

CBAT BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Trustees' meeting held on 3rd February 2021 at 4:00pm via videoconference

Present: Nigel Riglar (Chair), Graham Ayre, Debbie Bird, John Gilbert, Emma Gray (Finance Director – FD), Barbara Green (from 5.00pm), Ruth Hollier, Stuart Wilson (Chief Executive Officer – CEO).

Apologies: None.

In Attendance: David Dale (Clerk).

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies received and accepted:

None. Barbara Green had indicated that she would be able to join the meeting at 5.00pm.

3. Declarations of Interest:

There were no new general declarations.

4. Minutes of the meeting of 2nd December 2020

It was **proposed** by JG, and **seconded** by RH, that these be approved and signed, to be published on the Trust's website. This was **agreed** unanimously.

The Clerk advised that item 22 (Leadership capacity with the Trust) contained confidential information relating to an employee, this item would therefore not appear in full in the published minutes.

5. Action point checklist

All actions completed or in progress.

6. Matters arising

None.

7. Trustee appointments and resignations

There had been no resignations or new appointments since the September meeting.

At this point the Board agreed to depart from the order of business as set out on the agenda so that some items could be discussed later in the meeting when all Trustees were present.

8. Health, safety and wellbeing

The FD reported that the main activity at present is staff testing for Covid-19. Primary school employees are self-testing at home, Marling School employees are being offered testing twice weekly at the test centre in the hall. The CEO showed photographs of the test centre and explained how the process works.

Trustees asked about the capacity available to test large numbers of secondary pupils when they return to school, and about the frequency of testing. The FD explained that there are sufficient volunteers to have 6 test stations operating, this according to DfE numbers would give capacity for 360 tests per day. Staff tests would be offered at times when the pupils were not on site. Under current guidelines, pupils would be tested on return to school, and again 3-5 days after that.

Trustees noted all the actions that were being taken, and asked that their thanks be conveyed to the staff and volunteers providing the tests.

9. Data protection and privacy (GDPR)

The CEO reported that there had been one Subject Access Request at Marling School in December but the request had subsequently been withdrawn.

The FD reported that all breaches of data privacy are recorded. There had been one minor breach recently when email addresses had been inadvertently shared, this was quickly contained by recalling the email concerned.

10. Finance

The FD presented the revenue forecasts and actuals report to the end of December (Month 4). 34% of the forecast full year Income had been received, and 35% of expenditure incurred. She explained a number of areas on the reports and drew Trustees' attention particularly to two items with greater expenditure to date than forecast – supply staff due to teacher absences at the primary schools (to be covered by insurance), and grounds maintenance at Marling School where the full year costs are already showing. Trustees noted these two items but had no further questions.

11. Audit & Risk Committee

Trustees had received the minutes of the first meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee on 13th January 2021. GA had been elected Chair, and he explained the membership and terms of reference of the Committee. The other Trustee is JG, and a third independent member with extensive professional experience in audit, risk and finance had been appointed (Jane Exworthy). A number of minor changes to the terms of reference had been agreed. Trustees asked questions about the internal assurance arrangements that were being put in place, the FD reported that she is soon to meet the individual concerned and agree the terms for his services.

It was **proposed** by GA and **seconded** by JG that the membership and terms of reference of the Audit & Risk Committee as described be approved, this was **agreed** unanimously.

12. School Development Board minutes

These had been circulated in advance and were noted.

13. SDB recommendations for consideration in line with Scheme of Delegation

None.

14. Trustees' decisions taken under Scheme of Delegation since last meeting

None.

15. Trust policies

The Clerk reported that a number of Trust policies relating to staff leave/absence, health and safety, and GDPR are due for review and renewal, but as they are likely to have only minor changes it was proposed that this be done via email before the next Board meeting. Trustees asked that the policies be sent to them one by one as they become available, and are clearly numbered as part of a series for approval.

16. School updates

The CEO presented the Headteachers' interim reports. For Marling School, DB as link Trustee had met the Associate Headteacher to go through the report in detail. Key points include:

- Key worker provision – up to 22 students a day are in school to use key worker/vulnerable children provision.
- Remote learning – teachers have received training on this, feedback has been good; students working at home access the full curriculum and follow their normal timetable of 5 one hour lessons each day; IT systems have been upgraded, and equipment supplied to a small number of students where needed; attendance for live elements of lessons is recorded and any concerns logged with parents.
- Pastoral support – via tutorial sessions and extra support where needed; a Wellbeing Day is planned before half term for staff and students.
- Exams –consultation ongoing over the arrangements for GCSEs and A levels in summer 2021, decisions will be communicated after half term.

Trustees discussed these issues and in particular the difficulty of monitoring future pupils' progress in the absence of SATs baseline data. The CEO acknowledged the challenges involved, and said that in addition there could be no school performance tables for some year groups.

For Cam Woodfield Junior School, RH as link Trustee had met with the Headteacher to go through the report in detail. Key points include:

- Key worker provision – 61 pupils (33%) are in school to use key worker/vulnerable children provision.
- Remote learning – teachers are providing remote learning for both KW provision and pupils' home learning; the school provides 4 hours a day of learning (maths, reading, writing, and a theme lesson) as per Government guidance; learning packs have been provided for those pupils who find online learning difficult.
- Pastoral support – regular contact with children and families who would normally need it; daily class Zoom meetings to help pupils stay connected to each other.
- RH reported that the Headteacher is maintaining a clear and positive focus on tracking and assessing pupils, there is confidence that the current lockdown will not affect pupils as much as the first one did.

For Berkeley Primary School (no link Trustee yet), key points include:

- In school provision – 1/3 EHCP children are in school.
- Remote learning – 80% of lessons have a live element, the school is meeting or exceeding Government guidelines, daily tracking and follow up where children are not engaged.
- Pastoral support – children have daily contact with their class teacher, additional individual contact where needed, daily class Zoom.
- Equipment – some IT and internet issues, Trustees asked about the provision of equipment to children who need it and the CEO reported that the school has now received laptops from the DfE.
- New Deputy Headteacher now in post.

17. Wider educational issues

The CEO reported that schools were unlikely to reopen before 8th March at the earliest. The Government had stated that 2 weeks' notice would be given, meaning that there would not be any announcement until after half term. Hopefully the reopening of secondary schools will be staggered to facilitate Covid testing of students.

He reported that the Trust had not been successful in a bid to lead a teaching school hub for Gloucester and the Forest, but we were named partners in both of the successful bids in the county so we would be hoping to still play a major role in delivery of teaching hub work across the region while aiming to retain some of the work we have been doing through CETA with local schools.

The DfE is offering a mentoring programme for smaller MATs, involving 10 support days from now until July. The DfE guidance on the Trust-to-Trust Development Programme had been shared with Trustees before the meeting. Trustees agreed that it would be beneficial to express an interest in joining this programme.

18. Growth opportunities

The CEO reported that he cannot provide any news yet about the Gloucester bid.

He is due to have an informal conversation with a primary school Chair of governors to gauge appetite for joining a MAT.

There is a new opportunity for a local authority free school presumption bid for a new primary school at Bishops Cleeve to open in 2023. Expressions of interest are required by 12th February, and bids to be submitted by 26th March. Trustees had a full discussion about the merits or otherwise of bidding for this school, and although there might be pressure on capacity if the Trust ends up with managing multiple projects simultaneously there was widespread agreement to go ahead with this bid – some of the work from previous bids will provide a good basis, and the bid team would be strengthened with the involvement of the CWJS Headteacher.

19. Trust staff capacity **Confidential**

The CEO referred to the Board's decision at its last meeting about the re-designation of the Finance Director post, this will be implemented with effect from 1st April. He showed Trustees the leadership structure chart and explained current acting arrangements. Trustees agreed to his proposal that the Associate Headteacher post should be graded on the limited scale LT 21-26.

Trustees had a detailed discussion about the longer-term implications of the current structure if the Trust's growth ambitions come to fruition. In particular, they considered the pros and cons of internal or external advertising of senior posts where there is an acting postholder, the implications for acting postholders, and the need to ensure that the size and cost of the leadership team remains in proportion to the scale and resources of the Trust. The CEO said that no further decisions are needed now but that Trustees would need to consider these issues again within the next 18 months and make some specific decisions then.

20. People Strategy

The CEO said that he had had an initial conversation with BG, drawing on her professional experience in human resources and organisational development. A People Strategy would give a base for planning the Trust's future workforce and skills requirements, and would strengthen its position in the market to attract teachers. Trustees also noted the importance of retaining existing talent. They agreed that it would be beneficial to take up BG's offer to do some initial

thinking about the scope and structure of a People Strategy, and to consider at a later date whether they would need to set up a task force to develop the Strategy.

21. Use of consultants

The CEO reported that he had held an informal meeting with an educational consultant, someone with a range of relevant skills who could potentially add capacity to some of the Trust's current and future projects. These include work on the MAT capacity framework, and IT capacity and models. He asked Trustees for their views on this. There was a detailed discussion, with Trustees seeking assurance that the cost of using a consultant would add value to the Trust, its schools and its pupils; would support the Trust's growth ambitions; and would not entail reliance on a single provider. Trustees agreed to the use of consultants for projects where it is beneficial to buy in additional support.

22. Possible new Trustee

The CEO said that he had identified a potential new Trustee, a person with substantial senior experience in a range of education and STEM roles. It was agreed that he would arrange to meet her with the Chair and another Trustee to discuss the role.

23. Risk register

The FD presented the updated risk register. She drew Trustees' attention to internal assurance arrangements (as discussed under item 11 above), financial reserves, and the updating of the Trust's finance policies. There had been no changes since it had been reported to the Audit & Risk Committee last month. Trustees agreed that with the Committee now operating it would be its role to review and check the risk register, and to bring any recommendations back to the Board.

24. Any other business

JG reported that he had been unable to access the View My Financial Insights tool, as discussed at the Audit & Risk Committee meeting. The FD said that she would log on to the system to check any access requirements.

25. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 24th March 2021 at 5.00pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. G.', written over a horizontal line.

24th March 2021