

LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD OF BOLTON IMPACT TRUST

FORWARDS CENTRE

**VIRTUAL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM
THURSDAY 15 OCTOBER 2020 AT 4.00PM**

Present: Vicky Byrne (VB), Deborah Crier (DC), Liz Douglas (LD), Carleen Fernside (CFe), Christopher Fielding, Academy Lead (CF), Suzanne Harulow, Chair (SH), Damien Mills (DM) and Jenny Scott (JS)

In attendance: Mr P Hodgkinson (PH) Executive Principal, Mr D Smith (DS) Finance Director, Ms R Leonard (RL), Executive Vice Principal, Mr M Moosa, Trainee Accountant (observing), Mrs Suja Varghese (observing) and Mrs C Brooks, Clerk, Governance Services.

Suzanne Harulow in the Chair

Virtual Meeting Protocol

Governors were reminded of the virtual meeting protocol as had been agreed at a previous meeting.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed all present thanking them for their attendance to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Joanne, Blackburn, Charlene Parkinson, Kirsty Smith (newly appointed Governor) and Lynn Williams.

CF noted that Kirsty Smith had been unavoidably detailed at work but had recently undertaken a tour of the provision. It was felt that with her knowledge and experience of SEMH, she would be an asset to the LGB.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2.1 Declaration of Pecuniary or Conflict of Interests

No declarations of pecuniary interest or conflict of interest were made.

2.2 Annual Forms for Governors completion

The Clerk referred to the slight change in process for the annual completion and return of the following forms for this year:

- Register of Business Interest
- Declaration of Eligibility and Privacy Consent
- Safeguarding Declaration

- Code of Conduct Acceptance (no change to content)

Register of Business Interests

In accordance with the academy's financial handbook, entries in the Academy Trust's Register of Business Interests (RBI) were to be reviewed annually. All Trust Members, Local Governors and the Principal were asked to complete the LA model pro-forma and return it to Mr Smith for retention. It was noted that the entry included:

- relevant business and pecuniary interests
- details of any governance roles in other educational institutions.
- any material interests arising from relationships between governors or relationships between governors and school staff (including spouses, partners and close relatives)

The Clerk noted that trustees and local governors were required to complete this information and that failure to do so may be in breach of the Trusts Code of Conduct.

Governors had been sent a pack of the required forms including Declaration of Eligibility, Code of conduct acceptance, Register of Business Interest and Safeguarding Declaration required for their completion and return to him either via email or post in the stamped addressed envelope whichever was preferred.

Agreed: That all governors complete the Declaration of Eligibility, Register of Business Interests, Safeguarding Declaration and Code of Conduct Acceptance forms and return them to David Smith at the earliest opportunity.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS FOR 'ANY OTHER BUSINESS'

There were no items of 'Any other Business' notified at this point in the meeting.

4. MINUTES/MATTERS ARISING OF THE LAST MEETING

Governors had received the minutes of the last meeting held virtually on 8 June 2020 for their review and approval.

Matters Arising

4.1 Partnership Governor, minute number 5.1

CF reported that Liz Douglas had been appointed as the Partnership Governor and whilst she hadn't been able to access the live webinar, the details had since been made available and therefore both she and CF would access this and report back any relevant information shared.

The Clerk noted the matters covered were as follows:

- Primary Update, Recovery and Ofsted – Presented by Deb Butler
- Secondary Update – Presented by Geraldine Whitehead

- Overview of support available for families and schools, particularly to assist with recovery. An outline of work undertaken to secure school attendance, routines and engagement – presented by Steve Berryman

4.2 Website, minute number 5.2

PH reported that Victoria Gavin had taken over the responsibility of maintaining the Academy website and was currently in liaison with a number of website providers and in the process of receiving quotes for consideration. It was noted that the quotes already received ranged from £900 - £1,600. Further discussions were to be undertaken over the next week with a further update being provided to Governors at the next meeting in the Spring term 2021.

Action: PH to provide an update report to Governors at the Spring term 2021 meeting.

Agreed: To approve as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of the Governing Board held on 8 June 2020

At this point in the meeting Liz Douglas reported belated apologies for her absence to the last meeting.

5. NOMINATED GOVERNOR ROLES

5.1 Chairs' Briefing

The Chair reported that she had attended the virtual live event of the autumn term Chairs' Briefing meeting held on Monday 28 September 2020.

The following points had been highlighted:

- Autumn term updates:
 - Changes to the School Exclusion Process During the Pandemic
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education Update
 - Academies Financial Handbook
 - Financial Transparency in schools and academies
 - Ofsted Monitoring Visits
- Governance in the Years Ahead – 'Keeping our Board's vision at the core of our planning'

The Clerk noted that PH and DS had confirmed that the finance related updates would be shared at Trust level.

5.2 Link Governors Report on Training / Recent Training undertaken

RL referred to her circulated report explaining that she had taken on the responsibility of Link Governor for training across the Trust. RL confirmed that she had attended the Link Governor briefing held virtually on 14 September 2020 where it had been reported that in addition to the usual courses offered in the 2020/21 programme, there were a number of new training opportunities available to assist governors in their role, taking into account national initiatives and changes in legislation.

RL recommended that Governors access as many courses that they could to enhance their Governance role, particularly whilst these were all being presented virtually due to the circumstances of the Pandemic. It was noted that courses could be accessed at a convenient time to suit each individual and once completed, Governors were asked to advise RL to enable her to update and maintain accurate Governor training records.

CF noted that he had accessed a number of virtual courses including 'Ofsted and Governance'. CF commended the content and wealth of information shared within this course and recommended Governors consider accessing this.

LD noted that she had expressed an interest in the 'Leading Governance' Course. It was thought that funding was available for this course and had since liaised with CF who had agreed for her to make further enquiries.

RL referred to the National Induction course for the newly appointed Governors noting that this was a very beneficial course to undertake and for any Governors who would like refresher training.

Governors were informed that a meeting had been held with One Education, the Trusts Human Resources provider, regarding effective maintenance and monitoring of the Single Central Record (SCR). Following discussion, it had been realised that there was a need across the Trust for more rigorous monitoring in this area. Therefore, training was to be arranged in November 2020, particularly aimed at those Governors with safeguarding responsibilities. It was hoped that this may provide clarification of the Governor monitoring that was required.

RL referred to Safeguarding and the recent updates to the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2020 Document and the LA Model Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Governors were informed that once all the LGB meetings had taken place for this term RL would forward Part 1 of this document to all Governors requesting that they read the document and return a signed declaration to confirm that they had read and understood it. It was noted that a short quiz may also be undertaken to confirm Governors understanding.

Governors were also asked to advise RL of any external courses attended and to ask for training to be sourced for any other Link Governor role related training that they felt would be beneficial to them.

RL noted that a review of the Governor skills audit would also be undertaken in liaison with DS to inform any gaps in skills across the Trust, with Governors being directed to access related courses.

RL noted that whilst there were a vast number of excellent courses made available by the LA, not all were as relevant to Alternative Provision (AP). Governors were requested to consider any training needs in order to up-skill and enhance their Governance role to further discuss with PH or RL who would endeavour to source courses to best meet their needs.

The Clerk encouraged all Governors to access as much training as was possible, in particular whilst it was being offered virtually.

Action:

- i) Newly appointed Governors to access the National Induction Training and any other Governance related courses required to enhance their role.

- ii) All Governors to make the necessary arrangements to access suitable courses to widen their knowledge and enhance their Governance role.
- iii) RL to forward part 1 of the KCSiE document for Governors review together with a declaration for Governors completion and return.
- iv) Governors to read Part 1 of the KCSiE document and return a signed copy of the declaration to confirm that they had read and understood it.

5.3 Nominated Link Governor Visits

The Chair thanked Governors for making the time to undertake a monitoring visit to their link area of responsibility and for the provision of the detailed reports as circulated for Governors review and information.

CF also thanked Governors for undertaking the visits and for the provision of the comprehensive reports. It was noted that the on-going support and challenge provided from Governors was very much appreciated.

The following reports were submitted by link Governors providing information in respect of their area of responsibility:

- Health and Safety – D Crier
- Vision and inclusivity – Liz Douglas
- Teaching and Learning – Jenny Scott
- SEND Provision – Carleen Fernside

CF referred to Governor impact noting that the majority of Governor impact was made during the link Governor visits and other supportive conversations held.

It was suggested that as recording the impact was an item of discussion later in the agenda that the content of the forms submitted be further discussed at that point to enable the impact to be highlighted and recorded within item 11 of the agenda where the impact statement was to be agreed.

At this point in the meeting, CF referred to the need to appoint a Link Governor for Safeguarding. It was noted that Suzanne Harulow was currently undertaking this role on an interim basis. Governors were requested to consider this role and to contact CF for further discussion if interested.

Agreed: That the Governor reports be considered in conjunction with the points to be recorded for the Impact statement later in the meeting.

Action: Governors to consider the role of Safeguarding Link Governor

6. ACADEMY LEAD REPORT TO GOVERNORS

Governors were informed that for the Autumn term 2020 Local Governing Body meetings, the Academy Leads had all been asked to write their reports with slightly different contents and in a

different format. The circulated report had therefore been adapted to reflect the changes in light of the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Key items included:

- Summer Term 2020
- Preparing for September 2020
- Results and Destinations 2019/20
- Updates since we have re-opened fully in September 2020
- Current pupil numbers
- Safeguarding

CF highlighted the following aspects of the report:

Curriculum Intent

Governors were informed that the Curriculum intent/offer from the Forwards Centre (FC) was bespoke to each child taking into account the child's home circumstances. It was important to ensure that it was pitched at an appropriate level to best meet the needs of the child and their family circumstances.

Case Studies

CF reported that he had included a number of anonymised case studies to reflect the work undertaken in order to best support each child at the FC.

CF referred to the need to 'keep children safe' at all times including any isolation or lockdown periods with 'eyes on' visits and on-going child action meetings with the relevant outside agencies.

Staffing Matters

CF confirmed that since the commencement of the new academic year there had been no confirmed positive cases of Covid 19. However, staff members and pupils were constantly in and out of the building due to the need to self-isolate should any Covid related issues dictate the need. CF noted that this was having an impact on the pupils but that the staff team were managing the challenges as effectively as they could under these circumstances.

Attendance

Governors were informed that taking Covid matters into account, attendance level remained positive at 95%.

PH commended the FC for this level of attendance noting that the average attendance data for Alternative Provision (AP) was 58% equating to a 37% increase on national levels.

Governors discussed that the attendance levels at the FC was testament to the work undertaken by all staff at the FC and the excellent culture provided instilled confidence in pupils and their parents/carers.

CF noted that the FC had adhered to all Government and DfE guidance and had some very robust procedures and risk assessments in place.

Pupil Numbers

CF informed Governors that whilst pupil numbers were lower than in recent years due to Covid, two new pupils were due to commence next week. A visit had been undertaken and the parents had been very impressed with the offer of provision.

Fire Evacuation/ Invacuation procedures

CF confirmed that despite the low numbers on site the FC had successfully completed fire evacuation and invacuation procedures

Children Missing from Education

CF confirmed that there were no children missing from education.

Questions of the Academy Leads report were invited but none were raised.

Agreed: That Governors receive and note the contents of the Academy Leads report with thanks.

7. FINANCE PRESENTATION

Governors had received a financial presentation compiled by DS detailing the financial position of The Forwards Centre.

DS shared an on-screen copy of the presentation noting that this report was in a slightly different format than on previous occasions and would be presented by Mubeen Moosa, Trainee Accountant.

MM guided Governors through each of the following sections:

- Anticipated Outturn 2019/20
- Variances between budget and outturn
- Budget for 2020/2021
- Wider Trust Position
- Pupil numbers in PRUs September 2020 (including financial impact)
- Mitigation in place

Governors were reminded that the financial year for Academies was from September to August.

Anticipated out-turn for 2019/20

MM reported that the closing balance of 31 August 2020 for the Forwards Centre had been in deficit of £3,000. However, it was noted that the Trust had made an overall surplus and therefore causing no significant concerns at this stage.

Variances

MM reported that despite the deficit balance, some savings had been made due to a reduction in expenses as a result of the Covid pandemic.

Budget for 2020/21

The Trust had set the budget for 2020/21 in a deficit position of £24,000. This had been based on previous pupil numbers. It was noted that the recent pay award for both teaching and support staff had also been accounted for in this figure.

Governors were informed that there were 10 less pupils attending the FC which equated to a loss in income of £150,000 if pupil numbers remained the same.

Wider Trust Position/Mitigation

MM reported that pupil numbers were lower in many areas across the Trust and that the Trust were in liaison with the relevant bodies to lobby for additional funding. It was noted that the Trust were trying to reduce any uncommitted spends and increase traded places.

DS thanked MM for the presentation made to Governors.

DS referred to the significant loss of income across the Trust being due to the reduction in pupil referrals as schools had been required to close between March and July 2020. Initially schools had been told that for the 2020/21 academic year, they would be funded based on the previous year's pupil numbers, but this had since been withdrawn.

PH assured Governors that whilst the financial situation of BIT was very concerning, the Trust were doing all they could to put a case forward to the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and the LA for additional funding. It was noted that whilst some LA's were able to provide additional funding for their Pupil referral units (PRU's), Bolton LA were finding this difficult, due to other financial pressures at this time.

PH discussed the current funding agreement in place with the LA and the related pressures on both sides. It was noted that the Trust had built up a good working relationship with the LA, and it was hoped that with on-going communication regarding this matter that the financial needs of the Trust could be met in some way.

PH confirmed that many businesses were facing similar issues but felt that despite the challenges faced, this issue could be worked through. Governors would be kept updated.

DS confirmed that work was being done to address the concerns raised and savings and efficiencies were being made across the Trust where possible.

CF referred to traded places noting that Forwards Centre had welcomed their first traded pupil for a visit to the centre last week and they were due to commence on Monday 19 October 2020. This was a new venture for the Forwards Centre, but it was felt that the service provision could support them and their family to best meet their needs.

LD referred to the pursuit of external funding and asked if the Trust had considered this aspect of generating income.

DS confirmed that external funding had been applied for in the past via the traditional approach, however, this would usually only be approved for specific items.

LD confirmed that she was involved in writing bids in her line of work and there was funding available to help combat the impact of the Covid Pandemic. LD would forward relevant information and links to DS for his consideration.

Action: LD to liaise with DS regarding possible routes to consider in respect of accessing additional funding.

Agreed: That the details within the financial report be received with thanks.

8. **GOVERNOR QUESTIONS OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM**

Agreed: That Governors had no further questions of the Leadership Team than had already been raised.

9. **POLICY APPROVALS AND REVIEW OF PROCESS**

Governors had received the following policies for their review and approval.

9.1 Safeguarding and Child Protection (Model) Policy

CF confirmed that the model Safeguarding, and Child Protection Policy had been updated by the LA in line with the 2020 updates that had been made to the Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) Document. The updated Policy had been circulated to schools for their review and was required to be personalised to their school. RL confirmed that this had now been completed for Governors approval.

RL reminded Governors as discussed earlier, once all LGB meetings had been completed for this term she would circulate Part 1 of the KCSiE Document 2020 to all Governors for their review together with a declaration form to sign and confirm their understanding.

CF reminded Governors of the need to appoint a permanent Link Governor responsible for Safeguarding and to contact him if interested. It was noted that SH was currently undertaking this responsibility until a permanent appointment could be made.

Agreed: That Governors approve the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2020.

Action: RL to circulate Part 1 of the KCSiE document 2020 to all Governors to read and return the signed declaration to confirm their understanding.

9.2 Behaviour Policy

CF confirmed that the Behaviour Policy had been reviewed and updated in liaison with Liz Douglas subject to Governors approval. It was noted that the support given from Liz in this matter had been very much appreciated.

Governors confirmed that they had read and approved the updates made.

Agreed: That Governors approve the updated Behaviour Policy.

10. GOVERNANCE SERVICES UPDATE

Governors had received a briefing note detailing the recent updates and virtual events planned from by the Governance Services Team including:

- Clerking and Support – Continued virtual arrangements
- Governor Training and Development - Virtual arrangements
- Governance Services staff update

11. IMPACT STATEMENT

CF referred to the discussion held earlier in the meeting and the submission of the reports completed following Link Governors visits to their area of responsibility.

CF confirmed that the impact that Governors had on the success of the Forwards Centre was immense. It was noted that whilst some impact could be seen from the discussions and agreements made in LGB meetings, it was felt that the majority of the impact made was during Governors monitoring visits to the Centre. CF confirmed that both he and the staff team very much appreciated the on-going support and challenge that was provided by Governors.

CF referred particularly to the work undertaken and the support provided by the Parent Governor, currently in respect of attendance. It was noted that the challenge and support they offered was invaluable as they were able to see things from a parents perspective and guide the team in the direction to best meet the needs of parents and gain more positive outcomes.

Following review of the visit reports submitted it was

Agreed: That through the on-going work of the local governors across this cycle of governance, the impact included:

- Providing expertise and rigour to the on-going process of risk assessment as the Forwards Centre re- opened and operated under the COVID pandemic.
- Improvement to the revised Discipline and Behaviour Policy to include a parent's perspective.
- To add expertise and scrutiny to the Forwards Centre's new curriculum topics including the use of good quality texts.
- Scrutinising and offering suggestions on the consistency of the FC's SEND provision maps which led to staff training.
- Ensuring scrutiny and rigour of the on-going monitoring and reporting of attendance during the COVID pandemic.
- Support for the well-being of the academy lead during this very unusual time.
- The appointment of a new Co-opted Local Governor to ensure a broad skill set is maintained across the LGB

- A review of the Link Governor roles to ensure effective challenge and monitoring is maintained
- The submission of Link Governor visit reports very reflective of the challenge and support in place
- The approval of the safeguarding and Child Protection Policy in line with updates to the KCSiE 2020 document.

12. DATES OF NEXT LGB MEETINGS

Agreed: That the Local Governing Board meetings for the remainder of the academic year 2020/21 be held as follows:

Spring Term: Monday 1 February 2021 at 4.00pm
 Summer Term: Monday 14 June 2021 at 4.00pm

All meetings to continue to be held virtually unless otherwise informed.

13. CONSENT TO ABSENCE

Agreed: To consent to the absence from this meeting of all absentees.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of 'Any Other Business' reported.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

Agreed: That none of the matters minuted at this meeting be designated as confidential in accordance with the Academy's Memorandum and Articles of Association.

PH asked that Governors exercised confidentiality in respect of some of the Finance related discussions held.

The Chair thanked CF and his staff team for their continued dedication. It was noted that the atmosphere remained very calm in the Centre and commended CF and his staff team for being able to sustain this environment during such challenging times.

CF thanked Governors for their contributions to the meeting and for their on-going support and commitment to the Forwards Centre. It was recognised that Governors time was limited due to their own individual work commitments and the dedication shown was very much appreciated.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm

Signed as a correct record: _____
 (Chairman/Vice-Chairman of Governors)

Date: _____