



Board Meeting

Hybrid meeting held on Teams and in person

07.02.2023 – 6pm

MINUTES

Present remotely: Sue Bailey (Chair), Mark Williams (Vice Chair, FPP Committee Chair), Kim Taylor (Exec Head), Billy Mollison, Julie Perry, Anthony Upshall

Apologies: Rebecca Berton, Mike Westcott-Rudd

No.	Minutes	Actions
1.	Welcome and Apologies RB and MWR sent apologies	
2.	Declaration of Pecuniary Interest No issues with pecuniary interests	
3 and 4	Approval of the Previous Minutes, Matters Arising, and Actions Update Previous minutes discussed, no questions. Matters arising were to do with the visit to Spaldwick, and the build at Alconbury Weald which KT has reported on in her executive head report. Page 6 of the minutes, pupil numbers to be added Approval of the minutes of the previous board meeting: approved once this is added. Internal audit: There has been an update which MW will brief on.	

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	<p>SB has asked GC to provide information regarding top slicing and the funding of the central team. GC has agreed to present this at the next FPP.</p> <p>SB asked if there were any questions, there were none.</p>	
5.	<p>Board of Trustees make up for 2023 and beyond</p> <p>Struggling to recruit trustees, SB has spoken to Steph about this regarding different routes. The previous candidate Niki Dow is in full time employment and stepped back as she was concerned about the time commitment. LinkedIn could be an option for advertising, and we could have some discussions with local organisations. LinkedIn has been noted to have adverts for non-exec directors. SB shared that we need some new people for diversity and to protect the future of the trust, especially if anyone was to step down from trusteeship. AU said that previous he had mentioned Alconbury Weald, there are houses being built and business in the area who could be interested. His daughter has contacts at the nursery there, and may be able to offer a route into that. KT thanked AU and said this was a good idea, and shared that she has some connections there too which could be an option.</p> <p>AU suggested Urban and Civic regarding this. SB said that some of the people employed on the Wisbech Green project are committed and KT will explore this. JP suggested links with the hospital in Wisbech, or constabulary members. SB suggested that Hotel Chocolat might be a good link as there are stores in both areas. BM suggested other social media such as Facebook and Twitter. BM said it's possible that LinkedIn fees will be waived or reduced.</p> <p>Steph suggested linking up with C CVS regarding membership, and offered to get a price. SB and KT said to go through with this. <i>Steph to get a price for membership from C CVS.</i></p> <p>SB closed by saying that if we have discussions about the central team ongoing, it will open up conversations about growth so she has added this to the agenda now, before the new schools start. It is important the trust is seen to be an attractive employment option.</p>	

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6.

Subcommittee debrief:

FPP:

Meeting on 26/01/2023 First key point was finances – forecast has been discussed and there is an overall projected deficit of £250,000, but discussions for cost-cutting bring that to £40,000. This will need to be closely monitored and should be achievable.

At the board meeting in December, we discussed a previous debate around the internal auditor. It was decided we would not change auditors, but instead brought the internal auditor to the meeting. Caroline Day attended the committee, however as a result of that meeting, Days have withdrawn their services on the grounds that she felt the trust did not have confidence in her work. We therefore need to retender for the internal auditors. This was last done two years ago, and we need to secure a new provider as a priority, unless the board offers to conduct that undertaking in its entirety.

SB asked if it was worth asking board members in attendance whether they would take part in the retendering. MW said it should be FPP acting as audit committee who would handle the retendering, but that trustees not normally part of FPP would be welcome. JP said that was usual practice for the audit committee to do this – it could be a subset of the committee rather than the whole committee, and it is important to have absolute clarity on what we need. BM said that as part of the process of retendering, he could internally be part of the process, and that KT and GC would be part of this. SB asked for the minutes, the email from Caroline said that there was the option of reappointing if an agreement could be reached, and asked for clarity as to where we are with this. MW said that we have not received a disengagement letter but she has two weeks to send this. MW feels that given how we arrived at this point, it could be difficult to re-engage her. MW also said we would not start the retendering process until the disengagement letter was received.

AU asked if Caroline Day’s comments from the email were substantiated. SB said that we were tenacious in trying to get an answer from Caroline. SB did say that it was right and proper that questions were asked and responded to. However, the responses were not satisfactory to all present. BM said that moving forward, the

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internal auditor appointment process should have criteria agreed for what we seek. SB said that we have all the information from last time, which has been made available and will be improved upon.

AU asked for us to activate password self-reset, Steph to email Jon about Billy's access.

KT said that the specification for internal auditor appointment is similar across different trusts, but can include additional items where needed. JP shared that her trust could potentially share their document for additional guidance, which may help improving the robustness.

TLW:

SB chaired the meeting, heads from all three school sites attended the meeting. School contextual data, behavioural incidents, attendance figures etc was shared. It was asked that exclusions were reported going forward. SCA's head Alex presented about a research project he wants to initiate across the trust, as it is applicable to all settings. He was very enthusiastic about it, and is currently working on outlining funding and costings.

Chris Carey, new head at Wisbech Green, was introduced, and he raised one key point about pupil selection, ensuring that pupils attending the school were compatible with one another, noting that the process needed to be robust.

Andrew Armstrong, St Neots site, updated on his new objectives. He commented on the reduction in behavioural incidents, which was reassuring.

JP asked, we approved that this could come from the reserves/training fund, is this correct? KT said it was, and that this is where the funding would come from. JP added that success factors should be commented on in the proposal, and that this project could be a pilot for future collaborative projects.

SB opened to questions, there were none.

7.

Trust Strategy

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Academy council meetings

These are going well, and there have been some great discussions and involvement. MW shared, he attended a meeting a few weeks ago, and that it had been mentioned that it would be great to have trustees more involved. He asked, to what extent should trustees continue this, should it be alternating trustees or consistent trustees? SB said that one of the suggestions was that the academy councils should develop a one-page summary of discussion points and celebratory items from the meetings. This has not been done previously, but they may be in a position to do this now. Having this regularly come to the board would reduce the requirement for board members to attend AAG meetings. MW said that now he has attended a few meetings, he gets all the papers and feels as though there is an expectation. JP said that having the summary sheets would be great, and reminded us that AAGs are somewhat a subdivision of board, part of governance. She said that there should be annual governance reports to the board. It is important to recognise that the chairs are responsible for those meetings, and if a chair requests a board representative, we should provide that. Previous she has seen it set as an expectation where trustees do at least one site visit and one AAG meeting, to allow us to see the mechanics. SB said that she feels the way forward is for the chair to request board member attendance and that, perhaps in the past, they didn't know they could. KT added that she has attended SCA AAG meetings, which starts with a learning walk. These are well attended. KT agreed that one-page reporting would be beneficial and that escalation points could be raised here too. SB summarised that reports should contain positive, negative and 'requires action/investigation' points, and that minutes would only need to be accessed on an 'as needed' basis. Trustees should know that the AAG at RMA was appreciative of the resources invested in the school. MW added that the culture was one of clear improvement, and that motivation was good. KT said that the team spirit at both sites was excellent, with lots of excitement about the new school.

Expansion of the Central Team

This will be discussed further as part of exec head report. It is important to be clear how the central team is funded, whether this will be from top slicing, what

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	<p>percentage etc, and GC will report on this at the next FPP meeting. RB sent a link to a course to SB, which might be beneficial to staff and trustees.</p> <p>SB opened to comments. JP said that she felt this was the right thing to do, and mentioned that different funding models exist around central teams, such as direct charges, top slicing (which is most common), and gag pooling, where everything can be pooled, or certain items can be. There are different levels of gag pooling. SB said that GC mentioned different options and it would be key for trustees to review this to open debate. JP mentioned, benchmarking reports are produced, and if this is produced for our geographical area, she will pass this over. KT said that there is limited benchmarking for SEND schools available due to the level of need. KT also said she would be keen to go towards gag pooling. It is hard to introduce this with established schools that are protective of their budgets, and KT feels that sharing across the trust is important. JP said that as her trust has grown and developed, they have been able to get ahead of problems, and that AZETS can help with these discussions.</p>	
8.	<p>Safeguarding and SCR</p> <p>RMA have had their safeguarding reviews. None of the schools have had any red flags, and that safeguarding is effective. Orange flags from May 2022 have been remedied. Focus is now on the momentum with embedding safeguarding, working with DSLs and supervision for them taking place regularly. KT noted a high level of effectiveness, working especially with complex issues such as peer-on-peer abuse, self-harm and welfare issues.</p> <p>JP said that as safeguarding lead trustee, the progress was reassuring. The landscape inherited was challenging, and as we grow as a trust, we could look at peer-on-peer safeguarding in more detail, consulting with external experts to 'train-the-trainer'. KT said that SCA have had internal audits regularly, and what is strong across the trust is the ongoing supervision of the DSLs, supporting the person to do the work. Going forward, there should be less need for external reviews, and that current practice can be implemented quickly in the new schools. JP said that family liaison can provide a huge amount of value, and that safeguarding is a very difficult job, especially with traumatic cases. She also added that protocols are being established for referrals to</p>	

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	<p>LADO, where KT and JP are notified in a confidential manner, and that they reserve the right to escalate this to the board. KT has been providing high level reports as things happen, as well as an overview of the landscape. JP reminded the board that even though she is the lead, safeguarding is the responsibility of every trustee, and that we need a strategic approach to safeguarding. Action: Steph to distribute the report to trustees.</p> <p>SB added that checking of the SCR should be done – Jon Panther can access this from SCA. At trustee-level, it doesn't need to be especially operational, and more strategic. JP and KT will meet termly with AAGs and DSLs to review serious cases where needed.</p>	
9.	<p>Executive Head Report</p> <p>KT delivered her report and addressed several key points.</p> <p>Regarding the Central Team, this has been defined, and Jon Panther is training school secretaries. Finances are defined separately due to a specialist skillset. KT has noted on her report that it can be beneficial to have an extremely qualified consultant to support certain aspects, and we outsource most of this.</p> <p>KT asked about introducing an operations manager. SB asked if we have funding, KT said there are funds available, either through top slicing or school funding. This could be advertised to start in the new financial year. She also noted that the new structure would be continuously under review. SB said she would like to review the external consultants, as the role is important, but also in terms of supporting KT, which of the roles would be the most useful to the Exec Head on a part time basis. MW shared that KT's chart is helpful, and would find it useful to see the reporting lines, and how they fit into the structure of the organisation. MW also said that it would be useful to see current year, and future years, and the recruitment of future roles. MW said that this would then be useful as a standalone document. KT said that there are two pillars, admin and finance. SB suggested looking at part-time posts, as some roles don't really need to be in-house, where others would be useful to have in-house.</p>	

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SB said that this would be useful to discuss, and that the proposed dates for new roles should be added to the chart.

BM agreed that reviewing structure is important, and asked, do we have a skills matrix and a characteristics matrix? BM said it appears that we are trying to build a team with as many skills as possible. IT is key to identify the skills needed now, skills needed at various points in the future, the skills we already have in-house, and the skills we could better utilise to fill gaps. For an operational manager role, do we have someone right now within the trust who could be developed and assume that role, do save us on consultant fees, recruitment etc. SB said that when it comes to succession planning, it is key to review the consultants, and the people we have internally, and who could assume various roles in the future. KT said that we have a succession planning document with a list of people who could be developed into future roles. It is possible an internal candidate will apply, but we must consider what is best for the trust.

JP said that she felt this role was the right thing to do, being mindful of changes to the academy handbook, sustainability, and the amount of activity required to develop a good recruitment campaign. Regarding skills already in house, there could be associate roles for people already within the trust whereby someone might do, for example, 20 days per year within their associate work. AU added that he worked with a multi-academy trust of 11 schools, and that they have all of the roles on the report and more within the central team. Regarding MIS and IT, AU asked if we had this in house? KT said some is outsourced, but we have IT specialists in-house. AU said that there will be a point there it is worth looking at the cost-effectiveness of bringing various consultants in house. KT said there is some risk with this, where huge amounts of money have been paid but skills lacked the ability to do the fixes, so consultants were skill needed.

MW asked for funding clarification. KT said it could come from top slicing or reserves. MW asked, if this is approved and this happens in-year, where will this be funded from next year? KT said it will be part of the central team costs.

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	<p><i>KT therefore asked the trustees to approve for recruitment of the Operations Manager role. All trustees approved the role.</i></p> <p>KT shared this would go to EPM, who would review the salary, job description and specification prior to adverts going out.</p> <p>Headteacher for Prestley wood has been approved for recruitment, EPM will approve the salary before it goes out.</p> <p>KT added the data protection audit has been completed, and KT will have a report for the next meeting with some items. KT shared that the risk log is short, as only the highest risks have been escalated. Some previously high risks have been stepped down, such as safeguarding at RMA. Finances are also brought to attention but due to a higher level of reserves, it is not as significant.</p>	
10.	<p>Policies for approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RMA Behaviour policy • Appraisal and Capability Policy • Data protection Policy • Health and Safety Policy • Surveillance and CCTV Policy <p>SB spent a lot of time reviewing the behaviour policy and found the processes reassuring, and that RMA will be absorbing a lot of the responsibility.</p> <p><i>All policies were approved by board members, having already been scrutinised at committees.</i></p> <p>AU commented that, regarding policies, it can be a lot of work to review them when someone leaves. KT to highlight this to Jon.</p> <p>AU commented that the DPO role is outsourced, and that they use their own email address. He would expect that their email address would be a trust email address. KT will amend this.</p>	

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	JP commented, on reporting lines, it is usual that the clerk to trustees usually reports to the chair, but contracts can be executed by the executive head.	
11.	AOB AU asked, are trustees supposed to have ID badges or lanyards? SB said she has one, and that pre-covid all trustees have one. If a trustee comes into school often, it would be useful for them to have one.	
12.	Confidential items Redacted	

Meeting ended at 20:06

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