

Minutes of Board Meeting

Date:	Thursday 11 th March 2021	Time:	09:30 - 12:30
Location:	Teams	Clerk:	Sunita Yardley- Patel
Present:	Paul Hann – Trustee (Chair) Frances Hall – Trustee Nick Hudson – Trustee (CEO) Andrew Jones – Trustee Jan Renou – Trustee Bal Samra – Trustee Karen Bramwell – Trustee Ian Brookman – Trustee	Attendees:	Jo Dawson (National Director of Finance) Rob Pritchard (National Director of Education)
Apologies:	Peter Murray – Trustee		

	Item	Action
1.	Welcome, introductions and apologies	
	<p>The Chair opened the meeting with a tribute to Gareth Jones, former principal of Ormiston Meridian Academy who recently passed away from Covid. The Chair outlined the incredible work that Gareth did for the Trust and the big difference that Gareth made in the community in supporting young people. Those in the Trust that have worked with Gareth outlined the wonderful work and contribution that he made to both the local community and the Trust and messages of condolences outlined what an amazing man he was. The Chair confirmed that the Trust has written to Gareth’s family with condolences.</p> <p>The Chair also paid tribute to Su Bailey who worked in the Finance Team at Ormiston Forge Academy. Su is remembered for offering far more than just the finance role at the academy; she was a really important part of the school community and will be greatly missed.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and updated the group on the discussions from the Principal Review Group. The Chair highlighted the</p>	

	<p>positivity from principals about the support from the Trust and the relationships with Regional Directors. The CEO outlined that the group was appointed to give the principals the mechanism to feedback to the Trust Board and it was a useful function to triangulate information for the Trustees.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the agenda for the meeting.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>Minutes and matters arising</p>	
	<p>Minutes agreed with an amendment to page 2; change 2020 to 2021.</p> <p>The action log was reviewed, and actions closed were agreed for removal.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>CEO Report</p>	
	<p>The CEO outlined that staff in schools and head office have done a fantastic job of ensuring that schools have been ready to open this week.</p> <p>The CEO outlined the report, highlighting the IPR commentary and staff survey results, particularly the perception of the Trust which has been further analysed and included in the report. There now needs to be follow-up work completed on this across the Trust.</p> <p>The Chair of the F&C committee outlined that there continues to be improvements made in financial performance. The budget has been provisionally approved but there needs to be further understanding of what the situation is next year in terms of grants that will be received and spending required related to covid. The budget therefore will need final sign-off from the board when some of the currently changing variables are more clearly understood.</p> <p>Trustees asked how the survey results will impact communication and engagement with staff.</p> <p>The CEO responded that communications have already been sent to all members of staff with a summary of the survey results. There has been a separate communication to principals to outline the results for individual academies. Principals have also been given marketing materials to display around the school to demonstrate follow up. Regional Directors have received results for individual regions to benchmark and follow-up with principals. There will also be work completed with Head Office staff on the Head Office results.</p> <p>Trustees suggested that the Trust adopt a ‘stay connected’ or similar approach to further develop communications, building on the momentum that the survey will have generated.</p> <p>The CEO responded that this would be considered in communication plans.</p> <p>The Chair outlined that the Principals Review Group were positive about CPD work that is being completed across the Trust, noting an acknowledgement from the group that the recently established Teaching and Training Team has significantly improved training and CPD since it was developed.</p>	<p>NH</p>

	<p>The CEO noted that IT remains a key focus for the Trust to support good communication with the appropriate IT infrastructure. There will be more of a focus on IT in the July CEO report.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Reopening Update</p>	
	<p>The CEO outlined that schools have opened for a full school day with testing and so far, reopening has gone well.</p> <p>The National Director of Education outlined the attendance figures from January to March. Primaries are currently open to all pupils, secondary has been staggered because all students needed to have covid tests. Attendance is high, currently 97% and there have been few issues reported.</p> <p>New risk assessments have been completed and consultations with unions took place; the return to school has been smooth. The biggest challenge has been testing because this is a completely new process, this has however run smoothly in most schools. There have only been 2 positive tests across the Trust and covid bubbles are working in the same way as previously where a test is positive. The government has indicated that extra funding will be provided for testing.</p> <p>The National Director of Education outlined the process for Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) including the need for further guidance from exam boards, the monitoring of suitable staff and student workloads and the moderation processes across the Trust and in academies. There also needs to be transparency about process with parents and students and some departments will need to be given the opportunity to individualise grading processes. Practical subjects will be graded based on work already completed.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the benchmarking and moderation processes, including the involvement of RLPs in the moderation process to ensure consistent and accurate grade boundaries. It was noted that the agreed processes for TAGs is similar to other large MATs.</p> <p>Trustees asked what is being done across the Trust to ensure that there is a consistent approach to testing students for Covid?</p> <p>The National Director of Education responded that the DfE and PHE have published guidance on how to do the testing in schools. All members of school staff are doing central training delivered nationally on how to deliver tests.</p> <p>The Trustees acknowledged the huge volume of work required to complete testing and asked how well the process has been implemented?</p> <p>The National Director of Education noted that more problems were expected in relation to testing and masks but both issues have been less problematic than expected. The number of children that have consented to testing has been 85%. Those that have not consented have either refused consent or have not returned consent forms yet.</p> <p>The CEO outlined the current strategy for moving RLPs into schools and how the RLPs will be allocated and the current projects underway. Following the</p>	

	<p>introduction of RLPs and the lockdown resulting in the RLPs not being in schools, there now needs to be work done on consistency of practice and quality across the Trust.</p> <p>The CEO updated on the successful work recently underway by the OAKS including plans to widen the operating base in the South and East by opening new hubs, receiving a research visit from Ofsted to understand how initial teacher training has been working in the pandemic and the successful securing of third placements for trainees which many other organisations have not managed during the pandemic.</p> <p>The CEO also updated on student personal development: enrichment and extra-curricular activities have been maintained throughout the pandemic and this has been positive and well-received. The development of Student Voice Council has been positive and links with the Trust Board will be a good opportunity to engage with students. It was also noted that many projects in the Trust a focused on being greener/eco-friendly.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the recruitment, support and development of RLPs and what potential career paths may look like for those appointed to the role. It was agreed that working across levels is key to the success of the role and it is key to invest in the right people. Trustees encouraged that salary should not always be reflective of hierarchy and suggested that consistency is integral to the success of the RLP model. The CEO noted that part of the reason for having specific school assignment briefs is to be able to effectively performance manage and RLPs are given results related targets to ensure effective oversight.</p> <p><i>Karen Bramwell joined the meeting.</i></p> <p>Trustees asked for an update on tutoring and mental health and wellbeing?</p> <p>The National Director of Education outlined the previous return to school plan in September which involved the recruitment of numerous tutors on a temporary basis. It was noted that there is also a national tutor programme available which is part funded by the DfE however this is not as cost-effective as 'home-grown' tutors. Academies are already set-up with sufficient tutors.</p> <p>The CEO outlined that nationally there have been discussions about the impacts of students mental health and wellbeing and this has often been negatively communicated to stakeholders across the sector. However, the evidence suggests that the majority of students are relishing returning to school. Schools are carefully supporting the return to school and will follow normal procedures to identify individuals that might need additional support and ensure that staff are appropriately trained to identify and support students where required. In the longer term, more work will be completed on SEMH support in academies.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p>Comfort Break</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Financial Update</p>	

	<p>The National Director of Finance outlined the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool noting that the tool has not previously been submitted to the Trust Board but it is now a requirement to do so.</p> <p>Trustees clarified that the number of time the board has met would need to be amended.</p> <p>Trustees asked how the associated excel spreadsheet is reviewed and at what level.</p> <p>The National Director of Finance responded that the spreadsheet is reviewed by Executive and it is just the Trust wide ones that come to Trust Board.</p> <p>The management accounts were presented, the National Director of Finance confirmed that the accounts have been reviewed by F&C Committee.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the presentation of accounts and the associated narrative. It was outlined that there have been ongoing conversations with ESFA about financial planning and benchmarking and the ESFA is aware of the project and infrastructure work that the Trust is due to undertake. It was noted that the Trust needs to invest in numerous areas to catch-up with sector partners.</p> <p>It was agreed that the narratives related to financial position need to be consistent across the leadership team.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Quorum</p>	
	<p>The Company Secretary outlined the work completed on governance since the last meeting with two volunteer trustees. The proposals outlined an increase in quorum of Trust Board and sub-committee meetings to three or half of the meeting membership, remove the mechanism for a casting vote and add extra meetings to the Trust Board meeting calendar to focus on training and development.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the structure and focus of the training and development meetings and whether the extra meetings would be about structured CPD or engagement. It was agreed that Trustees would benefit from further clarification about the function of the training and development meeting and paper should be presented to the July meeting, outlining a proposal for meeting content including suggested training, a self-effectiveness review and engagement with stakeholders.</p> <p>Trustees agreed the paper and asked for training plans to come to the July meeting</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Conversions Update</p>	
	<p>The CEO updated on negotiations with the department about current conversions. There was a discussion about timeline and due diligence and the DfE and ESFA have committed to put in writing, responses to finance questions. It was agreed that should the financial position not be satisfactory, the conversion would not proceed.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the potential to work with the converting organisation on a consultancy basis in the first instance to work further</p>	

	<p>towards a satisfactory financial position before finalising the conversion. It was outlined that this would need further investigation and there will be an additional meeting scheduled to further consider this situation.</p> <p>Trustees noted progress in discussions and that the current position is well set-up for an 'arms-length' management situation. There are currently concerns around finances and this would provide an ideal solution.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the suitability of the conversion and whether the organisation meets requirements for joining OAT (i.e. feeder school, local to another school, new expertise, mission and purpose etc.).</p> <p>The Chair of F&C outlined that the F&C Committee discussed the finances and outlined significant concerns related to more than finances including concerns about resources and expansion of geographic presence.</p> <p>The National Director of Finance outlined that following the start of the due diligence process, there have been discussions about how risk mitigation will work in key areas and resources have been allocated to ensure that there are not any impacts on existing expertise and resources. It was also noted that the ethos matched with that of the Trust.</p> <p>The Chair of SIS Committee updated the Board on the discussions that had taken place at SIS Committee relating to the advantages of the conversion. The advantages of additional expertise it was agreed would add value to the Trust.</p>	
9.	Complaints Policy	
	The Complaints Policy was agreed.	
10.	Committee Minutes	
	<p>The Trust Board noted the minutes from the following committees: F&C minutes - 25.11.20 People Committee minutes – 08.01.21 SIS minutes – 04.02.21 People Committee – 22.02.21 – The People Committee Chair gave a verbal update on the on-going pay review. There will be further discussions at the next People Committee and a final proposal will be proposed at the July Board Meeting. F&C minutes 24.02.21 A&R minutes – 24.02.21</p>	
11.	AOB	
	None.	
12.	Date of next meeting	
	Date of next meeting: 8 July 2021	