

Trustees (Remote) Meeting
21st September 2020
10.00am – 12.00pm
Minutes

Present:

Ms Louise Hutchinson (LH) Trustee
Dr Elaine Burfitt (EB) Chair of Trustees
Dr Martin Hanbury (MH) Executive Headteacher
Mr Cole Andrew (CA) Trustee
Mr Andrew Bent (AB) Trustee

Apologies: Mr Patrick Johnson (PJ) Trustee
Mr David Deane (DD) Trustee
Mr John Corker (JC) Trustee

In Attendance: Miss J Thorp (JT) Just A Sec (Minutes)

Key: **Governor question/comment** **Response** **Action Required**

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Dr Hanbury welcomed Trustees to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Patrick Johnson, David Deane and John Corker. EB explained that this was an additional Trustees meeting being held to review governance arrangements across Chatsworth Multi Academy Trust.

2. Audit of Skills

It is a requirement of the Auditors that Trustees complete an annual audit of skills. MH has circulated a document which reflects the skills Academy Trust Boards required. Trustees are asked to complete and return the document so that the responses can be collated into the matrix and a summary of strengths and areas for development can be produced and submitted to the external Auditors.

At the next Trustees meeting, it would be beneficial to discuss the findings of the skills audit with a view to looking to recruit Trustees with the necessary skills to fill any gaps.

It was noted that whilst some statements are very straightforward, requesting a 'yes' or 'no' response, other statements are very broad and subjective, for example, I understand...which does not make it clear as to what level of awareness Trustees would be expected to have.

MH acknowledged that the skills audit is not a perfect tool but felt that it was a useful tool to give a general overview of the skills of the Boards members and initiate discussion points.

Action: All Trustees to complete the audit and return it to MH by the 28th September 2020. Responses to then be collated into the matrix and a summary produced. A

discussion will then be held at the next meeting regarding strengths and gaps with a view to recruiting Trustees with the necessary skills to further strengthen the board.

3. Setting Future Agendas

EB suggested that by having a fixed agenda structure, this would ensure the Board is compliant, discussing the appropriate and relevant items at each meeting and reducing the risk of repetition.

Trustees will consider early on during each meeting whether they are focused on the right aspects and carrying out their role effectively. Agenda will then contain the following items:

- Welcome, Apologies
- Minutes, Action Log
- Core Reports – e.g. Finance, Estates, Education, HR and Safeguarding
- Communication and Engagement – e.g. Pupils, Parents, Community – also linking to website
- Risk Register – high risk areas not already discussed in the core reports and review of scoring
- Annual Governance Items set out in an annualised timetable to ensure compliance – e.g. Strategic Development Plans, External Auditors Reports
- Governance of Trust Board – e.g. Exceptions Reporting of Business Interests (changes/outstanding forms), Annual Skills Check, Trustee Development Events
- Flexible Slot for Other Business
- AOB
- Date and Time of Next Meeting

LH advised that the NGA and The Key for Governors produce a timetable of set events throughout the year that should be considered by Trust Boards. As a result, LH had drawn up a timetable which was shared by the previous Clerk but not implemented. This could be used as a framework to save repeating the exercise.

CA agreed that an annual timetable would focus the mind to prevent repetition and ensure compliance. It is advisable if the Clerk to Trustees produces a draft agenda in advance of the meeting containing the relevant items to be reviewed and approved by the Chair.

LH referred to the Scheme of Delegation document which is key to all parties understanding their roles and responsibilities within the Trust.

AB agreed with the proposal to introduce a set annual timetable of agenda items but cautioned against having too many items on each agenda. The Scheme of Delegation is an important document in determining what should be on the agenda of the Trust Board and Local Governing Board. The Terms of Reference for the Local Governing Board should be very clear as to what the agenda should contain. Any aspects not listed in the Terms of Reference are a matter for the Trustees.

AB presented the Omega Trust Scheme of Delegation format which uses the RACI format (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed). The document outlines each area of responsibility and determines when the Members, Trust Board, Local Governing Board, Executive Principal or Head of School may be responsible or

accountable, consulted with or receive information only. For example, the Principal may be responsible for carrying out a piece of work but Trustees are accountable for the decision making.

In addition to the Scheme of Delegation which is a more general document covering a wide range of governance aspects, the Scheme of Financial Delegation sets out specifically the responsibilities of individuals and groups in relation to financial matters.

The model was produced by Browne Jacobson and has been adapted to meet the needs of the Trust.

LH agreed that this would be a good format to use to prevent overlap in meetings of the LGB and Trust Board that has been an issue in the past. For example, lack of clarity as to which board is responsible for approving certain policies.

Currently, the High School LGB has no role in financial monitoring and does not have a Finance Committee due to a lack of financial expertise on the board. As such, this role sits with the MAT Finance Committee and Trust Board.

Action: AB to share the Scheme of Delegation document and support with the development of a Chatsworth specific version

Trustees were happy with the proposal for MH to produce a draft Scheme of Delegation, Scheme of Financial Delegation and Terms of Reference for the LGB using the Omega Trust version as a basis. The documents will then be discussed at the next Chairs and Executive Head meeting on 20th October before being circulated to Trustees for further discussion at the next Trust Board meeting in November.

4. Delegation of Responsibilities across the Trust

This matter was discussed under item 3.

5. Information / Communication Process

The idea of establishing a more formal link between the Governing Boards and Trustees has been the subject of discussion for some time now. The Trust is keen for updates and key information to be shared both ways between the boards via a more formal method.

By producing a clear Scheme of Delegation, which identifies aspects of Trust business requiring consultation or information to be shared, a more effective method of communication can be introduced.

Action: Communication / Information Sharing to be considered again once the Scheme of Delegation has been produced

6. Individual Trustee Roles and Responsibilities

The idea of introducing individual roles and responsibilities for Trustees has not been progressed to date but may be considered further once the Scheme of Delegation is in place.

The Trust already has an established Finance Committee in place with key individuals who have the financial expertise necessary to monitor Trust budgets and provide support and challenge to the leadership team.

A Code of Conduct is in place for LGB members and Trustees on each of the boards. AB offered to share the Code of Conduct for Omega Trust as a comparison document.

Action: AB to share the Omega Trust Code of Conduct

7. Creation of Vice Chair Role

The Trust Board does not currently have a Vice Chair but it would be beneficial to appoint one to step into the role in the absence of the Chair. Trustees agreed that the election process should be revisited annually.

Action: Trustees to submit expressions of interest in the Vice Chair position prior to the next meeting

8. Storage and Compliance of ROBIs

DBS Checks

Companies House Information

The Trust would benefit from key governor compliance information being stored at a central point to ensure it remains compliant with all statutory requirements.

Chatsworth MAT Trust Board, Finance Committee and Futures Governing Board are now using the Trust Governor online platform to manage all Governor and Trustee business. The system has facilities for storing compliance information such as record of business interests and DBS numbers.

AB suggested that the Governor Hub system was a more modern interface and provided a brief demonstration of the system. The High School Governing Board currently uses this system as part of the SLA with Salford Governor Services.

It was agreed that the Trust would benefit from having one Trust-wide system and that the matter would be given further consideration

Action: Trust Governor versus Governor Hub to be considered further

9. Any Other Business

Covid Update

As well as ensuring the safety and wellbeing of staff and pupils of Chatsworth, the Trustees have a responsibility to ensure the leadership team are well supported. MH thanked Trustees for their concern and confirmed that all members of the leadership team are managing well but are under enormous pressure during such difficult circumstances. The advice is changeable and the situation is chaotic making it difficult to manage.

The students have suffered from some lost learning time as a result of transport being cancelled due to transport staff being unwell.

There have been no confirmed staff cases to date but one confirmed case of a pupil. As such, the decision was taken to close the Wentworth site in case of infection transmission.

However, it was then determined that the pupil had not been onsite for four consecutive days and therefore an urgent cleaning response was not required.

It is a concern that the Government's test and trace system is not working and does not support the school and college. Because of the delays in being able to obtain a test, the Trust is taking an over-cautious approach and sending more pupils and staff home. However, this approach is necessary to protect the pupils and staff.

Some classes have had to close due to staff illness. Normally these instances would be covered by another member of staff but this is not possible due to the bubble system in place. The illnesses have not been Covid related to date, more so the usual seasonal colds and coughs that staff and pupils pick up as they return to school in September.

The constantly changing advice is a source of frustration for staff. For example, Public Health England initially advised that that were a number of classic and secondary symptoms and if a pupil or member of staff had so many of each, they would be classed as a potential Covid subject. This advice then changed and secondary symptoms were not being taken into account, however yesterday, Helen Birkinhead was advised that secondary symptoms were now factored in again.

The working hours of SLT have increased significantly, particularly over the weekends. The team can only fire fight at this stage which is a very draining form of working and this is unlikely to change in the near future. The challenge is maintaining stability and providing good leadership when information is constantly changing and being contradicted.

Trustees asked for thanks to be passed onto all leaders and staff for their efforts and commitment to providing a safe and secure environment to staff and students.

Dates for Academic Year 2020-21

Future dates have not yet been set but hope to be by the end of next week.

Action: Dates to be sent to Trustees as soon as they are confirmed

Summary of actions

Item	Action	Who
2	All Trustees to complete the audit and return it to MH by the 28 th September 2020. Responses to then be collated into the matrix and a summary produced. A discussion will then be held at the next meeting regarding strengths and gaps with a view to recruiting Trustees with the necessary skills to further strengthen the board.	All
3	AB to share the Scheme of Delegation document and support with the development of a Chatsworth specific version	AB
5	Communication / Information Sharing to be considered again once the Scheme of Delegation has been produced	MH/EB
6	AB to share the Omega Trust Code of Conduct	AB

7	Trustees to submit expressions of interest in the Vice Chair position prior to the next meeting	All
8	Trust Governor versus Governor Hub to be considered further	MH
9	Dates to be sent to Trustees as soon as they are confirmed	MH