

STAR MAT Board of Trustees'

Minutes of the meeting held Thursday 16th July 2020, immediately upon the conclusion of the FAR Committee meeting (7pm), via Google Meet

Present: Clare Thornton-Eckford (Chair), Tom Fielden, Peter Wilson, Simon Peacock, Richard Coy, Nick Sheppard, Alison Smith, Deborah Hastie

In attendance:

Martyn Sibley (Chief Education Officer, STAR MAT)
Melissa Boyes (Chief Finance Officer, STAR MAT)
Ian Yapp (CEO Designate, STAR MAT)
Iain Tessier (Clerk, Governance Advisor – STAR MAT)

Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were accepted from Frances Dodd. Alison Smith would be late arriving. There were no declarations of interest.

1.0 Covid Update (originally item 2)

Prior to the meeting, Trustees had received the following documents:

- Risk Assessment Overview for September
- Risk Assessment Timeline
- The Risk Assessment Template for September opening
- Attendance Statement

1.1 The CEO designate reported a bubble closure at Saxton due to a positive Covid-19 test. This would remain closed until the end of term. The Headteacher had dealt with the matter well. Parents had taken children from other bubbles, which was probably inevitable despite reassurances. Public Health England did note that internal controls were strong and that there were no risks to other groups. RCCN had responded in timely fashion on the cleaning front. This incident had widened everybody's eyes and would ensure everyone remained alert. Trustees noted that systems had been tested and had been shown to be strong. The CEO designate welcomed the supportive comments.

Alison Smith joined the meeting

1.2 The CEO designate summarised the position around risk assessments. Trustees would have access to the finalised RAs for schools returning in September. A timeline had been compiled. The Estates Director would have conversations with headteachers and visit sites to ensure that RA submissions matched the situation on the ground. It was agreed that a meeting of the Covid19 Working Group would take place on Tuesday 1st September at 4pm with the designated authority to approve the risk assessments.

1.3 The attendance statement had been issued in response to the latest DfE guidance. Fining would not be used as a default position. Conversations with families would take place first. Following that support, fines may be considered. Schools had been given such discretion.

1.4 Trustees and the CEO thanked the CEO designate for his work on the Covid response and associated matters. The CEO designate acknowledged a challenging period but some positives had come out of it in terms of his own preparedness for the CEO role.

ACTION

2.0 Scheme of Delegation Review

Prior to the meeting, Trustees had received a revised Scheme of Delegation for consideration. Trustees were also presented with an operational Strategic Group constitution for information.

2.1 The Diocesan recommended scheme had been used initially upon inception. Other Schemes had been referred to during the review. There was commonality in such documents that was not present in the Trust's current scheme. Going forward, an annual review of the Scheme had to be undertaken. The Scheme now also needed to reflect a Trust that had developed and matured over two years. The new Scheme of Delegation would apply to all schools, with Church school specific elements incorporated (in blue on the final draft) – instead of on a separate version of the Scheme. The CEO and Alison Smith had met to discuss development of the Scheme. Suggestions had been submitted by Ms Smith, taking a steer from another local Trust that had recently completed a review of their Scheme and with the requirements of the Diocese in mind. The proposed revisions made a lot of sense. Safeguarding aspects of governance had been beefed up and placed in their own dedicated section. Alison Smith gave reassurances to Trustees about the processes undertaken during the review. The rationale for the revisions was sound. All amendments had been checked with the Diocese and there were no issues to report. The Trust had evolved and the document now better reflected the MATs teams, the development of governance and, crucially, formally captured where and how Trust intervention might be required/implemented to support local governance. The financial oversight aspects of the Scheme had been looked at by the COO. Likewise, the input of the Governance Advisor had been sought.

2.2 Since compilation of the final draft, both Headteachers and Chairs of Governors had been provided with an opportunity to give feedback. Comments had been submitted at the Chairs' forum. One of the LGB Chairs had pointed out that they felt that the Scheme could give more clarity about the relationship between Trustees and Members. The LGB Chair also asked for consideration to be given around Chairs being invited to the one-to-ones when Trustees were considering a Trust appointed governor. A brief discussion followed. It was agreed that Members needed to be better informed about the Board's strategic plans and the effectiveness of governance – particularly as interaction with Members was now explicitly referenced in the AFH. The CEO to ensure that recently approved documents in those areas be shared with Members. Members were already able to access Board meeting papers and minutes via Decision Time. The Clerk would remind Members of that facility. Members would also receive the finalised Scheme of Delegation via the Clerk. As for the LGB Chair's second point, Trustees could understand boards wanting to get a sense of a new governor before they joined an LGB but ultimately these were Trust appointed persons. Trustees needed to hold one-to-ones and then give due consideration to where an individual would be best placed. That process could not be influenced one way or another by the views of a particular chair. The suggestion was rejected. Nevertheless, Trustees welcomed the engagement by the Chair in question.

2.3 All Trustees were asked to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Scheme.

2.4 **Resolved:**
Trustees approved the revised Scheme of Delegation.

3.0 Governance Matters

3.1 Trustees' nomination of Martyn Sibley as a Trustee to Members had been rejected. Claire Earl had been instructed to deliver a letter to Members asking them to reconsider their decision. The Clerk would resubmit a resolution to Members if there was indication that a reconsideration would be forthcoming. The Members' rationale was summarised to Trustees. Several Trustees indicated their frustration at the Members' position – Trustees had given a great deal of consideration as to what was in the best interests of the Trust and it was Trustees, not Members, who best understood the current situation and what skills and experience was needed to take the Board forward into the next phase.

MS
Clerk

ALL

- 3.2 Given that Mr Sibley's trusteeship had been vetoed, the Clerk enquired as to whether the Board wished to continue with the appointment of Mr Sibley on to the LGB at Sherburn Hungate – albeit that appointment would now be on a permanent basis.
Resolved:
Trustees agreed that Martyn Sibley should be appointed as a Trust governor at Sherburn Hungate with effect from 1st September.
- 3.3 The Chair suggested that one of the governors allocated to the CAT at Kellington be reassigned to bolster governance at Sherburn Hungate. Ed Ball had now joined Kellington's LGB and, since last meeting, both the Chair and Vice Chair of Sherburn Hungate had decided to step down. Trustees discussed the proposal. The CEO noted that there had been progress in securing a new LGB chair at SHP. Responding to a query, the CEO said that the situation at SHP was not quite as critical as at Kellington and therefore it was not necessary for a formal CAT to be put in place at SHP. A Trustee said that everyone needed to be mindful of ensuring that Trustees could still attend to their defined duties and not allow Board capacity to be unduly stretched. The Chair understood colleagues' concern but in the short-term certain LGBs needed support around board leadership and development.
Resolved:
It was agreed that Richard Coy would join the Sherburn Hungate LGB instead of the Kellington CAT.
- 3.4 Deborah Hastie's feedback on the meeting she had attended at Appleton Roebuck did confirm the previous observations that there were issues with the function of the LGB and the inexperience of the LGB's new Chair. Chair's training needed to be pushed at a robust pace. In light of this, the Chair had contacted her counterpart and made clear the expectations of the Trust. Deborah Hastie was to follow up on this and indicate where challenge needed to be delivered towards operational leadership. There were individuals with skills and strong character on the LGB and, with effective stewardship, the LGB could become a strong local board. Conversely, if the current trajectory continued, the Trust could be faced with another intervention process to oversee. The Clerk was asked to send details of the NGA Chairs' training course to Mrs Hastie.
- 4.0 Strategic Group**
- 4.1 The Trust's revised Strategic Plan had been discussed at the recent Trustees' virtual away day. The outcomes of this had already been shared with the Headteacher group and highlighted at the Chairs' forum.
Resolved:
Trustees were happy to formally record their approval of the revised Strategic Plan. The plan to be shared with Members as indicated earlier in the meeting.
- 4.2 The CEO designate noted that an operational Strategic Group had been established to co-ordinate and implement executive plans etc. Trustees had been given a copy of the group's Terms of Reference.
- 5.0 Any Other Business**
- 5.1 The COO raised items that had been escalated to the MAT Board by the governors at TGS. The COO indicated the response she had given to governors at said LGB meeting. The COO recommended that the Trust's formal reply include an indication that the Trust intended to carry out a review of central services. Trustees discussed the points raised, with individuals invited to offer their views. It was agreed that there would be no reduction in the CSF, nor would it be implemented on a phased basis.
- 5.1.1 A Trustee asked specifically about the school's issue with school improvement support. Was it true that the Trust was not covering this area adequately enough? The CEO designate pointed out that it had been made clear to TGS' Headteacher that improvements in this function could not take place unless the Trust had the means to invest in it. That of course was part of the

DH

Clerk

reason for gearing up the back office functions and looking at deliverability of services on the CSF as it stood. School Improvement services were not yet actually a structured part of the MAT fee in any case. The headteacher's point that school improvement was not just about the SI partner's oversight but the wider ability to develop staff was a valid one. However, everyone had to recognise that school improvement nationally was going into an interim year. TSAs were being phased out and the replacement mechanisms were not ready and providers had therefore not formulated their services or how to offer them. There was no simple fix at present. Schools had to face the fact that they were likely to have to pay more to get more in a number of areas – so it was difficult to square the Headteacher's point when the school was unhappy about having to invest more central funds in the MAT. As for reciprocal school improvement arrangements, that was dependent upon having good relationships with neighbouring schools and Trusts and having something worth trading. Frank exchanges followed.

- 5.2 The COO had enquired directly with the ESFA about exam cost liability for schools if students wished to take up the offer of a formal exam in the Autumn. There was currently no guidance on whether schools would be able to reclaim costs. The COO clarified the current legal and Trust policy position regarding passing on charges to individuals for exams. Certain amendments aimed at mitigating the risks of escalated costs were tabled and highlighted in the current charging and remissions policy in blue.

Resolved:

Trustees agreed that, if permissible, the proposed amendments could be included in the Trust's charges and remissions policy. Mitigating circumstances for individuals should always be considered however and therefore suitable wording to that effect should also be included. Further work on this policy, if necessary, was delegated to the Covid Task Force group.

- 5.3 Trustees wished to mark the retirement of Mr Sibley as CEO. A presentation was made. Mr Sibley was invited to say a few words. Trustees wished to record their thanks to Mr Sibley for his enormous contribution to the Trust and, in particular, for his leadership of the two secondary schools within the Trust. Mr Sibley's dedication to the teaching profession was noted.

TaskF

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Action Points from the Meeting	Agenda Item	Person(s) Responsible	Date for Delivery
Ensure various documents were shared with Members	2.2	MS / Clerk	By early autumn term
Familiarisation with new Scheme of Delegation	2.3	ALL	ASAP
Follow up on concerns over AR LGB leadership Details of NGA chairs' training course to be passed on	3.4	DH Clerk	ASAP
Further review of C&R policy as necessary	5.2	Task Force	Ongoing