

Board of Trustees/Directors

Minutes: 11 October 2021

T/34/21, 4.00 pm

The meeting was held online using MS Teams due to the current Government restrictions and was recorded from item three

Trustees/Directors:

Cheryl Mathieson – in the chair	Dominic Course	Jane Collings
Nicola Dunford	Sarah Cox	Roy Gillard
Jason Hayward-Jones	Paul Waterworth	Fiona Walters

In attendance: Matt Matthew, Business Manager
Sue Howard, HR Officer acting as Clerk

1. **Apologies**

Fiona Walters – sanctioned

Paul Waterworth was absent without apologies - sanctioned

2. **Declaration of Business Interests**

The CEO is a Trustee of South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust (SDMAT) and also a Trustee for the Bearnas Education Foundation. Mr Roy Gillard is a Director of Labyrinth Accountancy Limited. Mr Dominic Course is a Trustee of SDMAT and Director of DACORS Ltd. Jane Collings is an employee of Babcock as a Governor advisor.

3. **Minutes of previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting T33/21 held on 12 July 2021 were approved: Part I only

4. **Matters arising**

4.1 **Item 5.1 SENDCo's**

The CEO updated the committee that all SEND qualified staff are now referred to as "SENDCo". The SENDCo is based in one academy but will provide support across a small number of academies; this complies with the SEND regulations. Each individual academy then also has its own "SEND Lead", who may not be qualified but has SEND experience, who will look after the day-to-day SEN responsibilities within the academy. The Trust's SEND policy has been updated to include this change and lists all the relevant personnel.

4.2 **Item 16.3 Change of FW's title**

There was clarity needed regarding FW's title of 'Trustee Responsible for Overseeing Christian Distinctiveness and SIAMS'. The CEO reported that it must represent what is stated in the Schools Organisation & Governance Group (SOGG). She will check and liaise with FW. All Trustees were in agreement.

5. **Chief Executive Officer's Report**

The CEO had provided her report prior to the meeting via SharePoint and highlighted some items at the meeting which included:

- There are a few staff absences due to Covid positive tests but at the moment these are low in numbers and are being managed.
- Learn, Support, Challenge Days now operate via the Trust's 'Triad' programme. The Trust has been split into five Triads (3 schools each) and each one includes an experienced

Academy Head (AH), a less experienced AH and an AH who may be new to the Trust. They form effective groups going round to the academies within their Triad focussing on a particular subject. Feedback reports are produced after each visit which are passed to the Executive Improvement Team (EIT) to follow up on. This has meant, that as part of their interrogation of academies and checking of quality of teaching and learning and progress of pupils, the EIT are now able to concentrate on Ofsted Preparation Days (OPD). The OPDs aim to mirror as far as possible an Ofsted visit.

- **The meeting moved to Part II**
- **The meeting moved back to Part I**
- **Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF)** – an application has been submitted which will provide funds to increase the Central Team to be able to employ additional staff in Admin, Catering, teaching and TA. This will increase capacity and create a Trust support team to be available at short notice to provide emergency cover in an academy when needed. E.g., long term sickness or specialist support required.
- *Growth - JHJ asked whether there are any checks or assessments in place with regards to staff when considering new schools looking to join the Trust* – the CEO confirmed that there is a very intensive due diligence programme in place which looks at staff as well as finances, data and standards.
- *JCO asked about the apparent high drops in pupil numbers in some of the academies and whether the Trust does any form of tracking.* The CEO confirmed that tracking does take place along with looking at demographics etc. The reasons tend to be either down to families moving out of the area or SEN pupils moving to specialist schools. The numbers in some schools have also been affected by losing bigger numbers at the top of the school (Year 6) than have come in at the bottom (Reception). However, our Preschools overall are reporting good increases in numbers, and these would hopefully follow on with academy applications next year into reception. The academies are very active in ensuring marketing efforts are maximised to attract more pupils, i.e., open days, leaflets, more use of social media etc.

Business Plan - CEO has suggested objectives for each section and the Chair asked all Trustees/Portfolio holders to respond to the CEO with their comments.

Action All

6. **Risk Register**

To note further changes to the Staffing and Employment Section following DC's comments have now been made by the Remuneration Committee.

Approved

7. **Audit Committee**

No further meetings have been held since T33/21.

Terms of Reference (ToR) will be reviewed by the Committee at their first scheduled meeting 30 November 21.

It was noted that the Trust annual external Audit has just taken place and the committee, in accordance with their ToR, will arrange to meet independently with the external auditors following this.

8. **F&GP Committee**

8.1 Minutes of F&GP/5/21 – 24 September 2021. The Chair summarised the key points from the meeting. The Committee will be looking at new software including in particular forecasting and budgeting programmes to improve our financial management systems and support the growth of the Trust.

8.2 Terms of Reference for approval. The committee have reviewed their ToR and recommend to the Board for approval.

Approved

8.3 2020-21 Financial Performance – the audit should be finalised by the end of the week. The TBM will await the Audit Report but is fairly confident that the Trust will

have a 'clean' audit this year. It was noted that at the end of 2020-21 the Trust is showing an increased level of reserves and the Committee is considering a programme of potential capital projects within the Trust on which to spend some of the reserves. Strict criteria to tie in with the Business Plan such as staff development, growth in pupil numbers, ICT improvements etc. will be followed to decide on the success of the projects.

The month end report to 30 September 2021 (month 1) would be emailed to Trustees within the next few days. The TBM reported that all academies are performing satisfactorily so far and the Trust is in a good position at this early stage of the academic year 21.22.

- 8.4 Property. Result/update of CIF Appeals. The TBM and the CEO had had several meetings with the CIF people but not much had come from them. The TBM reported that the response deadline regarding the appeals we submitted was September but no news has been received to date. We will be starting submissions for the next round of applications, the deadline for which is December 2021. Stoke Gabriel have been awarded £38k from the Local Authority for the expansion of their Early Years area.

9. Remuneration Committee

- 9.1 Minutes of Remuneration Committee meeting – 24 September 2021 were circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting. Following previous comments, minutes (rather than a verbal summary) will be circulated in future. The Chair stated that a rigorous process was followed for Teacher Pay Increments following annual appraisals. The committee agreed and approved all recommended increases and these will be applied to October payroll backdated to 1 Sept 2021. The Trust was still awaiting further guidance from the DfE on the amount, if any, of pay increases this year.

- **The meeting moved to Part II**
- **The meeting moved back to Part I**

- 9.2 Terms of Reference for approval. These had been updated but following comments received it was agreed that the committee would seek further guidance from the ESFA and seek legal advice. It was agreed to carry this item forward to the next meeting.

10. Standards & Curriculum Committee

- 10.1 Minutes of S&C/4/21 – 15 September 2021. The Chair explained the changes to the the committee. As the new combined Moorland Board was up and running, DC was no longer Chair of the local board of the South Dartmoor Schools and so he had stepped down from the S&C committee. He remains as Chair of Audit Committee. JCO had stepped down as Chair of the S&C Committee, but would remain as a member of the committee. The Chair gave thanks to JCO for her time as Chair. In order to ensure adequate Trustee representation on the committee, the Chair had agreed to join the committee and take over as Chair until such time as a Trustee with education experience has been recruited.
- 10.2 Main issues from Local Hubs drawn from S&C meeting. The main point was that the first meeting of each academic year for S&C should be pushed back slightly to allow time for LBs to report fully. *SC asked for some continuity and consistency around LB meetings to ensure that their meeting dates are set and reports provided to feed in effectively to the S&C committee meetings.* CEO is meeting with Sarah Clarke from the EIT to clarify the next steps to ensure this is actioned. The LBs have extremely dedicated and effective Chairs and the Trust are very grateful for their commitment and support. JCO commented that perhaps the frequency of the S&C meetings

should be reviewed (instead of 2 meetings in the first term change to 1 in the first term and 2 in the second term).

A question had also been raised about swimming lessons across the Trust and the CEO had agreed to follow this up with the PE Lead.

- 10.3 Terms of Reference for approval. The committee have reviewed their ToR and recommend to the Board for approval. **Approved**

11. Governance

11.1 Governors:

Claire Lister was **approved** as a Parent Governor for Otterton

Anne Pelosi was **approved** as a Staff Governor for Otterton **Approved**

11.2 Trustees:

The Chair reported that Mike Fisher has stepped down as a Trustee and gave thanks for his support during his time with the Trust. The Trust are actively recruiting for Trustees to include educational and property experts. It was noted that the Trust have engaged a recruitment consultancy company to assist with the recruitment of two new Trustees.

The Chair explained that she is looking to introduce an appraisal process for Trustees to ensure the effectiveness of the Board and its members.

SC explained the aims of the proposed 'Togetherness Day' to be held before the end of Autumn term. Concentrating on the Vision & Values of the Trust, this event will aim to look at the roles and structure of the board, current skills held and any gaps of knowledge missing. SC will liaise with Trustees to finalise a date. **Action SC**

12. Safeguarding

- The meeting moved to Part II
- The meeting moved back to Part I

13. Health and Safety

There were no issues of Health & Safety to report to the Board.

14. Policies for approval

The following Policies have been reviewed and updated and are presented for approval:

14.1 Recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee

- Draft Admissions 2023.2024 – New Admissions Code noted and provided for Trustees via SharePoint **Agreed in draft**
- Fundraising **Approved**
- Write Off/Asset Disposal Procedures **Approved**

14.2 Recommended by the Remuneration Committee

- Suite of Personnel Policies – to be carried forward to the next meeting. Those ready for approval will be uploaded to a separate folder on SharePoint for all Trustees to review with the intention to then be approved before the next full Board meeting. It was recommended that a checklist be added to the actual documents for Trustees to acknowledge they have read policies and are content for them to be approved to ensure a quorate is met.

Action SH & Trustees

14.3 Recommended by the Standards & Curriculum Committee

- Administering Medicines and Medical Conditions **Approved**
- Early Years **Approved**
- RSE – following Trustee comments being addressed, final version approved in principal **Action ND & SH**
- Safeguarding – as above **Action ND & SH**
- SEND – as above **Action ND & SH**
- Teaching and Learning – as above **Action ND & SH**

14.4 Recommended by Trustees

- Exclusion – to be carried forward to 9 Dec 2021 for approval following further discussions with the Academy Heads & CEO
- Anti-Fraud & Corruption – amend to include Anti-Bribery **Approved**
- Identification Badge **Approved**

15. Term Dates 2021-22 & 2022-23

15.1 Trustees were advised by the CEO of the additional day allocated for Queens' Platinum Jubilee during 2021-22. This has been set for 6 June 2022.

15.2 Term dates for 2022-23 following review by AH's **Approved**

16. Trust Logo

Revised logo for approval. Following a scrutiny of websites during the summer term, it had been agreed that a logo was needed which was more reflective of the Trust's name and ethos. A designer had provided a couple of designs and one had been chosen after discussion with the EIT and AHs. *DC commented that the Trust should be aware the image chosen is not protected from copyright and so isn't owned by the Trust.* The TBM will investigate this further and also the possibility of adding a strapline specific to our Trust.

Action TBM

16. Meeting Dates 2021-2022

The following dates have been agreed for 2021-2022; meetings will commence at 4.00 pm, except for the AGM which will start at 6.00 pm.

Monday 6 December 2021

Monday 7 February 2022

Monday 23 May 2022

Monday 11 July 2022

AGM Monday 18 July 2022, 6pm

Following previous discussions regarding online vs in person meetings, the Chair proposed that the meetings on 23 May and 11 May and the AGM on 18 July 2022 should be held in person, subject to the circumstances at the time. There would also be the option to participate in these meetings online for anyone not able to attend in person. All other meetings would be held online via Teams. Those Trustees present agreed the proposal.

17. Any Other Business

The CEO reported that she was putting together a series of short training sessions for Trustees and asked if Trustees had a preference for dates. It was agreed that the CEO would send round a selection of dates to seek availability.

Action ND