

STAR MAT Board of Trustees'

Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 29th September 2020 at 5.30pm via Google Meet

Present: Nick Sheppard (Vice Chair), Tom Fielden, Peter Wilson, Richard Coy, Deborah Hastie, Frances Dodd, Alison Smith (from item 6), Simon Peacock (from item 4.1)

In attendance:

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

1.0 Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

1.1 Apologies were received and accepted from the Chair, Clare Thornton-Eckford. Alison Smith and Simon Peacock had indicated that they would be late arriving. There were no declarations of interest. Nick Sheppard, as Vice Chair, would Chair the meeting.

2.0 Declaration of Business Interests

2.1 The Clerk had circulated the declaration forms prior to the meeting. Certain returns had already been received. The Clerk asked that the remainder of the forms be returned as soon as possible, so that the annual register of interests could be completed.

3.0 Minutes of the Last Meetings – 30th June, 16th July and Task Force EGM 1st September

3.1 Resolved:

Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 30th June, 16th July and 1st September 2020 were all true and accurate records of those meetings and the Vice Chair was duly authorised to sign them.

4.0 Action Points and Matter Arising

4.1 30th June meeting

1. The CEO indicated that this matter had moved on via the need to prioritise contingency planning; i.e. what was to come rather what had been and gone. For example, the Trust needed to focus on its digital and people strategies. A questionnaire was not the right approach now.

Simon Peacock joined the meeting

2. The digital strategy to be picked up more broadly after the release of the review report. A proposal would be shared with Trustees in due course.
3. Cleaning contract on the agenda
4. This matter had been progressed to everyone's satisfaction.
5. Completed.
6. Completed.
7. Completed.
8. Completed.
9. The CEO review process was on the agenda. Training and CPD to be looked at during the October meeting.
10. Completed.

ACTION

ALL

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4.2 16th July meeting
All actions had been attended to.

5.0 Governance Matters

5.1 Nomination of Trustee to Oglethorpe and Dawson Foundation
Tom Fielden had been invited to join the Board of the O&D Foundation and had indicated a willingness to do so. Trustees were happy for that nomination to proceed.

5.2 The Clerk outlined the potential to recruit a governor for the Sherburn Hungate LGB. The individual concerned had previously submitted an application, with a view to joining the South Milford LGB. Trustees discussed the proposal. It was agreed that Richard Coy would speak to the applicant about possible options.

5.3 **Resolved:**
Trustees reappointed Sue Summers as a Trust appointed governor for Kellington LGB.

6.0 Estates Update

A report on the Capital investment programme using SCA funding had been circulated prior to the meeting. Trustees had also received a proposal with regards the cleaning contract.

Alison Smith joined the meeting

6.1 Rob Holah was invited to speak about the completion of the major projects outlined in the report and the benefits therein. Mr Holah also talked about the Sherburn Hungate expansion programme (NYCC led project). Further approved works had been completed according to the schedule. Certain audits were booked in and would feed into next steps and the ten year capital plan. Certain works that had been approved were awaiting a start date. The COO added that the Trust had been awarded a further £794k in SCA funding and Mr Holah was addressing how best to use this via assessed revisions to the 10-year capital plan. Trustees welcomed the fact that the Trust had invested in large scale works in a successful way and were improving the learning environments for children.

6.1.1 A Trustee raised the Fire Risk Assessment review at SHP. Had the Trust been a) happy that this had gone ahead and b) content with the action points raised. Mr Holah indicated that he had been happy with the timing of the visit and the report that had been completed thereafter. It was noted that the new security systems for South Milford had been positively received by stakeholders.

6.2 The COO summarised the report/proposal on the cleaning contract. There were ongoing concerns about RCCN and the standard of cleanliness in schools. RCCN also provided caretaking services within the Trust but there were no issues on this front. Responding to a Trustee query about the latest picture, the COO replied that cleaning continued to be 'a battle' for good service. Hence, the recommendation was to split the cleaning and caretaking services into two. It had to be noted that securing any new provider(s) was not about cost saving but about improving quality. Caretaking could be brought in-house under the leadership of Rob Holah. Cleaning needed to remain with an external contractor, due to the capacity required to run such a team from a staffing and HR perspective.

6.2.1 A Trustee was reticent about the caretaking proposal. Managing a relationship rather than managing a team was surely better; that way Mr Holah could concentrate on delivering on projects and utilising his time and skills to best effect. Outsourcing caretaking services allowed the Trust to hold an external provider to account for the contract. Another Trustee echoed their colleague; bringing a service in-house also meant bringing a risk in-house, no? The COO felt that the Trust had the internal capacity and processes to run the service. Mrs Northrop-Clay would oversee the cleaning contract and Mr Holah would line manage the caretakers.

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6.2.1 Responding to a query about costs, the COO reiterated that, at this stage, cleaning procurement was about delivering a better quality cleaning services for the schools. To that end, Sherburn High would be permitted to remain outside the contract. Why was this the case? The school had a good cleaning services team and the Trust did not see any justification to jeopardise or interrupt this. Given that this was one of the secondary schools, would the Trust not lose some of the economies of scale on offer? The COO did not think so. The COO was cautious about forcing a contract upon the school when there was no pressing need to do so. A Trustee considered the benefits of bringing Sherburn High 'onboard'. For example, could the current SH cleaning team leadership/staff be scaled up to become the service provider for the MAT. Mr Holah acknowledged that this could be a possibility. The COO agreed, noting that some conversations might come up during the tendering process.

6.2 **Resolved:**

Trustees agreed to progress the cleaning contract tendering process on the basis outlined in the report/proposal.

7.0 **Covid Update**

7.1 Overall attendance in the primary settings had started off very well (at circa 98%) but had dipped slightly to around 95% or just below. Sherburn High had seen attendance as high as 93% and as low as 88% but attendance was very good all things considered. TGS attendance had been as high as 96% but had dipped down to 83% - mostly due to 50 students self-isolating in one year group following a positive Covid-19 test. It was fair to say that attendance was, due to the developing situation, a very mixed picture.

7.1.1 Were any students having to isolate in Sherburn High? Across the Trust, 363 pupils were self-isolating as of Friday 25th. Similarly, 27 staff were also self-isolating. There had only been one confirmed positive case of Covid-19 within the Trust to date. The CEO explained the decision that had been reached to close Y7 in TGS for one day following the positive result. The steps taken had been commended. The incident rates varied across the piece and with no set patterns. The picture had calmed over the past few days and the hope was that this would continue.

7.1.2 How were the schools managing the learning for self-isolators? And what was the Trust doing to support student and staff wellbeing? The CEO said that this was where the recently put together contingency plans kicked in. If children were isolating but not unwell then there was an expectation that they fulfil their complete timetable and use materials placed on the Google classroom. Cayte Mulhern was leading on oversight of the wellbeing/safeguarding parameters and there would be an update on this in due course.

7.1.3 Was the Trust tracking lost learning days? The CEO acknowledged that he did not have such data. The situation was very complex. The law and guidance was changing all of the time on what constituted a lost learning day. Children were maybe not in school but were accessing their learning remotely, as they should be. On the flip side, the CEO was aware of an emerging issue with some stakeholders not self-isolating when they really ought to be. Perhaps more days should actually be being lost but people were not following the rules. This was very hard to manage.

7.2 The CEO went on to say that leaders were in fact unable to do anything other than try to manage the Covid scenario – dealing with enquiries from parents, for example, could take up a large part of the day. The CEO felt that a communication from the Trustees to staff would be a positive thing; to acknowledge to everyone, including parents, the challenges of the situation and that the Trust was committed to doing its best to navigate its way through the situation. A general discussion followed. The Vice Chair agreed with the CEO's suggestion. A letter to be drafted after the meeting and circulated to staff and stakeholders as soon as possible.

7.3 The Trust's risk assessment processes had been very effective. Certain sites had been revisited to look at improving wash facilities and pupil flow. Issues with the latter were mitigated

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by the decision to make face coverings mandatory. The staggered start and finish times were helping with the matter. A complaint about access at SHP, which had unfortunately made the press, had hopefully now been resolved. The schools had been asked to look at seating arrangements of pupils to aid better contact tracing. Further guidance had been rolled out by the Trust in a number of areas, following updates from DfE.

- 7.4 The biggest current concern was around testing. A request for prioritised access to testing for teachers had got nowhere. The access to advice had been very variable, though the Trust had generally been fortunate in this regard. As noted, cleaning also remained variable and a cause for concern. The CEO thanked Trustees for the positive comments on recent communications – the CEO still felt this was an area that could be improved upon though. The Trust was working mutually with EBOR and Pathfinder Trusts on this and other situation management tasks. Staffing capacity in the next few months would be critical. As an example, Riverside had four supply teachers last week. Large amount of supply in multiple schools only added to the list of potential vectors for spread. Staff energy and capacity was also something being monitored closely. Governance and strategy had to continue, of course, but everyone had to be mindful of capacity to deliver and what was realistic in terms of time scales for completion of projects. On the other hand, the CEO was conscious that Covid mitigation could not be all-consuming.
- 7.5 What was happening with the online learning offer? Planning and development for this was ongoing. The Covid Task Force needed to meet to look at the contingency measures under the tiered system and how online learning would continue effectively within that. Would Zoom be used for live lessons? The CEO did not anticipate a great deal of learning via Google Meet (the MATs preferred platform) – indeed live learning was not supported nationally. The long-term benefits of purely online learning through streamed lessons were not understood. A Trustee believed that short bursts of interaction by this method were necessary and would be beneficial to children. Equally, children would likely not enjoy/respond to sustain long periods on video calls – in the same way that adults struggled. The CEO assured Trustees that some live learning would be in the Trust’s model but that it had to be carefully considered.
- 7.6 What was happening with exams next year? The last formal notice schools had received was that everything would be in place for exams to proceed as normal. However, the CEO said ‘watch this space’, as the arguments on both sides would really get under way. Similarly, there would be debate about the fact that OFSTED inspections were to resume in January.
- 7.7 What were the emerging priorities on the learning and wellbeing fronts? The CEO replied that from Monday next week he was starting conversations with the SIPs about the returns to school, about safeguarding and the absolute priorities. One question to explore was ‘what is the wider wellbeing and performance data telling you thus far’. These sessions would lead into the upcoming Headteacher appraisal meetings. Those appraisals would be completed by half-term. The CEO noted that the schools would soon be using a new wellbeing software data tool.

8.0 Strategic Plan

Circulated prior to the meeting.

- 8.1 The CEO had been working on the document and some of the operational aspects remained a work in progress. Certain staff were new to the central team and this had to be factored in when considering timescales etc. The intention was to complete a KPI tracking tab and colour code (RAG) it accordingly. There would be a progress update every term. Trustees would be able to see what operational measures had been completed to support the delivery of the strategic plan.
- 8.1.1 Were there enough explicit actions referring to increasing professional capital? The CEO acknowledged that the plan was not a finished article and there were gaps from previous still to be addressed. Wishing to make a wider point, the CEO said that the return from Covid was not a done deal. Frankly, the Trust was nowhere near delivering on its curriculum progression objectives at this stage. Even though so much time had been spent on it prior to lockdown. Everyone remained very positive about the strategic plan and the curriculum development work

but there was zero capacity to bring this to Headteachers right now – who, in turn, also had little spare capacity beyond trying to keep their schools open.

- 8.2 The central services review would come to the October meeting. AVEC would be giving a presentation and holding a Q&A. How the Trust delivered against the recommendations would need to be carefully managed given what everyone was facing on a day-to-day basis. Anything that affected staff morale would not be welcome right now.
- 8.3 The Trust had the people strategy report but there was lots of ‘empty space’. The heads felt that this was something that could be move on in the background. The CEO asked if Mrs Dodd had capacity to support/give input to a working group looking at staff wellbeing. Mrs Dodd said that she would be happy to contribute.
- 8.4 Would there be a uniform approach to safeguarding and training? A Trustee said that this had come up during a link one-to-one with their link school’s LGB chair. The CEO and the Governance Advisor spoke about expectations around training and that a matrix would be launched in October, to accompany the training protocol, spelling out exactly what individual governors and boards as a whole would be expected to cover from a training perspective. This included safeguarding. The CEO added that Cayte Mulhern had been largely engaged with the return of TGS to date but was now attending to her whole Trust safeguarding brief. There were several areas of development that had been identified, including improving training.
- 8.5 Picking up on the origin of the last point, a Trustee asked what was the best way to engage in the Link Trustee role. The CEO encouraged all Trustees to book in a welfare call and to ask school leaders how the first few weeks had been. Following discussion, it was agreed that this should be facilitated through contact with LGB chairs. Discussion turned to the matter of school visits in general and when and how to use virtual visits or in person visits.
- 8.6 A Trustees was concerned about a focus on the negatives during the meeting. The Trustee felt that the quality of education had to be a priority. Doing the day job really well was the best way to restore that positivity. They challenged leadership to promote a positive sense of achievement? The CEO acknowledged that some of his messages were pretty stark and that this was the reality in some of the areas Trustees focussed upon. However, the teaching and learning in schools was lively and positive. There was a sense of normality in the classroom amongst teachers and pupils. It was at SLT level where matters became very challenging. The CEO hoped that the already positive development work on the curriculum and in other areas would resume as the situation became even more normalised and everyone felt they had the capacity to move on.

9.0 Policy Review

- 9.1 **Resolved:**
Trustees approved the revised Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.
- 9.2 **Resolved:**
Trustees approved the PEEP policy and the Security policy.
- 9.3 Trustees were content, in principle, with the draft pay and appraisal policies. These to be formally approved in October once the Government had made a formal announcement on teachers’ pay and conditions arrangements in early October.

10.0 Receipt of Notices

- 10.1 The COO informed Trustees that the Trust had received, via Veritau, a disclosure under the Whistleblowing policy. As a result of this, Veritau had been commissioned to undertake an investigation into the allegations made. Trustees were notified of the school concerned.

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10.2 The COO informed Trustees that the Trust had received notification from the ICO office that a SAR had not been dealt with in a timely fashion by one of the Trust's schools. This matter had been investigated and the matter was now resolved. Trustees were notified of the school concerned.

10.2.1 With regards the notification from the ICO, was there anything the Trust needed to do to manage/process data requests better? No further response was required from the Trust at this time. Internal school processes did need to be looked at and matters were in hand.

11.0 Confirmation of PANs 2022-23

11.1 Trustees were notified that none of the schools wished to adjust their PANs for the year in question. This to be confirmed with NYCC.

12.0 NJC Uplift

12.1 The COO explained that the NJC uplift had been negotiated at 2.75%, backdated to April 2020. The effect of the uplift was included in the finance numbers for this year.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the NJC uplift as negotiated at 2.75%

Frances Dodd and Tom Fielden left the meeting

13.0 Items to be Communicated to LGBs

None.

14.0 Any Other Urgent Business

14.1 NYCC and York Council were looking at proposals to remove district councils and to either form unitary authorities based on a North Yorkshire and York model or split the current regions into unitary authorities East and West. No doubt Trustees would have a view on this. The CEO felt that the first option was preferable and wished to communicate this to officials. He was happy to do so either individually or under the banner of the Trust. Trustees were happy to follow the CEO's professional judgement. Trustees welcomed sight of the draft letter.

IY

15.0 Date and Time of the Next Meeting

20th October 2020 at 5.30pm.

Ian Yapp and Rob Holah were invited to leave the meeting.

16.0 CEO Performance Review

The COO was invited to speak to the requirements under this item.

16.1 CEO recruitment would be on the October agenda. AVEC would be invited to speak to Trustees about the process and their options. There were various considerations based upon whatever decisions were taken as to that process and its outcomes.

16.2 The performance review process needed to be taken forward and completed correctly for Ian Yapp. The suggestion was to use the panel with the membership agreed previously. This was agreed, with the addition that Mr Sheppard would join the panel fully rather than acting as a reserve. The panel was required to recruit external support with educational expertise. Trustees noted their preference was to approach the leadership of Red Kite Trust for that support. The panel needed to convene in October to undertake the CEO review. The process of assessing executive remuneration would be assisted by HR.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm

| Action Points from the Meeting | Agenda Item | Person(s) Responsible | Date for Delivery |
|---|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Return Business Interest forms (if not already done so) | 2.1 | ALL | ASAP |
| Report outlining the digital strategy for the Trust | 4.1 | IY | Due course |
| Contact potential governor | 5.2 | RC | ASAP |
| Letter to staff and stakeholders | 7.2 | NS | ASAP |
| Contribute to working group looking at staff wellbeing | 8.3 | FD | Due course |
| Draft a response on proposals for local authorities going forward | 14.1 | IY | Due course |