# Minutes of meeting

People Committee

| Date: | 20 January 2021 | Time: | 08:00 – 10:00 |
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| Location: | Teams | Clerk: | Emma Pemberton, PA to National Director for Education |
| Present: | Frances Hall, Chair and Trustee<br>Bal Samra, Trustee<br>Janet Renou, Trustee<br>Andrew Jones, Trustee | Attendees: | Nick Hudson, Chief Executive Officer<br>Carmel Brown, National Director for HR, and Operations<br>Jo Dawson, National Finance Director |
| Apologies: | None received | | |

| | Item | Initials |
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| **1.** | **Welcome, apologies and sign-off minutes from previous meeting.**<br><br>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and confirmed no apologies received.<br><br>The Chair asked if there were any items to add to AOB. None received.<br><br>Minutes from October 2020 were reviewed by attendees. All agreed that the minutes are a true and accurate record of the meeting.<br><br>Action points carried forward were reviewed, updated and where relevant, closed.<br><br>The Chair confirmed that the new standing agenda item for 'Teaching and Training' would not be included today. After a discussion with the National Director for Teaching and Training prior to the meeting, it was best felt to adjourn the agenda item to the next People Committee meeting in order to provide a more thorough update. Teaching and Training to be added to April meeting.<br><br>The Chair requested both the National Director HR and Operations and clerk to step out from the meeting during item 4 to allow a discussion to take place between the Chief Executive Office and Trustees. Both agreed to do so. | EP |
| **2.** | **HRD Report**<br><br>The National Director for HR and Operations provided an update on key operational HR issues and strategic projects since the last meeting, including:<br><br>**Recruitment**<br>• **Teaching** - It was identified that recruitment has been slower than normal over the Autumn term. COVID-19 is having an impact on people moving roles due to the pandemic. There are set resignation dates for teachers within any given year and an overview of these dates were given to Trustees to provide context for any future discussions. | |

- **Head Office** - An overview of Head Office recruitment identified that positions had been filled predominantly through internal promotions, which is a real positive for addressing staff development and progression.
- **Current Vacancies** - Our new Applicant tracking system, Vacancy Filler, is working reasonably well but there is still lot of work taking place to get this looking right and working to its full potential.

**General Comments**
- The National Director for HR and Operations acknowledged that the step to build relationships with trade unions had been significant. Covid-19 presented many challenges around reopening schools and unions seeking to enforce Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act 1996, which offers to protect staff if they refuse to work due to concerns around health and safety. But the landscape is changing rapidly with the Government recently taking the decision to close schools with only partial reopening to vulnerable and children of key workers.
- The various performance management processes across different groups of staff were also discussed. In particular during these changing times, are our PM processes robust enough to respond to changes in focus in the current environment. The performance management Teaching objectives are able to shift to cater for the new assessment process following recent changes to the GCSE / A level examination process being cancelled.
- The public sector pay freeze will impact on all staff across OAT who earn in excess of £24,000. Those under £24,000 will receive payment of £250. This means that there will be no cost-of-living increase for staff but teachers and support staff in our academies would still be eligible for pay progression through the performance management process.
- Covid-19 related staff absences are currently being reviewed but it has proven difficult to monitor due to variations on how absence is coded. Work is taking place with HR Payroll to ensure that this is recorded more consistently.
- Opening schools – This has been very challenging for different areas throughout the Trust as some geographical areas have been hit harder than others. Examples were provided to give context.

**Questions**

**The Trustees thanked the National Director for HR and Operations for the work undertaken and for providing a brief verbal overview. The Trustees asked if it would be possible for a similar overview to be provided at the start of reports submitted so that the items requiring focus are highlighted at outset.**

The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that this could be included going forward.

**The Trustees asked, on the subject of the public sector pay freeze. Does the pay freeze apply to OAT HO including the senior team?**

The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that this freeze on a cost-of-living award applies to all staff earning over £24,000. Those who earn less than £24,000 would be subject to a payment of £250.

**The Trustees asked if it is policy that we are trying to move to a more of a focus on performance related pay and salary ranges?**

The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that this is the general direction of travel for head office staff and principals. There is work going on to look at the pay structures for these two groups. For any changes to take place a full costing would need to be done to review viability. This will be brought back to the People Committee at the next meeting.

CB

For all academy based support staff and teaching staff OAT follow national negotiated terms around pay and other terms and conditions. At some point in the future if appropriate, there can be further discussion on any changes around our positioning in this area.

A discussion took place between attendees on the subject of historical pay structures within the teaching profession and how it has changed and developed over time, from auto progression to performance related pay, and how it continues to change.

**The Trustees asked, on the subject of staff data, is OAT able to use the staff profiles across academies to identify diversity, gender, ethnicity, age and so forth? Additionally, does OAT have a view about what profile it wants to achieve?**

The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that this is an area requiring attention. In the first instance OAT is reliant on candidates providing this information through the completion of application forms, but historically not many do so. As a result, there is only a small amount of data available, which does not provide an adequate baseline to assess. The only qualitative data currently available is on age and gender, although there will be a focus on diversity and equality moving forward.

The Trustees expressed a wish that more be done to help encourage people to provide this information. In addition, the Trustees would welcome more data analysis of diversity, gender, ethnicity, age etc. across all areas, including senior leadership, and would like to revisit this subject in the future to engage in wider discussions on the Trusts aspirations in this area.

The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that there is data available on gender pay reporting, which is available for Trustees to view.

**The Trustees asked, in terms of performance, does OAT profile all staff and where they sit within their grading so that talent development and progression is supported?**

The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that currently banding pay scales form part of the structure and allow clear vision of where staff sit within their current role. The National Director of Teaching and Training is focusing particularly on talent development across our teaching staff and progression is one of the topics discussed through our performance management processes. Going forward there now needs to be a similar focus on this for support staff, which the National Director HR and Operations will focus on.

| 3. | **Employee Survey Results Overview** | |
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The National Director for HR and Operations provided Trustees with an overview of the top line results from the recent OAT Employee Survey.

Highlights and areas for reflection were shared with Trustees, and it was acknowledged that 60% of staff engaged and completed the survey, which is a great result for a first-time survey.

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that the timing of the survey may have had a direct impact on engagement, with national lockdown in place and staff potentially more able to respond.

The National Director for HR and Operations offered to grant access to Trustees to view themes and splits of the data and confirmed that the focus is now on communicating results. Staff have engaged really positively, so it is important that this is now maximised in terms of OATs response.

The timeline showing next steps was shared with Trustees both for 2021 and 2022 (when year two of the survey will be delivered).

**Questions**

| | **The Trustees were concerned over the results on 'Trust Perception'. Does this mean that only half of staff have a positive opinion of the Trust?** | |
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| | The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that there are 9 questions within this section with a mixture of responses. In particular the strongly positive scores are around OAT's vision and values and buy in to these and staff feeling proud to work for OAT. There is more work for us to do around communication across a range of different issues between the trust and staff. So, there is work still to do done to bridge this gap and develop new ways of working going forward. | |
| | The Chief Executive Officer also confirmed that it would be prudent to look at the different occupational groups that answered these trust perception questions to see whether roles further away from the Trust reflect the percentage rating. If so, it will allow an opportunity to readdress the balance. | |
| | The Trustees thanked the National Director for HR and Operations for sharing the detail and acknowledged the People Committee had early sight of the survey results. They recognized that at this point the initial results only provide high level indications of areas on which OAT need to focus its energy and would therefore welcome further communications from the Executive Team once deeper analysis has taken place. | |
| | The Trustees also commented that how OAT communicates and acts moving forward will be at the heart of how effective the process is. Understanding the data is important and how OAT weave it into the Trust communication to staff is critical. It is important not to rush into any decisions at this stage around actions and take time to properly digest and understand the data. | |
| | Additionally, the Trustees felt it may be advisable to focus on three or four key areas or themes for improvement and to provide clear key messenging to staff about these. This in turn may help staff to engage more moving forward and to make the outcomes become part of the culture within OAT. | |
| 4. | **RD and Executive pay discussion**<br><br>National Director HR and Operations and clerk left the whilst the Chief Executive Officer provided the committee with a verbal update.<br><br>Both rejoined once the update was complete. | |
| 5. | **Update on progress re reward work for OAT HO Staff and Principals for September 21 onwards**<br><br>The National Director for HR and Operations provided an update on the ongoing Head Office and Principal Pay Grading Project.<br><br>**Head Office**<br><br>External pay specialists have been engaged to help support the job evaluation process for OAT head office, benchmarking roles both against the Birmingham demographic and the education sector. The recent public sector pay freeze was discussed to provide context, and an explanation provided on how this would impact on the project. It was confirmed that work to identify salary scales continues to be ongoing, with timescales for completion being directly impacted due to Covid-19.<br><br>Initial indications show that some historical roles will require some form of pay adjustment in order to align to current benchmarks and the newly developed pay grading and ranges.<br><br>**Principal Pay Project**<br><br>Work has progressed in terms of developing school groupings for all academies, and within these groupings, the associated pay scales. | |

A discussion took place to explain the potential outcomes and how this would affect roles when evaluated against the market.

Moving forward it is hoped that HR will work closely with Finance to agree costings and to understand potential implications of moving over to the new pay scale system. In addition, it was acknowledged that work needs to be completed to identify the best way of communicating changes to principals.

It was acknowledged that there has been some discussion within the Executive Team on providing some form of recognition to Principals at the end of this particularly challenging academic year, and the National Director for HR and Operations was keen to gauge the thoughts of the Trustees on this.

The Trustees advised that it may be better to wait a while until the threat of the virus has eased. It was felt that this would be a better time to gauge the national mood and ensure that OATs response is in line with other public sector roles. As this starts to settle and normality returns there will be a national conversation around where we are and how we move forward later in this current academic year. The Trustees recommend waiting until that point before making any decisions.

**Questions**

**In terms of principals pay, the Trustees asked how OAT is making sure that pay bands relate to specific criteria within a role in order to ensure that OAT is being fair and equitable across the Trust.**

The National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that the proposed pay scales and the principals performance management process would provide the opportunity for movement based on strong performance.

**The Trustees asked if there was clear evidence of a step change across key roles to show progression and allow for succession planning.**

The Chief Executive Officer confirmed that there would be room for progression across the Trust and the National Director for HR and Operations confirmed that the pay scales would show clear pathways for career progression from principal roles to those on the Executive team.

A discussion took place between attendees on how the changes may impact on where principals may sit within bands after any realignment of pay scales, and also the impact on the performance management process. The Trustees advised that focus should be on working through the principles and to identify the criteria and pay bands but would advise caution on making any final decision on whether to proceed based on gauging the national mood.

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| 6. | **OD Update – Finance Review**<br><br>The National Finance Director joined the call to respond to any questions regarding the latest update of activities taking place within the finance function.<br><br>**Questions**<br>No questions arose. | |
| 7. | **Review of Risk Register**<br><br>The Risk Register is an extract from the overall OAT Risk Register, which details items pertinent to the People Committee.<br><br>The register was reviewed, and attendees asked to make any comments and/or recommendations. | |

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|   | Trustees identified that the priority remains around risks associated with COVID-19 but agreed that these had been managed effectively. |   |
| 8. | **A.O.B.**<br><br>No items received. |   |
| 9. | **The next People Committee meeting will take place Wednesday 28 April 2021.** |   |

| Table of Action Points | | |
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| 1 | Teaching and Training to be added to agenda for April meeting. | EP |
| 2 | Review across pay policies to complement one another in terms of design, strategy, behaviour and culture so that all aspects correlate across each element rather than being seen as separate entities. This work to be undertaken as part of the ongoing work on pay policies in the Spring term. Carried forward from October 2020. | CB |
| 3 | Update on HO and Principal pay to be brought to the next meeting. | CB |