

MEETING OF THE RISK & AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM

BOLTON IMPACT TRUST

FRIDAY 25 JUNE 2021 AT 11.00AM

Present: Joshua Bennett (JB) – Chair of Committee, Keith Davies (KD), Sue Hincks (SH) and Paul Hodgkinson (PH) – Executive Principal

In Attendance: Rebecca Leonard (RL) - Vice-Principal, David Smith (DS) – Finance Director and Emma Stoddard (ES) – Clerk to the Trust Board

JOSHUA BENNETT IN THE CHAIR

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

JB welcomed Trustees to the meeting. No apologies for absence had been received as all governors were present; however, PH stated that he would need to leave the meeting at 11.30am for a meeting with the Local Authority.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

No items of Any Other Urgent Business were notified at this point.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST RISK & AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING – FRIDAY 19 MARCH 2021

Strategic Risk Register Update (Minute Number 7)

JB commented that incidents regarding knives had not been added to the Risk Register as agreed at the last meeting. RL suggested that this could be added as ‘violence related incidents’ rather than just knife crime to ensure all aspects of extreme behaviours were included. JB stated that he would be happy for RL and DS to decide how this would be recorded under the category of safeguarding risks.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF RECENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Finance & Resources Committee – Friday 11 June 2021

DS reported that further to discussions at the Finance & Resources Committee, he had received confirmation that Lever Park had been successful in securing the capital infrastructure bid for the thermal comfort and boiler replacement scheme. This was just over £500,000 worth of work and the majority would be funded by a government grant. Unfortunately, the bid for the roofing work had not been successful. AA Projects would be appointed as project managers and would go out to tender to appoint contractors for the work. DS stated that it was now too late to complete the work during the summer holidays so he would try and arrange for this to be completed during the autumn half term break. JB asked what would happen with regards to the roof at Lever Park. DS advised that AA Projects would resubmit the bid, but this could only be done on an

annual basis and repairs would need to be made, if necessary, in the meantime. Another avenue may be to pursue this via insurance.

DS advised that the Trust had received the deed of termination notification letter from the Secretary of State to close the Personal Learning Centre. DS had a meeting with the solicitors later today regarding the formal legal procedure for closure. PH added that he felt the closure of the PLC no longer presented any risks to the Trust.

Standards Committee – Friday 11 June 2021

PH stated that it was clear from the termly Standards Committee minutes that common areas of concern were being highlighted by Trustees on the committee. As a result of this a 7-point action plan had been produced from the minutes to address the key issues being raised including:

1. Measuring progress in English across the Trust with a focus on Lever Park and Youth Challenge.
2. Creating a Curriculum Ready check for pupils.
3. Ensuring curriculum intent was personalised for each pupil.
4. Provide reading level data from across the Trust.
5. Consideration as to how the Trust can collect and report attendance data.
6. Recent Ofsted review and PHSE curriculum.
7. Clear statement of intent for the KS3 curriculum at Youth Challenge.

A Woosey would then lead on this moving forward in her new role as Director of Standards. The action plan had been circulated to Trustees on the Committee and had been well received, this would be RAG rated and monitored by the committee moving forward. PH stated that after trialling this, and if successful, this would be rolled out to LGB meetings and other committees.

SH asked if the issues regarding progress in English and attendance data needed adding to the Risk Register. PH stated that he was happy for these to be added to be able to monitor outcomes.

SH asked if there would be any risks involved around teacher assessed grades such as potential appeals from parents and possible legal action. RL stated that there were now very robust systems in place and the Academies benefitted from being in a Multi-Academy Trust and could be confident in the standardisation of grades. Some exam boards had asked for evidence in English and Maths. RL stated that she did not feel that parents would appeal any teacher assessed grades. Staff worked very closely with parents, most were very supportive and there were unlikely to be any surprises when grades were published. SH asked if the exam boards had asked for evidence for individual pupils or for groups. RL confirmed that this had been for individual pupils and in some provisions, this had been just one subject, which could be due to the small numbers of Year 11's in the cohort.

KD asked for an update on the Director of Standards appointment. PH reported that AW had been conducting a lot of research and fact finding and had been liaising with Academy Leads. PH reminded Trustees that AW had been the Academy Lead at the PLC and the appointment to Director of Standards had been a cost neutral exercise and therefore was not a financial risk to the Trust. PH added that the new post would be paramount in driving standards forward across the Trust.

6. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER UPDATE

A copy of the Risk Register had been uploaded to the Gateway.

Business Critical Risks

B2 – Financial Sustainability

DS proposed that the likelihood score for financial sustainability be reduced from 3 to 2 and show as a green risk, rather than an amber risk. DS reported that this was being proposed due the implementation of the savings strategy and the Trust now having a flexible staffing model in place. DS added that likelihood of re-entering financial concern due to the pandemic was low. JB asked whether Bolton LA and the wider Government strategy for a longer-term reduction in permanent exclusions presented a significant risk to the Trust. RL stated that there had been a huge increase in the number of referrals from the LA in recent weeks so the strategy to reduce exclusions was extremely unlikely in the current climate. PH added that the Trust had taken steps to mitigate any longer-term risk via the Trust's Diversification Strategy and now had customers from other boroughs in all of the Trust provisions.

B1 – Poor judgement resulting from an Ofsted inspection.

JB stated that it had already been agreed earlier in the meeting that progress in English and attendance across the Trust would be added to the register. PH suggested that the 7-point Action Plan could be included to show the steps the Trust was making to address these issues. RL stated that the increasing numbers of Key Stage 3 pupils at Youth Challenge could have significant implications for the curriculum as the current curriculum was not designed to be long term. Although the Leadership Team were aware of this risk and were already responding, it was suggested that this be included on the risk register to enable this to be closely monitored. It was further proposed that the likelihood score for B1 be increased from 1 to 2 to acknowledge this increasing risk.

O2 – Safeguarding Risks

Trustees had agreed earlier in the meeting that violence related incidents be added to the Risk Register under Safeguarding Risks due to the increase in violent crime referrals across Bolton.

- Agreed:**
- i) That the Financial Sustainability likelihood score for B2 be reduced from 3 to 2
 - ii) That the Financial Sustainability likelihood score for B1 be increased from 1 to 2
 - iii) That violence related incidents be incorporated under Safeguarding Risks
 - iv) That the Risk Register be approved subject to the above changes

Action: DS (update Risk Register)

PH offered his apologies and left the meeting at this point.

7. TRUST SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

A written Safeguarding update had been provided and included the following areas:

- Update from March report
- Current safeguarding numbers
- Training
- Policy Update
- Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges
- September 2021 onwards
- Actions / Next Steps

RL provided an update on the actions taken since the last report. RL stated that she had previously reported on the workload capacity for Safeguarding Leads but added that she felt this was currently able to be managed.

One Education had delivered a Safer Recruitment update session for staff who had previously completed the full accredited training. RL stated that this had been worthwhile, and some recommendations had arisen from the training, which would be actioned. One Education would be running the full accredited course in the autumn term for a further group of staff to ensure those involved in recruitment were fully trained. Trustees and Local Governors involved in recruitment would also be invited.

Trustees were informed that Ofsted had published their report on sexual abuse in schools and colleges on 10 June. RL stated that many of the signs of good practice included in the report were already in place within the Trust's provisions; however, the recommendations for all schools would be looked at in more detail at the Safeguarding Hub meeting. Following this a review would take place across the Trust, which would include culture, staff training, pupil voice, RSE curriculum and reporting systems including analysis of CPOM's.

JB asked if there had been an increase in the severity of safeguarding issues being recorded. RL replied that there had been a noticeable increase with many families reaching crisis point during the pandemic. RL added that the Trust had re-launched the 'Who's in Charge' programme to address the rise of child to parent violence and to try and avoid families reaching crisis point where possible. 11 out of 15 parents had been engaged with the programme, which had been the best response so far and a positive impact had already been seen via pupils' behaviour.

8. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRAMME 2020/21

A copy of the Beevers & Struthers draft Assurance Report – Business Critical Controls, Visit's 1 and 2 had been uploaded to the Gateway. DS stated that the visits had been very thorough and had focused on much more than just financial controls. The auditors had met with each Academy Lead, who had found the feedback to be very helpful.

Recommendations arising from the audit had been included in the report. DS directed Trustees to the proposed responses to the recommendations:

Recommendation 1 -Value for Money

The auditors had stated that benchmarking of BIT's Financial Regulations against other Academy Trusts highlighted that other Trusts had a mandatory requirement for any purchases exceeding £10,000 to have 3 written quotations or formal tenders.

Trustees were therefore asked to consider whether transactions over £10,000 should be supported with 3 written tenders or formal quotations.

DS explained that 3 quotes were obtained for expenditure exceeding £7,500 and this practice would continue under normal circumstances. However, in certain circumstances the service is required from a particular organisation, or supplier, due to the specific nature of the provision. There had been one transaction over £10,000, which related to the SLA for One Education. The procurement of the service was undertaken by the Executive Principal and Finance Director, following discussions with the Board of Trustees. DS stated that exceptions from the requirement to obtain quotes that require approval from the SLT (and tendering for purchases above £15,000 requiring Trustee approval) provides a framework for the Trust to obtain the correct balance between obtaining value when purchasing goods and services whilst providing the opportunity to purchase from a specific supplier when a business case demonstrates that it is appropriate. JB stated that it was his understanding that single tenders tended only to be used when only one provider was available. DS stated that in this instance the supplier had been highly recommended. KD asked if the Trust had access to frameworks that provided a list of approved suppliers, who had already gone through the process. DS stated that the Trust had used the framework in the past for energy supplies, but they had not been able to provide the most competitive price. KD stated that it was important that the Trust could justify all appointments for services and suppliers. JB suggested that the Trust do some market research into HR guidance and support before the contract with One Education ended to ensure the Trust was securing good value for money.

Recommendation 2 - Central Record Management System

Beevers & Struthers had recommended that a Central Record Management System be created that Academy and Trust staff had access to. DS reported that the Trust had now procured an electronic HR system in response to this recommendation.

Recommendation 3 - Starters Checklist

Trustees were directed to recommendation 3 and informed that a new starters checklist was now in place across all academies within the Trust.

- Agreed:**
- i) That the proposed management responses in the document be approved and the Financial Regulations be updated accordingly
 - ii) That the draft Assurance Report be received and noted

9. MANAGEMENT VISITS

A summary report of the Management Visits had been provided. It was noted that VG had commenced her maternity leave early and therefore was not present to provide a more detailed update, but more information would be emailed to Trustees as soon as this was available. RL stated that the visits held so far had been very beneficial and clearly showed the progress of the systems in place in each Academy, they had also been helpful during the internal audit. KD stated that it was pleasing that there had been progress in every area, as shown on the report.

KD asked if branding guidance had been produced and disseminated throughout the Trust. RL confirmed that all staff were aware of the new branding guidelines and the Leadership Team were leading by example to ensure this was filtered through.

Action: RL (email detailed report when available)

10. POLICY UPDATE

Agreed: To approve and adopt the Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy

11. DATES OF NEXT RISK & AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING

Autumn Term: Friday 26 November 2021 at 11.00am

12. CONSENT TO ABSENCE

Agreed: To consent to the absence of PH (from 11.30 am onwards)

13. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Urgent Business.

14. CONFIDENTIALITY

Agreed: That no matters discussed at this meeting be designated as confidential in accordance with the Academy's Memorandum and Articles of Association

The meeting closed at 12.00 pm.

SUMMATIVE ACTIONS:

Minute No.	Responsible	Action
6	DS	Update Risk Register
9	RL	Email detailed Management Report when available.

Signed as a correct record: _____

Date: _____

(Chair of Risk & Audit Committee)