

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF MEMBERS & TRUSTEES OF BOLTON IMPACT TRUST

MEETING HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM

WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY 2021 AT 4.00 PM

Present: K Davies (KD) – Chair of Trustees, B Atkinson (BA) - Member, J Bennett (JB), Paul Hodgkinson (PH) - Executive Head Teacher, S Hincks (SH), D McKeon (DMc) and M Sidebottom (MS)

In Attendance: R Leonard (RL) - Vice-Principal, D Smith (DS) - Finance Director and E Stoddard (ES) – Clerk to the Trust

KEITH DAVIES IN THE CHAIR

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Trustees and Members to the meeting.

An apology for absence had been received from T Grimshaw.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

3. FINANCE MATTERS

Statutory Accounts

A copy of the Trust's Statutory Accounts for the 2019/20 Financial / Academic Year had been uploaded to the Governance Gateway. DS advised that the accounts had presented a very positive position with the Trust having reversed the deficit and moving into a surplus position. DS stated that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had been very pleased with the progress that had been made.

Management Letter

A copy of the Report to Trustees and Summary of Audit Findings had been uploaded to the Governance Gateway. DS directed Trustees to the recommendations listed within the report, which included:

- Three invoices not authorised for payment – DS explained that this had arisen due to invoices having to be emailed during the pandemic. DMc stated that this was a common theme for Trusts during the pandemic.
- A number of receipts had been found to be missing during the FairFX card transactions audit – DS advised that these had been for very small amounts of

money i.e., 0.50p, £2.00 but additional checks had been introduced to strengthen this process.

- The composition of the Members and Trust Board – this had been reviewed and B Atkinson had stepped down as a Trustee in August 2020 but remained a Member, so this had reduced the number of Members currently appointed who were also Trustees ensuring a level of independence. In addition, the Trust would seek to recruit additional Members within the year to strengthen this position.

Internal Audit (consolidated response)

A copy of the Trust's response to the Management Letter had been uploaded to the Gateway. The letter detailed the actions that would be taken to address the recommendations within the report.

The Chair stated that he felt the Trust's response had been very thorough and recommended that the recommendations be added to the next Risk & Audit Committee agenda for further discussion.

- Agreed:**
- i) To approve the Trust's Statutory Accounts for the 2019/20 Financial / Academic Year
 - ii) To note the recommendations within the Management Letter and the Trust's response

4. COVID-19 UPDATE FROM THE EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

Trustees were directed to the written update from the Executive Principal, which had been uploaded to the Governance Gateway.

The Executive Principal reported that the latest Government guidance, which was released at the start of term, had created some confusion around the opening requirements for Special Schools and Alternative Provision during this third national lockdown. Initially the guidance stated that all children registered to Special Schools and AP should attend site as vulnerable children but after lengthy discussions between representatives from the Special and AP Sectors and the Government this was changed to include the phrase 'where appropriate'. The guidance was slightly clearer now although in the Trust's case it remained open to interpretation.

The Trust had reintroduced the priority lists, which we were used during the last lockdown. The numbers of students on site differed across each Academy. Students who were unable to fully carry out their studies at home had been brought into school and this was usually due to lack of equipment or because they were studying on vocational pathways. Trustees were informed that the priority lists were fluid and were reviewed regularly.

At the start of term work was undertaken with the Academy Leadership team to try to establish what a successful curriculum offer would look like for a multi-site AP/SEMH provision. Specifically concentrating on the Intent and Implementation phases, 7 key questions were created, which would be used across the Trust. A checklist was developed, which was used weekly by each Academy. PH stated that he had presented the checklist to Steve Bagnall from the DfE who had been very impressed with the content and this was also now being used by other AP providers.

Feedback had been obtained from parents and PH reported that he had personally spoken to a parent from each Academy to ascertain their views. The Trust would respond to and act on the feedback received.

Trustees were informed that the Trust's secondary sites had now started the Lateral Flow Testing and it had been confirmed that staff within Special Schools would receive the Covid-19 vaccination as a priority. PH stated that he had spoken with Paul Rankin (Assistant Director, Children's Services) regarding whether this would be extended to include AP staff.

PH advised that the Government has resuscitated their guidance from last summer around High Needs Funding and feedback was currently being awaited from Bernie Brown (Director, Children's Services). PH stated that whilst the updated guidance was more positive, negotiations would still likely be needed with the LA.

PH stated that despite a third national lockdown, pupils at Bolton Impact Trust were safe, engaged, and happy and any concerns would be immediately actioned. The Executive Principal invited questions at this point.

MS asked which supplier was being used for pupils entitled to Free School Meals during the lockdown. DS explained that the Trust were using Bolton Council for the food parcels and despite negative news reports about the parcels being supplied in other areas of the country, he was very pleased with the content of the parcels being supplied by Bolton. MS asked whether the Trust would consider using the voucher system again. DS stated that he felt the food parcels were preferable as it could not be guaranteed that the vouchers would be spent on food.

KD asked how many more laptops were needed by each Academy. VG explained that the Trust had received 65 Government funded laptops, which was two thirds of the total amount needed. The devices had been distributed evenly amongst the Academies with each Academy receiving two thirds of the number requested. Academy Leads had also worked closely with community groups and this had led to some groups donating refurbished devices. Some Academies had brought pupils back on site if they struggled to access online learning. DMc asked if access to Wi-Fi

was an issue for some pupils. VG stated that a number of pupils did not have appropriate Wi-Fi access, so the Trust were looking at alternative options. PH informed Trustees that the vulnerable children category now included pupils who could not access equipment or who were not engaging. In response to this, pupils studying vocational courses had been given a place as they could not receive the full offer from home. This list was fluid and was reviewed daily by the Academy Leads with particular attention being given to pupils classed as amber or red. RL stated that staff needed to be alert to any changes as barriers to learning could easily change for example one child had access to a device last term, but this had changed during the latest lockdown as the device now needed to be used by a parent working from home.

The Chair thanked the Executive Principal for his detailed and informative report.

Agreed: That the Executive Principal's report be received and noted

5. RESTRUCTURE – UPDATE AND PROPOSAL TO MOVE TO FORMAL CONSULTATION

The Board of Trustees, having designated details of the discussion that followed as confidential in accordance with Article 125 of the Articles of Association, this information is excluded from these minutes.

6. DATES OF NEXT MEETING

Trustees were reminded of the agreed meeting dates for 2020/21:

Spring Term:

Standards	Friday 5 March 2021 at 11.00am
Finance	Friday 5 March 2021 at 1.00pm
Risk & Audit	Friday 19 March 2021 at 11.00am
Trust	Tuesday 30 March 2021 at 4.00pm

Summer Term:

Standards	Friday 11 June 2021 at 11.00am
Finance	Friday 11 June 2021 at 1.00pm
Risk & Audit	Friday 25 June 2021 at 11.00am
Trust	Tuesday 13 July 2021 at 4.00pm

7. CONSENT TO ABSENCE

Agreed: To consent to the absence of T Grimshaw

8. CONFIDENTIALITY

Agreed: That the following items of discussion at this meeting be designated as confidential in accordance with the Academy's Memorandum and Articles of Association:

Minute Number 5 (Restructure)

With no further business the meeting closed at 4.45 pm

Signed as a correct record: _____

Date: _____

(Chair of Trust Board)

ACTIONS

Minute Number Person Responsible Action Required

AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING