

Minutes - Board of Directors

Version: Approved
Meeting Date: Thursday 2 February 2023
Location: Microsoft Teams
Time: 4.00pm

Chair:	Paul Olomolaiye (PO)	Chair of the Board
Members:	Bethan Owen (BON)	Vice Chair of the Board
	Nicky McAllister (NM)	Director
	Adrian Coleman (ACO)	Director
	Su Coombes (SCO)	Director
	Bryony French (BF)	Director
	Suzanne Carrie (SCA)	Director
	Rachel Mortlock (RM)	Director
	Mark Davies (MD)	Director
	Anthony Cherry (ACH)	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
	Rachel Mylrea (RM)	HR Director
	Sarah Lovell (SL)	Chief Operating Officer
	Andy Ling (AL)	Director of IT
	Alison Fletcher (AFL)	Director of CLF Institute
	Gareth Jones (GJ)	Member
	Wendy Hellin (WH)	Clerk
Apologies:	Nusrat Arshad (NA)	Director
	Debbie Attack (DA)	Director

Minutes

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	PO welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies are recorded above.	
2	Declarations of Interest/Member & Director Declarations	
2.1	None	
3	Minutes of Previous Meetings	
3.1	Minutes of the meeting of 1 December 2022 were approved.	
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	1. At the last board meeting, a review of the local governance structure was commissioned. This process has started, and a report will be provided back to the board at the March meeting. SL reported that this will be completed by the Head of Governance if an experienced person is appointed to that role, if not, it may be that an external professional undertakes this work. An update will be provided at the March meeting.	SL

5	Strategic and Educational Updates	
5.1	Disadvantage even over, attendance first	
5.1.1	DN gave a presentation on Disadvantage Even Over, Attendance First. The slides are available on Teams. The next stage of the strategy is about empowering teams and individuals. The 'column' is well established and acts as a platform on which colleagues can be empowered and have ownership for improvement.	
5.2	Attendance	
5.2.1	The strapline for the education plan has been extended so it is now 'Disadvantage Even Over, Attendance First'. This reflects the significant focus on improving attendance across the trust.	
5.2.2	KR reported that she continues to work closely with Fiona Lightwood and academy teams on embedding the focus on Status, Belonging and Esteem. These three words are becoming embedded into the language used when talking about the attendance; it is an approach to support pupils to come to school and let them know they are valued. The focus has very much been on the gap between PP and Non-PP pupils, compared to the 2019 gap. The DfE are not releasing PP attendance data	
5.2.3	KR provided an update on current actions and strategies to improve attendance, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity in the column (use of data, attendance tracker, policy etc.). • Attendance Review visits. • Sharing data weekly and daily with daily targets set. • Specific focus on lowest attenders. • Close work between safeguarding and attendance leads. • Audit on attendance practices. • Consideration of setting up a DfE Attendance Hub in the trust. 	
5.2.4	KR reported that attendance is still not where it needs to be for secondary at 1% below national average. Attendance is just below national average across the primary phase. Despite a significant amount of action, the impact is not yet showing in the data.	
5.3	Ofsted Updates, timeline for EPA outcome, initial lessons learned	
5.3.1	The Ofsted profile of the trust has improved over time, which illustrates the 'trust dividend'. The focus on disadvantage reflects the difference the trust is making on the life chances of pupils, and this has been recognised by Ofsted. ST reported that the Ofsted profile of the trust was compelling to the Regional Director's Office in terms of the growth agenda.	
5.3.2	KR provided an update on the EPA Ofsted Inspection. The report details the judgement as good in all areas, with both Personal Development and Leadership and Management as outstanding. KR shared some of the Ofsted quotes with the board.	
5.3.3	This is the 6 th inspection under the new framework and the strength of the shared curriculum is coming through in the outcomes.	
5.3.4	The EPA outcome is a trust-wide collective effort. There are a number of leaders across the trust that have been directly involved in the improvements at EPA, including SW, Vicky Counsell, Chris Barratt and several other leaders and members of the CLF Institute and professional services team.	
5.3.5	Questions from trustees	
5.3.6	Can you provide some further information about the attendance hub?	
5.3.7	We were asked if we were interested in becoming an attendance hub as the trust met the criteria required (around specific pieces of data). We will meet with the DfE next week to learn more but in essence we would lead a network that we establish and then reach out to promote attendance. The DfE provide some funding and it works on a rolling Chair basis. There would be different networks in place and colleagues would share best practice and seek to rise the tide for all.	

5.3.8	There is a Northern Alliance already in place and the trust has benefitted from some of their shared resources. Their approach is different to that the trust would take. The trust focus is based on the 'Status, Belonging, Esteem' approach of supporting pupils and families to improve attendance. It is about making sure pupils feel valued, and missed when not in school, rather than simply getting them to school.	
5.4	Assessments and Exam	
5.4.1	DN provided an overview of the assessment and exam structure at each key stage phase. Raising attainment has been a focus for a long period of time, and the main contribution is the investment in high quality teaching and learning in every lesson, every day, and a well sequenced curriculum. Some equity is supplied to support some students to get the best outcomes as possible. The lead up to the KS4 and KS5 exams is well-practiced, and all academies have a 100-day plan in place (or equivalent). There is deliberate effort to keep the main thing, a main thing (the teaching and learning) vs strategic moves (interventions and strategies).	
5.5	Raising Aspirations	
5.5.1	SW provided an update on Raising Aspirations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The whole trust event takes place on 8 March 2023 for all 1600 Year 9 students. • It coincides with National Careers Week and takes place on International Women's Day. • There are keynote speeches from Rav Bumbra and Junior Saunders • There will be a focus on pathways for AP and SEND learners • There will be a range of pre and post learning within academies to ensure the CLF CEE Strategy aims are fulfilled and the Gatsby Benchmarks met. • The event is key in the CLF calendar but is only one part of the CEE strategy. 	
5.6	Professional Services Update	
5.6.1	SL described the new structure of the Professional Services teams. The Corporate Services Team has been separated out and there are now 6 teams within Professional Services: Operations, IT, HR, Finance, Estates and Facilities and Education. The post of Director of Estates and Facilities remains open; a second round of recruitment has commenced. Further interviews for the role of Head of Governance took place today and it is anticipated that an appointment will be made shortly. A Project Manager is also being recruited to support with growth, specifically due diligence, conversion and induction.	
5.7	Key Projects Update – WHA, MIS, LHA	
5.7.1	SL provided the following update: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winterstoke Hundred Academy – the additional build is on target for completion on 25 August 2023. • Lime Hills – the provision has opened successfully in temporary accommodation and there has been lots of positive parental feedback. The planning for the new building was submitted on 1 December 2022 and is awaiting approval; client engagement meetings are underway. • Management Information System – the procurement project is underway with the new system due for delivery on 1 September 2023. 	
5.7.2	Questions from trustees	
5.7.3	Is there anything that is not going well, or not on track? What are the challenges?	
5.7.4	The biggest challenge is recruitment at present. There are a number of vacancies to fill, and it is a candidate-driven market. We continue to explore how we can be more attractive as an employer. Securing the right people and ensuring we have the right capacity is a priority.	
5.7.5	Are the challenges in recruiting support staff or teaching staff too?	
5.7.6	At present we are recruiting well and have just completed a successful recruitment for APs and art teachers. We are trying to ensure we secure the talent we have and have started to	

	recruit SCITT trainees in readiness, especially for maths, science and English where roles have been hard to fill.	
5.8	HR – RM - One Year in the HRD role	
5.8.1	<p>RM provided an update on HR, having been in role for a year. RM described the position HR was in when she joined and detailed the developments that have taken place in 2022, including improvements to data and the insights that bring, particularly to EDI and wellbeing, and the improvement to the PD offer. The focus for 2023 includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and retention • Capacity and Systems to prepare for growth • Industrial relations 	
5.8.2	Questions from trustees	
5.8.3	Have there been improvements to the diversity of the workforce?	
5.8.4	<p>We are making progress. We have been able to measure where we are, looking at ethnicity and gender. There were some challenges with disability data as we did not have records on the system. In terms of gender, it is a 75% female workforce, and we are being creative to try to attract more male colleagues. We are aware of the gender pay gap and are supporting women into leadership roles. In terms of ethnicity, we have recently looked at the data for BaME colleagues and in November they made up 10.7% of the workforce, compared to 10.3% in August. The focus now is to drive this forward at academy level and try to ensure the staff make-up reflects the student population and the communities we serve.</p>	
5.9	Industrial Action Update	
5.9.1	<p>RM reported that all academies remained open to some degree on 1 February; six academies remained fully open. Student attendance was lower than anticipated and follow up was done in the normal way where students had been expected on site but had not attended. There were picket lines at 11 academies (mostly secondary). ST described the media coverage and noted that the focus in the media was around how important the role of the teacher is.</p>	
5.9.2	<p>The next proposed strike action days are 2,15 and 16 March and academies will use the intelligence gathered from 1 February to assist in their planning of those days.</p>	
5.9.3	Questions from trustees	
5.9.4	There is likely to be some unhelpful feedback from parents, who ask why it is okay for children to miss school due to the strikes, whereas holidays are strictly not permitted. Does the trust have an answer prepared for that scenario?	
5.9.5	<p>Principals will respond, in these cases, to confirm this is a national dispute, not a dispute with the trust or with the school. However, it is unlikely that there will be a satisfactory answer for those small minority of parents.</p>	
5.10	Boolean Maths Hub Conference, Five Counties Developments	
5.10.1	<p>AFL provided an update on the very successful Boolean Maths Hub Conference that took place at Taunton Racecourse with over 2000 people in attendance. A lot of positive feedback has been received about the event. ACH confirmed this and congratulated AFL on her leadership of this event. ACH noted it was a great advertisement, not just for the Boolean Maths Hub, but for the whole trust.</p>	
5.10.2	<p>Work on the Five Counties developments continues at huge pace. A second cohort of leaders has been enrolled. There is a conference taking place at Taunton Racecourse on 8 February, focusing on disadvantage and SEND.</p>	
5.11	Growth	
5.11.1	<p>MD provided an update on the Growth Sub-committee meeting of 1 February 2023. The minutes of that meeting are available in Teams:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Regional Director's office is in support of the trust taking forward a large plan of priorities rather than a piecemeal approach and support the trust's ambition to grow. The proposal to create and grow further clusters is a deliberate strategy; there are some examples of where there are real opportunities to grow strong clusters over time, including in Somerset and Gloucestershire. The growth opportunities are made up of a range of sectors including AP and special. The growth sub-committee were reassured around the plans to grow capacity in the staffing teams to support the planned growth. Waycroft has identified the CLF as its preferred MAT – it has 3 primary academies in South Bristol; due diligence has now commenced for that project. The agenda is also moving forward for 2 of the provisions within Learn@; one with a site in Taunton, and one with 2 sites (one in South Bristol and one in Bath). 	
5.11.2	ACH advised that during the Growth Committee meeting, members gave challenge around the prioritisation of different opportunities and received clarification around why particular projects were being considered first, and in line with the trust's core principles. Challenge was also given around process capacity and future governance.	
5.11.3	ST advised there have been a number of meetings with the DfE and that agreeing the timeline had been key in terms of ensuring the trust had the capacity to take these projects forward at a suitable pace. The DfE has agreed that at the Advisory Board on 20 February, a wide number of opportunities will be considered, so that if agreed, the trust can move forward on those without the need to return to the DfE for each matter individually.	
5.11.4	At the meeting of 20 February, Tewkesbury School will be discussed, and it is likely to be in a transfer position. Further to this, some discussions have commenced with a primary school in Tewkesbury, the pupils of which all go to Tewkesbury School, meaning this could start a new cluster. Additional information about Heathfield School is likely to be available after half term; this is the school currently being led on an interim basis by Hannah Jones (VP at Hans Price) and the trust is supporting it with a variety of school improvement support.	
5.11.5	Questions from trustees	
5.11.6	Is there any funding that will come from the DfE to support the CLF to grow?	
5.11.7	There are three funds that we can seek funding from including TCaF. The trust has already applied, and been successful, in receiving funding for Lime Hills Academy. The window opens again in March, and a further application will be submitted.	
5.12	Board Update	
5.12.1	<p>Terms of Office and Vacancies</p> <p>ST advised that ACH and NM are coming to the end of their second term of office as trustees. NA has also informed the trust that she will be resigning in March. This will result in three vacancies. ACH is also a Director of CAB TL and John Cabot Ventures; this will result in vacancies for those companies. ST invited Directors to consider if they would be willing to be a Director of either of those trading companies.</p>	
6	Finance	
6.1	Finance Update	
6.1.1	<p>SL provided an update on the management accounts as at December 2022 and highlighted key risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The accounts are in a good position despite some challenges brought by the energy increases and pay awards. Income is £2.8m favourable to budget. Total Staff Costs are £1.9m adverse to budget. Other costs are £1.5m adverse to budget. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Savings target still to be realised of £480k and included in the FOT (£360k achieved). Overall deficit of £273k forecast against a £300k surplus, adverse variance of £547k Mainstream schools will have an additional grant, this will total approximately £1m and has not yet been included in the figures. The cash flow and balance sheet are healthy. The reserves are estimated to close at £5m. 	
6.1.2	Questions from trustees	
6.1.3	You referred to identifying savings to mitigate the pay award. Can you give some specific examples of the things schools have done to meet their targets?	
6.1.4	We provided academies with a list of opportunities to explore to achieve savings; there were a whole range of approaches taken. The onus was on the Principals (with support) to identify the opportunities for savings. Some examples have included delaying recruitment to particular roles (whether by design or inability to recruit) and being creative around the educational supply spend. Some of the improvement projects that were desired but not essential have also been put on hold. The Principals know their budgets really well. The strike will have inadvertently also brought about some salary savings.	
6.1.5	Will the additional £1m be used to improve performance across the trust?	
6.1.6	We have been discussing capacity at KOA and this will be further considered at the Executive Team meeting on Monday. ACTION: SL to provide an update on the planned spend for the additional £1m at the March board meeting.	SL
7	Other Operational Issues	
7.1	Determination of Admissions Policies	
7.1.1	At the October board meeting, the board approved that we go out to consultation as part of the review of the admissions policy for Frome Vale Academy. No changes are proposed to the policy; the consultation was required due to it not having been consulted on during the previous 7 years. There has been no feedback during the consultation period and therefore the policy remains unchanged. It is therefore proposed that the board approves the proposal to determine the admissions policy for Frome Vale Academy. All other admissions policies are remaining as is and will be approved through the Academy Councils before 28 February when we must have determined all policies.	
7.1.2	The board approved the policy.	
7.2	MIS procurement	
7.2.1	In order to progress the procurement of a new MIS system, it is proposed that the board delegate authority to 2 trustees to review and approve the contract. The overall contract value will be in the region of £1.2m. The board delegated authority to MD and ACO.	
8	Confidential Item	
8.1	ST described the current model of line management for Principals across both the secondary and primary phase. Currently the model includes Senior Principals (SPs) that have responsibility for areas beyond their own academy, often including line management of another Principal. In order to carry out their role as Principal of their own academy, they cannot be released for more than a day a week regularly, and two days occasionally. In addition, the Executive Principals (EPs) have line management responsibility for several academies.	
8.2	There are some very experienced EPs and SPs, and they are well-respected, high-profile leaders. Over time the role of the EP has developed and there is now a bigger focus on trust wide strategic developments. It is not anticipated that the Executive Team will grow beyond its current size, but the rather some of the roles will be reconsidered.	
8.3	The proposal is to create space between the school and Executive Team and in that space will be the Executive Principals, to line manage the Principals in academies and check, support and challenge the work being carried out through school improvement. The current	

	Executive Principal role will become Education Directors, and these will be more strategic roles, looking at trust wide initiatives. The next steps, following agreement from the board, is to enter a period of consultation with the current Deputy CEO and current EPs.	
8.4	Questions from trustees	
8.5	Will the Education Directors (Eds) have line management responsibility for Principals?	
8.5.1	Yes, it will be a gradual process to develop the capacity over time and initially the EDs will need to continue to line manage some Principals. We will stop appointing Senior Principals and will begin to recruit EPs. Over time we can develop the model to decide how many EDs and EPs are needed, and the skillset required at each level. There will be a geographical cluster model (cross phase), with each group having an established large cluster of schools, sitting alongside a new cluster with a smaller number of schools (such as South Glos/Gloucestershire). It will have one ED and one EP overseeing that geographical area. Specialisms will be considered; if the ED is a primary specialist, the EP will be a secondary specialist and vice versa.	
8.6	Have you looked to other sizable MATs to see how their structures work?	
8.6.1	Yes, we have looked at around 30 other MATs and have tried to look at comparable ones. It is common to see Regional Directors or Education Directors in place. Executive Principals are often school based working across two or more schools; this no longer fits with how our EPs operate. We are also reviewing the salary structure for senior leaders, and we have carried out some research and benchmarking, as well as reviewing the analysis carried out by the previous HR Director in 2015. We have looked at local and national MATs and also looked overseas to America and Australia to see the models there.	
8.7	End of Questions	
8.8	ST advised that he has talked to each EP and the EDoE individually about the proposed model; if the board approve the proposal, the next step is to move to formal consultation.	
8.9	The board approved the proposal.	
9	Any Other Business	
9.1	No further business was reported. The meeting closed at 6.18pm.	