

Trustees (Remote) Meeting
14th July 2020
9.30am – 12.00pm
Minutes

Present: Mr Patrick Johnson (PJ) Trustee
Ms Louise Hutchinson (LH) Trustee
Ms Elaine Burfitt (EB) Chair of Trustees
Mr John Corker (JC) Trustee
Dr Martin Hanbury (MH) Executive Headteacher
Mr Cole Andrew (CA) Trustee
Mr Ian McKinlay (IM) Member
Mr David Deane (DD) Trustee
Ms Helen Birkinhead (HB) Headteacher, Chatsworth High School
Mr Andrew Bent (AB) Trustee

Apologies: Mr Brendan Murden (BM) Member
Mrs Francine Brower (FB) Member

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 and Members to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Brendan Murden and Francine Brower.

New Trustee Andrew Bent was welcomed to the meeting and invited to share details of his experience as Chair of the Omega Academy Trust, his previous experience as Accountant with United Utilities and his current role as Asset Manager.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (31st March 2020)

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a correct and accurate record.

3. Matters arising from previous meeting minutes and summary of actions

MH to discuss the plans for Easter holiday opening with unions and relay the response to Trustees via email – Complete

Staff Uniforms Update – Following consideration of the feedback received, the decision was not to proceed with the plan to introduce a staff uniform.

4. Executive Head Review and Questions

The purpose of the review is to capture the intentions of the Trust over the coming months and the reasons behind the decisions being taken.

The support programme will continue to the end of July. More than thirty young people have benefitted from the programme and other aspects of support have also been

offered. An example of this is support for health colleagues in carrying out general health care tasks for Chatsworth young people.

Some appropriate challenge was received from Chatsworth High School Governors at the last meeting chaired by Louise Hutchinson. Following the discussions, Governors were in full support of the plans. A parent workshop then took place and the result was that parents fully understood the processes and reasons for decisions having been made and some very supportive comments were received.

Further challenge is expected in relation to the long term impact on pupils' learning, childcare implications for families who work, concerns that children could struggle to return to a full time onsite education if the situation continues for a significant length of time and the overall impact on the school and college community.

SLT have done some fantastic work encouraging as many pupils back into school as possible, offering a blended learning programme and working with social care agencies to ensure children and staff are safe. The offer is as good as it can be for September but leaders are committed to reviewing the plans on a weekly basis and adapting as necessary.

The decision has been taken to operate small bubbles from two pupils and two staff to up to ten pupils. This will enable any outbreaks to be dealt with swiftly and contained within the bubble.

Government advice has been contradictory but the local advice from Salford Council and the Health Authority has been very useful.

Due to the risk of a second wave of infections and the implications for this, the Trust is trying to plan accordingly. Coronavirus is likely to be an issue for some time yet and therefore, schools and colleges must adapt their practice to enable a manageable and high-quality service to continue to be delivered.

In addition to the Coronavirus challenges, a significant increase in student numbers is projected over the next few years. The school had a 95 PAN but was already at 130 last year. Therefore, it was agreed that the PAN should increase to 140 with the support of the LA but it is already expected that numbers will reach 142 in September. Within three years, the expectation is that numbers could increase further to 165. Futures is expected to have 25 students in September and could reach 35 within 3-years. The projections are very positive but bring with them some challenges.

While there will be financial benefits in terms of economies of scale, it will be necessary to invest in additional staffing and specialists. Building space is a major concern and at some point in the future, it may be necessary to refuse pupils. To try and address the issue as soon as possible, there is a significant amount of work to do to try and secure some new estate to accommodate the increasing numbers.

A Trustee advised that a further increase in PAN would require formal consultation and therefore, if the plan is to increase from September 2022, it would be appropriate to look at this in the autumn term. Increasing the PAN could also attract some capital funding.

Dr Hanbury explained that the Trust is in an unusual position of not owning any of its buildings. Previously, when the Trust wanted to carry out building improvements, it was not possible to access any funding as it was viewed to be improving the LA estate. The Trust sub-lets the buildings from the LA who hold the lease. It is further complicated by the fact that the school is situated in a PFI building.

Advice around the size of building and space required for children with SEN is quite obscure. Further guidance will be required in case the school reaches the point where places have to start to be refused.

Given the need for social distancing, will additional transport costs be the responsibility of the Trust or the LA?

It is understood that there will not be any additional transport costs for the Trust. However, it may be necessary to consider enhancing the service by offering to transport pupils if the LA cannot provide the normal service and parents cannot support.

Caution was advised against taking this approach. Whilst it is commendable from an educational perspective that the Trust is trying to overcome a barrier, transport is the responsibility of Salford Council and not the Trust. Therefore, it is important that Salford understands that any offer would be time limited and an interim solution so that it does not become the Trust's responsibility. The Trust should be a safety net only in the event that Salford is unable to resolve the issue.

Would you consider a transport contract with the LA?

The Trust already has a contract in place but as social distancing rules still apply, the number of pupils minibuses can accommodate has reduced from 10 to 2-3.

Trustees were advised that in another authority, some schools now offer transport contracts to the LA for their own students. School staff escort the pupils to and from school which has a positive impact on behaviour management and means that pupils have a better start to the school day.

What would be the impact on staffing if you have to clean the minibuses between each journey?

Staff have been supporting with this throughout the lockdown. The school has now invested in some washable covers which will make it easier to manage the process.

Is this an effective use of staff?

The aim is to ensure as many pupils as possible can come to school and this may mean that staff have to take on other responsibilities. However, where possible, parents will transport their children. A full time onsite cleaner has been employed who could also support with cleaning the buses.

Have specialist professionals continued to provide services throughout lockdown?

NHS specialists have not been able to deliver a fully comprehensive service but there has been some remote provision such as art therapy. AT Therapy have delivered training and worked with some students and music therapy has gone ahead which is an external service.

The leadership team have done a fantastic job in managing this difficult situation and it is unlikely that things will return to the previous normal. What does future strategic

planning look like, how will you drive forward the curriculum and school improvement to avoid losing the momentum?

It will be business as usual in terms of making the college and school the best educational provisions they can be. The plan will be to maintain the focus, expand the profile and become a national entity which the leadership team has some very strong ideas on. Coronavirus will not affect the momentum of delivering against the development plan.

Are any pupils likely to have lost skills in key areas such as vocabulary and mobility?

Yes, there are likely to be some who have lost skills in these areas. Staff are monitoring the impact through regular contact with families.

A recovery curriculum devised by Barry Carpenter will be introduced. This recognises that all children have suffered some form of loss and trauma through lockdown whether they have lost someone or not and the school must nurture them through it. The curriculum will be delivered through discreet sessions as well as being weaved into the general timetable. It is accepted that it will be difficult for some pupils to return after such a long time at home and therefore, staff must have the skills and resources to deal with this. It is also acknowledged that issues may not present immediately and staff should be prepared for this.

Although it is important to get back to the curriculum as soon as possible to start to address the gaps in learning, the emotional aspects must be addressed first or success will be affected.

The situation has provided an opportunity to develop an emotional and social interaction route through the curriculum. There is already a strong momentum in place for curriculum development and if anything, the situation has enabled the pace to quicken and some excellent work has been produced.

It is important that families are also made aware that they have a role to play in their children's development. The school can teach children the skills they need to a certain point, but parents also have a responsibility to continue the work at home. The situation has forced parents to engage more with home learning and with the risk of a further lockdown at some point, parents must be prepared to continue this during holidays, weekends and after school.

It is positive to note that parents have been proactive in many ways and have sent in photographs and messages about the activities their children have been involved in such as gardening and cooking.

Approved: Trustees supported the plans for the reopening of Chatsworth High School and Chatsworth Futures from September.

Dr Hanbury advised Trustees that Brendan Murden had confirmed his approval of the plan via email prior to this meeting.

5. Finance Update – Minutes (2nd July 2020)

Mr Corker provided an overview of the Finance Committee meeting which was an unusual meeting in the sense that budgets were not the main focus of discussions.

The committee discussed the financial impact of Covid. Costs to date include £5,500 for free school meals and practical equipment such as new waste bins etc. totalling £1,500. For staff who worked over the holidays, some will require payment but others will take time off in lieu. The total amount cannot yet be confirmed but indications are that costs will be recoverable.

Four students will stay on at Futures for an additional year due to their final year having been adversely affected by Covid. This will mean Futures has 26 learners altogether for September which has an impact on staffing and recruitment. The long term target is to reach 40 learners.

As some aspects of funding are paid in arrears, the committee discussed the potential impact on the budget in terms of recruiting additional staff to support the increase in student numbers. The committee was assured that there are adequate funds in the bank including funding set aside to cover a potential shortfall if the ESFA held back funding for learners as a result of the college's inadequate Ofsted rating. The ESFA has since confirmed that the college will receive full funding for these learners and therefore, the funds can be released to cover additional staffing costs.

The committee discussed the purchase of a cloud based finance system. The system will be of great benefit in terms of managing the High School, Futures and Engage under one system and saving a significant amount of time and money in the long term. However, following further considerations, it was agreed that it would be disruptive to implement at this point and therefore, the recommendation is to defer the implementation until September 2021.

The committee was presented with a three year forecast which was significantly different to what was predicted earlier this year and moving from a deficit to a surplus position. The committee felt that more work was required to ensure the budget reflected an accurate picture of the expected position before being submitted to the ESFA and tasked the leadership team with this exercise.

Trustees must be satisfied that the budget is in a sustainable position before any further decisions are taken in terms of increasing student numbers and recruiting more staff.

The committee also discussed a proposed restructure of the business functions within the Trust due to the sad passing of a member of staff. The proposal was for HR and Finance to sit together and other business functions to sit separately. However, Trustees cautioned that finance and HR were too big to be managed by one member of staff and therefore, this should be reviewed again to ensure that an efficient team is developed with a five year focus.

Will this help to address the issue with forecasting?

Yes

Haines Watt will be carrying out an audit in the autumn term and at this point, the end of year report will provide a far more credible foundation to the projections.

The challenge is that the management accounts provide details of the in-year spend and the Auditors then look back at what has actually been spent so it is difficult to compare actual spend to expected spend.

In an ideal world, the Trust would have someone with accounting expertise to support Vicky McRae who has practical business manager experience in managing school finances but not necessarily profit and loss accounts required as an academy. At the moment, the Trust is wrestling with how best to bridge the gap and it is felt that separation of these roles would be the best way forward to be able to manage the workload.

There is nothing wrong with the accuracy of the figures being presented but it does not give the level of financial reporting the Trust is looking for. The budget always forecasts a shortfall that does not become a reality which is positive from one perspective but negative in the fact that the Trust could have had extra money to spend on students. It is important to ensure that the resources available to the Trust are put to the best use.

A Trustee expressed that this is a risk for the Trust. Mr Corker agreed but assured Trustees that the financial position is closely monitored by the Finance Committee and there are no significant concerns at this stage in terms of cash balances and levels of income and expenditure.

The Trust must become more strategic in its planning and monitoring of finances. However, there are no concerns currently as reserves are sufficient to be able to draw on if necessary.

Dr Hanbury acknowledged that leaders do not yet have precise information to be able to make some key decisions and therefore, a cautious approach has always been taken. The risk is low in terms of the stability of finances but funding could be used better.

6. Risk Assessment Process

The risk assessment is presented today for approval to be published on the website. The role of Trustees is to ensure the risk assessment is in place and that correct processes are followed rather than scrutinising the detail of the risk assessment.

The risk assessment is set out in the Greater Manchester format. Separate assessments have been completed for Chatsworth High School and Futures by the appropriate personnel. The assessments are set out using a straightforward ragging system based on the degree of risk, mitigating actions and outcome risk.

The assessments were completed initially in early June and a risk action plan was then created for leaders to address any operational high risks. The actions were then reassessed prior to the Governing Board meetings held at Chatsworth High School and Futures and presented for information. A further review took place yesterday to include any further actions taken.

Most risks have now become green indicating low risk. It must be noted that none of these aspects can be completely risk free. However, the Trust now feels in a position to say that the school and college are ready to reopen. A further assessment at the end of July will dictate the plans for September.

Individual pupil risk assessments now incorporate a Covid element. The assessments have been scrutinised by the leadership teams and where necessary, returned to teachers with questions or challenge. Once complete, leaders have endorsed the risk

assessments which gives reassurance to teachers that leaders are satisfied that all necessary mitigations have been taken to manage the individual needs of each student.

The risk assessment process and environmental assessments then led to the bubble process.

A Trustee expressed concern that fire procedures are currently rated as red in the operational procedures document. These risks must be reduced prior to the school and college opening in September. Dr Hanbury explained that the training has not yet taken place but there are plans to do this prior to reopening. At the next review point, it is expected that this will change to an amber rating.

Where is the risk assessment format from?

The format has been developed across Greater Manchester and has been approved by the legal department. It is a requirement of Salford Council for all schools to have completed it.

A Trustee raised that whilst this is a comprehensive and detailed document, as a risk management document, it requires some improvement. The general principle is that risks have an associated colour but this does not give an indication of the level of risk within a colour, for example, how red is a red. The more appropriate method of assessing risk is to use a numerical system with numbers allocated to impact and likelihood which are then multiplied together to allocate a ranking system which provides a more accurate picture of the highest and lowest risk areas. Dr Hanbury explained that the Trust uses this matrix within its internal risk assessments for students but this is a format schools were required to use by the Council.

Do we review the risk register at Trust Board meetings?

Not currently

Andrew Bent offered to share the risk register template developed for the Omega Trust.

Action: Andrew Bent to share the Omega Trust Risk Register template

In terms of future planning and the approach to blended learning, are there any issues with access to equipment and Wi-Fi for pupils and if so, how will you address this?

A key part of the work early on was to identify which pupils had access and who would struggle to access the online learning. It was identified that this would become the new poverty gap and therefore, a survey was completed in terms of what equipment students had available to them and what support they may need. A list was then sent to the LA and the school was advised that they would be allocated ten laptops. However, these were not received. Another request has been completed and a response is awaited.

As an interim measure, works packs have been produced and delivered to families which have included sensory resources. Some students are reluctant to use ICT and would rather use physical resources and one family will not access the online learning platform due to religious beliefs.

Some laptops are available to families but need to be configured differently for home use. This will be a focus as it will become a key provision next term for some pupils.

For children with profound disabilities who are unable to access ICT equipment, packs of sensory resources have been delivered. The Manchester United Foundation donated £10,000 for the school to use on equipment such as laptops, I pads and sensory boxes. The library of resources will be used to support students who cannot return to school in September due to having severe respiratory conditions.

Staff have been excellent at getting children involved in remote activities such as Zoom choirs, science lessons and cookery.

Some parents fed back that they felt it was important to have more social contact than learning and the school has tried to respond to this request. However, moving into the autumn term, it will be important to increase the levels of academic learning and going forward, remote learning may become a way of reaching children who are absent for other reasons such as hospital admissions. This is a real positive to have come out of the Covid situation.

It is important to develop teacher skills in the area of online learning and this will be a focus for the autumn term with two middle leaders supporting.

The Trust has opted to use Microsoft Teams for the vast majority of contact with students which is felt to be the most secure platform. However, for some of the larger activities such as the choir, Zoom has been used but staff have been given clear protocols to follow. Staff have read and signed the LA documents in relation to online safety before being authorised to use the systems.

Approved: Trustees approved the risk assessments to be published on the website

7. Trustee / Governor Links

The matter of Governor and Trustee links has been discussed previously but was further delayed when Covid arrived.

The Trust is keen to secure links between the Trust Board and Governing Boards and by having specified links, the plan would be to meet and share information which would then be reported back to the relevant board. Currently, Trustees are reliant on leaders presenting information but it is also important to receive feedback from other perspectives.

Trustees were referred to the organogram which shows the make-up of boards. There are currently seven Trustees, three Members, eight Governors for Futures and eight Governors for the High School. However, it is a problem that the High School has a 50/50 split of independent Governors and employees of the Trust and this balance must be redressed. The same issue is not apparent at Futures with only one employee of the Trust. Francine Brower is a Member but also a Governor of Futures.

Link areas have been identified and the next stage will be to put names to these areas. It was suggested that the safeguarding link should also include wellbeing.

Finance is an area that has been identified as an area of weakness on the High School Governing Board and this is the reason finance responsibilities were delegated to the Trust Board Finance Committee to provide the necessary levels of scrutiny and challenge.

A Trustee challenged the purpose of a link role and felt that it would be more appropriate to review the strategic plan and the school and college improvement plans and to align link roles with these. Governors and Trustees could be allocated to oversee key aims and objectives of the Trust to support the strategic development. The aim of link Governors and Trustees is to triangulate the information and monitor the delivery of the development plans.

Does this link with the Articles of Association in terms of the accountability responsibilities between Trustees and Governors?

This would need to be checked.

It is important to identify the lines of accountability and communication. Trustees hold overall responsibility but certain aspects will then be delegated to the CEO, Headteachers and Local Governing Boards which should be set out in the Scheme of Delegation and Terms of Reference for each board.

The Terms of Reference for each board are reviewed in September which will provide an opportunity to tweak them if necessary.

It was agreed that a separate meeting should be arranged to discuss this further.

Action: Louise Hutchinson to email the Terms of Reference to Andrew Bent for review and a separate meeting to be arranged to discuss delegations further

Andrew Bent offered to share the Omega Trust reporting template between LGB and Trustees

Action: Andrew Bent to share the Omega Trust reporting template

Action: Helen Birkinhead, Beth Cocken and Martin Hanbury to review the Trust and Operational Strategic Plans to ensure they are aligned.

8. Strategic Development Plan

The strategic development plan contains three objectives.

The first relates to the development of Engage but it is unlikely that the timescales will be achieved due to the current Covid situation. The financial position remains stable with the LA continuing to purchase places although young people have not necessarily been able to access them recently.

The second relates to premises and the need to increase capacity for the expected increase in high school and college student numbers over the next three years. Dr Hanbury is scheduled to hold a conversation with Geoff Catterill from the LA this afternoon.

The third objective relates to the development of the outreach service which the Trust would like to proceed on although it is acknowledged that some schools may not be in a financial position to buy in the services.

What is Engage?

Engage is an associated company which serves young people who leave Chatsworth Futures if they would like to continue to access services provided by the Chatsworth

family. Engage offers activities out in the community and is a non-educational care establishment. It serves the needs of approximately twelve young people and is staffed by employees of the Trust who are seconded to the service.

Bearing in mind the current position, a Trustee suggested that priority three should be adapted to ensure the Trust can provide the necessary support to youngsters who are unable to attend school and college in autumn before proceeding with outreach services in mainstream settings.

Dr Hanbury recalled that Trustees had identified a need for outreach within mainstream to enable the Trust to share expertise. He questioned whether there needed to be a compromise, suggesting that the priority for the next year should be Chatsworth pupils but that this could then become a foundation for how Chatsworth works with others in the community.

Action: Dr Hanbury agreed to insert a sentence to clarify the intention.

Should there be a strand for providing the best possible experience to Chatsworth students and improving the quality of teaching and learning?

It was explained that within the operational development plan, the quality assurance objective addresses the need to secure high quality practice. The view of the leadership team is that this should be habit rather than an objective. The priority will always be to improve the teaching and learning and even with the High School Ofsted rating of Outstanding, there is always work to do to improve practice. This is therefore a feature of the school development plan and it is important not to lose the focus if the aim is to become world class.

Outstanding schools should be working on action based research to maintain the outstanding judgement in the long term – how far along this road are you?

Eight members of staff are in the process of completing leadership programmes and a further five have just enrolled. This is important as these staff will be following a focus area of the school development plan which is very ambitious and means that staff are expected to step up, lead others and ensure that everyone is working to the same goal. Staff are very enthusiastic and will take the lead to develop practice and the leadership team is keen to give them the opportunity to do this.

Is it an issue that the Trust Development Plan is not quite aligned with the School and College Development Plans?

Yes, this will need to be reviewed and adapted with input from relevant leaders.

The notion of becoming a research school is exciting and there are staff who would be keen to engage with this.

Dr Hanbury reflected on the comments from Andrew Bent and suggested that a more cohesive and explicit statement would be appropriate within the Strategic Development Plan given that Chatsworth Futures still has an Ofsted judgement of Inadequate. Although the college is now well on the way to becoming a good establishment with the high quality leadership of governors and staff, it is important to highlight that the focus remains on improving the quality of provision at all levels within the organisation.

Action: Explicit objective to be added to the Strategic Development Plan to highlight the focus on further improving the quality of provision across all areas of the Trust

Action: Strategic development plan to be an agenda item for the next meeting

9. Operational Development Plan

Progress against the priorities within the Operational Development Plan is as expected. Some aspects have been delayed by Covid and others have been achieved in part.

Trustees had no questions in relation to the Operational Development Plan

10. AOB

In light of the announcement that individuals must wear face masks in indoor public facilities and the challenges this may present for Chatsworth youngsters, it was suggested that a letter should be composed and emailed to parents with a photograph of the young person to confirm that they have SEN and should be exempt from this requirement.

Action: Letter to be composed in support of students who are exempt from wearing face coverings

Thanks to staff

It was suggested that a formal acknowledgement should be sent to staff from Trustees and Governors for their achievements and commitment during what has been a very challenging time.

Appreciation should also be given specifically to the leadership team for their efforts over the past months and managing to interpret the often unclear and conflicting information provided by the Government to ensure students and staff remained safe throughout.

Some staff have worked through the holiday period and when not teaching, have supported in other ways, for instance ensuring pupils received their free school meal vouchers.

A letter has been produced from the Governing Board which is in its final draft and will be circulated following this meeting.

Summary of actions

Item	Action	Who
6	Andrew Bent to share the Omega Trust Risk Register template	AB
7	Louise Hutchinson to email the Terms of Reference to Andrew Bent for review and a separate meeting to be arranged to discuss delegations further	LH
7	Andrew Bent to share the Omega Trust reporting template	AB

7	Helen Birkinhead, Beth Cocken and Martin Hanbury to review the Trust and Operational Strategic Plans to ensure they are aligned.	HB, BC, MH
8	Dr Hanbury agreed to insert a sentence to clarify the intention.	MH
8	Explicit objective to be added to the Strategic Development Plan to highlight the focus on further improving the quality of provision across all areas of the Trust	MH
8	Strategic development plan to be an agenda item for the next meeting	MH
10	Letter to be composed in support of students who are exempt from wearing face coverings	MH, LH, EB