

Board of Trustees

Wednesday 6 December 2023, 4.30pm

Great Moor House, Exeter

Attended:

Philip Bostock (PB) – Interim Chair	Teresa Gardner (TG)
James Frampton (JF)	Richard Jacobs (RJ)
Lindsay Hetherington (LH) <i>Virtually</i>	Jade Otty (JO)
Sarah O’Meara (SOM)	Moira Marder (MM) – CEO
Saxon Spence (SS) <i>Virtually</i>	Crispin Taylor (CT)
Alex Walmsley (AW)	
In Attendance	
Melody Floyde (MF) – Trust Governance Coordinator	Lorraine Mitchell (LM) – Head of Corporate Governance & Compliance
Jon Lunn (JL) – Director of Education Performance	Sue Pym (SP) – Executive Director of Finance & Estates
Andy Mulcock – Observing Meeting Virtually	

Apologies:

<p>Lee Elliot-Major (LEM)</p> <p>Ben Manning (BM)</p> <p>Tamsin Frances (TF) – Executive Director of People, Strategy & IT</p> <p>Tim Rutherford (TR) – Deputy CEO</p>
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Meeting Minutes

Item No.	Business	Action
1.	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Philip Bostock welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Andy Mulcock, Lee Elliot-Major, Ben Manning. Tim Rutherford and Tamsin Frances.</p> <p>Declarations of interest were noted, as follows: AW: Director, First Federation Trust & Member of Diocesan Education Group AW, RJ, SP: Directors, Fusion School Services Ltd</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Previous Meeting and Update on Actions.</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 11.10.23 were approved as a full and accurate record.</p> <p>All actions were recorded as complete or in progress.</p>	

3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>None</p>	
4.	<p>LGB & Trust Board Update</p> <p><u>Appointments & Resignations</u></p> <p>Trustees reviewed and noted the recent Governor Resignations. The new interim Chair at QE, Keith Baker, was confirmed.</p> <p>Roger Williams was approved as a Co-opted Governor at Marine Academy Secondary.</p> <p>The following elected governor appointments were noted:</p> <p>Theo Zimble – Staff Governor, Matford Brook (subject to SCR checks) Diane Evely – Parent Governor, QE (subject to SCR checks)</p> <p>Action: MF to formally confirm appointments by the usual process.</p> <p><u>LGB Consultation</u></p> <p>LM gave an overview of the outcome of the LGB Consultation. A meeting had been held with Trustees to review the results ahead of approval.</p> <p>The compliance Hub pilot had been successful and was being supported by LGBs. The quorate had been reduced so that the hubs could be agile and flexible.</p> <p>The proposal to formally move to the compliance hub model and associated terms of reference was agreed.</p> <p>All Through Schools – concern had been noted about having one staff governor on the LGB as it was felt that this was not representative of both primary and secondary phases. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to have staff voice from both phases. Agreed that All Through School LGBs would have 1 x Primary Staff Governor and 1 x Secondary Staff Governor.</p> <p>The same principles would be applied to parent governors for all-through schools. 1 x Primary Parent and 1 x Secondary parent.</p> <p><i>What has happened to the link governors for Health & Safety?</i> The need was being duplicated across the Trust. The Trust Board can decide if this role is needed. It should be school specific based on need with a clearly defined function and role.</p> <p>LGB Minutes – The flow of information from LGBs to the Trust Board was raised. It was agreed that LGB minute summaries should go to the Education Committee rather than Finance & Resources to allow for follow-up on the school Improvement focus. Feedback needed to be two ways, some governors did not currently feel sufficiently informed.</p> <p>It was confirmed that general themes and specifics from LGB meetings were covered at the termly LGB Chairs Group and also picked up by the Trust Governance Coordinator.</p>	MF

	<p>The minute templates for LGBs had been updated so that summary information for the Trust Board was routinely captured within the minute document.</p> <p>Trustees noted that there were link governors for careers, it was unclear where this was being picked up at Trust level and consideration should be given to appointing a Careers Link Trustee.</p> <p>Set up meeting with Nicky Henderson re careers focus in the Trust.</p> <p>It was confirmed that there was a majority of foundation governors on the ASAP LGB in line with the Articles of Association. It was also confirmed that governors would not be removed as part of the new LGB structure.</p> <p><i>How will Trust Staff Link governors be appointed?</i> We would look at individual needs of schools. Governors will be appointed in conjunction with the Senior Executive. Aspiring leaders in particular will be encouraged to take up roles.</p> <p>The Trust Board Approved the changes outlined following the LGB consultation process.</p>	LM
5.	<p>Policies for Approval</p> <p>Trustees reviewed and approved the updated policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Procurement Policy (Competitive Tendering) <p>Action: Upload the Competitive Tendering Policy to the Trust Website.</p> <p><u>Biometrics Policy</u></p> <p>Biometrics was classed as special category data and DfE required there to be a biometrics policy. Two Trust schools currently used biometrics. Draft policies had been put in place in the schools and a Trust-wide policy was being developed.</p> <p><i>Is it a whole new policy?</i> It will be added as an appendix to the Management of Information Policy. The main policy will also refer to this. We have assurance that this is lawful. It was agreed that the Biometrics Policy would be circulated to Trustees for approval by email.</p> <p>Action: Biometrics Policy to be circulated and approved by email.</p>	MF LM/MF
6.	<p>Approval of Trust Annual Accounts 2022-23</p> <p>Formal Board approval was needed to sign off the Annual Accounts for 2022-23. These would be submitted to the ESFA.</p> <p>SP gave an overview of the key points. The year-end position had been better than expected. A substantial amount of the surplus would be designated for capital projects.</p> <p><i>Trustees noted that there were a lot of questions around school trips, they queried if advice should be given to schools about accounting for trips?</i> Trips have been running less since Covid, LD is reviewing this and setting up a number of templates to support the process.</p>	

	<p>There were no adjustments to the audit and very positive feedback had been received in the meeting. Liam Dingle’s hard work with the management accounts was noted.</p> <p>Trustees formally approved the signing of the Trust Annual Accounts.</p> <p>Action: Arrange for the Annual Account documents to be signed and submitted.</p>	<p>MF</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Education Committee Proposals</p> <p>JO gave an overview of the recent Education Committee.</p> <p>Meeting dates were being reviewed to ensure that they were being held at the appropriate time to review the correct data. The spring term meeting date would need to change.</p> <p>Prototype data dashboards had been reviewed. The Education Committee would see top level key comparable metrics for primary, secondary and post 16. This would enable Trustees to be more specific in what was being asked of the two scrutiny panels to review.</p> <p>The Committee agreed key focuses for the Scrutiny Panels for the current year.</p> <p>ISJP – in depth look at exclusion rates and patterns. Dig into the data and review shared practice between schools. Also look at links to reduced timetables so that Trustees are fully aware of this.</p> <p>ESP – continue to look at school reviews, particularly at Primary outcomes. Dig into this and why all Trust primaries are not achieving equally.</p> <p>It had been agreed to appoint a Lead SEND Trustee. It was important to strengthen the Trust Board in this area.</p> <p>The School Improvement Model had been added to the Terms of Reference. This had not been previously available and would be the focus of the summer term meeting.</p> <p><i>It would be positive to link employer engagement and links with careers into the school curriculum.</i> This is apprenticeships and is a very positive way of employers working with students. There are far fewer opportunities for 16-18-year-old apprenticeships and it would be very beneficial for the Trust to support with this.</p> <p><i>What would this look like in practice?</i> A good Trust Career Strategy would look at these opportunities, work with employers to show that 16 years olds have lots to offer. There would need to be a rethink of funding in the FE sector. Equalisation between applied learning and academic learning is important. The Trust could be at the forefront of this.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the link governors for careers did go into the schools to talk to careers leaders, to ensure wider discussion of options. This was an area already being reviewed by the Executive. There was a programme in Plymouth and there was already a good link with one of the governors who leads on this.</p> <p>The updated Terms of Reference for the Education Committee were approved.</p>	

	Action: MF to finalise and publish the Terms of Reference.	MF
8.	<p>Financial Update</p> <p>SP gave an overview of the management accounts.</p> <p>A £670k deficit was being budgeted for, ahead of this currently. This was largely due to vacancies.</p> <p>MAP would no longer be funded on estimates. This had been anticipated and would be built into the accounts.</p> <p>The ESFA were supportive of the Trust. The Trust would be taking part in a Net Zero Pilot to put in energy efficient initiatives in schools. ASAP and CEC expansions were being explored and the ESFA had been consulted about QE.</p> <p>The total student numbers were 230 lower than expected. The loss was largely in sixth forms so this needed to be closely monitored. Primary schools were also an area of focus. It was noted that financial difficulty in primary schools was common across the sector. SP was leading on work with other schools, this provided good networking opportunities.</p> <p>The two key areas of work were understanding sixth forms and understanding primaries to look at what would develop optimum results in the primaries.</p> <p>The focus for secondaries would be the arrangement of classes and deployment of staff. Tools were being developed for HTs to do modelling for potential savings and to enhance understanding.</p> <p>Cashflow was strong.</p> <p>It was noted that it was a difficult time across the sector as a whole.</p> <p><i>With sixth form numbers being lower, how is the sixth form project moving forward and are we looking at the curriculum offer to make them more attractive? We are doing work on costings for sixth forms.</i></p> <p>A full record of the discussion is in Part B of the Minutes.</p>	
9.	<p>Chief Executive Officers Report</p> <p>The CEO report had been circulated in advance of the meeting. MM gave an overview of key points, and also updates on wider areas that may affect the Trust.</p> <p>The recent Ofsted inspections for Exwick Heights and St James had both been very positive. The Trust had written to formally request that the St Luke's Ofsted was brought forward.</p> <p>JL gave some headlines from data in terms of context. Trust schools were in the top percentages in many categories.</p> <p><i>How is this good news shared within the community? We are waiting for headlines and then will develop a strategy to share with key areas.</i></p>	

Work was being undertaken on the context of schools. In general Trust schools had small numbers of EAL and it was noted that only 16 schools in the country met the same context as ASAP. The current work was at school level. The next piece of work would look at the Trust context in terms of impact.

To confirm, the factors to be included in the contextual piece are DS, EAL and cohort size? These are the big two statistically. High DS leads to lower progress, high EAL leads to higher progress.

A more nuanced approach was needed to provide support to schools and communities.

Plymouth Place-Based Strategy

Some SEED funding had been secured from DfE. This would be used for co-ordinating action and investments to improve quality of life for the Plymouth community.

MM was chairing the Plymouth group this year, a strong multi-agency approach was needed to find solutions and ensure that resources were used effectively. Trusts were working together.

The Trust was supporting the KS2 to KS3 transition process. There was now a common transition day for Plymouth and data-sharing protocol for all schools.

An in-year admission protocol was being developed with the LA, this would state the maximum number of times children could move schools.

Is it pupil moving or “off-rolling”? It is pupil moving. Culturally this has been prevalent in Plymouth. The place-based group have commissioned an external consultant to work on reducing mobility, also to reduce exclusions and suspensions and improve AP provision in the city.

Trustees noted that it would be beneficial for one of the outcomes to be a best practice model that could be shared with other areas.

Growth

Laira Green – the due diligence report was circulated.

Torbridge = looking at March 2024 conversion.

QE Masterplan Update

SP gave a presentation on the QE Masterplan. A copy was circulated with the papers.

This would be a focus for the Trust Board in the future.

A full record of the discussion in in Part B of the Minutes

For Information

10.	<p>School Term Dates 2025-26 Noted for information. No questions.</p>	
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11.	Minutes of LGB Chairs Group Noted for information. No questions.	
12.	Minutes of Audit & Risk Committee The minutes were noted for information. There had been a point raised about the Trust Register of Interests and the requirements of declarations. Action: Email Trustees with guidance on the declarations to be included on the Trust Register of Interests.	MF
13.	Minutes of Finance & Resources Committee Noted for information. No questions.	
Any Other Business		
	Trustees recorded their thanks and congratulations on the Trust Award evening which had been very successful. Thanks were extended to the Trust Board for their ongoing hard work and support. Date of Next Meetings: Weds 21 February 2024 (admissions determination) Weds 27 March 2024 (Away Day) Wednesday 22 May 2024, 4.30pm Weds 10 July 2024 (Conference)	
Non-Fusion Directors in Attendance Only		
14.	Related Party Transaction Report 2023-24 – Fusion School Services AW, RJ and SP, Directors of Fusion School Services, were not present for this item. Trustees reviewed and approved the one-year extension of the catering contract with Aspens. The meeting closed at: 18:44	

Signed by the Chair of the Board:

Signed electronically on Governor Hub

Date: 27.03.24