

## STAR MAT Board of Trustees'

### Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 5.30pm via Google Meet

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

**In attendance:**

Ian Yapp (Chief Education Officer, STAR MAT)  
Melissa Boyes (Chief Operating Officer, STAR MAT)  
Rob Holah (Estates Director, STAR MAT)  
Iain Tessier (Clerk, Governance Advisor – STAR MAT)

	ACTION
<p><b>1.0 Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</b> The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.</p>	
<p>1.1 Apologies were received and accepted from Frances Dodd.</p>	
<p>1.2 There were no declarations of interest. The Clerk confirmed that the Register of Interests had been updated and was available on the Trust's website.</p>	
<p><b>2.0 Minutes of the Last Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020</b></p>	
<p>2.1 <b>Resolved:</b> Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meeting, held on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2020, were a true and accurate record of that meeting and the Chair was duly authorised to sign them.</p>	
<p><b>3.0 Action Points and Matters Arising</b> Action points from the last meeting had been attended to.</p>	
<p><b>4.0 Covid / Schools Provision Update</b> Prior to the meeting Trustees had received the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Report from the Covid Task Force meeting dated 12<sup>th</sup> January (for Q&amp;A purposes)</li> <li>- Remote Learning Policy (for approval) and launch letter</li> <li>- Powerpoint presentation (from TGS Student Council to support fellow students with working from home and online learning)</li> </ul>	
<p>4.1 There were no comments or questions relating to the Task Force meeting.</p>	
<p>4.2 Lateral Flow Testing (LFT) for primary school staff had been announced; to be carried out on a home testing basis. There would be training for staff on this. The kits were coming out and guidance documents had now been received. Risk assessments to be compiled accordingly as per instruction in the webinars.</p>	
<p>4.3 Friday 12<sup>th</sup> February was a designated training day across the MAT. The CEO said that this would not be used for a whole staff event as planned, given the situation. The intention was to continue with the training day but use it for other operational and logistical matters. However, if schools were required to open over half-term then this position would be reconsidered and the training day rescinded. A Trustee asked if the schools had to open for key worker children anyway, given the DfE mandates. The CEO had enquired about this with ASCL, DfE and NYCC and was awaiting an answer. Everyone was aware that DfE might make a last minute decree that schools needed to remain open over the half-term break. Trustees were happy for the CEO to make an executive decision on the use, or not, of the training day.</p>	

- 4.4 **Resolved:**  
Trustees approved the new Remote Learning policy as circulated. The policy had been considered in detail by the Covid Task Force Group.
- 5.0 **Governance Matters and Board Development**  
Prior to the meeting Trustees had received the following information:
- Potential governor application forms (carried over from December meeting)
  - Revised LGB outline agendas for Spring Term and Revised Agenda Planner for the remainder of the year (for approval)
  - Revised protocol for Trustee engagement in their link role with schools and LGBs
- 5.1 Appleton Roebuck CAT  
Mr Coy fed back on the launch meeting of the CAT. Information about the scope and purpose of the CAT was well received. It was now down to the business of governance. Mr Coy would still speak to Mr Bellamy but did not believe that now was the right time to proceed with his application. Trustees agreed. A brief discussion took place. The priorities for the time being were a parent governor election and making sure that governors attended to relevant training.
- 5.2 The CEO spoke about consultation on a process around digitising parent governor elections. The DPO was looking at certain matters on behalf of the Trust. A proposal would come forward as soon possible.
- 5.3 The application from Stephen Westland to join the LGB and TGS was carried forward. Mr Fielden acknowledged that he had not had chance to speak to Mr Westland but would do so as soon as possible. Trustees were happy for Mr Fielden to have discretion on whether to invite the Chair at TGS to comment on the application and/or to meet the applicant prior to a recommendation being made.
- 5.4 With reference to Mr Gibson's application to join the LGB at SHP, Mr Coy noted that he had been a strong candidate at the recent parent governor election for SHP but was not successful on the ballot. However, the Headteacher was keen to bring his skills set on to the LGB and Mr Coy agreed.  
**Resolved:**  
Trustees appointed Mark Gibson as a Trust Appointed governor for Sherburn Hungate Primary.
- 5.5 **Resolved:**  
Trustees re-appointed Adrienne Burrow to the local board of South Milford Primary.
- 5.6 **Resolved:**  
The revised Link Trustee protocol was approved. Clarifying expectations of the role was useful for Trustees and would be useful for LGB chairs as well.
- 5.7 Matters to do with the Pay and Pay Appeals Committee were carried forward to March.
- 5.8 The Governance Advisor indicated that the appointment process for Trust Appointed governors would be clarified in a flow chart ahead of next meeting. This would be based on previously agreed protocols. Trustees could reflect on whether parts of the process should be adjusted.
- 5.9 The COO outlined a rationale for increasing the number of FAR committee meetings; this reflected the amount of resources/finance related business and its regularity through the year. The CEO wanted to make more space in the main Trust Board meetings for the education and school improvement agenda and to deal with strategic governance matters most effectively. This proposal had been discussed with the Governance Advisor, who advocated the move. With additional FAR committee meetings in the diary, updates from the COO at main meetings could be captured via a summary report under just one agenda item. Trustees were happy to proceed with this proposal. Initially, an additional FAR Committee meeting would be added to the 2020/21 meeting schedule and would be timetabled for early summer term.

IY

TF

Agenda

Clerk

5.10 Trustees considered the revised LGB agendas for spring term and a further revised Agenda Planner for the remainder of the year, factoring in the ever changing situation for schools. All key business was still covered but some items had been moved around. These would be signposted to LGB chairs.

5.10.1 If curriculum planning was pushed back, would that give the Trust/schools enough time to implement intentions etc? The CEO acknowledged that this was a fair question in general. However, this was more about the timing of curriculum planning reporting to LGBs, rather than the actual preparedness of schools to implement their curriculum plans. There was already some really good practice going on – it was just about finding the right time to report to governors, when the priority right now had to be outlining and scrutinising the remote learning offer. The Trustee pressed the CEO to try and find a place for this reporting as soon as possible. The CEO would look at this matter again.

IY

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the outline LGB agendas for spring term and the revised Agenda Planner for the remainder of the year.

**6.0 School Improvement Matters**

Prior to the meeting Trustees had received the ‘continuing the conversation’ reports and the draft School Improvement Strategy document. Trustees had also been given seen a letter regarding an English Hub.

6.1 Trustees confirmed that they had read the reports, particularly that which related to their link school. The CEO was happy to take any comments or questions.

6.1.1 The reports indicated escalation of issues around provision for vulnerable learners to NYCC. Where had the CEO got with this escalation? There had been problems with provision for certain individuals and the Trust had been managing situations as best it could in the given circumstances. The strength of the Trust came into its own to support schools in this instance. The CEO was candid about some of the particular issues schools were facing. The Trust was now trading directly for Ed Psych support and no longer buying in to NYCC.

6.1.2 The Trust seemed to be lacking a strong SENDCo at one of the schools. Was there any scope to pick up this apparent problem through capacity elsewhere in the Trust? The CEO assured Trustees that such duties for the school in question were being supported. The Headteacher for the school had a plan to remodel the way SENDCo support was delivered but this involved HR processes. It was therefore not appropriate to comment further at this point.

6.1.3 The Chair raised the success of Phonics at Kellington and the external recognition therein. Trustees agreed that this achievement should be formally recognised by the Board. The Chair to pick this up via the next LGB at Kellington.

CTE

6.2 The draft School Improvement Strategy had been discussed at strategic headteacher group. Some new elements had been added. References to an ‘Education Committee’ to be removed. The plan was a work in progress and the CEO intended to bring a final draft to the March meeting for approval. Given the ever changing strategy of DfE, the Trust needed to ensure that the SIS remained a ‘live’ document to some extent. The continuing conversation format formed part of the school improvement narrative. The CEO was conscious to improve transparency around this subject. The Education Risk Register would remain in two parts for the remainder of this year. One for external audiences, with the most recent verified data from 2019 and another version which reflected current assessments – not necessarily based on formal data but rather the validated views of the CEO and headteachers. A Trustee raised the matter of the church schools. The CEO agreed to have a conversation about this with Alison Smith. Trustees welcomed the content of the draft SIS at this stage.

IY

IY

## 7.0 Trust Strategic Plan

Trustees had received a report outlining progress against the plan's KPIs (RAG-rated). The CEO invited comments on the 'reds' and any questions in general.

- 7.1 Priority 2a – the Trust still needed to roll out self-declaration in relation to safeguarding protocols. The CEO acknowledged that there had been a hold up with this at HR. The Trust also needed to assess where LGBs were at in terms of their completion of safeguarding training – this would be easy to evaluate via the training matrixes.
- 7.2 Where were schools up to in terms of consultation on RSE policy? Was the DfE going to take a sensible approach and shift their deadlines? The CEO would take these questions away and feedback at next meeting.
- 7.3 Responding to a Trustee query, the CEO said that the T&L pedagogy group had not yet met, however, meetings had taken place to discuss remote learning offers and a policy had been drawn up (as seen by Trustees). The COO noted that the Trust had commissioned Environ (used by Red Kite) to support its remote learning infrastructure at a cost of £5k. Trustees welcomed these developments.
- 7.4 Assessment and reporting of progress for primary pupils was 'red' but this was understandable given the cancellation of formal primary assessments. There was now good solid data for the autumn term across the piece but the relevancy of it would become more tenuous the longer the current situation continued. Despite the quality of online provision nothing could replicate the physical classroom teaching and the assessments that could take place therein.
- 7.5 Business Continuity Plans – the Trust needed to be sure that LGBs were signing off on their elements of this. The COO replied that Claire Earl was doing a piece of work around policies and this would include whether LGBs were up-to-date with elements of policy approval. GDPR was also 'red' because of the need to conduct data audits – the intention to do these had been shelved given the current pressure on schools. The framework was ready to go and would be launched when appropriate.
- 7.6 The CEO said that the Trust was pleased with progress on HR-related policy development.
- 7.7 The CEO had been expanding its links and networks with other Trusts and organisations.
- 7.8 The 'greens' in the governance section reflected a significantly improved position in terms of capacity and training since the start of the autumn term. The CEO was considering revisiting the LGB RAG-rating exercise, so Trustees had a picture of local strengths and weaknesses. The internal audit of governance would provide a fuller picture of the quality of governance across the Trust. Trust Board development and effectiveness was discussed. A formal review of Trust governance, using some form of approved template/metric, to take place at the end of year and reported back through the July meeting. The Clerk noted that Trustees would see the LGB training matrixes ahead of the March meeting.

## 8.0 Cleaning Contract

Trustees had received the summary paper for the cleaning contract, along with ancillary documents covering the following:

- The details of a preferred bidder and related particulars, including costings etc
- A detailed presentation on running the cleaning service in-house

Trustees to approve the cleaning contract based on this information and the recommendation of the Trustee working party convened to consider this contract.

- 8.1 The COO began by thanking Mr Sheppard and Mr Peacock for their support on the panel. Regardless of the compliance issues with the current supplier, the Trust Board had still been required to go through a thorough process, with a high level of scrutiny, given the costs associated with the contract.

IY

Agenda

8.2 The scoring templates had been moderated. Five bidders had been shortlisted – RCCN (current provider) was not among them. A preferred bidder had been selected. The Trust had also put forward an in-house model for consideration/comparison. Progressing the in-house model was not recommended at this time purely due to question marks around internal capacity to manage such a large service. Bulloughs were being recommended for a three-year agreement. They had interviewed well and came with good references. The level of service in the new contract had increased and therefore so had the cost (circa £50k uplift on current contract). The total value of the contract was £1,475,500.

8.3 Mr Peacock commented that a simplistic cost comparison was not possible because you were not comparing 'apples with apples' on the providers and their services. Some of the potential suppliers had not been offering the same levels of service and/or had not reflected all costs in their submissions. Bulloughs were the stand out candidates. Responding to a query, the COO clarified that their staff would be paid for 52 weeks but worked 47 weeks. This was due to companies having to fulfil statutory holiday pay entitlements. Bulloughs pricing was realistic based on this and other quoted costs. The Trust new this from comparison with the costs that had been calculated for providing the necessary service in-house.

8.4 A Trustee evaluated the proposition. There was a £10k uplift in costs over an in-house service but the Trust could outsource the service to what was considered to be a reputable company. This was essentially the position. It was noted that the internal proposal was a very good document and Trustees thanked Mr Holah for putting it together. The preferred contractor appeared to have credibility and came across as a company that the Trust would want to do business with. A Trustee noted that this was a tender about driving up quality and the decision should not be led purely on price. RCCN had been less expensive but everyone had seen the impact of this contract.

8.5 Was the start budget at Brayton re: cleaning accurate? No and the COO would look at this with the school ahead of March revisions.

**MB**

8.6 A Trustee agreed with the COOs motion to use central funds to foot the shortfall between what was in this year's start budgets for cleaning and the increased costs of the new contract; certainly in the first year. This could be reviewed for future years in due course.

**8.7 Resolved:**

Trustees agreed that the Trust could enter into a contract with Bulloughs for cleaning services. The three-year cost of the contract would be £1,475,500. Trustees were happy to proceed on that basis in return for improvements in service and reducing reputational risk. It was noted that the internal proposal had helped evaluate the quoted costs of a new service more accurately.

**9.0 COOs Report**

Trustees had received a summary report from the COO with appendices including a finance timeline and the Trust Management Accounts. Trustees had also received the formal report from the SRMA.

9.1 The COO asked Trustees whether payments should be made to exam invigilators booked to cover the short-notice cancellation of BTEc exams. Trustees believed that these individuals should be paid for work promised to them and rescinded at short-notice. The COO confirmed that all associated employment costs were already in school budgets.

9.2 The COO raised the urgency of proceeding with the final procurement process for payroll. This needed to be progressed swiftly. The process to be managed purely internally and not through YPO. There were three shortlisted providers. The contract did need Board approval.

**Resolved:**

Trustees agreed that Mr Peacock and Mr Fielden would represent the Board on the panel and, given the time factor involved, Trustees delegated authority to Mr Peacock and Mr Fielden to make the final decision on who the provider should be. This in accordance with allowances for such delegation in the Articles of Association. The final outcome to be reported to the Board.

**SP, TF**

9.3 New posts and revised staffing structure  
All costs for the new posts were included in the budget. The Trust had shortlisted for the SBM post at TGS (post-holder to be on the MAT back-office structure). The candidates were all experienced and could 'hit the ground running'. The starting salary to be set at £39,880. The candidate pool could possibly be used to cover the upcoming SBM vacancy at SHS – matters to be discussed with the SHS headteacher and HR. The Finance Assistant role was necessary and the current apprentice, who had interviewed for the post, would be a great fit. Mr Holah was invited to speak about the maintenance technician role and the rationale for its inclusion in the structure. The post-holder would add capacity to deal with day-to-day issues, allowing Mr Holah to concentrate on strategic development matters. The role was key to support the liaison with contractors and ensure operational matters were being attended to. The post-holder could also manage meetings with contractors on sites.

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the inclusion of the new posts on the Trust's back-office structure.

9.4 Budget  
There was continuous monitoring of budgets. The overall projected in-year position was an improvement on start budget but there were some schools that were showing negative in-year balances. The reasons for this were briefly outlined. The COO remarked that the move to BPS would be good. Trustees agreed.

**10.0 School Condition Allocation (SCA) Approval (2021 Estates Spend)**

Prior to the meeting Trustees had received the following information:

- SCA Structure Proposal
- SCA 10-year Costed Plan
- 2019/2020 SCA Spend
- Minutes of the recent Trustee working party Scrutiny Group
- Breakdown and Overview of 2021 SCA Spend (for approval)
- Job Description for Premises and Maintenance Supervisor Technician (new post)
- Premises Structure Proposal

10.1 Mr Holah clarified the nature of the documents circulated and why the scrutiny process was so important and how it had been helpful to the SCA process this time around. The breakdown report also gave all Trustees a visual of the proposed allocation. Trustees welcomed the ease with which the spreadsheet could be understood. The scrutiny group were recommending the proposed 2021 SCA allocation as outlined. Trustees were pleased to see the ongoing and long-term investment in the schools and thanked Mr Holah for his continued good work in bringing the projects to fruition.

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the 2021 SCA spend as outlined.

**11.0 Policy Review**

Trustees had received a revised Admissions policy for review approval.

**11.1 Resolved:**

Trustees approved the policy as circulated.

**12.0 Items to be Delegated or Communicated to LGBs**

12.1 SCA spend to be added to the CEOs planned letter to LGBs.

IY

*Mr Yapp was invited to leave the meeting. Mr Holah also left the meeting.*

### 13.0 Any Other Urgent Business

13.1 The Chair reported meeting with a potential candidate for the CEO post. There had been 13 expressions of interest to date. There was a brief discussion about the logistics of the interview process and the input of HR around finalising the process. A Trustee noted that the shortlisting process could be lengthy, as well as other planning, if all the expressions of interest resulted in firm applications. The COO was already scheduled to speak with HR on this matter.

### 14.0 Date and Time of the Next Meeting

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021 at 5.30pm

*The meeting closed at 7.55pm*

Action Points from the Meeting	Agenda Item	Person(s) Responsible	Date for Delivery
Deliver proposal on digitising parent governor elections	5.2	IY	When ready
Speak to Mr Westland re: application to join TGS LGB	5.3	TF	By March mtg
Prepare flow chart outlining process for considering and approving Trust Appointed governors	5.8	Clerk	March meeting
Curriculum planning reporting to LGBs	5.10.1	IY	Due course
Record Trustees recognition of Phonics outcomes at Kellington (via their LGB)	6.1.3	CTE	Next Kellington LGB
Deliver School Improvement Strategy for approval. Speak to Alison Smith about the specifics to do with Church School	6.2	IY	By March mtg
Progress with implementation of RSE policy and position re: DfE deadlines	7.2	IY	Report back at March meeting
Review cleaning contract costs in Brayton budget	8.5	MB	By March LGBs
Reports to Trustees on the outcome of the procurement process for Payroll services	9.2	SP, TF	Once a decision had been made
Convey the approval of SCA spend in letter to LGBs, via communication with heads and chairs	12.1	IY	ASAP