

Minutes - Board of Directors

Version: Approved
Meeting Date: Thursday 23rd April 2020
Location: Virtual via Teams
Time: 4.00pm

Chair: Airlie Fife (AFI) Interim Chair of the Board

Members: Nicky McAllister (NM) Director
 Su Coombes (SCO) Director
 Suzanne Carrie (SCA) Director
 Paul Olomolaiye (PO) Director
 Guy Keith-Miller (GKM) Director
 William Liew (WL) Director
 Adrian Coleman (ACO) Director
 Deb Atack (DA) [part] Director
 Anthony Cherry (ACH) Director
 Nusrat Arshad (NA) [part] Director

Attendees: Steve Taylor (ST) CEO
 Dan Nicholls (DN) Executive Director of Education
 Sally Apps (SA) Executive Principal
 Susie Weaver (SW) Executive Principal
 Kate Richardson (KR) Executive Principal
 Alison Fletcher (AFL) Director of CLF Institute
 Ian Payne (IP) HR Director
 Bryony Green (BG) Director of Corporate Services
 Sarah Lovell (SL) Finance Director
 Jon Jones (JJ) Principal BBA
 Wendy Hellin (WH) Clerk

Observer: Tim Withers (TW)

Apologies: Bethan Owen (BON) Director

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	Introductions were made. Apologies are recorded above. This meeting was rescheduled from its original date of 19 March 2020 due to Covid-19. Meeting protocols were explained. AFI welcomed Tim Withers who joined the meeting as an Observer. Jon Jones (JJ) is joining the meeting to present the Professional Development Policy. SA confirmed that an aural recording of the presentation from JJ will be made to provide evidence for his NPQEL course.	
1.2	AFI thanked ST for his regular updates to Directors and, on behalf of the board, thanked ST, the Executive team and staff in academies for all their exceptional work carried out in response to Covid-19. ST reported that the response had been a team effort and thanked the board for their support during this time.	

1.3	The updated risk register is included for reference at Flag A*. This is currently a starred item. This has been re-issued to show Risks impacted by Covid-19. These are highlighted yellow for ease of identification. The Academy and Governance Structure chart is included for reference at Flag B*. This is a starred item.	
2	Declarations of Interest/Member & Director Declarations	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meetings	
3.1	Minutes of the meeting of 6 th February 2020, and the minutes of the AGM of 6 th February 2020 were approved.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	<i>4.1 DN will commission some research into the possible correlation between academies with high levels of non-specialist teaching and poor performance. DN reported that the data has been sourced. The focus is particularly on Year 11. DN will include further information in the next 3 – 19 Education Report. This will follow at the next full board meeting. This item is covered in Flag D.</i>	
4.2	<i>4.7 The board asked that once the new HR system is in place, the employee relation case data is broken down in relation to protected characteristics. This will allow trends to be spotted. This is covered in the HR report.</i>	
4.3	<i>5.2.6 Further consideration will be given to the questions raised around climate change and this will be an area that is revisited at future board meetings. ST confirmed there is nothing further to report at this time.</i>	ST
5	Education Report	
5.1	Input from Academy and Executive Scrutiny	
5.1.1	The Academy Scrutiny panel, chaired by BON met on 27 th January 2020, and the outcomes are contained in the Education Report at Flag D. The Executive Scrutiny panel met on 23 rd January 2020 and looked at the work of the Education Executive Team with a focus around the strategic work, risk register, CLF Institute work, exclusions, attendance and performance across academies. Recommendations made are being followed up and the minutes are available on Teams. The Academy Scrutiny meeting due to take place on 16 th March 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19; scrutiny planning is currently on hold.	
5.2	Key Stages EYFS to Post 16 report	
5.2.1	DN highlighted key areas of the March Education Report.	
5.3	Questions from the board	
5.3.1	What are the proposals for national assessments for the summer?	
5.3.2	GCSE and A level exams have been cancelled. Student outcomes will be based on centre assessed grades. Ofqual have produced a set of guidance materials detailing how schools should find a grade for each student and a ranking. Centre-assessed grades will be sent to the exam boards and will be reported to students in the summer in the normal way via results days. Assessments for the primary phase have also been cancelled and we are awaiting national advice on how to proceed.	
5.3.3	Data in the Education report indicates that boys are excluded far more than girls – is this the general trend?	
5.3.4	The trend shows that boys that are in vulnerable groups such as PP or SEND are excluded the most. This is true in the federation but also nationally and discussions are taking place across external networks on what can be done to improve the picture for boys. The data shows that there were significant exclusions in terms one and two, but that they have declined significantly over term 3 and 4.	
5.3.5	Attendance rates are lower than the national average. What is causing this and how is it being tackled?	

5.3.6	Despite an improvement over the last two to three years, data shows that attendance has declined this year in almost all of our academies. Kate Richardson now leads in this area. A CLF Attendance Officer has recently been appointed and their sole focus will be the improvement of attendance across the trust.	
5.3.7	Is there any gender differences and social factors, such as period poverty, playing a part?	
5.3.8	It is likely there are some social factors but there is no firm evidence available. There is some very good practice going on in some academies around period poverty. The case remains that attendance needs to improve.	
5.4	CLF Response to the pandemic	
5.4.1	DN shared slides detailing the federation's response to Covid-19.	
5.4.2	The education section of the trust's Strategic Plan has been simplified to identify key work streams that need to be the focus during the pandemic. There has been further development of the CLF curriculum online, with over 150 blogs or lessons for teachers to use as resources. DN reported that the trust is now closer to the community than it has ever been and explained how the trust is to develop the idea of being a civic partner going forward.	
5.4.3	DN reported that colleagues across the trust have done an extraordinary job in developing distance learning. The slides show how distance learning has been developed. Work is taking place to ensure an effective transition back into academy learning for all students once schools reopen.	
5.4.4	Questions from the Board	
5.4.5	The CLF Online Curriculum looks great. Where is the information on Post 16?	
5.4.6	Helen Angell and Kath Cooper are working together to bring the strong Post 16 distance learning provision which exists locally into the trust online platform.	
5.4.7	Is the availability of laptop/broadband at home an issue for our students from deprived backgrounds? If so, how does our planning address this?	
5.4.8	In response to an initial survey shortly before the schools were closed, academies have distributed paper copies of learning packs to families where it is known there is no online access. Academies are now carrying out a second survey to assess need as it is evident that some households are, for instance, relying on one iPad. A number of devices have now been put into homes of both staff and pupils where we had availability and where we could ensure the resource was meaningful and that the necessary safeguarding measures could be put in place. Work continues to identify suitable solutions for getting accessible WiFi or data into people's homes.	
5.4.9	There are many families in hardship and the sector faces two problems: how to ensure families have sufficient food; and how to ensure connectivity to allow distance learning. Gaps will grow for disadvantaged students over this period and the focus of the trust is to ensure that the gap is as small as possible. Although it was announced that disadvantaged students would receive a free schools meal voucher over the Easter holidays, the trust had already put in place a plan to provide food for these students. PO noted that this support to families across the city already demonstrates the trust as a civic actor and partner.	
5.4.10	What has the response been like, across the trust? Are children engaging well with their learning?	
5.4.11	It is difficult to measure. Academies are contacting students in different ways depending on the age of the student and known circumstances. A number of surveys have now been circulated asking about engagement and barriers. The issue is that it is the most disadvantaged students that are likely to find it the hardest to access and complete the work; they may choose to deselect from education so we need to ensure the quality of the distance learning is consistently high.	

5.4.12	Do we know if distance learning varies in terms of efficacy across different attainment groups?	
5.4.13	Around the time of school closure a lot of safeguarding work was focused on vulnerable children. Learning support teams are still working during the closure with this focus. The difficulty is that we lose children, not in terms of safeguarding, but in their learning and progress. Academies will use a range of tools to assess where those students are, in terms of their education, when they come back to school.	
5.4.14	Given the widening gap, what is being done in terms of language provision for those settings that have a lot of refugee or newly arrived families?	
5.4.15	There is some specific work done in those academies where this is relevant. All family information and safeguarding links have been shared in multiple languages on websites. Academies such as Evergreen Primary Academy have been very proactive around support for those children who do not speak English as a first language. SA reported on the CLF Box Project which provided food, recipe cards and craft items to over 2000 families in need over Easter.	
5.4.16	What wellbeing support has been provided to staff and pupils?	
5.4.17	KR reported that a team of colleagues are working to support the wellbeing of staff and pupils during the pandemic, in addition to what is happening across the academies. There is a signposting page on the website for resources, we have some guest bloggers and counsellors available to support with anxiety as well as grief. We have provided a confidential email address for those that need to access free of charge support. There is also a community page with recipes and features such as the photograph competition. A virtual book club has taken place for staff. There are 157 colleagues that hoped to take part in the CLF 10K. This will now take place virtually and people can still sponsor colleagues – a link will be put in Teams.	KR
5.5	CLF Institute	
5.5.1	AFL provided an update on events that have taken place since the board paper was written in March. All of the teaching school council work has paused including the roll out of hubs. Recruitment of teacher trainees for next year is positive with interviews taking place on line.	
5.5.2	Recruitment to NQT is slower, partly as the recruitment cycle has been delayed. Many of the trainees have not yet secured posts. It has been confirmed that trainee teachers will still be awarded their qualified teacher status and move to the next stage of their career. It does mean that in September when they are in academies they will have missed a proportion of their in-school practice and will need extra support.	
5.5.3	Recruitment to NPQ qualifications continues with cohorts starting in May albeit virtually.	
5.5.4	Other online training such as Thrive and Maths Hub initiatives continue to run. The CLF Institute was successful in gaining a bid to provide training for schools to meet the statutory RHSE curriculum for next year.	
6	Finance Report	
6.1	SL shared slides showing the current financial position. Grant funding continues to be paid. Whilst there have been some additional costs incurred due to the pandemic, there have also been some savings made resulting in the federation's financial position remaining strong. Savings have been made in staff recruitment, supply staff and consumables. All staff recruitment has been suspended with the exception of key roles for September. Additional costs include increased cleaning costs and site security. The federation has assumed costs relating to refunding parents and stakeholders for things paid for such as school meals, lettings and trips. There have been no reported cases of fraud but control measures have been increased.	

6.2	Details on the financial impact across the trust have been shared in depth with WL and AFI. The financial position is continually monitored and may change on the reopening of schools. The forecast surplus for this academic year was £190K and the forecast has now increased to £633K. No adverse changes are predicted for next year as funding has already been received. The majority of student recruitment is secure, but there are some recruitment challenges to Year 12. Budgets for next year are currently being set based on a series of assumptions. It is suggested that FEG is delayed until later in June (but before the board meeting) to allow colleagues time to ensure all assumed elements of the budget are as accurate as possible.	
6.3	WL reported that he and SL have had regular discussions over the last few weeks and that he agrees with the approach SL is taking.	
6.4	Questions from the Board	
6.5	Will we be refunding all trips and potentially bearing the loss or will this be on a case by case / school basis?	
6.6	We are fully committed to refunding parents for all trips. There are around ten of concern at present and we are pursuing matters with the relevant travel and insurance companies.	
6.7	What would social distancing in schools look like when schools resume; and how are the costs of this going to be funded?	
6.8	We are working on a number of different assumptions depending on whether schools open fully or partially. Conversations are ongoing. It is anticipated that a monetary contingency will be required for reopening and another for the 2020-2021 budget setting process as well. In terms of capacity, a number of scenarios are being explored. It is likely that any return will mean that significant PPE is needed by staff or children. Where this is the case it is likely that schools would only remain open for vulnerable students and those of keyworkers. It may be that children do not return to school until the situation is much improved and the scenario is closer to that shortly before schools closed, where the key messages were around hygiene and hand washing.	
6.9	The Health and Safety Manager (Jo Crickson), together with the Compliance, Health and Safety Officers (Owen Dukes and James Lewington) are taking part in a national piece of collaboration considering what would need to be in place for academies to reopen and how that is assessed on a site by site basis. The intention is that this piece of work will result in a toolbox for all schools to use.	
7	HR	
7.1	HR Report	
7.1.1	The HR payroll has been implemented successfully with a strong success rate.	
7.1.2	Sickness absence remains a concern. During the pandemic period, some of the team have been focusing on producing some good resources for academies to use to better support the reduction of sickness absence.	
7.1.3	In terms of EDI, IP and colleagues are creating a diversity training package.	
7.1.4	Recruitment is currently taking place for Teaching Assistant Apprentices. A consistent teacher job description is now in place. Recruitment to senior teams has taken place; details can be found in the HR report.	
7.1.5	IP outlined the risks related to job evaluation. Further investigation needs to take place as well as discussions with Avon Pension Scheme	
7.1.6	The professional services pay review has been awarded at 2% and the national living wage applied.	

7.1.7	Guidance for staff and managers have been issued to staff as well as working from home guidance and risk assessment. Communications from ST to staff have been strong and regular and have been very well received by staff.	
7.2	Questions from the Board	
7.2.1	Can data on sickness absence include a break down by short and long-term absence and a budget number on the headcount chart (to show if we are above or below)?	
7.2.2	This will be added to the next HR report.	IP
7.2.3	What is the definition of a payroll error; is it errors with starters and leavers?	
7.2.4	It is incorrect pay received on pay day due to incorrect processing at our end or that of our payroll provider.	
7.2.5	In relation to the data on employee relations in Appendix A, please can you provide baseline numbers such as how many men and women there are overall? Some of the numbers are not clear.	
7.2.6	There are some differences due to the ethnicity of all staff not being recorded, whereas age is. Baseline information will be added for clarity in the next report.	IP
7.2.7	With regard to EDI, will Principals be reviewing action plans on their websites?	
7.2.8	The work referred to is an attempt to focus our attention to two or three main areas, it is different to the work of individual academies.	
7.3	Professional Development Policy – Jon Jones and Ian Payne	
7.3.1	The Profession Development process has been a focus over the last two years. It is intended that this moves from pilot phase to full implementation from September 2020.	
7.3.2	The first pilot took place at BBA during the 2018-2019 academic year. This year the pilot was rolled out to around 50% of CLF academies. The previous policy was tightly linked with pay progression, capability and annual targets for teachers. This version moves to a process with much more regular meetings and feedback and targets directly linked to departmental strategies. It aligns all members of the academy staff to the overall aims of the academy. It does not include those on the leadership scale; objectives for those members of staff will be more target driven.	
7.3.3	NA, Chair of the People and Wellbeing reported that this has been a focus for the People and Wellbeing group and that the process and policy has been reviewed by the group who are happy to propose that the board approve the policy.	
7.3.4	JJ shared slides showing feedback from Principals involved in the second phase of the pilot and slides showing improvements in student outcomes.	
7.3.5	IP confirmed that a checking process will be implemented to ensure the regular review meetings are taking place.	
7.3.6	The board approved the Professional Development Policy.	
7.3.7	NA confirmed that the People and Wellbeing group had also focussed on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking at hard to recruit subject areas – there are currently no perceived areas of risk reported by Principals; academies are broadening where they are advertising for vacancies. Looking at the use of supply teachers – which agencies are used, how we go to market and what other options there might be, including the over recruitment of teachers. Examining absence figures and looking at strategies in place to reduce these. EDI – this has not been a focus for the P & W group as yet this year but is on the agenda for remaining meetings this year. 	
8	Strategic Developments	
8.1	CEO Report	

8.1.1	The board are asked to approve a new name for Uphill Primary School upon transfer to the federation. The academy preferred choice is Uphill Village Academy and this is the name proposed to the board. The board approved the proposal.	
8.1.2	ST reported that the leadership forum, a group consisting of all principals and CLF Executive Team Members that normally meet fortnightly, has been meeting every week over the last four weeks. The Executive team are meeting twice a week. Throughout the Easter break many colleagues kept schools open for vulnerable children and children of key workers. ST had over 20 conversations with Principals over this period to find out how people were.	
8.1.3	At leadership forum, colleagues have been reflecting on what is on their SLT agenda and common themes include disadvantaged children, attendance, quality of provision of distance learning, rate of work completion, student reports, teacher assessed grades, the transition to schools opening again and planning for September. Colleagues have been considering what they are learning during this time, what their leadership role is and the style they adopt and what the role of the tutor is. There are questions still being considered, such as the transition arrangements and how to help staff and children deal with bereavement.	
8.2	Mid-year Strategic Plan Reports	
8.2.1	Area A – School Improvement, AFI	
8.2.2	The report for Area A was circulated in March and is available on Teams. The report shows that good progress has been made to date. It notes in-year additions and suggests some areas to fine tune the document to support evaluation. In addition, further work has now been carried out in response to the pandemic and shared with AFI.	
8.2.3	Area B – People, GKM	
8.2.4	This has already been covered under the HR report. The report is available on Teams.	
8.2.5	Area C – Infrastructure, ACO	
8.2.6	The report has been submitted and will be published on Teams. The review took place on 24 th February 2020. A number of actions were set for the year and these actions were well thought out in terms of supporting and delivering the objectives. In terms of progress the results were variable. Some actions were delayed due to events outside of the federation’s control (such as obtaining funding for a Post 16 site). However, progress has been good in places and some actions have already been fully completed. Progress in some areas is a little behind and might continue to be due to the added pressures arising from Covid-19. Overall Area C is in a strong position and it is anticipated that most of the actions will be complete by the end of the academic year.	
9	Governance	
9.1	Report from Chairs of Academy Council meeting	
9.1.1	A very positive COAC meeting took place virtually on Monday 20 April 2020 with full attendance. The agenda was refocused to support governance during the pandemic and to assist in the next round of Academy Council meetings. Positive feedback has been received from attendees about the meeting.	
10	Other Operational Issues (including PSGs, H&S, ICT, Safeguarding)	
10.1	Operations Report	
10.1.1	BG provided an update on events since the Operations Report was written for the March board meeting.	
10.1.2	Confirmation has been received that the federation will still receive the School’s Condition Allocation of just over £1.1m. A provisional plan for allocation has been produced.	

10.1.3	Planning permission has been granted for the development of property at JCA to provide further capacity to Snowdon Village.	
10.1.4	It has been confirmed that plans for Uphill Village Academy to join the federation will go before the Headteacher board in May with a proposed transfer date of 1 st October 2020.	
10.1.5	ACH declared that his wife is on the North Somerset District Council (not on the education committee). There is no actual conflict; the board noted the disclosure.	
10.1.6	Although colleagues are trying to continue as normal with regards to contracts and procurement, there may be some unavoidable deferment of some procurement activities.	
10.2	Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy	
10.2.1	The Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy has been produced centrally as a CLF policy in response to demand from academies and as part of the ongoing rolling programme of providing resources and standardising where appropriate to do so. The board approved the policy subject to the amendment of an unfinished sentence at item 11.2 of the policy, and the addition of confirmation that an Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out.	BG
11	Report of the Sub Groups	
11.1	Audit Committee	
11.1.1	There has been no Audit Committee meeting since the last board meeting.	
11.2	Finance Executive Group	
11.2.1	This has already been covered.	
11.3	Premises, Projects and ICT Group	
11.3.1	ACO reported that the PPI group met on 24 th February 2020 to review key risks and major projects. ACO said he was pleased with progress made, particularly in relation to improvements in Health and Safety at HWA. The federation has created an estates database to consolidate all data around condition and maintenance requirements; this will help ensure budgets are spent appropriately and essential works carried out where possible.	
11.4	People and Wellbeing Group	
11.4.1	This has already been covered.	
11.5	Remuneration Committee	
11.5.1	There has been no meeting since the last board meeting.	
11.6	AFI reflected on how much has been covered by the Executive Team, in terms of strategy, practice and provision and thanked them all on behalf of the board.	
12	Election of New Chair	
12.1	Nominations were requested in advance and one nomination has been received for Paul Olomolaiye. No further nominations were received. Paul Olomolaiye left the meeting to allow a vote to take place. The vote was in favour of the proposal. Paul Olomolaiye re-joined the meeting and WH informed him he had been elected as Chair of the Board. AFI remains the substantive Vice-Chair; no further election process is required for that role.	
12.2	The Chair's action delegated to AFI was extended to PO until 1 June.	
13	Any Other Business	
13.1	The next meeting is scheduled for 7 May – it is proposed this is rescheduled to 21 May 2020. The proposed date will be circulated by email in order that Directors can check their availability.	WH
13.2	The meeting closed at 19.10hrs.	