

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of the video conference meeting held at 16:00 hrs on 4 May 2020

Directors	Office	Term
Andrew Armour		23/12/2020
Gary Benn		23/12/2020
David Boatman	Vice Chair	23/12/2020
Melissa Challinor		23/12/2020
* John Luke		23/12/2020
Sarah Mitchell	CEO [Executive Headteacher]	Ex-Officio
Andrew Taylor	Chair	23/12/2020
Liam Tobin	DPA LGB Governor	22/07/2023

In attendance:

Tom Bennett Clerk

* *indicates absence*

1/20 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from John Luke.

2/20 Notification of AoB

- DPA Insurance Claim

3/20 Notification of business interests

Gary Benn declared that his wife worked for GOMAT and he worked for Eddisons that provide services to GOMAT.

No other director declared a potential conflict of interest on any matters to be discussed at the meeting or that they have received or given hospitality or a gift that could be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the MAT.

4/20 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2019 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

5/20 Matters Arising

No matters arising, not otherwise covered on the agenda, were reported.

MAIN BUSINESS

6/20 COVID 19

The EHT reported both schools have remained open to care for the pupils of critical workers and vulnerable pupils. DPA has been closed since the 25 March 2020 as no parents had taken up the places offered for these pupils but the available provision was being promoted to applicable families. There have been between two to four children at GCPA each day.

A 2-person weekly rota to care for the children had been set up with teachers and teaching assistants.

Action

Both schools had carried out risk assessments and put in place the necessary health and safety arrangements to look after these children. Both schools had coped well in meeting the challenges and planning for the administration staff to work at home and in providing pupils with home learning.

One of key matters that the MAT was currently investigating was whether each school could furlough some of catering and Breakfast Club staff. The MAT's auditors had advised that schools may be able to furlough staff if the schools could show the staff were part or wholly funded by private income and it was best practice and ethical to do so. The decision would also need to demonstrate value for money.

Most of the catering and breakfast club staff had other roles within each respective school. The MAT was seeking confirmation whether they could be furloughed for part of a role.

The cost of the providing catering at GCPA was lower than budgeted due the decision to defer the recruitment of a member of staff. As a result, the total catering cost was covered by the Infant Free School Meals grant [IFSM] and the school would not need to furlough.

The cost of the provision of catering at DPA was higher due to the setting up the new catering facility at the school and was currently running at a loss due to the school "closure".

The decision to furlough needed to be taken at Board level who would need to demonstrate and document that it was best practice and ethical to do so and, if agreed, amend the scheme of delegation.

If it was agreed to furlough staff funded by private income, such as catering staff, the Board would also need to agree whether to pay 80% of the salaries refunded under the government's Employee Retention scheme or to pay 100% of the salary to help retain those staff furloughed who might be difficult to replace if they left.

It was **agreed**, in principle, the MAT should furlough as many as staff to prevent either school losing money due to the loss of private income and to "top-up" furloughed salaries to 100% to help retain staff. All agree that staff morale was very important in progressing with the furloughing option.

EHT

It was **agreed** to amend the scheme of delegation to include the furloughing of staff with Board approval a requisite.

EHT

Re-opening both schools to pupils would need to be risk assessed to deal with the likely staggered return of pupils as well as all staff returning. The MAT was receiving daily updates from both the DFE and Essex CC.

7/20 Governance

a) MAT Risk Register

Andrew Armour reported the Audit committee had highlighted three high risks at DPA being staff welfare following the last Ofsted Inspection, admissions and pupil transport from Carver to DPA.

It was **agreed** to add Covid-19 and other pandemics to the risk register to identify the impact that might arise including the absence of key staff at each school.

EHT

It was **agreed** to review and update the risk register that had been last reviewed in November 2019 and to circulate it after the meeting.

EHT

b) **Audit Committee**

The meeting noted the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 30 January 2020

Andrew Armour, the Audit Committee Chair, reported the Audit Committee were having difficulties, under the current Covid 19 restrictions, in meeting the representatives of the three audit firms that had tendered.

It was **agreed** to postpone the tender for new auditors and to recommend to the members that the current auditors, Price Bailey, continue for the 2019-20 financial year.

EHT

c) **Annual General Meeting**

The Chair reported the Chelmsford Diocese had appointed the Rev. Alex Jeewan as a Trust member to replace the Rev David Tomlinson who had stood down due to relocating to Birmingham.

The Chair would now send out the notice to hold the 2019-20 Annual General meeting in the next week or two.

8/20 Executive Head Teacher's [EHT's] Report

The EHT introduced her previously circulated report and highlighted the following:

- The number of applicants for pupils wishing to join the reception had DPA for 2020-21 was significantly higher than the number that had applied last year. There had been an increase in the number of parents who had put the school down as their first choice, this reflected the marked increase in the number of parents who had visited the school and talked to staff. It was pleasing to note that the recent Ofsted assessment had not had a negative impact on admissions for Early Years.
- The Accounting Officer, EHT had received a letter from the ESFA requesting how the Trust were planning to operate with the lower funds at DPA for 2020-2021 due to lower pupil numbers in the current year. EHT has responded advising the ESFA that the school has implemented tight cost controls and the budget would improve with the increase in the number of pupils for 2020-21. Monies would be carried over to support next year's budget.
- The Department for Education [DFE] has announced they will not be collecting data for all primary schools. This includes EYFS, phonics, KS1, KS2 and the new multiplication data being introduced this academic year for Year 4.
- Each academy had a full complement of teaching staff. The challenge will be the recruitment of support staff.
- Building works at GCPA had stopped due to the pandemic and difficulty in getting supplies. Work had now resumed.

- Both schools had updated their safeguarding and child protection policies to meet the changed circumstances in looking after vulnerable families and children learning at school and at home.
- Amy Sargeant has been Acting Head of School during the EHT's leave.

The meeting noted a letter from all the staff at GCPA expressing how grateful they were to Amy for how she had taken over the leadership during the past term and, in particular, how well she has led and managed and communicated with the staff, pupils and parents in meeting the many changes and challenges of the pandemic crisis.

It was **agreed** to write a letter to Amy Sargeant to express the Board's appreciation on how well she well she had done in "stepping up" and meeting the requirements of the new role as well as the many changes that had been implemented.

EHT/Chair

It was **agreed** to write a letter to the DPA Head of School to commend him for the work to increase the number of applications to the school.

EHT/Chair

The Chair asked if proper security and building maintenance checks were being carried out at DPA since it closed.

The EHT advised that she had discussed this with the Head of School who had agreed to ensure there a member of staff was in school during the week to provide a contact point and monitor security and the buildings.

The Chair thanked the EHT for her comprehensive report and all her hard work on behalf of the Trust.

9/20 Academies' Development Plans

The EHT introduced the Academies' Development Plans for 2019 – 2020 and the progress being made in achieving the key priorities at each school.

It had been difficult to make progress on completing some actions under each key priority due to staff working at home. However, teaching staff had made progress in spending time on subject leadership roles and updating curriculum progress maps.

The EHT re-iterated the need to include staff welfare on each Academy's risk registers as staff morale had been affected by the recent events and being "self-isolated". It was important to ensure they felt they were still a valued member of each school team, even when working from home.

10/20 Strategy/ Future Plans

The Chair reported the discussion he was having with three schools on joining the MAT had been put "on hold" due to the current lockdown restrictions and the need for schools to manage the changes in schooling.

Gary Benn reported he had researched all the Church of England Primary schools in North Essex and South Cambridgeshire that had highlighted there were only two single primary academies that had not already joined another MAT. Most other primary schools, not in a MAT, had not at present converted to academy status.

It was **agreed** to circulate the findings and map of the area after the meeting.

GB

11/20 Finance

a) **Managements Accounts for the 7 months to 31 March 2020**

The meeting received and noted the managements accounts for each Academy the 7 months to 31 March 2020 and to noted and approved variances between the forecasts and budgets for the year.

b) **ESFA Letter 21 April 2020**

The meeting noted a letter received from the ESFA on the provision of financial returns and the requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook during the COVID-19 pandemic

c) **Pupil Premium grant**

The pupil premium grants for 2020-21, based on the census at each Academy in January 2020, will be £21,070.00 [GCPA] and £26,370 [DPA] that was in line with what each school had expected.

The EHT reported there may be some families with financial difficulties that may need additional support and qualify for pupil premium funding.

d) **Delegated expenditure limits**

There were no requests for expenditure that exceeded the EHT's approval limit.

12/20 Personnel

a) **Recruitment policy for the appointment of staff**

The EHT reported the current recruitment policy had been updated and was more comprehensive, included the safeguarding provisions for safe recruitment and meeting statutory requirements.

It was **agreed** to approve the recruitment policy for the appointment of staff.

Following a question from David Boatman, the EHT confirmed the teaching staff at each Academy were of a high standard and met the teaching and learning needs of each Academy including at Foundation Early Years level.

b) **New staff and leavers**

The meeting noted the appointment of new staff and those leaving the MAT, as set out in the EHT's report, and received confirmation that they had been employed or left in accordance with the MAT's recruitment, performance and dismissal policies.

The EHT reported the contract of a member of staff at DPA, who had been employed on a fixed term contract to the end of this academic year, had been extended to Easter 2021, due to the current situation of not being able to recruit.

c) **Staff performance management reviews**

It was noted the DFE had initially advised all schools that staff performance reviews should not take place and schools should not be formally monitoring staff 'performance' during this period.

The latest guidance received from the DFE on 27 April 2020 was that teacher PMR should go ahead remotely with judgments being made to mid-point progress only. Teachers demonstrating expected performance and not indicating signs of capability requirements at the mid-point should progress as expected.

EHT

ROUTINE BUSINESS

13/20 Chair's Action

None.

14/20 Safeguarding

The meeting noted the current safeguarding provision as set out in the EHT's report and an annual safeguarding report from the Director responsible for Safeguarding would be presented at the July Board meeting.

15/20 Health and Safety

Gary Benn reported both schools were now using "Safesmart" database and monitoring software that would help them to manage, monitor and record how H&S was being implemented. This had been received well by both schools who were entering the data that should be completed soon.

16/20 Correspondence

None.

17/20 Minutes/reports of committees

The meeting received and noted the confirmed minutes of the meeting of the GCPA LGB held on 22th April 2020.

18/20 Any other business

- **Oil Spill**

Gary Benn reported there had been an oil leak from the central heating boiler tank at DPA that had soaked into and created a reservoir of oil up to a depth of one metre in the school grounds. The oil had also soaked into the grounds of two neighbouring properties.

The insurance company loss adjusters had visited the school to quantify the cost of removing the reservoir of oil from the school grounds and neighbouring properties and would be issuing a report on what the insurers would cover.

The neighbouring properties had confirmed their insurers would cover the cost of restoring their grounds once the oil had been removed.

It was **noted** the school would review its detection systems to minimise the risk of similar events arising in the future.

The EHT expressed her thanks to Gary Benn and Sharon Dyster who had spent considerable time and effort dealing with the unexpected problem.

19/20 Date/time of future meetings

Thursday 16/07/2020 at TBC

Approve by the Board of Directors on 16th July 2020