

## STAR MAT Board of Trustees'

### Minutes of the meeting held Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 5.30pm via Google Meet

**Present:** Clare Thornton-Eckford (Chair), Nick Sheppard, Peter Wilson, Richard Coy, Alison Smith, Simon Peacock, Tom Fielden, Deborah Hastie (from item 8 until item 14)

**In attendance:**

Ian Yapp (Chief Education Officer, STAR MAT)  
Melissa Boyes (Chief Operating Officer, STAR MAT)  
Iain Tessier (Clerk, Governance Advisor – STAR MAT)  
Salli Radford (Head of Governor Services, CYC)  
Samantha Vince (Clerk, designate)

#### 1.0 Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.

1.1 Deb Hastie had indicated that she would be late arriving. There were no declarations of interest.

#### 2.0 Minutes of the Last Meeting – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021

2.1 Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meeting held 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were a true and accurate record of that meeting. This included approval of the three sets of confidential minutes pertaining to that meeting. The minutes were duly approved. Trustees also approved the minutes of the meeting to ratify the new Headteacher appointment for Brayton on 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021.

#### 3.0 Action Points and Matters Arising

|     |   |                                    |
|-----|---|------------------------------------|
| 3.1 | Complete BI form (if not done so)   | Completed                          |
|     | Model approaches to DBS renewals and deliver proposal to Trustees                                 | On agenda                          |
|     | Actions lists from safeguarding audits to Google drive  | On agenda (drive set-up on Google) |
|     | Notify Trustees of the outcome from delegated decision making re: Buddies at SHP                  | On agenda                          |
|     | Procurement of support for external reviews of governance   | On agenda                          |
|     | Discuss with local chairs attendance at other LGB meetings to observe strong governance in action | Next forum agenda                  |
|     | New equalities policy and Trust approach to the equalities agenda                                 | On agenda                          |
|     | Report following review of CST framework  | Completed.                         |
|     | Amend text in link Trustee protocol   | Completed.                         |
|     | Attend to link visits   | Ongoing.                           |
|     | Finalise people strategy  | On agenda for approval             |
|     | Finalise SI strategy  | Approved at CAS comm               |
|     | Notify LGBs of approved policies  | Clerk notified of comms            |

#### 4.0 Safeguarding

A safeguarding update had been circulated prior to the meeting.

**ACTION**

4.1 The CEO had made comments against some of Cayte Mulhern's points. He highlighted the procurement of SCR Tracker. The Trust was also going to be signposting routes to training and provide clarity on renewal and refresher training for governors.

4.2 There was an update on the position re: Buddies.

4.3 The CEO pointed out that the timetables set for the safeguarding audits for the high schools by NYCC were not really viable. The CEO had spoken to Mr Sheppard and they had agreed that the best way forward was to defer the audits until the spring and make sure they progressed on two separate days. Mr Sheppard said that this was not ideal but there were no burning issues at either school with regards safeguarding. However, having the additional level of assurance from an external provider would be good and therefore rebooking the audits was the best solution.

4.3.1 Could the MAT look to use a different external provider? The CEO said that he would be reluctant to do that. It made sense to use the LA as the Trust was under the NYCC Safeguarding Partnership. A Trustee said that, notwithstanding the point about there being no apparent burning issues in either school, whilst the Board was without details from an audit, it did not necessarily know what the risks might be. It was essential that any review did look at the SCRs (on the timetable it was not scheduled that NYCC would) and ensure all information was present. A brief general discussion followed. The Chair was in favour of having the audits completed by someone either this side of Christmas or early in the Spring Term. The CEO and Trustees agreed. The CEO would take the matter forward.

4.4 The CEO had looked at DBS modelling and options for a renewal programme (to be layered over the current self-declaration process). The CEO outlined two options and the associated costs.

4.4.1 Why was the Trust opting for re-check every three years? This was what Trustees had wanted the CEO to look at. There was no actual statutory renewal period. Even the auto-update service was not constantly reviewed – DBS were re-validated at points of request. Mr Sheppard spoke about how bringing in a process was always about considering relative risk. The CEO said a measured approach was necessary and being mindful of capacity in schools to potentially deal with a lot of evidence from individuals. Trustees debated which option to go with. Views were shared. When asked, the CEO said he was in favour of option 2.

4.5 **Resolved:**

Trustees agreed that the CEO should further model option 2, one where there was a straight three year renewal programme and one where that time interval was five year plus the addition of a random annual sample. To bring forward to April Board meeting.

5.0 **Approval of the Annual Accounts**

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

- The statutory accounts for 2020/21
- The summary audit findings
- The Letters of Representation

5.1 The Chair of the FAR committee recommended the accounts to the Board. The accounts had been suitably scrutinised at FAR committee.

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the accounts for 2020/21 and authorisation was given to those persons who were required to sign off the accounts.

6.0 **Governance Matters**

6.1 Governor Appointments / Re-appointments

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the re-appointment of Messrs Davey, Middleton and Cook as governors at

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**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the appointment of Katie (Lara) Thornton as a Trust Appointed governor for Kirk Fenton LGB.

6.2 Review of LGB Performance / Risk Register

Updated LGB risk register circulated prior to the meeting.

The CAS Committee had looked at this in some detail. There were further notes against each of the LGBs to reflect current thinking. There would be an evaluation of the post-CAT position at Kellington in the summer term. The CEO noted that this also needed to be approached in alignment with the Trust's approach to external reviews. There was a brief discussion about how to deal with LGB capacity at Riverside. It was noted that Appleton Roebuck needed to move forward with a Parent Governor election as soon as possible.

6.3 Training Review (Board and LGB level)

Updated training matrices had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The CEO noted that training uptake was generally improved. Where uptake was strongest, this reflected the overall quality of that LGB. At the next chairs' forum the CEO would be clarifying the Trust's requirements with regards frequency intervals and number of members of LGB required for certain training. There was also the potential to use a 'knowledge checker' process. The Trust was going to look at whether Every (or similar) could be used to track training and compliance for governors.

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6.4 Internal and External Reviews of Governance

Covered under operations update later in the meeting.

6.5 Governance Capacity

Details of vacancies on LGBs provided.

Matters noted.

6.6 Member Appointed Trustees

Matters were in hand to take this forward. The Chair noted that the Board was very much at capacity and perhaps beyond that in some circumstances. A general discussion followed.

6.7 Review of the Appleton Roebuck CAT

Report circulated prior to the meeting.

Trustees noted the current position.

**Resolved:**

It was agreed to extend the CAT until the end of the Spring Term.

6.8 Code of Conduct

A revised Code of Conduct had been circulated prior to the meeting.

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the revised Code of Conduct.

6.9 Working Group review

Briefing paper circulated prior to the meeting.

Trustees noted the review paper and thanked Mr Mitchell for taking the time to write it. The Clerk noted the quality of reporting and the general way working parties had been approached at SHS.

Theirs was a blueprint for others to follow and ensure that governance process was conducted open, fairly and transparently, as it should be.

- 6.10 Governing a School Trust  
CST briefing paper highlighted to Trustees.

Trustees noted the guidance in the briefing paper.

- 6.11 ToR for Rapid Improvement Working Group (RIG)  
Draft Terms of Reference circulated prior to the meeting.

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the RIG ToRs as circulated.

- 6.12 Link Reports  
Link reports relating to Kellington, Kirk Fenton, South Milford and Monk Fryston/Saxton had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Trustees noted the contents of the reports provided.

- 7.0 **Update on Growth Mobilisation**  
Various guidance documents had been circulated.

- 7.1 *See confidential minutes.*

*Deb Hastie joined the meeting.*

8.0 **CEO's Report**

The following documents had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Main report
- Covid update
- Strategic Plan 2021/22
- Strategic Plan KPI review paper
- People Strategy
- Church Schools on a page
- Sixth Form strategy paper
- Riverside Headteacher recruitment briefing paper

- 8.1 **Resolved:**  
Trustees approved the 2021/22 strategic plan.

*Samantha Vince left the meeting.*

- 8.2 **Resolved:**  
Trustees approved the People Strategy.

- 8.3 **Resolved:**  
Trustees approved the Church Schools information.

- 8.4 The CEO reflected upon a productive meeting in relation to the 6<sup>th</sup> form strategy. Clear priorities had been realised as a result of the meeting. There would be further realignment of the two 6<sup>th</sup> forms and their offer. The notes of the meeting had captured the contents of discussion well. There would be a further meeting in the Spring term to look at course and assessment realignments. The Chair was keen to keep up the momentum in terms of driving forward the 6<sup>th</sup> form strategy.

*The Clerk requested a short break.*

**Resolved:**

- 8.5 Trustees agreed that the Headteacher recruitment panel for Riverside would consist of Clare Thornton-Eckford, Alison Smith and Nick Sheppard. Simon Peacock to act as reserve.
- 8.6 There was also a need to establish a headteacher recruitment panel for a forthcoming appointment. The Chair also requested delegated authority for that panel to explore and agree, if necessary, alternative leadership models. The Chair and CEO provided rationale for why the Trust might diverge from the current leadership model for the school concerned.

**Resolved:**

Trustees agreed that the panel should consist of: Clare Thornton-Eckford, Simon Peacock and Deb Hastie. Alison Smith to act as reserve. The requested delegated authority was duly given.

- 8.7 Matters to do with school improvement were reported via CAS, however, the CEO briefly updated Trustees on ongoing work around the support plan at Appleton Roebuck and a planned review of progress therein next week.
- 8.8 The CEO talked about sustainability and the climate action agenda. He wanted the Trust to be proactive with regard the agenda on sustainability – schools were already engaged on eco-schools and Estates work was already linked in.
- 8.9 The reactive support costs around school improvement was projected to run over budget by the close of the academic year. This was primarily due to the support plan work at Appleton Roebuck and some planned support for curriculum development at Kellington. The CEO was not suggesting taking any action at this stage but wanted Trustees to be aware that everyone did need to think about the way school improvement provision was funded going forward.
- 8.10 The CEO asked Trustees for a steer on what option to pursue with regards the Safeguarding and Inclusion Leader post (current postholder on secondment until August but a long-term solution was required). The CEO was invited to outline the rationale and any recommendations. The CEO favoured – although did not want to make a definitive proposal - the implementation of option 5. This offered the potential to rebrand the role and bring in wider responsibilities to the postholder. This would make the post more attractive and it would be classed as a MAT executive level post.
- 8.10.1 A Trustee pointed out that this post would be a cost that would have to be picked up via the central service fee. Would the considerable costs involved drive savings within schools? The CEO said that they could not offset the costs of the role and may incur costs by allowing the Trust to offer the strategies built by the postholder (in the various areas of their responsibility) to other settings. The CEO was clear that this was not a casework role, as such it would not reduce schools' costs in that regard. However, having such a postholder would help with the Trust's presence when it came to dealing with external partners – it was more likely that the postholder would 'unlock doors' if their calls came from them as the Trust's lead in this expanded area. A Trustee could see a good fit with an expanded role and the vision and values of the Trust. The search for synergies could be explored at a later date. The Trust could risk losing all of the progress made in this area to date if the current secondment was not taken forward as a full time, expanded post. The only issue was the total cost and affordability – but sometimes you had to speculate on the basis that Trust growth went ahead and you needed the role to add capacity and the potential for traded offers etc. This view was shared by the Chair and another Trustee.

**Resolved:**

Trustees agreed that the CEO should explore option 5 and that Nick Sheppard, Clare Thornton-Eckford and a current serving headteacher (acting in an advisory role if appropriate), should support the CEO with the decision making and selection process.

- 8.11 The CEO said that if the Trust could recruit to the post, it would also free up his capacity to look more closely at the School Improvement function and what it needed to look like to best serve the Trust. This was very necessary, not least if the Trust expanded. There were opportunities for a traded function via establishment of a robust internal function. There were people within the Trust

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that could contribute to that support. The CEO needed to look at costings. A Trustee suggested looking at this at CAS. The CEO was happy to do that, however, he cautioned that any traded function element could only happen if there was the guarantee of growth within the Trust to provide the necessary income streams.

## 9.0 Operations Update

The following documents had been circulated prior to the meeting:

### 9.1 ICT

Report circulated prior to the meeting

The Trust had worked with Schools ICT on a basic roadmap for a three to five-year plan. Work had been going on with regards other projects on the ICT side and the COO updated Trustees on progress to date.

With reference to the information circulated on the broadband and Smoothwall procurement (item 9.5 on the agenda), why was Sherburn High not on board with the procurement? The COO explained that this procurement was still a local level decision and the school's leadership had not wanted to join the group procurement. A Trustee asked about infrastructure as part of the options on the table. The COO explained that the 'boxes and switches' were not included on this procurement exercise – they would come as part of the 5-year plan (with a procured supplier). Did the proposals include the extra capacity TGS wanted, such as a leased line? Yes. Trustees remained concerned and surprised both that SHS was an outlier and that there was a lack of technical input on the Trust side, as part of the decision making. The CEO was asked to feedback Trustees' concerns to the headteacher at SHS and the COO was asked to approach the network managers and ensure there were skilled people inputting on the procurement exercise.

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#### **Resolved:**

Trustees agreed to delegate further decision making on this issue to Clare Thornton-Eckford, Simon Peacock, Nick Sheppard and Tom Fielden (the ICT working/scrutiny group).

### 9.2 GDPR Compliance Update

The compliance review reports for each setting had been circulated to Trustees.

Responding to a query from Trustees, the CEO assured the Board that matters of concern from the reports would be picked up where necessary.

### 9.3 Post-implementation Review

Briefing paper circulated prior to the meeting.

The COO was concerned that some schools were reporting still not feeling the benefits of the change in cleaning contractors. This contract was still requiring quite a lot of management on the Trust's side. The Trust had paid a premium for better cleaning and better management so should expect an uplift in responses. This was something to keep an eye on.

### 9.4 Contracts update and Briefing paper

Circulated prior to the meeting.

#### **Resolved:**

Trustees approved a 1-year extension on the contract with Sagars for external auditing services.

#### **Resolved:**

Trustees approved a 1-year extension on the contract with Avec/EPM for HR services.

With regards the governance contract, a tender document was being finalised and the tender process would begin in the new year. Trustees were content to proceed on that basis.

## 10.0 Riverside Update

- 10.1 Trustees noted that which had been discussed and agreed at FAR Committee. Trustees asked the COO to check with HR about the part they should play in the implementation of process.

**Resolved:**

Trustees agreed to delegate to Alison Smith to take any necessary action around Trustees' further involvement in process on this matter.

*Alison Smith left the meeting.*

**11.0 Saxton Update**

- 11.1 Trustees noted and agreed with that which had been discussed and approved at FAR Committee.

**12.0 Trust Sub-Committee Reports**

- 12.1 The minutes from the CAS Committee had been circulated. Minutes from the recent FAR Committee meeting would be circulated as soon as they had been approved. The Chair of the Pay Committee confirmed that the committee had met to review the appraisal processes used by the Trust and, having gained assurances as to those processes, had moved to make necessary decisions on teacher, headteacher and CEO progressions.

**13.0 Policy Review and Approval**

The following policies had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Health and Safety
- Attendance Management
- Whistleblowing
- Disciplinary
- Flexible working
- Leave policy
- Family friendly policy
- Recruitment and selection
- Data protection
- Equalities
- Mobile Phone Policy

- 13.1 A Trustee flagged up certain points that should be included in the Whistleblowing policy, to make clear when and how that policy should be used and what other policies might be more appropriate to deal with issues certain individuals wished to raise.

**Resolved:**

Trustees approved the policies as circulated, with the exception of the Whistleblowing policy. This would be amended and represented to the next meeting.

*Deborah Hastie left the meeting*

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

LGBs to be notified of approved policies.

**15.0 Any Other Business**

- 15.1 The Chair confirmed that Trustees would have a pre-meet via to the Members' AGM on the 16<sup>th</sup> December.
- 15.2 Trustees noted the Friends of Riverside strategy circulated for information.

**Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting to take place on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April at 5.30pm

*The meeting closed at 8.45pm*

| Action Points from the Meeting   | Agenda Item | Person(s) Responsible      | Date for Delivery          |
|--|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ensure safeguarding audits happened by early Spring term   | 4.3.1       | IY                         | Early Spring term          |
| Further model option 2 re: DBS renewal policy  | 4.5         | IY                         | Next Meeting               |
| Ascertain whether Every could be used as a training and compliance tracker for governor CPD                                  | 6.3         | IY                         | Report next meeting        |
| Further explore option 5 with regards continuation of the Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead post                               | 8.10.1      | IY (support from CTE & NS) | Report next meeting        |
| Speak to SHS headteacher about their decision to remain outside of procurement exercise and relay Trustees concerns therein. | 9.1         | IY<br>MB                   | Report to next FAR Comm    |
| Check on Trustees role in Riverside process  | 10.1        | MB                         | ASAP                       |
| Amend Whistleblowing policy  | 13.1        | IY                         | Re-present at next Meeting |
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**These minutes were approved at the STAR MAT Full Board of Trustees meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022.**