemented with clear criteria for determining risk and the risk appetite – this will be brought to the committee and trust board for consideration and approval. The committee had also reviewed the external review of governance report and associated actions, the scope and quotes for the cybersecurity internal scrutiny work, and the interim audit management report</p> <p>The CFO provided an update to trustees on the monthly accounts reporting and requested feedback in relation to the information trustees felt they required to effectively discharge their responsibilities and provide the appropriate challenge and scrutiny. The Chair reported that he finds a headline summary report useful, with information on any variances which would then lead to discussions and challenge by the trust board. The need to balance workload with appropriate reports was discussed. It was concluded that top level information analysis was essential and should there be any concerns then more detailed monthly reports would be necessary. The CFO explained that there are simplified requirements within the Academy Trust Handbook (which comes into force in September 2023) on this. The use of PowerBi will also be explored in reporting to Trustees, as well as training from the CFO to the Trust Board.</p> <p>There was a challenge from Trustees that those schools which are consistently RAG rated as ‘red’ should have financial delegations removed. The CEO confirmed that moving forwards, the CEO and DCEO meetings with Headteachers (HT) will be more frequent, and HTs will be held to account for budgetary concerns, such as supply agency costs and overtime. The Trust Board agreed with this approach and removing autonomy of spending based on RAG rating.</p> <p>A brief update on the Conditions of Care was provided by the CEO on the growth trajectory which takes into account the current conversion and the change in the capacity ratio based on a school moving from RI to Good.</p>	
<p>7. CEO Headline Report</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the report highlighting the key updates, mainly that one conversion is being processed and an official application to the DfE has been submitted by King's Oak Primary Learning Centre. Due diligence is now underway and a report will be submitted to trustees nearer the time of the proposed conversion.</p> <p>The DfE have approached the Trust to consider an application from a primary school in Castleford to join Waterton. The CEO provided a summary on the financial, estates and educational background of the school and it was agreed by trustees that the details of this, along with the location of the school highlights that it would not be a good fit for Waterton or in line with our Conditions of Care.</p> <p>Resolved: Trustees confirmed that the approach from the school in Castleford would not be progressed.</p> <p>An overview of system leaders' duties was provided and confirmation that the CEO has increased capacity for this work since the appointment of the DCEO. Three strong Headteachers from outside of the Trust have been appointed to begin in September.</p> <p>Trustee Q: Is there a risk that there are pre-schools being set up in the RI schools? CEO A: These are areas of deprivation, and the pre-schools are being set up (from the age of 2) to attract pupils into schools from an early age to offer a better education and boost numbers in mainstream school, therefore attracting additional funding.</p>	
<p>8. Governance Report</p>	
<p>The Head of Governance provided a brief summary of the key points within the report, as well as a summary of the external review of governance. Trustees commented positively on this and the assurances it provided on the governance structure and systems in place. The HoG explained that further work will be undertaken on the recommendations from the report, and these are being monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>An overview of the work with the DCEO on ASC agenda planning and Headteacher report templates was provided.</p> <p>A discussion took place on extending the link Trustee roles – the HoG agreed to contact Trustees individually to suggest areas to link with.</p> <p>Furthermore, it was agreed to refresh the Trustee profiles for the website with an agreed proforma for these.</p> <p>Resolved: the governance calendar 2023/24 was approved by Trustees.</p>	HoG
<p>9. Finance Main Report</p>	
<p>The CFO provided context to the finance report which was the main report at this meeting. There are national concerns and challenges around school funding and budgets. Budget setting for 2023-24 has been extremely challenging across the Trust, with multiple meetings needed to complete the process in several schools. There have been some very difficult conversations and difficult decisions in some schools surrounding matters such as falling pupil rolls, lower intakes in early years, redeployment of staff, lack of appropriate funding for children with SEND. Some of the smaller schools have had difficulties in mitigating staffing costs, for example when there has been a maternity leave. At Charlston, there was a reduction of 21 pupils on the census last year which has resulted in a decrease in funding for 2023-24. A staffing restructure is ongoing, including the movement of a surplus teacher to the central team.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The CFO reiterated that in most cases, if schools stick to their agreed plan they will deliver a balanced budget, but there are certainly some challenges ahead. On a consolidated basis, there is a deficit of £30k and 5 schools currently showing an in-year deficit, two of which are significant.</p> <p>The deadline for the ESFA Budget Forecast Return has been amended to the end of August. Some sector professionals are of the opinion that this indicates the possibility of additional funding being assigned to schools. Until formally announced this will not be included in budget plans. The message being shared with the public is that there is plenty of money within schools. Although this may be the case for some secondaries (where the funding per head is higher), this is not the case for primary schools. Waterton hold reserves in the knowledge that their future depends upon those reserves. As a trust, forecasting and budget planning is completed cautiously. Expenditure is prudent; however, some expenditure is necessary, and some is unexpected. The trust maintains reserves within the levels prescribed by the ESFA.</p> <p>A specific question was raised by a trustee regarding SEND funding and the need to review staffing structures if there is inadequate funding. The CEO highlighted that the Head of SEND and Inclusion was reviewing this and looking at reshaping how schools work with SEND pupils which creates the right environment for the children whilst ensuring staffing is appropriate. A Goudie explained that this had also been a topic of scrutiny and challenge at the recent West Hub Board – ensuring children’s’ needs were met with appropriate staffing, but within budgets, and that other pupils in the class/school were not negatively impacted. Trustees discussed further and agreed that the emphasis should be on headteachers to work within the funding. Trustees were comfortable with the assurance from the ELT that a proactive dialogue with headteachers is in place, at an appropriate frequency and with the level of challenge required to meet agreed budgets.</p> <p>The CFO provided a summary of the position relating to supply costs. During 2022/23, supply costs have reached an unacceptable level. The culture of using supply staff for absence cover will need to shift and headteachers are being reminded of this frequently. The Trust ELT are exploring other options to address this issue, including looking to recruit an individual to the central business team who, as part of their role, would be the main point of contact for schools when requiring cover/supply. In response to questions, it was agreed that whilst there would be a cost in creating a new role, this could make a significant impact in reducing supply costs. Trustees reiterated the need for headteachers to be held to account for supply costs and managing cover, and the CEO confirmed this is on the agenda for the headteachers meeting and will be part of performance management.</p> <p>A question was asked by a trustee to see a three-year budget forecast. The CFO responded by confirming that work had started on this including looking at GAG funding, pupil numbers and other funding assumptions but highlighted the difficulty in forecasting three years ahead due to the significant unknowns. An example was given about the impact that sector politics has, including the number of politicians who had taken on the role of secretary of state for education in the past year, and the impact of government white papers and change in policy</p> <p>Trustees discussed and considered other strategic opportunities for growth and income generation including more apprenticeships and a focus on early year apprenticeships.</p> <p>The Chair drew attention back to the Academy Trust Handbook and the requirement for the trust board to approve and minute approval of the budget. The CFO referred to the report setting out the synopsis of each school’s projected outturn which provides contextual information, and the consolidated summary. There is a c£221k deficit across the schools, but taking into account</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Newstead SEND provision, which is now set up, and the surplus in trust central, this brings the position to a consolidated c£31k deficit. This was felt to be achievable by the ELT if further forensic Challenge is introduced.</p> <p>There remains a challenge in that future pay awards are unknown, and with staffing making up the highest proportion of costs the details of this have a significant impact on budgets. The trust reserves position will be c£1.5m which is approximately 6%, which is still felt to be a good position.</p> <p>Trustees scrutinised the consolidated budget and picked up that the document was incomplete and did not include the overall consolidated budget of all schools and trust central. There appeared to be a missing column and there was some confusion relating to which was the most recent iteration of the document and at what point the document had been uploaded to Teams for trustees to review. The CFO provided the figures verbally which were missing and explained the process by which the West and East Hub Boards had robustly scrutinised the budgets of the schools within each of their hubs. The discussion continued on the accuracy of the information and the timeliness with which it had been shared with trustees and trustees felt strongly that as financial accountability lies with the trust board and due to the confusion on the document, there should be adequate time for trustees to formally review the correct information, scrutinise and ask questions in order to fulfil their statutory responsibilities and approve the budget.</p> <p>The Chair summarised and brought the discussion to a close, highlighting that whilst he is confident there are robust financial governance processes in place, given the previous lengthy discussion and the summary document not including trust central, it would be appropriate for an extraordinary trust board meeting to be convened next week to formally consider and approve the budget. Trustees agreed that this was the most sensible solution.</p>	
<p>10. Education Offer Headline Report</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary of the overall standards of education set out within the report. All schools are either maintaining a good standard of education or have improved since joining the Trust. Based on current risk banding it is believed West End could be judged as outstanding. SKA was inspected under a graded section 5 in April and the school was judged good in all areas, having been judged as requires improvement when it had joined the trust. Similarly, Normanton Junior had been graded as '4' when joining the trust and had recently secured a good judgment.</p> <p>Attendance remains a pressing issue – trustees' attention was drawn to the figures within the report and the range of strategies employed across the trust to improve attendance, including the support provided by the Education Welfare Officer (EWO). Trustees were assured that each case where attendance is below 80% is thoroughly understood by the school and the EWO with targeted actions in place.</p> <p>In relation to suspensions, it was highlighted that an analysis of the schools with higher levels of suspensions reveals that these suspensions often relate to a minority of pupils, many of whom are receiving repeat suspensions.</p> <p>In response to a Trustee's question, it was explained that suspension figures tend to be less than the Wakefield average, however, some of the schools within the trust are in more difficult areas and present with greater challenges. However, with the Head of SEND and Inclusion now in post, work next year will include a more detailed review of pupil behaviour, and in particular how pupils with SEND are supported to reduce suspensions.</p> <p>The DCEO tabled a document which had been prepared for trustees based on the KS2 outcomes published today. A top line summary was provided that phonics outcomes were excellent (above</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>national) and KS1 very good (in the main, above national). However, KS2 outcomes were not as strong as predicted or hoped for, and across the trust outcomes are just below the national average and are lower than where they were last year.</p> <p>Specific attention was drawn to Cherry Tree (CTA) as outcomes were significantly below at every level, and also to Wrenthorpe (WA) which had some significant challenges but which are specific to the cohort rather than a school wide issue.</p> <p>It was highlighted to trustees that ‘reading’ outcomes were significantly lower than predicted in nearly all the schools, which in turn has had a negative knock-on effect to the combined outcomes. Maths has remained strong with a slight increase overall from 67 to 68 across the trust.</p> <p>A trustee commented that it had been in the national press regarding the difficulty of the reading paper and whether that had an impact on the trust’s outcomes. The DCEO and CEO explained that the pass marks of that paper had been changed to reflect this, and that it would be the same for all pupils in the country, so this was not necessarily an explanation for the low results.</p> <p>There is disappointment from all headteachers across the trust, and forensic work with schools is being undertaken starting immediately. In response to questions, it was discussed that for some headteachers the outcomes had come as a surprise, so there would need to be real scrutiny of teacher assessments and how targets had been set. The headteachers meeting scheduled for Friday is focussing specifically on outcomes and strategies required for improvement.</p> <p>The CEO stated that there is a reputational risk for the trust which he takes responsibility for, and although good in early years, phonics, and KS1, outcomes were not where they should be for KS2. These outcomes had only been published today, so now, forensic work will be undertaken to unpick and gain clarity and greater understanding of the numbers.</p> <p>Q from a Trustee: Is there a clear strategy around headteacher target setting, and will this be looked at?</p> <p>The CEO highlighted that the school improvement team will be in schools, and the first thing will be to review the target setting and assessments. To add further scrutiny, headteachers will meet the CEO/DCEO with greater frequency (monthly) and there will also be spot checks. The reporting will have to be more prescriptive and forensic to ensure continuity across the trust, including that of pupil progress meetings, teacher appraisals etc. There are some schools where outcomes and Ofsted judgements are strong (LBIS, CIS, WEA) but where the ELT believe that the school needs specific strategies these will be compulsory. There will always be professional integrity, but measures must be more prescriptive in future to meet targets and secure stronger outcomes.</p> <p>A trustee raised a point that phonics and KS1 outcomes were good, so it did not seem to correlate that reading outcomes were so low in KS2. The CEO reiterated the need for forensic analysis to gain a greater understanding of points such as this as the outcomes were only published today. This will then be reported to the trust board at the next meeting when that understanding is there.</p> <p>Trustees found some of the discrepancies between teacher assessments and outcomes, alarming, and requested reassurance that this will be analysed and reported back. Further information on regional data was also requested.</p> <p>Trustees shared the same focus of the ELT that outcomes must improve, and that being below the national average is not an acceptable place to be for the trust. Whilst there are some good pockets of results, and successes to be celebrated, there must be accountability for the significantly lower outcomes across KS2 with a clear plan of improvement.</p> <p>Resolution: The ELT will begin work immediately with headteachers to forensically review outcomes and put strategies in place for improvement and provide a detailed update to trustees at the autumn meeting for their scrutiny and assurance.</p>	<p>ELT</p>

ITEM	ACTION
<p>11. Operations Offer Headline Report</p>	
<p>A brief summary of the key points within the operations offer headline report was provided, including; an update from the DfE regarding the new build of SCS (Sharlston Community school) was expected very soon; the WEA (West End Academy) decarbonisation project is going very well.</p> <p>Recruitment had gone extremely well for the Headteacher positions and for Newstead Academy. An additional SEND allowance had been included for the TA posts at Newstead which had helped in securing high quality TAs. In response to a question, it was confirmed that this had been included within the budget.</p> <p>A tribunal claim from an ex-employee, regarding payments they felt they were owed by the trust following a maternity miscalculation and holiday payments, was successfully negotiated and no further challenge received.</p> <p>A trustee questioned whether the process/ mechanisms had been addressed to ensure miscalculations do not occur again? The CEO confirmed that processes had been reviewed and checks were in place to ensure this does not occur in future.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dying to Work <p>The CEO made Trustees aware of a charter to support colleagues through diagnosis of a terminal illness. This was not a legal obligation but had been presented by the Trade Unions. It was agreed to implement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Caretaker Proposal <p>The central team have commenced work to review the trust's caretaker provision across all schools and central offices. A proposal has been made to the new cleaning company, RCCN to extend the current tender and include caretaking services. This will involve a TUPE process for all caretaking staff. Over time, this will be cost neutral to the Trust, as well as being logistically more efficient, reducing headteacher workload of having to open and close schools at times and also recruitment challenges. This was also felt to reduce risk. Feedback from other trusts who have arrangements in place such as this has been very positive.</p> <p>Resolved: Trustees approved moving forwards with this process.</p>	
<p>12. Appraisals</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a summary of the way in which a homogenised approach to appraisals within schools is being implemented, with Headteachers being instructed to use this methodology to ensure rigour and uniformity across the Trust.</p> <p>The ELT will now jointly carryout appraisals of CLT members, using already established schedules and documentation.</p> <p>Trustees commented positively on the implementation of this and agreed it created a more robust structure.</p>	
<p>13. Building Strong Trusts; Board Discussion</p>	
<p>Trustees agreed to defer this discussion to the next Trust Board meeting, and review alongside the strategic plan.</p>	
<p>14. Policy Update</p>	
<p>It was reported to Trustees that the Hub Boards had reviewed the policies and recommended all for approval.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>A Trustees posed a question on the home-working policy regarding cybersecurity and the CFO agreed that the policy should make specific reference to this.</p> <p>Resolved: Trustees approved the policies which had been reviewed/updated and uploaded to Teams in advance of the meeting.</p>	CFO
<p>15. CFO/COFO Job Description and Appointment</p>	
<p>The CEO provided a brief summary for newer Trustees, that the Trust had not appointed a COO when the previous COO had left, and due to the appointment of a DCEO and the restructuring of CLT the workload had been reassigned. Therefore, it was proposed to re-evaluate the CFO job description to include some aspects of the previous COO role, and rename the office as COFO to cover the operations offer of the Trust.</p> <p>Trustees agreed with the job description being progressed to the evaluation panel.</p>	
<p>16. Any Other Business</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DfE Declarations of Interest Request - INSETS - Trust decennial anniversary <p>Budget – the discussions within agenda item 9 were continued briefly as the CFO and HoF had printed out the consolidated budgets which included the column which had been missing on the previous iteration and tabled this for Trustees.</p> <p>Action: Trustees requested further time to review the financial information before minuting formal approval of the budget. The Chair suggested an extraordinary meeting next week to enable adequate time to review and scrutinise. Trustees agreed with this approach. The HoG will communicate with Trustees to convene the meeting on Teams.</p> <p>DfE Declarations of Interest Request – This had been covered within agenda item 7.</p> <p>INSETs – The CEO confirmed that the Trust were looking at setting these centrally to ensure timing across all schools was appropriate.</p> <p>Trust decennial anniversary – The CEO advised that the ELT would prepare a proposal for Trust celebrations for the 10-year anniversary (2024) for the Trust Board to consider.</p> <p>The Chair reiterated the commitment of Trustees to visit schools and undertake learning walks – the CEO highlighted that he would continue to visit schools with Trustees to support this. The format of documenting the visits was discussed to capture evidence of monitoring.</p>	<p>HoG</p> <p>HoG</p>
<p>17. Feedback to/from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Comments and Concerns</p>	
<p>A Goudie, Chair of the West Hub updated the Trust Board that the schools within the Hub had discussed the difficulties of securing ECHPs and appropriate funding for the need required. There had been detailed scrutiny of budgets within the Hubs and feedback provided to the Trust Board.</p>	
<p>18. Identification of Confidential items</p>	
<p>There were no confidential items.</p>	

ITEM		ACTION
19.	Confirmation of date and time of next meeting –	
	<p>An extraordinary meeting of the Trust Board will be convened for Thursday 20th July at 12 noon on Teams.</p> <p>Meetings for 2023/24 will be held at the Centre for Excellence at 6pm (with an opportunity for Hybrid meetings when required);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7th November 2023 • AGM - 6th December 2023 • 19th March 2024 • 16th July 2024 	HoG

MEETING CLOSED 20:25

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 11 July 2023

Agenda Item N ^o	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
5	Financial Management Policy - agreed that J Wathen would review the policy with the CFO	JW	asap
8	link Trustee roles – the HoG agreed to contact Trustees individually to suggest areas to link with.	HoG	Autumn term
8	refresh the Trustee profiles for the website with an agreed proforma for these.	HoG	Autumn term
10	ELT will begin work immediately with headteachers to forensically review outcomes and put strategies in place for improvement and provide a detailed update to trustees at the autumn meeting for their scrutiny and assurance.	ELT	Ongoing / report at next mtg
14	Reference cybersecurity with Home-working policy	CFO	AASAP
16	communicate with Trustees to convene the extraordinary meeting on Teams	HoG	ASAP
16	Format of Trustee evidence of learning walks at schools	HoG	Autumn term