

Trustees:

Isabel Cherrett – Chair (IJC)
Nicola Dunford (CEO)
Jason Hayward-Jones (JHJ)

Jane Collings (JCO)
Mike Fisher (MF)
Cheryl Mathieson (CM)

Dominic Course (DC)
Roy Gillard (RG)
Fiona Walters (FW)

In attendance: Matt Matthew, Business Manager
Rachel Hill, Clerk to the Trust

Welcome and apologies: The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. There were no apologies.

Declarations of Business Interests: The CEO is a Trustee of the Bearnes Educational Foundation and South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust. Dominic Course is a Trustee of South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust. Mike Fisher (MF) declared that he has become a Director of Adorn Property Limited. Clerk to send Related Interest form to MF.

Action Clerk

1. **Minutes of previous meetings**

The Part I Minutes of the meeting T27 held on 13 July 2020 were approved as an accurate record. These minutes will be signed at a later date when Government restrictions allow.

2. **Matters arising**

2.1 **Item 2.4 Local Board Membership for Drakes and Otterton. Information for GIAS required and governors to be listed on website**

The Chair reported that Local Board Membership for Drakes and Otterton had been updated and now reflects the governors in place. Seats for parent governors remain open. It was agreed that the Chair would email a letter of thanks to governors who were leaving the Totnes Local Board.

Action Chair

It was agreed that the Chair of Trustees requires a defined list of governors for each Local Board together with start and finish dates in order to be able to thank those who are leaving. It was agreed that the ATSIL would work on this.

Action ATSIL

2.2 **Item 2.5 Ofsted grid detailing recommendations**

Trustees thanked the ATSIL for the summary of Ofsted visits circulated prior to the meeting. The CEO reported that the Executive Improvement Team (EIT) have undertaken a risk assessment of all academies and produced a RAG rated priority list, based on vulnerability to an adverse Ofsted judgement. This is a group document to be updated by all and will form the basis of meeting discussion.

[The Chair asked whether Governors would be involved in the preparation for potential Ofsted visits.](#) The CEO replied that the ATSIL is working with Governors on this.

2.3 **Item 5.1 Business Plan**

- Financial Strategy & Control. Vacancy on Audit committee. This item to be deferred to Agenda item 11.
- Growth & Capacity. Morchard Bishop management partnership and setting up of Stoke Gabriel Pre-School. CEO to update. This is dealt with within the CEOs report.

- Diocesan Liaison. Meeting with Interim Lead of the Diocese. This is dealt with within the CEO's report.

2.4 Item 7.4 Internal Audit Programme 2020-2021

The TBM advised that he was waiting to hear from Griffin Chartered Accountants as to their availability. [The Chair asked if the Internal Audit Programme was available and if it matched lines on the risk register?](#) The TBM advised that Griffin had listed standard items.

2.5 Item 8.4.1. Condition Improvement Fund (CIF)

The CEO advised that an appeal has been lodged for Hennock and Landscope against unsuccessful CIF bids. Thanks were extended to the TBM for successful CIF bids in respect of Tedburn, Yeoford and Broadhempston. Detailed information about current CIF bids are contained within the CEO's report.

2.6 Item 10.4 Raleigh Federation

Minutes for meetings dated 9 January, 12 February and 9 July 2020 have been received. Minutes for the May meeting remain outstanding. Minutes are now posted on their website.

Governance Review

The Chair advised that the Academy Trust Data & Standards Lead Andy Keay will be presenting on data collection at 2.30pm on Monday 7 December 2020 at 2.30pm before the Board of Trustees meets at 4pm.

3. **CEO's Report**

The CEO's report had been made available to all Trustees seven days prior to the meeting.

Return to school for all pupils post lockdown

The TBM and CEO had met and talked with Academy Heads about potential issues for a return to school for pupils post lockdown. The CEO reported that it had been a positive return with a percentage attendance in the mid 90's. The majority of staff were confidently back in the classroom. There are a small number of staff shielding and some that, while back at work, remain highly anxious and needing AH intervention.

Systems have been put in place at Landscope House to ensure Trust staff work within government guidelines for Covid.

The Broadhempston Vision and Values meeting will be held with staff.

As the term 'Senior Leadership Team' is generally used within a school setting, the SLT has been renamed Executive Improvement Team (EIT) to reflect the cross-Trust role. This team will focus on ensuring that academies are operating at the highest possible level in all aspects.

The Academy Trust Safeguarding and SEND Lead and Executive Head for Cheriton Bishop and Yeoford had held a Quality First Teaching session for all Academy Heads which had been well received.

Programme for possible future lockdown

[A Trustee asked whether strategies were in place should a teacher have a positive Covid test result.](#) The CEO reported that practices were in place. Due to the way in which the Trust is working, it should be that a bubble shuts not the school. Staff capacity is sufficient enough to ensure that the Trust could manage with issues of this nature. [A Trustee asked if the Trust had a set of responses ready if they had to close a bubble.](#) The CEO replied the Trust would have to follow government guidelines in this respect.

National, Regional and Local issues

Sam MacDonald is the newly appointed RSC Lead for the South West Lead. The Trust has met with him. With Ofsted returning after a lay off there could be many schools moving to RI/ Special Measures with Direct Academy Orders - especially Small Schools.

Trust Capacity Funding (TCaF) is available but growth needs to be demonstrated in order to apply.

Upon the retirement of John Searson at the Diocese, Sue Lockwood has stepped up in an interim capacity.

Business Plan

- The Growth and Capacity section is complete.
- The Governance section requires further work.
- Each Academy will be asked to ensure that they have at the least one parent and one staff representative on their Local Board.
- The Workforce Strategy section requires work and Job Descriptions require reviewing. Appraisal targets require scrutiny.
- Each Trustee will be responsible for a portfolio within the Business Plan and this will be the area they report back on regularly at Trustee meetings. There will be an expectation that Trustees will link with Trust personnel responsible for their area in order to develop a deep understanding of improvement and development. Trustees will then be best placed to challenge the CEO and others to ensure they are being fully interrogated and achieving the best for the Trust. This depth of scrutiny will ensure governance within the Link is effective going forward.

The CEO will email the Business plan to Trustees as soon as it is completed.

Action CEO

Safeguarding

Alex Waterman continues as the Academy Trust Safeguarding and SEND Lead. She will use each individual Academy Safeguarding self-audit submitted to the Local Authority (end of November 2020) to develop a 2020-21 Trust Action Plan. The CEO will provide an overview and add how the Action Plan priorities are achieved as the Trust moves forward.

Safeguarding at Bearnese is monitored and the Academy Head supported by the Improvement and Inclusion Hub Lead and other staff within the Academy.

The CEO extended thanks to all Academy Heads for their work to support staff.

At this point in the meeting a set of questions raised by a Trustee in relation to the CEO's report were brought up for discussion. These questions and the CEO's responses had been emailed to all Trustees prior to the meeting. The CEO responses were for Trustees and Officers only and form Part II of these minutes.

The meeting moved to Part II minutes

The meeting returned to Part I minutes

Funding

In addition to the CEO's written report it was noted that the Ilington Primary School build planning permission has been granted. The TBM advised that an onsite archaeologist was required. MF agreed to send the TBM contact details for same.

Action MF

The Chair asked if the tender process could be timed so that it became an agenda item at the next Board of Trustees meeting.

Action TBM

Income Generation

Thanks were extended to the Income Generation Officer for her thorough report and work to date. The TBM added that online learning is a focus for 2020-21 and the Trust was working to increase the IT provision for schools. There is a current shortage of hardware and laptop prices have increased.

The TBM has spoken to the DfE about this and also Crown Commercial Services. A consistent foundation level of IT equipment was required.

A Trustee noted that the Trustees had agreed to spend money on hardware but funding was also meant to be spent on working with children who were falling behind. The CEO replied that training had begun with the KickStart programme which would be distributed around Academies in order to release teachers to work with disadvantaged children. The Bounce-Back curriculum also caters for individual needs.

4. **Risk Register**

Finance and Financial Sustainability. Revised by F&GP committee on 28 September 2020. Next review February 2021.

Education Standards and Achievement. Partially reviewed 30 September 2020. Further review by S&C committee required.

Staffing and Employment. Reviewed on 17 May 2020 by the Remuneration Committee. Next review June 2021.

Quality and Reputation. Reviewed 11 February 2020 by Trustees. Next review February 2021. Quality and Reputation 1-5 and 11 due for review October 2020.

Safeguarding. Reviewed May 2020. Next review by S&C Committee December 2020.

Regulation and Statutory Compliance. Reviewed by the Audit committee April 2019. Next review May 2021

Governance. Partially reviewed 30.09.2020. Requires review by Board of Trustees.

Infrastructure Estate. Reviewed 28 September 2020 by F&GP committee. Next review February 2021.

Infrastructure IT. Reviewed by F&GP committee 28 September 2020. Next review February 2021.

Infrastructure Health and Safety. Reviewed by F&GP committee 28 September 2020. Next review February 2021.

Infrastructure Business Unit. Added November 2019. Next review by F&GP committee November 2020.

The Chair of the S&C committee noted that she had recently updated the Educational Standards and Achievement section. The Chair of Trustees agreed to ensure the formulae were in the correct places and also write a protocol on how to do this.

Action Chair

The Clerk was asked to feed review dates into the relevant committee agendas.

Action Clerk

The CEO expressed concern about the Governance section as it requires review. The Chair agreed to review this section.

Action Chair

The Chair reiterated that the Risk Register forms a key document for Ofsted visits and committees should remain vigilant about updating it.

Action all committees

5. **Scheme of Delegation**

The Board of Trustees approved the rewritten Local Board section of the Scheme of Delegation.

Approved

The Board of Trustees approved the Scheme of Delegation.

Approved

Thanks were extended to the CEO and ATSIL for their work over the summer on the roles and responsibilities of the Local Board.

The Chair of Trustees agreed to make amendments to the Scheme of Delegation prior to circulation to bring it up to date.

Action Chair

The Chair advised that at the F&GP committee meeting held on 28 September 2020 it had been agreed that as each policy was updated, the Clerk would lift any delegated responsibility to officers or Governors and add it to the table.

Action Clerk

6. **Audit Committee**

The TBM advised that the current external audit had commenced week commencing 5 October 2020. The Chair of the F&GP committee will join the closure meeting. Bishop Fleming will report at the Audit Committee meeting to be held on 11 November 2020.

The Audit Committee's role is to scrutinise the draft Trustees' and Governance Statements.

Action Audit committee

7. **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

The minutes of the F&GP meeting held on 28 September 2020 were noted.

The Chair is to action one amendment under item 2.4. to change the reference from South Dartmoor MAT to Westcountry MAT.

Action Chair

The Chair of the F&GP committee noted the following discussion points from the meeting.

- The Trust has seen a loss in income of approximately £19,000 for paid places in Early Years.
- A Premises Officer has been appointed and will be employed from half term.
- The Bishop Fleming fees for auditing were discussed. The increase covers the new schools coming into the Trust. Fees will continue to be reviewed.
- The end of August accounts had been reviewed. The decrease in pupil numbers requires monitoring.
- The monthly meetings between the TBM/CEO and Chair will continue.
- Growth in Trust reserves are expected this year.
- A Financial Strategy and Control Paper is to be written.
- The Risk Register was reviewed.
- A Cycle 2Work Scheme was approved.

The Chair reported that the Constitution and Terms of Reference had been reviewed. A sentence under 6.1 had been added as follows: 'The Trust will seek to attract external funding and grants through income generation to benefit pupils within academies and across the Trust'.

The Finance & General Purposes Constitution and Terms of Reference were approved by the Trustees.

Approved

8. **Remuneration Committee**

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee noted the following discussion points from the meeting held on 25 September 2020.

- The annual pay review for staff other than those within the remit of the Board of Trustees had been approved.
- SMART targets have now been set at consistent levels across the Trust.
- The newly formed Executive Improvement Team had been discussed. This team is to offer a support mechanism on the education side.
- The HR Officer is now collecting applicants' diversity data for monitoring purposes. This information is not available to those shortlisting for interview.

A review of the Constitution and Terms of Reference had been undertaken with one recommendation for approval by Trustees. This was under item 6.1 and is as follows: 'The Committee will approve the middle management structure and make recommendations to the Board on the senior management structure'.

The Board of Trustees approved the Remuneration Terms of Reference.

Approved

The Chair of Trustees will appraise the CEO and report back to board. The CEO undertakes the appraisal of the TBM but the Board of Trustees as a whole approves his targets.

9. **Standards & Curriculum Committee**

The minutes of the S&C meeting held on 16 September 2020 were noted.

The Chair of the S&C Committee noted the following discussion points from the meeting.

- The Bounce-Back curriculum
- Scheme of Delegation
- Potential Ofsted Visits
- Risk Register

The Chair expressed concern that mixed messages were being received from Local Boards in terms of reporting and urged the Trust to look at how they listen to Local Boards and how this is reported back to Trustees. In future, Local Board issues will be moved to the top of the agenda for S&C meetings. The Chair of Trustees added that she had read clear reports from Newton & Teign and Woodleigh prepared for the S&C meeting and urged other Trustees to read the Local Board reports.

The CEO added that, together with the ATSIL, they had considered recording a video for S&C meetings, updating the Local Boards on academy business which the Local Boards could then question. The Chair of Trustees commented that a written report was helpful and asked the CEO and ATSIL to divide what they were reporting on to avoid duplication. A Trustee noted that it was key to help Local Boards to define their role and clarify communication exchange.

The CEO suggested that the annual focus visits for governors should form a major part of S&C meetings. Agendas need to be refined with less to do and more to discuss. The Chair of Trustees asked that the CEO/ATSIL and Chair of S&C involve the Clerk in any discussion regarding agendas.

Action CEO/ATSIL/Clerk

The Constitution and Terms of Reference had been reviewed with the recommendation that the ATSIL is a member of the committee. The Chair of Trustees advised that the ATSIL's role was to report to the committee as an officer. CM also noted that in the Scheme of Delegation it states that the ATSIL will attend meetings as and when required. It was agreed that the Chair of Trustees would make changes to the Terms of Reference and circulate to the Chair of S&C and CEO for their comments.

Action Chair of Trustees

JCO left the meeting at 17.40

10. **Finance**

The TBM reported.

- Provisional Outturn for previous financial year 2019-20. The accounts for the financial year ended 31 August 2020 had been circulated. These accounts have met expectations. School contributions to CIF bids have been saved.
- Budget 2020-2021. The budget for 2020-2021 had been circulated to Trustees. This was originally completed in July 2020. The DfE then advised that the budget forecast could be deferred to 28 September 2020. The Trust needs to plan how to use reserves going forward. It is anticipated that there will be a recoupment of Covid-19 related costs from the Government. At the end of this audit round it will be interesting to see how other Trusts have fared financially. **A Trustee asked why there had been an overspend on employees NI contributions?** The TBM advised that this was due to a ledger code error and in future these figures will be entered electronically to improve the system. **FW asked if the business development fund could be used to encourage business for the schools.** The Chair responded that Trusts needed, on the one hand, to retain sufficient funds to meet unforeseen costs and set aside reserves for capital building and equipment expenditure but, on the other, to spend funds received now for the benefit of current pupils and avoid being considered over-funded yet remain prudent as an ongoing concern. This position was constantly monitored by the F&GP Committee. The TBM reported that an increase in Trust mergers could be seen. The TBM advised that there were some schools causing concern

within the Link but the Trust has identified them. A measured and balanced approach is required going forward.

The Board of Trustees endorsed the F&GP committee's authorisation at their meeting on 28 September 2020 to submit the Budget Forecast Report (BFR 3).

Endorsed

11. **Governance**

The main changes to the Academies Financial Handbook were detailed on the agenda. The Chair urged Trustees to read and ensure they understand these changes.

There were no appointments of new Trustees or Governors to report. The Chair of Trustees reported that she had sent out a video advertising for expressions of interest in Trustee positions. This had been sent to Chairs of Local Boards and former colleagues. The Chair asked other Trustees to forward the advert to anyone who they thought could be interested. The TBM advised that Academy Heads had been asked if it could be uploaded onto each school's website or Facebook page. The Devon Chamber was also mentioned. It was noted that virtual meetings would help encourage Trustees who live further away to send in an expression of interest.

12. **Local Boards**

There have been no Local Board meetings since the last Board of Trustees meeting on 13.07.2020.

13. **Safeguarding**

The CEO reported on current issues.

The meeting moved to Part II minutes

The meeting returned to Part I minutes

14. **Policies**

The following Policies have been reviewed and updated and were presented for approval.

14.1 **Recommended by the Standards & Curriculum Committee**

14.1.1 Pupil Premium. The Chair of Trustees noted that the wrong document was being referred to on the DfE website. It was suggested the wording to read 'published by the DfE annually'. CM asked that references to Head Teachers were replaced by Academy Heads. Subject to these amendments the Pupil Premium policy was approved.

Approved

14.1.2 Behaviour. The CEO agreed to send the Chair the most up to date copy of this policy to update. Chair of Trustees to then forward a revised copy to the Clerk.

Action CEO/Chair of Trustees

14.1.3 Management of Outdoor Education Visits. This policy will be presented at the next Board of Trustees meeting.

14.2 **Finance & General Purposes Committee**

14.2.1 Capital and Revenue Reserves

Approved

14.2.2 Capitalisation

Approved

14.2.3 Central Funds

Approved

14.2.4 Fundraising

Approved

14.2.5 Investment

Approved

14.3 **Remuneration Committee**

14.3.1 Pay Policy 2020

Approved

15. **New Term Dates**
The term dates for 2021-2022 were approved.

Approved

16. **Meeting Dates 2020-21**
T30 07 December 2020. To note that at 14.30 Andy Keay will make a presentation on data; this in an action arising from the Trustees' Skills Audit.
T 31 08 February 2021
T 32 24 May 2021
T33 12 July 2021
T34 19 July 2021 – AGM
Clerk to advise Local Boards of the AGM date.

Action Clerk

17. **Any Other Business**
17.1 **Succession Planning**
Prior to the start of the Board of Trustees meeting, Trustees had met online to discuss succession planning. It had been agreed to hold a strategic Trustees meeting in April or May to discuss this matter further. Trustees have been requested to forward agenda items for the meeting to the Vice-Chair.

The meeting moved to Part II minutes

The meeting returned to Part I minutes