

Board of Trustees
Wednesday 26 May 2021, 4.30pm
Virtual Meeting via Teams

Attended:

Andy Mulcock (AM) - Chair
 David Hall (DH)
 Moira Marder (MM)
 Saxon Spence (SS)
 Lee Elliot Major (LEM)
 Rob Bosworth (RB)

Philip Bostock (PB)
 Richard Jacobs (RJ)
 Sarah O’Meara (SO)
 Alex Walmsley (AW)

Charlotte Davies – Director of Business & Operations (CD)
 Jon Lunn – Director of Education Performance (JL)

Sue Pym – Director of Finance (SP)
 Tim Rutherford (TR) – Deputy CEO

In Attendance:

Tamsin Frances (TF) – Strategic Projects Lead for Item 11 only

Meeting Minutes

Item Ref	Business	Action
1.	<p>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, this meeting was held virtually using Microsoft Teams.</p> <p>AM welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Crispin Taylor (CT).</p> <p>Declarations of interest were noted, as follows: AW: Director, First Federation Trust. DH: Exeter University</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Previous meetings</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 28.04.21 were approved as a full and accurate record. All actions were recorded as complete.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p><u>Trustee Recruitment</u></p> <p>AM reported that he had spoken to Lindsay Hetherington from the University who was interested in joining as a Trustee. Mike Shore Nye was very supportive of this. LEM noted that Lindsay would be a great addition to the Board.</p>	

4.	<p>Appointments & Resignations</p> <p><u>Appointments</u></p> <p>The recent LGB appointments were noted and agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Scott – Co-opted, St Luke’s • Joanne O’Neill – Staff, West Exe • Emma Gulliver – Staff, West Exe • Clare Palmer – Parent, West Exe • Mark Baptist – Staff, QE • John Huskinson – Co-opted, QE <p>Action: MF to send appointment letter to new Governors as per usual process.</p>	MF
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Items For Monitoring		
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5.	<p>Financial Update</p> <p>SP gave a brief overview of the current financial situation. There had been challenges around catering due to Covid and SP was currently working through the issues. SP was anticipating that the budget would break even this year.</p> <p>SP noted that Trust turnover would increase to £57m next year. The Capital Programme was increasing substantially. This year £630k had been received from school condition allocation. Next year, with the addition of QE and ASAP, this would be in excess £1.13m</p> <p>SP highlighted the negative impact on the nursery income of Covid. This was down 16% in the autumn and spring terms but appeared to have recovered in the summer term.</p> <p>SP confirmed that the budget would be presented to the Finance & Resources Committee on 23.06.21 and would come to the Board for agreement on 07.07.21. Funds for growth would need to be built in as it was critical to ensure that the Trust was ready for growth. It was also important to ensure a balanced budget in terms of staffing and non-staffing areas.</p> <p>SOM noted that it was clear, from the report, that primary schools were more of an area of financial concern and queried if this would impact on the decision for the Trust to take on more primary schools. SP confirmed that Covid had impacted more heavily on the primary schools as they had remained more open throughout the periods of lockdown, so had not seen the savings that secondaries had. The Trust was looking at ways of supporting them with the transition out of Covid. This position may change next year when complex needs came to the fore in secondaries. LEM noted that national research was suggesting larger 'learning loss' among primary pupils due to Covid compared with secondary</p> <p>PB queried the estimated pupil number data. He noted that, from looking at the Autumn 2024 figures, the estimate appeared to be 100 under capacity across the Exeter secondary schools, largely due to St Luke’s. He queried if there was comparable data available for St Peters and if they were suffering in the same way. It would be helpful to understand the bigger picture. TR confirmed that there was data showing the number of children across Exeter and Cranbrook. TR noted that St Peters was full and had historically increased its PAN and was stable at 1,300 children. There were fewer children entering year R in certain parts of the city. This could be a future area of focus for the Growth Committee.</p>	
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	<p>SP gave reassurance that the LGBs had unpicked their figures and had addressed the risks. Covid and Brexit had also had some impact on local demographics. SS noted that Exeter was developing accommodation for students and single people rather than families. This was an area for concern.</p> <p>SS queried if the pressures on the budget were common across all schools and if pressures were being put on the government.</p> <p>SS also queried the increase within the Central Team and if the new school improvement posts were full-time. She also noted the benefits of increase in primary school skills. TR noted that two of the posts were 0.8, the others were 0.4, they were temporary one-year appointments and may be extended depending on efficacy of the posts. The associated backfill had also been made on a temporary basis.</p> <p>SS noted that she was very encouraged by the way that the Trust's finances were dealt with. She expressed gratitude for all the hard work.</p> <p>AW noted the importance of investing in school improvement capacity ahead of need.</p>	
6.	<p>Chief Executive Officer's Report</p> <p>MM updated that there had been a number of positive Covid cases within the Trust schools with 50% of MAP Secondary Year 10 students currently isolating. The need to maintain focus was evident and there were still a fair amount of disruptions within the schools as the virus was still circulating.</p> <p>MM also noted the bibliotherapy programme that Whipton were embracing. She extended thanks to RB for recommending this.</p> <p>LEM queried if there was any further detail on the initiative to improve teaching in Plymouth and the share of £10m from the Government. MM confirmed that the money would be coming through the MATs and that figures were due to be confirmed on 28.05.21. MM's intention was to take the lead on improving literacy and numeracy and to support the most vulnerable families. A further TCAF application could also be made on the back of new schools coming into the Trust. SS queried if it was known who would be overseeing education in Plymouth. MM noted that there was a lot of work behind the scenes to support both primaries and secondaries.</p> <p>AW noted the degree of comfort from the challenge partner reviews and the new reliance on other measures to support school improvement. He queried the new review process and if there was an external element to this. JL confirmed that two Ofsted inspectors were employed by the Trust to lead the reviews so it was close to Ofsted. To date there had been 100% feedback from senior leaders that the reviews were hitting the right tone. They included developmental conversations and senior leaders were offered coaching ahead of the reviews.</p> <p>Whipton were undergoing a review currently and SOM noted the positive experience. JL confirmed that he attends all reviews along with other senior Trust leaders. This allows the reviews to go above and beyond Ofsted inspections in relation to the input.</p>	

	<p>One of the key strengths of challenge partners was the amount of time that leaders got to spend in other schools. JL confirmed that the headteachers across the Trust were involved in the reviews of other schools.</p> <p><u>Plans for 7th & 14th July</u></p> <p>AM noted the need to agree if Trustees would meet face to face or virtually for the Away Day on 07.07.21. He felt it would be a good idea to have a virtual back up but potentially the opportunity for face to face.</p> <p>It was agreed that the LGB Day on 14.07.21 would be held virtually rather than face to face due to the larger group attendees. It was agreed that training for governors needed to be widely accessible.</p>	
7.	<p>Growth Report</p> <p>PB noted that there had not been a further meeting of the Growth Committee since the last Board Meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 15.06.21.</p>	
11.	<p>Governance Review</p> <p>It was agreed to bring this item forward on the agenda to enable full Trustee participation.</p> <p>TF joined the meeting at 17:23 for this item only</p> <p>TF confirmed that final approvals of all documents would be at the Board Meeting on 07.07.21 but that comments were welcome on the documents.</p> <p>TF gave a presentation on the updated Trust vision and values. The working party had devised the new Trust statement and this had been developed further following feedback. AM noted the improvements on the vision and values. Positive feedback was received from Trustees who were in agreement with these.</p> <p><u>Reviewing of key documents.</u></p> <p>TF updated that the key amendment to the structure, since the previous meeting, was the position of the LGBs. AM confirmed that Trustees were happy with the new governance structure and noted that the LGBs were fundamental to how the Trust would shape its future.</p> <p>The revised Scheme of Delegation clearly laid out the delegation of responsibilities. AM confirmed that he was happy with the format. TF confirmed that further feedback and amendments would be made according to other elements of the review. There would also be further legal and governance checks before publication. The intention was to also develop a governance handbook to sit alongside the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>AW noted that common problems with schemes of delegation was the length and also lack of understanding of LGBs. AW queried if LGBs were on board and if they would be given clear guidance on this. AM confirmed that the LGBs were involved in the process and that two Chairs were involved in the consultation process. There were two further meetings planned with the LGB Chairs ahead of July.</p> <p>LEM left the meeting at 5.30pm</p>	

Trustees agreed that they were content with the updated Scheme of Delegation.

DH noted previous involvement of the Education Committee with the admissions process and subsequent follow up by the Board. He queried if everyone was content with this. TR noted that a service was bought in from the local authority who carried out the consultation around admissions. AM felt that this was a good point and that the Admissions process may fit well with the Education Committee as this was closer to LGBs. TR noted that a report could be produced annually for the Education Committee and also that LGBs would be consulted with, final sign off was for the Board. CD agreed that this could be expanded upon and that the ultimate responsibility sat with the Board, as the admission authority. In practice, the Education Committee should have the role to do more detailed work behind this.

TR noted that the understanding of the Scheme of Delegation was crucial for schools and LGBs and also more widely.

TF confirmed the mechanisms for feeding back on the key documents:

- Education Committee - any further thoughts from members of the Education Committee to send feedback to TF.
- Chairs Committee – feedback to CD
- Audit & Risk/ Finance & Resources – feedback to CD
- Growth Committee – feedback to CD
- Board – feedback to MF

PB queried if there would be Terms of Reference for the Education Panels. TF confirmed that these were the next level and would be created in line with the Scheme of Delegation. They would be reviewed and would be a key part of the Education Committee's role.

LGBs

TF ran through the role and context of the LGBs and the importance of improving the LGB feedback loop. The Education Committee would be the key link for the LGB Chairs.

Work has been done on the purpose of the LGBs and a new statement had been produced.

The Terms of Reference were being redeveloped and the focus would be on school improvement and the quality of education. The importance of a robust training package for LGBs was key.

SOM noted the positive shift of LGBs in terms of focus on school improvement. She queried if LGBs would have any responsibility for school finance or if this was removed completely. TF noted that the responsibility would not sit with LGBs but that they would be aware of finances and that this would feed into school health checks. In terms of legal responsibility the shift for LGBs was on to school improvement. TR noted that it was a noticeable step change as the responsibility for financial management needed to be taken away from LGBs, and the focus moving to funding and the school improvement plan. This could be an uncomfortable change for some and support and training would be provided. LGBs would need to be aware of where the money was spent but do not need to be managing the financial situation as this was managed by the Trust.

	<p>SOM queried if this would be implemented from September. TR confirmed that this was the intention and that final agreement was due to be sought at the LGB Chairs Meeting on 24.06.21. TR noted the strength of the LGBs across the Trust, however the operation of them was currently very different so consistent structures were crucial. MM noted that LGBs needed to be the gatekeepers of children’s experience in schools and needed to hold the Trust to account. TR noted that Trustees would need to ensure that the messaging was correct. It was a journey to obtain consistency.</p> <p>TF noted the changes in the cycle of business for the LGBs to incorporate more time to focus on issues.</p> <p>SS noted that, as a school governor, finance was a major issue. She queried if there would be a mechanism for LGBs to be consulted and to feed into the budget making process as this could lead to some tension in difficult decisions. SP noted that the proposal from David Carter was that Chairs would receive the information and discuss this with LGBs to gain more local ownership. This would be in terms of the RAG ratings and ensuring that they were understood. TR noted that the discussion point needed to be on school improvement. LGBs would not be making the decisions that they used to. If the training was correct then this would be very positive. Comments were welcome from LGBs on finance, but this would not be the same discussion that was held in the past.</p> <p>MM noted that the Trust’s spending of Pupil Premium/Disadvantaged money would be an important area of challenge for LGBs and would be an area for them to focus on. AM noted that LGBs retained oversight of financial responsibility and reiterated the importance of having strong relationships.</p> <p>MM queried how Pay and Performance would be managed. TR noted that there would be a pay and performance group who would meet annually and that this would be made up of a specific group of governors. The oversight of budgets and finance would sit with Trustees.</p> <p>MM extended thanks to TF for her hard work on the Governance Review. This was echoed by AM.</p> <p>Action: TF’s presentation to be circulated to the Trustees for review.</p>	<p>MF</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Committee Minutes</p> <p><u>Audit, Finance & Resources 12.05.21</u></p> <p>AW updated on key areas that had arisen since the previous AFR Committee.</p> <p>The intention was to go out to tender for new auditors at the start of next year. The members would be involved in this process.</p> <p><u>Trustee Annual Summer Review 25.06.21</u> - The request for funding towards catering for the Trustee Annual Summer Review on 25.06.21 was considered. It was agreed that this event was being held for the benefit of the Trust and that it would be beneficial if key staff could attend. Having considered the purpose and benefits and the Academies Financial Handbook and Trust policy requirements, Trustees agreed to the expenditure of up to £25 per head for food and non-alcoholic drinks for Trustees and invited staff.</p>	

RJ had offered to host the event and RJ and AM would work towards ensuring that catering was provided. Definite numbers and dietary requirements were needed. An invite would be sent out to Trustees and key staff.

The expenditure of up to £25 per head for catering for the Trustee Summer Review on 25.06.21 was agreed.

Summer School Proposal – AW updated on the expected £90k expenditure for summer school provision. SP noted that the summer school programme was not a well-developed market but that it was evolving rapidly. The best supplier for the provision were The Big Step, however as they were not a large company this did present some risks in terms of supplier exposure. It would be funded by the DfE and staged funding had been agreed to minimise risk. AW noted that approval was being sought outside of the usual AFR Committee due to the timings of the meetings.

The financial commitment to the Summer School Programme was noted and agreed.

Bank Approvals - There had been two new additions to the sign offs for the bank account (Sandra Yeats and Will Barrett). A proposal had been made that the new signers were limited to £20k, however SP updated that this would not work as a long-term arrangement as most costs were above £20k given the size of the Trust. It was now proposed that the new signers were given first sign off to be countersigned by an existing approver. This would be discussed in greater detail at the Finance & Resources Committee on 23.06.21 and the signing procedures would need further amendment. AW also noted the wider work needed on resetting the finance sign off limits.

All Saints Sports Hall - AW noted the fast moving situation with the All Saints Sports Hall project. A working party of Trustees had met with key members of the project team on 26.05.21 to further review the proposed options for the new sports hall. It had been agreed to go with the DfE proposal but with some extra improvements. DfE funding of £1m was available and the Trust would also need to contribute. AW noted confidence in Victoria Strickson the project manager.

CD noted the need for the sports hall provision and the expectations of the funded provision which was no longer possible. Given the scale and the nature of the project it was important to have Trustees who were involved and had a good understanding of the project. Also for them to have a level of delegated authority to enable decisions to be made and not to add delay.

Delegated Authority was requested from the Board for the Working Party to progress the project expediently. **It was agreed to give Delegated Authority to the Working Party for the All Saints Sports Hall Project.**

RJ left the meeting at 18:16

Education Committee 06.05.21

DH gave an update on the Education Committee held on 06.05.21.

The proposal for Summer Schools had been noted, and the Committee felt that it was important to make these available to all students, not just disadvantaged.

	<p>Ofsted inspections were returning for both primary and secondary schools.</p> <p>There was a worrying increase in acute mental health cases across the region, and this was troubling data which was noted with concern.</p> <p>The complaints process had been reviewed. AW noted that complaints could easily escalate and affect the confidence of parents. He noted the importance of training for complaints panels and stated that a close eye was needed on this. CD confirmed that a complaints toolkit and a training package had been developed with PHP law. One of the Isca LGB members was also involved in this. The intention was to offer out a training programme to Governors and this would also tie into the LGB induction process and handbook to ensure all governors had access to a consistent package of training. Records would also be kept updated to call on the pool of experienced governors and to allow opportunities for governors to develop in this area.</p> <p>The Inclusion Project (The Bridge) would be moving to a one hub operation due to restrictions in funding. The plans to handle this were impressive and had been agreed by the Committee.</p> <p>There was also a healthy discussion around the governance review and the committee were supportive of the proposal. It had been felt that the proposal for an equality, sustainability and diversity panel was something that should be trialled. There were significant issues coming out and this could be a place to discuss key issues. The Education Committee supported a one year trial of the panel.</p>	
9.	<p>Plymouth Governance</p> <p>DH left the meeting at 18:29</p> <p>MM updated on the potential appointment of a new Chair of Governors at MAP secondary. MM would be undertaking an interview early in the next half term.</p>	
10.	<p>Whipton Barton Update</p> <p>MM noted the recent positive work in strengthening the LGB at Whipton. SOM confirmed that things were progressing well and that it was an exciting time. Everything was on track and in place to make great progress. The three new governors who were starting would be very positive additions.</p> <p>SOM noted that there would be a big culture change for the new Headteacher but that the support in place would be very good.</p> <p>SOM also noted that the behaviour of the children was very high and this was impressive. SOM encouraged Trustees to visit Whipton and also noted that the assistant heads were working on improving the social media coverage of the school.</p> <p>SOM felt that having a link Trustee on the LGB was very beneficial in terms of forging positive relationships.</p> <p>SOM and MM were meeting a potential new Chair on 28.05.21.</p>	

	<p>The clerk position had not been filled but there was now the potential of combining the role with some additional support for the Clerk to the Trust to make the role more attractive.</p> <p>AM thanked SOM for her ongoing support at Whipton.</p>	
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Items for Information

12	<p>Fusion School Services Update</p> <p>AW gave an update on Fusion School Services. The provision was currently being run on letters of extension to contract terms that had not yet been signed. The reason for the delay was that the DfE had decided this could be a related party transaction and they wished to review this. A related party transaction notification had been filed on 30.03.21 and this was still with DfE. Questions had been received from DfE but sign off was still delayed. AW noted that everything had been done from the Trust’s perspective and that the fault for the delay was with the DfE.</p> <p>CD updated that clarity was being sought on whether the related party aspect could be separated from the approval and signing off of the other contracts. The delay was preventing the hard facilities management contract from being put into place across the schools. CD noted that things were moving, but very slowly.</p> <p>MM noted the ongoing problems with silo working in the DfE finance department and that the system could not cope with novel transactions.</p> <p>AM and MM extended thanks to AW for all his work with the PFI project.</p>	
13.	<p>SWTT Ofsted Inspection Update</p> <p>TR updated on the recent Ofsted inspection of SWTT.</p> <p>A full record of the discussion is in Part B of the Minutes.</p>	
14.	<p>Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>CD noted the relatively minor changes to the risk register since the previous meeting and that some risks were now highlighted for archiving.</p> <p>The Risk Register was now incorporated into the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee who would have responsibility for this and reporting back to the Board. There would be more visibility of the risk register.</p> <p>The school improvement section was due an update, but the sense was to hold off on this until further clarity was received from the DfE about how schools would be held to account.</p>	

Any Other Business

None Raised.

The meeting closed at: 18:47

Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 7th July 2020 TBC

Signed by the Chair of the Board:

Date:

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