

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Minutes of the video conference meeting held at 19:45 hrs on 16 July 2020

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

In attendance:

Tom Bennett Clerk

* *indicates absence*

Sarah Mitchell opened the meeting with a prayer.

20/20 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Gary Benn. Andrew Armour had sent advance notice of his late attendance.

21/20 Notification of AoB

None.

22/20 Notification of business interests

No director declared a potential conflict of interest with any items to be discussed at the meeting or that they had received or given any gifts or hospitality that could or be perceived to compromise their impartiality when dealing with matters for the Multi Academy Trust

MAIN BUSINESS

23/20 Governance

a) **Annual General Meeting [AGM]**

The Chair provided a report of the AGM held on 29th May 2020. The members attending the meeting were the Chair, Executive Headteacher, the Revd Alex Jeewan and the Revd Tim Elbourne, the Director of Education for the Chelmsford Diocese Board of Education.

The members received the MAT's Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19 and did not raise any concerns on the progress of the MAT and approved the Board's recommendation to retain the current auditors for 2020-21 in light of the difficulties of carrying out a full tender process due to Covid 19.

b) **Local Governing Bodies Membership 2020-21**

GCPA

The meeting noted one governor on the LGB had resigned and one other governor had

Action

advised of their intention to stand down at the end of the current academic year. With one other stepping down in October following a current building project at GCPA. Additional members are also due to end their term in February 2021.

The Board had already increased the number of governors on the LGB and had appointed an additional governor to provide cover for those planning to stand down.

GCPA had nominated two new LGB members, the pen portraits had been circulated prior to the meeting. Mrs Jayne Greenwood and Mr Andrew Farrimond would provide specific skills replacing those lost due to out-going governors.

It was **agreed** to

- appoint the two candidates from 1st September 2020.
- To advise the Chair of the GCPA LGB of the Board's decision.

DPA

There were no vacancies on the DPA's LGB and no governor had advised of their intention to stand down.

c) Chairs for the LGBs for 2020-21

The current LGB Chairs had not advised of their wish not to be appointed for a further year.

d) Audit Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21

The meeting noted the committee's terms of reference were unchanged and **agreed** to approve them as they stood.

24/20 Strategy/ Future

a) Risk registers for the MAT and each Academy

The EHT advised that each Academy had prepared their own risk register that had been reviewed by each LGB and then incorporated within the MAT's risk register.

The risk registers would be reviewed by each Academy's LGB at every meeting with any changes to the risk likelihood and impact tracked.

DPA's risk register included the impact of the oil spill on the MAT's finances.

The risk registers had also been reviewed by the Audit Committee at their recent meeting in July 2020, who had commended the system for monitoring and reporting the risks facing the Academies and MAT.

b) School Development Plans [SDPs] 2019-20

The meeting noted the updated SDP for each Academy and the progress being made to deliver the key priorities for each school.

c) School Development Plans 2020-21

The key priorities for the SDP for each academy for 2020-21 would build on the priorities achieved in 2019-20.

GCPA:

Leadership

Social, emotional well-being — pupils and staff

Broad and balanced curriculum

Computing

Governance

EHT

DPA:

Curriculum
Teaching & Learning - focus on intervention
Assessment
Reading
Writing
Developing effective leaders

d) MAT Development

The Chair provided an update on discussions he had had with a local church school. Following advice from the Diocese, it had been agreed not to follow these up.

Two other federated church schools had expressed an interest in joining the MAT. They were very interested with the MAT's values of providing overall support and shared teaching and administrative resources while allowing schools to maintain their individual characteristics to meet the needs of their communities.

Both schools had been assessed by Ofsted as good and, although were small, one larger than the other.

The meeting discussed the geographical logistics of the schools joining the MAT.

It was felt that should the schools join the MAT; it could provide the MAT with a "critical mass" that would attract larger primary schools.

It was **agreed:**

- To advise the schools that the Board of Directors were interested in following up discussion on them joining the MAT.
- To carry out full due diligence should the schools' governing bodies make a formal approach to join the MAT.

EHT

EHT

25/20 Executive Head Teacher [EHT]

The EHT introduced her termly report on the operation and performance of the MAT and highlighted the following areas:

Admissions

GCPA had been very busy with admissions for 2020-21 and was under pressure to admit more pupils under Essex CC's Fair Access protocols. The school had resolved one request from Essex CC to admit one child under the protocols that could have had a significant impact on the teaching and learning provided to other pupils.

The number of pupils at DPA was currently eighty-five. The school had lost several pupils of service personnel that had been posted away from the area. The school had gained new pupils of parents looking to find a new school that reflected the improved profile of the school among the local community.

Groups

DPA had a high number of service children [45] based at Carver Barracks.

GCPA had a high number of children with Education and Health Care Plans [EHCPs] that had increased the amount of work for the Special Education Needs Coordinator [SENCO] and Learning Support Assistants [LSAs] in providing one-to-one support. There was also a high number of pupils requiring Additional School Intervention and Support [AIS].

Leadership

Craig Duncan, the MAT's Education Adviser, had worked with both Academies on the new Ofsted Framework, subject leadership and curriculum mapping. Additional support

had been provided to DPA for teaching & learning and Early Years Foundation Subjects [EYFS].

Staffing Update

There had been a positive improvement in the provision of EYFS at DPA. The school had appointed a new teacher with excellent experience and skills in the provision of EYFS who would start in September. The Head of Debden wanted to highlight and record his thanks to one member of staff who had provided cover and had been highly effective in leading the EYFS team since early November and in restoring parents' trust in the school's early years provision.

GCPA were currently recruiting for two full-time equivalent LSAs to work with children with EHCPs to replace three LSAs leaving the school. GCPA has a large number of pupils with EHCPs (currently 5) which does have a significant impact on staffing and associated costs.

GCPA had been unsuccessful in recruiting a Catering Manager earlier in the year. The Assistant Cook was stepping up to cover this vacancy; the school has promoted the Assistant Catering Manager. Recruitment took place for a replacement Assistant Cook which, following interviews was an internal candidate so the school has now had to recruit a catering assistant. The school had now a fully staffed catering team (3) for September 2020.

The whole staff body across the trust had responded very well to the challenging times. Everyone has been flexible and accommodating when working with different groups, changing working patterns and prioritising the school, often with very little notice.

Covid 19

Risk Assessments for each Academy were being updated in line with Government guidelines in preparation for return of pupils in September. It was planned that all children would return on a full-week basis with staggered start and finish times. With the current guidelines, no rotas would be used. This would be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

The Chair asked whether the Directors should be aware of any issues arising from the plans to re-open the schools in September.

The EHT advised that planning for staffing had been difficult due to the need to provide time and prioritise pupils in Years 2 to 5 who had been home learning and may have fallen behind. Years 5 and 6 had less time to catch-up than earlier years and it was planned to provide more teaching staff to these years that could have an impact on staff costs.

It was **agreed** to send the Risk Assessment to all Directors for the September full opening for each school once completed.

The uptake of pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 returning to each Academy when the school re-opened in June had been very high.

Two "bubble" groups at GCPA have had to close temporarily due to one staff member having to self-isolate and another member of the second group having a Covid-19 test. Both closures were for no more than 2 days and all associated Covid-19 tests had been negative.

Transition

The current provision for Reception, Year One and Year Six would end before the end of term at each Academy to provide time for children in all year groups (Reception to Year 5) to have transition days with their new 2020-21 teachers.

Parent Complaint

A parent of a pupil at GCPA had escalated a complaint by referring it to Ofsted who had passed it to Essex CC to investigate. The LA had carried out an investigation and was satisfied that the school has responded appropriately, and no further action was required.

Safeguarding, behaviour and safety

There had been one fixed term exclusion at DPA this term.

Each Academy has ensured that risk assessments for Covid 19, safeguarding and Child Protection have remained up to date and in-line with the current requirements.

Both Academies have received good support from Essex CC in operating within the pandemic. Social Services operations have continued and planned meetings and support had continued at both schools.

Safeguarding training would be provided to all staff and governors on the non-pupil day in September (1/9/20 at 1:30pm)

All staff were aware of new Health and Safety and Fire Drill policies.

GCPA Building Work

Completion of the Multi-Purpose Teaching Room was now expected by mid-August. This extra space would be of great use to the whole school as a STEM hub in helping to provide and enhance a broad and balanced curriculum.

Two CIF bids had been submitted for repairs to the listed building and replacement of the heating and hot water boilers. The boiler replacements had been programmed for the Summer holiday. However, the hot water boiler had failed in early February and had already been replaced. Unfortunately, both bids were unsuccessful. These items would need to be considered and prioritised as part of a long-term capital plan.

DPA Oil Spillage

The oil leak from the tank for the school heating system has resulted in major works at the school. There has also been an impact on some neighbours' properties. A lot of time has been spent on communication with loss adjusters, contractors. The cost of replacing the oil tank would not be covered by the school's insurance. An emergency CIF bid to cover the cost of replacing the oil tank would be made. EHT wanted to thank the MAT Office Manager for all of her work with this project and the support of the health and safety director.

Finance

The 2020-21 budget for DPA would be challenging given the reduced General Academy Grant [GAG] following the reduction in pupil numbers in 2019-20. The ESFA had raised the issue with the Accounting Officer earlier in the academic year. EHT provided a written response to the ESFA advising them of the plans and measures that had been put in place to avoid the school making redundancies to balance the budget and ensure business continuity.

The ESFA's School Resource Management Adviser (SRMA) inspection due for the summer term has been postponed.

Sarah Smith, the MAT's Responsible Office, has completed and provided a report on her review of each Academy's internal controls and financial procedures.

Confirmation has been received that the Sports Premium funding will continue for 2020-2021.

The auditors, Price Bailey, planned to carry out pre-audit work at the end of July using Office Teams. The auditors have provided a lot of support and information during the year on topics such as furloughing and the Academies Financial Handbook 2020-2021.

GDPR

There had been one medical Subject Access Request [SAR] at DPA that had been dealt with.

There had been five minor personal data breaches in total during the academic year with most occurring during lock down; in accordance with the GDPR regulations, these breaches only needed to be logged and not reported to the Information Commissioner's Office [ICO].

Teaching and Learning

All statutory primary assessments have been cancelled for the current academic year.

Routine Ofsted Inspections have been suspended for the Autumn term 2020.

The priority for the MAT was to continue to raise standards in teaching and learning at DPA to ensure consistency across the school including new staff as part of the school's plans to be graded as a Good school.

The Ofsted assessment of DPA following their last inspection, had not impacted on the number of parents applying for places at the school. There had been a wide spread of applications to the school from local villages and Saffron Walden.

The Chair thanked the EHT for her comprehensive report and commended her and the staff for all the work that had been carried out, particularly on meeting the challenges of Covid-19.

26/20 Safeguarding

The meeting noted the annual Safeguarding Report for each Academy

27/20 SEND

The meeting noted the annual SEND report for GCPA; DPA's report to be circulated.

EHT

28/20 Finance

a) Management Accounts

The meeting noted the managements accounts for the period to 31 May 2020 showing the actual income and expenditure totals to date and the forecast for the year-end.

b) Budget 2020-21

The meeting received the draft 2020-21 budgets for the MAT including the draft 2020-21 budget for each academy. Each Academy LGB had reviewed their draft budget at their last meetings.

It was noted DPA 2020-20 Budget would be "tight" in light of the lower GAG income for 2020-21 based on the number of pupils in 2019-20'

It was **agreed** to approve the revenue 2020-21 budgets for the MAT and consider capital budget items when requested.

EHT

c) Requests for Expenditure that exceed the EHT's approval limit

None.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

29/20 Membership

The meeting considered the current membership of the Board of Directors following the decision of David Boatman to stand down as a Director. The Board needed to have sufficient Directors to have the necessary skills and experience to meet their responsibilities as well as have a quorum for each meeting. The Board wanted to formally thank Mr Boatman for his longstanding commitment and considerable contributions as a director of GOMAT; the trust had benefited from his knowledge and expertise.

It was **agreed** to identify suitable candidates for consideration at a future meeting.

ALL

30/20 Minutes of the previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings held on 4 May 2020 were approved as an accurate and true record of the meeting.

31/20 Matters arising

All matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting had been either completed or were included on the agenda.

32/20 Minutes/reports of committees

a) Audit Committee

Andrew Armour highlighted the main areas discussed and reported in the minutes of the Audit Committee meetings held on 30 January 2020 and 9 July 2020.

The committee had reviewed the internal and external audit plans, the Auditors' management letter, the Reporting Officer's report on internal controls and compliance with Financial Regulations, the Academies and MAT's risk registers and the Covid-19 Risk Assessments.

The committee felt the systems of internal control and accounting were very strong.

b) GCPA LGB

The meeting noted the minutes of GCPA LGB meeting held on 7 July 2020.

c) DPA LGB

The meeting noted the unconfirmed minutes the DPA LGB meeting held on 2 July 2020.

33/20 Any other business

None.

34/20 Date/time of future meetings

It was **agreed** to circulate the draft dates of the meeting dates for 2020-21

EHT

Approved by the Board on 3rd September 2020