

**MEETING OF THE RISK & AUDIT COMMITTEE OF
BOLTON IMPACT TRUST
MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM ON
FRIDAY 17 MARCH 2023 AT 11.00 AM**

Present: J Bennett (JB) - Chair of the Committee, K Davies (KD), P Hodgkinson (PH) – Chief Executive Officer and S Hincks (SH)

In Attendance: V Gavin (VG) – Director of Business Operations, R Leonard (RL) – Director of Academy Operations and E Stoddard (ES) – Governance Professional

J BENNETT IN THE CHAIR

PART A – NON-CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies had been received; all Trustees were present.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

SH informed Trustees that she had joined the Interim Executive Board for UCS Bolton but did not expect this to cause a conflict of interest.

3. NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Urgent Business notified.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE LAST RISK & AUDIT MEETING

A copy of the minutes of the last meeting held on Friday 25 November 2022 had been circulated with the agenda papers and had been approved at the autumn term Trust meeting.

Matters Arising

RL advised that she had shared the SCR with Trustees yesterday and online recruitment checks were now being made.

A Trustee asked for an update on the LGB Risk Register. RL explained that Academy Leads would be working on risks relating to their academy, this had been discussed at the LBG meetings, so governors were aware that this was coming. The individual academy Risk Registers would be presented at the LGB meetings, and a headline report would then be presented to Trustees. A Trustee commented that the LGBs may need to be aware of some aspects of the Trust Risk Register; however, confidential items would first need to be removed. RL suggested that this could be a standard agenda item at LGB meetings, and a redacted Trust Risk Register could be presented.

The Chair asked if all Trustees had now completed Level 1 Safeguarding training. RL reported that she would chase any Trustees who hadn't yet completed this but advised that the KCSIE would change again in September and the Designated Safeguarding Leads would provide more detailed training to Trustees and Local Governors. The Clerk advised that all Trustees still needed to complete the Level 1 Safeguarding training in the meantime as this was now mandatory.

The Chair asked if Trustees could participate in the Academy Safeguarding Audits. RL stated that this would provide an extra layer of quality assurance, which was welcomed, and she would arrange this with Trustees.

A Trustee commented that some updates on the Risk Register that had been previously agreed had not been actioned. PH stated that he would ensure this was actioned following the meeting.

Agreed: That all Trustees complete the Level 1 online Safeguarding training and the process be reviewed moving forward

Action: All Trustees (complete the Level 1 online Safeguarding training)

RL (arrange for Trustees to attend the Academy Safeguarding Audits)

PH (update RR with previously agreed actions)

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTE OF RECENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Finance & Resources Committee

A Trustee referred to the HR Report and asked if the wellbeing of the Central Team was also considered. PH advised that a robust support system was in place, the Central Team had been included in the staff survey and the feedback had been very positive.

A Trustee referred to the vacant CFO position and asked if statutory accounting requirements were being met. PH stated that Trustees had ratified the appointment of the CFO immediately prior to this meeting and this was a very positive appointment for the Trust. PH reported that David Smith had been providing support to the Trust on a consultancy basis since his retirement and all statutory accounting requirements had been met.

*In accordance with the Academy's Memorandum and Articles of Association, this matter has been designated as confidential in **PART B** of the minutes, thereby excluding the information from that which is to be made available to any interested persons.*

Standards Committee

A Trustee referred to the discussions around suspensions and asked if the Trust was working with the LA on this. RL provided an overview of the issues encountered during the autumn term. Of the 30 suspensions only 7 pupils were involved with only 2 now remaining at BIT. One of these pupils was awaiting a place at a Special School. RL explained that there was always a spike in the number of pupils during the autumn term. However, children were entering at a younger age, and behaviours were becoming much more complex, this was very unsettling, particularly for SEN children. PH advised that he had met with the LA to discuss this, and the Trust had clearly stated

that pupils needed to be phased in. A Trustee stated that this was a huge issue for the Trust and asked how this would be mitigated moving forward. PH stated that in addition to the conversations with the LA, the Trust would not be continuing the traded SLA with schools next year and instead the Trust would assess children before they joined a provision. RL added that a lot of work had also taken place with regards to behaviour strategies at Youth Challenge and staff who had been absent due to illness were now returning to school. The Chair proposed that this issue be added to the Risk Register to enable this to be closely monitored.

A Trustee stated that a new requirement was that the police now needed to be informed when a child was suspended and asked if the Trust did this or if this was still in its infancy. RL advised that the Trust informed the LA and external agencies but not the police so this is something that would need to be looked into further.

A Trustee asked if vaping was an issue. RL advised that this was an issue at Youth Challenge and Lever Park, but the Trust had a zero-tolerance approach to vaping. A Trustee asked if pupils were made aware of the risks of vaping and added that doctors could now offer nicotine replacement products to children. RL stated that this was covered within PSHE; however, the Academies were dealing with some very complex families, and this was very unlikely to deter pupils from vaping. Pupils would be referred to the school nurse if this was needed.

A Trustee commented that it was positive that the DSLs had taken up the offer of supervision from the LA. RL stated that money would be allocated in the budget to provide more capacity at Youth Challenge to support them with the complex issues. 10 additional children would join next year, and this additional money would be reinvested into safeguarding. The Chair stated that he was reassured by how much external support the Trust provided with regards to safeguarding.

Agreed: That the issues with regards to behaviour and suspensions at Youth Challenge be added to the Risk Register

6. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER UPDATE

A copy of the Risk Register had been uploaded to the Gateway. Changes to the register from previous discussions had been highlighted in yellow.

Business Critical Risks

B4 – Coronavirus

A Trustee asked if coronavirus should now be changed to a more generic risk. PH advised that there were still cases of Covid within the Trust, which was impacting on staff attendance. Trustees discussed this and agreed that now all restrictions had been lifted this should be changed to 'illness results in severe business disruption' as this could include coronavirus and other illnesses.

Agreed: That B4 be changed to read illness rather than coronavirus.

Strategic Risks

S1 – Impact of council strategy to reduce exclusions

JB asked if the landscape had shifted due to the SEND Green Paper. RL advised that despite strategies put in place, exclusions were not reducing and the demand for AP

was huge. A Trustee asked if other AP providers presented a risk to business. PH stated that there were more and more AP providers springing up, but these provisions usually did not provide a strong curriculum offer. There was a change in the landscape in this respect, but this did not present a threat to the Trust. However, Trustees needed to be aware that some children were joining BIT after being excluded from other AP provisions, which brought significant challenges. Trustees agreed that this presented a significant risk and suggested this be added to the Risk Register. In response to questions RL stated that some of the content relating to S1 and S3 may be out of date and would be updated.

Agreed: That excluded pupils from other APs to the Risk Register

Operational Risks

O3 – Exam Process Risks

A Trustee suggested that this risk could now be removed.

Agreed: To remove Exam Process Risks from the Risk Register

O5 – GDPR Breaches

A Trustee asked if the external audit had included phishing as all staff could be susceptible to this. VG stated that staff tended to act on any suspicious emails but acknowledged that more could be done in this area. RL reported that this section would be updated once the audit report had been received.

A Trustee asked if the new Chief Finance Officer was suitably qualified to undertake the DPO role. RL explained that the new CFO was qualified; however, as there would be a huge amount for the CFO to learn in the role an external DPO would be used initially to ensure this role was fully covered. A Trustee stated that having an external DPO would be beneficial as they could also share good practice.

Trustees discussed new risks that may need to be added to the Risk Register:

Open access site at Youth Challenge

The open access site at Youth Challenge had been discussed at the Finance & Resource Committee meeting and an overview was provided. The Trust had contacted Bolton Council with a view to them contributing to the cost of securing the site, but they had stated that they would not contribute as the infrastructure was already in place. VG explained that currently electronic gates were in place at the entrance, but these were left open as Schools ICT and visitors required access throughout the day. VG stated that she was in the process of gathering quotes for an electronic fob so the gates could be kept closed and accessed when needed. The first quote received was for £10,500. Trustees agreed that this issue needed resolving as a matter of urgency due to the safeguarding risks. A Trustee asked what safeguarding measures were in place until a fob could be fitted. RL advised that all doors were fobbed, and staff were present on the gates during break and lunchtimes. There was a risk at the vocational area when undertaking land-based tasks, but staff were always present.

In response to questions VG confirmed that capital monies could be used to fund this work.

Agreed: That the open access be added as a risk to the Risk Register with an impact score of 4 and a likelihood score of 3 (this could reduce once the fob was installed)

Behaviour and Suspensions at Youth Challenge

The increase in behavioural issues and suspensions at Youth Challenge had been discussed at the Standards Committee meeting and an overview was provided. A Trustee asked if BIT had legal responsibility for a child who had been excluded from a Trust provision. RL advised that the Trust did not have legal responsibility once a legal suspension was in place; however, the pupil could be at an increased risk whilst not in school and there could be an issue with reintegration. A Trustee stated that a child not being at a provision could be a risk, despite whether this was due to a suspension or poor attendance. PH advised that he was visiting Youth Challenge to look at attendance and a report would be provided to Trustees.

A Trustee asked whether behaviour and suspensions could be added under S1 – Safeguarding Risks. After discussion it was agreed that this should be added as a separate risk as the likelihood score would be higher than the current S1 score. Trustees concurred that whilst a lot of mitigation was in place this currently presented a significant risk to the Trust.

RL advised that recent referrals into Park School were Tier 4, which were very complex and high-profile cases with self-harm being a significant factor. A Trustee asked if pupils were searched for any items that could cause harm. RL explained that whilst there was not a blanket search policy in place, individual pupils could be searched dependent on the risk posed and this would be written into their individual safety plan.

Agreed: That behaviour and exclusions be added as a risk to the Risk Register with an impact score of 4 and a likelihood score of 4

A Trustee referred to the website audit and asked if this would be an issue for Ofsted. PH stated that currently Ofsted would make recommendations; however, another website audit would be conducted before the next meeting and a report provided to Trustees.

A Trustee asked if the Internal Audit recommendations regarding Members and Trustees had been actioned as this was a risk as the Trust would not be compliant with the Academies Handbook. PH stated that Dee Luczka had been appointed as a Trustee rather than a Member, and work was on-going to appoint non-Trustee Members.

Agreed: That the Risk Register be approved with the above amendments

Action: PH (update Risk Register)

7. GDPR / DPO UPDATE

A GDPR report had been uploaded to the Gateway. Trustees were informed that Gill Smith, external DPO, would be visiting in April and a further report would be provided.

A Trustee referred to the information requests and asked if the Trust was legally able to deny a Subject Access Request. RL stated that the Trust was able to do so under certain circumstances, this was a complex case and RL provided an overview for Trustees.

A Trustee referred to the steps to be taken next year, which included developing and implementing a retention schedule across the Trust and asked if this was not already a statutory requirement. RL explained that this was already in place but needed pulling together in one place and she would work closely with the DPO on this.

8. AUDIT

A copy of the 2022-23 Internal Accounts and the Trust Management letter had been uploaded to the Gateway. VG advised Trustees that all actions had been completed. A Trustee asked if this included actions from last year such as the DBS checks and Fairfax system. VG provided an update on these areas. A Trustee asked if the issues were being caused by the same members of staff each time. VG stated that the issue was more of an understanding of what was needed for audit purpose i.e., receipts were being obtained but they did not always include the information needed. A lot of training had been provided and VG conducted regular checks, purchase cards would also be revoked if incorrect receipts were provided on more than two occasions.

Trustees were advised that the next audit in May would focus on the SCR and absence management and asked if Trustees had any lines of enquiry that they would like to raise in these two areas. A Trustee stated that the SCR needed to capture everyone, and the SCR should also include a record of online searches.

Agreed: To receive and note the Internal Audit Report

9. TRUST SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

A copy of the Safeguarding Report November 2022, which had been presented to the Standards Committee, had been uploaded to the Gateway. This included a review of autumn term and spring term half term 1.

It was agreed that safeguarding had been discussed in detail throughout the meeting and there were no further questions.

10. PARK SCHOOL UPDATE

PH reported that the SEF and Quality of Education were now much stronger. The LGB had a new Chair and roles and responsibilities had been allocated. The results from the staff survey had been very positive and parents were also happy.

11. WEBSITE

It was agreed that the website had been discussed under agenda item 6 and there were no further questions.

12. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Friday 30 June 2023 at 11.00 am.

13. CONSENT TO ABSENCE

All Trustees were present at today's meeting.

14. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of Any Other Urgent Business.

15. CONFIDENTIALITY

Agreed: That in accordance with the Academy's Memorandum and Articles of Association, the matters designated as confidential, thereby excluding the information from that which is to be made available to any interested persons, is contained within **PART B** of the Minutes.

With no further business the meeting closed at 12.30 pm

SUMMATIVE ACTIONS

Minute Number	Responsible	Action
4	All Trustees	Complete the Level 1 online Safeguarding training
4	RL	Arrange for Trustees to attend the Academy Safeguarding Audits
4	PH	Update RR with previously agreed actions
6	PH	Update Risk Register with new actions

Signed as a correct record: _____

Date: _____

(Chair of Standards Committee)