



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TRUST BOARD

Held on Tuesday 17 October 2023, 2pm, via video conferencing

- Present:** Jackie Cutchey
Vic Daniels (Chair)
Fran Hargrove
Claire Heald
Lynsey Holzer (CEO and Accounting Officer)
Steve Purdy
Ben Stickley (minutes 1-10 only)
Toni Kittle
- In attendance:** Phil Beecher (Director of Finance)
Chris Everard (Director of Operations)
Stewart Harper (Governance Consultant)
Elaine Hammond (Director of People)
Karen Jarvis (Head of Corporate Services)

Welcome, Introduction and Apologies for Absence

1. Welcome was extended to all present, and apologies for absence were received from Miles Cole, Jeremy Beswick, Peter Dabrowa and Ngoc Nguyen.

Declarations of Interest

2. There were none.

Minutes of the last meeting

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2023 were approved without amendment

Matters arising

4. There were no matters arising which did not appear elsewhere on the agenda.

CEO Report

5. The CEO presented a report on progress. She noted the significant work required to drive improvement, which was having impact especially at secondary level. At primary level there were pockets of success, but there remained a significant challenge to spread these successes. It was noted that there had been changes of leadership at six schools in the Trust at the start of September.
6. The focus would be on raising standards across all year groups, but there were some that were especially important – such as Year 11 and Year 13. The trust-wide Year 11 project would be focused

on raising aspirations, attainment and progress, with the latter having been the sole focus for some, in the past. It was agreed to provide further details of this project to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

ACTION: Standards Committee Agenda

7. The CEO noted the focus in the primary phase, seeking improvements in all subjects.
8. It was noted that a recent Ofsted inspection of Cromwell Community College (an 'all through' school) had led to a rating of 'Good', which provided a positive basis for further improvement. This had occurred before formalised examination results were released, although the Trust's assessment was that the Quality of Education in the School was good.
9. A further inspection had taken place at Hillside Primary School a fortnight previously. This School, the Board were reminded, was subject to a Notice to Improve and had had new leadership in the Summer Term, and significant intervention from the Trust's Education Team. The CEO felt the judgement of 'Requires Improvement' was fair, and noted the inspection team had recognised the strong leadership of the Trust and School. They had also questioned why it had taken so long for the Trust to intervene, but noted the interventions of the Trust Board and Standards Committee since the start of 2023, and saw this as a sign of capacity to improve. There remained a challenge to keep the School in the Trust, which the Trust Board confirmed was still their desire.
10. A Trustee asked what targets had been set in Schools, and the CEO noted a 'data drop' at the end of the week, and that revised targets would be in place for the next half term. A further update would be provided to the next meeting of the Standards Committee.

ACTION: Standards Committee Agenda

11. A trustee asked about the new appraisal / performance management approach being implemented in the Trust, and the CEO noted very inconsistent practice in the past. Whilst this was being addressed over the coming weeks it would take an iterative improvement approach to bring it to the levels needed.
12. The Trust Board noted the report from the CEO and the structure of the Central Team at present.

Management Accounts

13. It was noted that management accounts had not been completed prior to the Finance & Resources Committee the week before, and so had not been considered in detailed there. The Director of Finance noted that these represented the year-end position, albeit before audit. A further narrative commentary would be circulated to Trustees, together with a report on capital spend.

ACTION: Director of Finance

14. The Director of Finance noted meetings with Business Managers in individual schools, and that these had been used to inform of the decision to move to an accruals-based accounting model in future.

15. [REDACTED]

16. [REDACTED]
17. A Trustee welcomed the more strategic approach to the presentation of management accounts, [REDACTED] They asked what support was available to those schools falling substantially short of admissions numbers. The CEO noted a substantial level of support available, through the Trust’s marketing team – including encouraging greater use of social media. Communications and marketing teams worked closely with individual schools, and the impact of this work would be kept under regular review over the course of the year. The CEO noted that, whilst there had always been a central resource, the opportunities had not been utilised fully. There was now a more proactive approach in place.
18. [REDACTED]
19. The Director of Finance, noted significant cost savings represented by the removal of absence insurance (agreed by the Finance & Resources Committee) which had represented a net cost of c.£0.5m over the past six years.

Financial Regulations

20. The Trust Board received draft Financial Regulations, recommended for approval by the Finance & Resources Committee.
21. The Director of Finance noted a change in approach by having individual policies (such as an Investment Policy approved at the Finance & Resources Committee) rather than a comprehensive single document.
22. It was noted that the External Auditors had not been consulted but would be provided with the revised Financial Regulations if approved. That said, the Director of Finance noted the standard nature of the approach.
23. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Financial Regulations for immediate implementation.

Pay Policy

24. The Trust Board received a draft Pay Policy, recommended for approval by the Finance & Resources Committee.
25. It was **RESOLVED** to approve the Pay Policy.
26. The Trust Board noted that Terms of Reference for a Remuneration Committee would be presented to a future meeting.

ACTION: Governance Consultant to draft Terms of Reference

27. It was noted, however, that there was a need for some decisions to be made more quickly, and thus it was proposed to form an ad-hoc committee of the Trust Board to take the decisions delegated to the Remuneration Committee under the Pay Policy. It was proposed that this be formed of the

Chair of the Trust Board, the Chair of the Finance & Resources, plus (at least) one of Claire Heald and Fran Hargrove.

28. It was **RESOLVED** to delegate the responsibilities of the Remuneration Committee to the ad-hoc committee referred, until such time as the Committee was formally established (before the end of 2023).

Staff Survey

29. The Trust Board received the outcomes of the survey undertaken in Summer 2023.
30. The Director of People noted that it had been a few years since the Trust had undertaken a Staff Survey, but that a contract had been awarded to Edurio to undertake this, leading to greater response rates – it was anticipated on repeating this annually.
31. There was, it was noted, a feeling of dissatisfaction though this was not out-of-line with the sector as a whole. Trustees noted the correlation between individual school performance and the satisfaction of the staff in those schools.
32. It was noted that 80% of staff had responded to the survey, well above what the provider would have anticipated in the first year. It was recognised, however, that without action on the issues raised there would be minimal impact. The CEO had recorded a video which had been presented at all INSET days at the start of term, and the People team were now working on further feedback.
33. The Chair asked what impact recent changes – including in leadership in individual schools – was having on staff satisfaction. The CEO reported that the impact was mixed, and that in a number of cases where changes were necessary the results of the survey had been very positive.
34. A trustee asked about school culture in better-performing schools and how this could be presented as case studies for other schools. The CEO noted the breadth of work on organisational development, across six key areas. A more detailed report would be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

ACTION: CEO / Director of People to present report on organisational development

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Any other business

38. There was none.

Date of next meeting

39. The next meeting would be held on 13 November 2023, at 3pm.

