

STAR MAT Board of Trustees'

Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 18th May 2021 at 5.30pm via Google Meet

Present: Clare Thornton-Eckford (Chair), Nick Sheppard, Peter Wilson, Richard Coy, Alison Smith, Simon Peacock, Deborah Hastie (from item 4.4), Frances Dodd, Tom Fielden

In attendance:

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

1.0 Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

1.1 There were no apologies. There were no declarations of interest.

2.0 Minutes of the Last Meetings – 2nd March 2021 and 23rd March 2021

2.1 Resolved:

Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meetings, held 2nd March and 23rd March 2021, were true and accurate records of those meeting and the Chair was duly authorised to sign them.

2.2 The notes from the Covid Taskforce meeting on 4th May 2021 had been circulated for information.

3.0 Action Points and Matters Arising

3.1	1. Speak to Mr Westland re: appointment to TGS LGB	Matter resolved. Mr Westland had been appointed to the TGS LGB.
	2. Update on progress with RSE consultations and policies in schools	The CEO had delivered an update. By the July meeting all areas of consultation and policy should be 'green'.
	3. Discuss Trust appointed governor process and rationale ahead of Chairs' Forum	On agenda.
	4. Attend to training, specifically safeguarding training, review matrices at summer 1 Trust Board meeting	On agenda.
	5. Church school effectiveness to be added to RAG criteria for assessing LGBs	On agenda.
	6. Deliver FWG ToRs to Chairs' forum and offer LGBs opportunity to establish working parties	Completed. To date, four LGBs had opted to set-up a FWG.

4.0 Governance Matters

4.1 Recent Appointments, Reappointments and Current Trust Appointed Vacancies

The Clerk confirmed that written resolution 005 (proposal to appoint Stephen Westland and Georgina Ashton to the LGBs of TGS and Riverside, respectively) had been passed.

Resolved:

Trustees appointed Paul Wire as a Trust Appointed governor on the LGB of Appleton Roebuck (this further to written resolution 006 on the subject, which had not been passed come the time of the meeting).

ACTION

Mr Sheppard indicated that he had potentially sourced a governor for the LGB at Kellington. The Clerk was asked to send all Trustees the MAT governor application form and the induction pack, such that it was then available for ready reference and distribution.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the following governor re-appointments:

- Philip Turnpenney at TGS
- Wendy Thompson at Brayton.

The Clerk had reported that there were 10 governor vacancies across the LGBs. A general discussion about local governance, capacity and implications followed. The Clerk was asked for his views on the matter. It was noted that the MAT had advertised vacancies and governance opportunities on social media.

4.2 Trust Appointed Governors Process

A finalised process flow chart had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the revised governor recruitment process as circulated.

4.3 Trustee/Governor Training Update

Trustees had been given access to the updated training matrices for the LGBs and Trust Board.

The CEO reported that Cayte Mulhern had been tasked with ‘chasing the gaps’ with regards safeguarding training. This involved direct contact with chairs and governors where necessary. Headteachers were also on board to get this matter resolved. All LGBs were working on improving their governor attendance at training. The matter would be raised again at Chairs’ forum. Once the initial gaps in core training were filled in, the CEO was hopeful that renewal/refresher training would be a simpler process.

Following conversations with Alison Smith, the CEO said that Foundation and CE school governors needed to complete certain Diocesan/Church School specific training. Thus, such courses would be added to the core training element for those LGBs matrices. Being flagged on the matrices would reaffirm Diocesan expectations on church school governors. All Trustees also needed to have a basic understanding of governance of Church Schools. To that end, it might be useful for Trustees to also attend the half-termly DET briefings.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the additions of certain Diocesan governor training modules to the matrices for CE schools.

Deborah Hastie joined the meeting

4.4 Trust Board Meeting Structure

A draft structure (revised), with proposed meeting dates had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Chair and CEO reflected on the need to revise meeting structures now that a Board level Pay Committee was required and a further FAR committee meeting was necessary – asking all board members to attend 14 meetings a year was a lot to ask. There also needed to be time dedicated to specific focus on detailed school improvement topics. The revised structure involved reinstating the committee structure, to complement the necessary number of Full Board meetings. There would be a dedicated School Improvement Committee once more. Committee memberships would be defined but committee terms would allow for all Trustees to attend all other committee meetings (apart from the Pay Committee) should they wish to. This approach would also allow better oversight of Church School Effectiveness. FAR meetings would ensure that critical business and compliance issues were covered. The Chair said that the current flat structure had served its purpose in that all Trustees now had that broad knowledge of the Trust’s business and governance duties. One had to be realistic about the capacity of Trustees to attend a greater

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number of meetings, particularly when Trustees were also supporting local governance where necessary. The Clerk noted that when compiling the agenda planner it had been clear that the number of meetings proposed could not realistically be slimmed down any further, not without compromising on the timing of certain statutory decisions and/or being prepared for some very lengthy meetings (something the Board was keen to avoid). A Trustee favoured the return to committees but said that they wanted to avoid repetition at subsequent meetings. The Board did not need to recap delegated business. The Chair and the Clerk noted that committee minutes would be shared well ahead of any subsequent Board meeting and that the 'purposes' tag on Decision Time would be better utilised to ensure that all agenda items were marked appropriately so that duplication did not happen. Another Trustee pointed out that Board needed to use person's particular skills to be best effect and the committee structure was best placed to deliver that, however, they echoed their colleague's comments.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the revised meeting structure, including the proposed buy-in of meetings for the year. Trustees noted the proposed meeting schedule for the year and this would be confirmed and approved at the July meeting. The final formal membership of the FAR Committee and reinstated School Improvement Committee also to be confirmed at the July meeting.

Agenda

4.5 LGB Meeting Structure

Proposal with rationale circulated prior to the meeting.

The CEO noted that one of the main drivers for the revised LGB meeting structure was to put more emphasis on and promote the need for 'active governance' between meetings. To that end, the LGB agenda planner would have clearer expectations about pre and post meeting activities. The proposed move to 7 LGB meetings was also in response to feedback from some quarters about the volume of work associated with servicing a relatively large number of LGB meetings. The CEO noted that feedback on the proposal had been very favourable, although some critical comments had been fair challenge and efforts would be made to address such points as far as possible. Trustees had received a pros/cons paper plus the feedback prior to the meeting. The Headteacher's group, in particular, had given detailed feedback.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the revised meeting structure for LGBs as outlined. Each LGB to have 7 regular, formal meetings in 2021/22 academic year.

4.6 Draft Agenda Planners

Draft planners circulated prior to the meeting.

Work would continue to flesh these out ahead of approval being requested at the July meeting. The meeting windows had been re-aligned to better fit with reporting requirements and to alleviate pressure on operational leadership at certain times of the year. Trustees were content with progress to this point.

Agenda

4.7 Trust Board Pay Committee

Finalised Terms of Reference had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The CEO noted the importance of centralising this function; this was the view of the Trust's HR advisors. The Terms of Reference had been flagged previously but were now finalised and included all relevant details of the Pay Committee's function and the process for managing any staff appeals.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the committee membership as follows: Alison Smith, Nick Sheppard, and Tom Fielden. Peter Wilson would act as a reserve. An appeals committee would be made up of any three Trustees not involved in the Pay Committee's decision making.

4.8 Scheme of Delegation Annual Review

Alison Smith agreed to support the review again. This made sense given that the Trust's SoD model was based on the Diocesan framework. The Clerk noted that he would be feeding in to the process and flagging the revised NGA guidance in this area.

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4.9 New Complaints Procedure

A new draft procedure, based on the DfEs new template, had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The Clerk summarised the rationale behind the new DfE template. It made a lot of sense because, unlike the predecessor, it covered all the eventualities MATs could be faced with. The key to ensuring that the new procedure was followed accurately and efficiently was training, for headteachers, governors and Trustees alike. The CEO echoed this – everyone had to be fully prepared to deliver against the new process. The CEO added that the next step was to consult with heads and governors and, following any observations, bring back a final version for approval at the July meeting. It was noted that one of the main differences over the previous procedure was the Trustee/CEO involvement in certain high level complaints and those specifically about headteachers. With that in mind, the CEO wanted to propose one alteration from the model template, that being the CEO having discretion to delegate an investigation of a complaint to a suitable individual. Partly this was to address a potential capacity issue but also to ensure that complaints were investigated by the most suitably skilled and knowledgeable individual for the circumstances of the complaint.

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- 4.9.1 A Trustee was concerned that the new model procedure was very prescriptive. There was a danger that it could be considered contractual. They encouraged the addition of a statement of principles, which would include the flexibility to allow for deviation or disapplication of certain aspects of the process, if deemed necessary, in exceptional circumstances. Of course any such change to be made clear to any complainant. The Clerk could understand the Trustee's reticence, however, he cautioned that this new process was based on a DfE approved template – one which highlighted the importance of following defined, clear and widely understood processes. MATs were of course free to amend the template to arrive at a procedure that was workable in their particular circumstances. Those engaging in the process did need to be clear exactly how a complaint should proceed at all stages. The CEO agreed to explore phraseology with the Trust's legal advisors.

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4.10 Decision on Meetings Remaining Virtual

Resolved:

Trustees agreed with the recommendations from the Covid Taskforce group. Formal LGB meetings to remain in virtual format via Google Meet for the remainder of the academic year. This in accordance with current NGA and DfE guidance to schools and governors.

4.11 Seconding Nominations for Parent Governors

Resolved:

Trustees approved a proposal to remove the need for parent governor nominees to obtain a seconder for their nomination.

5.0 **Strategy**

5.1 Review of Strategic Plan 20/21 and RAG rating

A RAGged Strategic Plan had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The CEO outlined in brief the main reasons why five areas remain RAGged as 'Red'. At the June meeting, the COO would be outlining in more detail the RAGged areas that pertained to FAR. Revision to growth strategy to be put forward. Existing strategy did need to change in certain areas. CEO being briefed on legal due diligence. Initial scoping meeting to look at 6th form operations. Five areas less red than they were. Comments and questions welcomed.

5.2 First Indications for 2021/22

A 'first thoughts' document had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The CEO believed that certain strategic ideas outlined in the document would happen, indeed some would happen naturally as a result of things already in motion. Some items would be shelved until a later date or not pursued. Crucially, the CEO wanted to understand the priorities each school had and these would link in to Trust's overarching strategy document. There would be the 'big three' or 'big five' priorities and then operational priorities feeding in to make them happen. Recovery from Covid would be embedded into the priorities, rather than having standalone status. The Chair agreed with this way of thinking; she wanted to see the Trust move on from Covid and get back to a sense of business as usual. What was clear from recent times was the need to focus on children's wellbeing and get that aspect of provision right.

5.3 Proposed Away Day for Trustees

Trustees agreed that this would take place 10am-2pm on 2nd July at Toulston Lodge, TGS.

6.0 **School Improvement**

The CEO had circulated an over-arching summary document prior to the meeting.

The CEO invited initial questions or comments based on his summary report or the range of documents circulated.

Did Trustees need to better understand the support being talked about as needed for Brayton? The CEO said that the school was dealing with long-term absences that were impacting on the capacity of leadership. The CEO explained how these issues were to be mitigated. If these interim measures moved into the autumn term then the Trust would need to look at greater financial support for Brayton. At that point it might be pertinent to talk in more detail but at the moment it was not appropriate to comment further on the specifics. Suffice to say the issues were not the fault of the school.

What was meant by further 'challenge support' from the SIP in reaction to the findings from the HMI pilot at Appleton Roebuck? The CEO replied that the SIP had provided a comprehensive response and roadmap/forward plans to cover necessary next steps and this was what was encapsulated in the phraseology used. Was it quite a challenging pilot inspection? Yes. The school did have some lessons to learn and they were on with this. The CEO felt that the issues raised were better caught via this inspection method than later down the line. Having analysed the papers on this, the Chair encouraged the Trust to share expertise across settings. The CEO agreed and measures were in place to make this happen. He gave an example of where this had already delivered positive outcomes for two of the Trust's schools.

In response to a comment about utilising a singular approach to learning across the Trust in a particular subject, where that approach was viewed as successful, the CEO cautioned that the rollout of any one scheme of learning did need to be considered in terms of its appropriateness for each setting. A one size fits all approach was not always the best solution.

6.1 General Update

Various briefing papers had been circulated prior to the meeting. There were also documents in the link Trustee folder on the Google drive.

No specific comments or questions were lodged.

6.2 Continuing Conversations

The latest round of conversation reports and a summary document had been circulated prior to the meeting.

No specific comments or questions were lodged.

6.3 Primary Data

Assessment evaluation reports for each setting had been circulated prior to the meeting.

No specific comments or questions were lodged.

6.4 Secondary Roadmaps and Policy

The centre assessed grades roadmap and policy documents had been circulated prior to the meeting.

TGS had escalated their policy to Stoneking for checking. No changes to the substance were proposed. This would be approved by the LGB in due course.

- 6.4.1 How confident could Trustees be that robust processes were in place? In designing the policies and processes, the CEO explained that the schools had internal meetings, liaised with the CEO, LGBs and other network partners and had guidance through CST and JCQ. The schools were doing everything that they could to deliver for their young people. Would the schools still receive appeals, yes, however all paperwork was in place and would be logged. A Trustee noted that the aftercare for students and parents was an important thing. A Trustee reported anecdotally, in their experience, communication had been very thorough via TGS; everyone knew where they stood. The CEO added that the schools' approach had been to create a flight path for students so they should be able to see in terms of the awards coming their way.

6.5 Attendance

A 'spot check' report had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Had attendance been better post lockdown? Yes, generally speaking this was the case. There were some cases of persistent absenteeism that were being monitored. It would be interesting to see if the next period saw a dip from the current high attendance levels.

6.6 SIC Reports

SIC reports relating to certain settings had been circulated prior to the meeting.

No specific comments or questions were lodged.

6.7 Draft School Improvement Strategy 2021/22 and Update on SIC Consultancy

The CEO made a recommendation with regards recruitment of a school improvement advisor function for 2021/22, the detail of which had been outlined prior to the meeting.

- 6.7.1 Was the Trust going to get hit with IR35 problems? The consultant being recruited, registered as a consultancy, would be working 42 days a year across the Trust. That person was also working with another Trust more extensively. The COO would check the issued raised via an IR35 tool and Stoneking. Was the Trust not required to seek three quotes for this contract? The COO confirmed that the proposal did not break the protocols in the Trust's procurement policy, however, Trustees approval was required to proceed with the plan as recommended.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the plan for external school improvement advisory services for 2021/22.

6.8 Church Distinctiveness Group Minutes

Circulated prior to the meeting for information.

A Trustee welcomed the inclusion of these minutes on the MAT Board meeting agenda. This group fulfilled a key requirement, engaging with the Diocese and delivering the church school effectiveness requirements.

6.9 Teaching School Hubs and Future Structures

Various documents had been circulated for information purposes.

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No specific comments or questions were lodged.

6.10 Safeguarding

The CEO had shared a letter with Trustees.

Trustees thanked the CEO for taking time to engage in the issues raised nationally in recent days.

7.0 **Committee Reports**

Trustees had access to the latest round of LGB meeting minutes prior to the meeting.

7.1 Trustees noted the content of the LGB minutes. The CEO noted how useful the wider meeting documents would be for link Trustees and these were available to all via Decision Time and/or the Google drive.

8.0 **Feedback from Trustee Link Visits**

Link Trustee visit reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.

8.1 The Chair asked Trustees to flag any particular areas of concern ahead of meetings. Otherwise these reports would be purely used for information purposes.

Resolved:

Trustees approved school link roles as follows:

- Richard Coy to Appleton Roebuck
- Deborah Hastie to Kirk Fenton
- Alison Smith to Sherburn Hungate

9.0 **ISR Review Report**

Circulated ahead of last meeting and this meeting. Proposals contained within the documents. Comments and questions were immediately invited.

9.1 Were all ISR changes driven by the formula? Not all aspects were formula driven. Up to column U on the document circulated was formula driven but thereafter certain differentials were applied based on a school's unique features. Were the proposals robust? Everything had been through HR and executive were content that they accurately reflected the ranges that should apply at each of the schools. Were the proposed ISRs and their consequences built into the budget? They had been and then they were removed. The COO now needed to put them back in and this would be reported at FAR. Were the plans affordable? The proposals were fair and benchmarked correctly.

Resolved:

Trustees approved the alterations to leadership ISRs as per the documented proposals. This outcome to be reported to the relevant schools and their LGBs

10.0 **Policy Review**

None.

11.0 **Headteacher Recruitment – Brayton**

A report, outlining two options for progressing recruitment, had been circulated.

11.1 The CEO talked about the timelines that affected measures to recruit a new headteacher. The CEO outlined the rationale for his preference for option 2. This was a more considered approach, which was appropriate given the current position of the school and its status as a sponsored academy. Comments and questions were invited at this stage.

11.1.1 Were there any options around federation? This could be a fall back strategy, however, as a substantive, ongoing position it would be difficult to run with given the size of the school. There were other options if executive support was considered necessary. The CEO pointed to the current headteacher's comments about the need to avoid using interim models, given the school's

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current position and what it had gone through in recent years in terms of the number of leadership changes. The CEO acknowledged that further internal leadership capacity might well be needed as this process moved forward.

Resolved:

Trustees approved option 2 as the preferred method for Headteacher recruitment.

- 11.2 The CEO would check with HR as to when the Board would need to confirm and approve a panel for this recruitment.

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12.0 Any Other Agreed Business

12.1 Resolved:

Trustees ratified the Brayton CE Primary safeguarding audit, on behalf of the school’s LGB, whose governors had indicated their approval. This to allow its formal submission to NYCC as soon as possible.

Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The next meeting to take place on Thursday 15th July at 5.30pm

The meeting closed at 7.55pm

Action Points from the Meeting	Agenda Item	Person(s) Responsible	Date for Delivery
Circulate the governor application form and induction pack to Trustees for their ready reference	4.1	Clerk	ASAP
Flag training at chairs’ forum	4.3	IY	Summer forum
Attend Diocesan Education Team termly briefing	4.3	ALL	Ongoing invitation
Support SoD review	4.8	AS	By July meeting
Consult with heads and governors on potential new complaints procedure	4.9	IY	By July meeting
Explore need for additional statements in complaints procedure with legal advisors	4.9.1	IY	By July meeting
Ascertain whether Trust exposed to IR35 issues with new SIP consultancy contract	6.7.1	MB	Report back to July meeting
Consequences of approved ISR proposals to be built into budgets	9.1	MB	By June FAR Comm
Report ISR decision to affected schools and their LGBs	9.1	IY	ASAP
Check with HR when Brayton HT recruitment panel would need to be confirmed and approved	11.2	IY	Due course