



Minutes of the Heart of Mercia Multi-Academy Trust incorporating  
Hereford Sixth Form College, King Edward VI College, Stourbridge  
and Worcester Sixth Form College.

Held at Hereford Sixth Form College on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2022

Present: Ken Hopkins (Chair),  
Sheila Boniface, Marion Hawkins,  
Toby Hooper (vice-chair),  
Shirley Tully, Peter Cooper (Executive Principal),  
Daniel Pearce-Higgins

In attendance: Jonathan Godfrey (Clerk to the Trust),  
James Miller (Chair HSFC LGB), John Hodt, (Chair KEVI LGB),  
Gill Slater (Chair Worcester SFC LGB), Sallyanne Griffiths (MAT Finance Director),  
Andrea Marshall (MAT Quality Improvement Officer)

1 **Apologies for absence:**

Craig Holden.

Ken Hopkins informed the meeting that Angela Perry had unfortunately had to resign from the Board owing to a change in her personal circumstances and was thanked for her contribution as a Director.

2. **Declaration of interests and gifts**

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None was declared

3. **Minutes of the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> December, 2021**

The minutes were approved

**ACTION**

4. **Matters arising and outcomes of action points**

It was noted that the action points had been implemented.

The query in minute 8 regarding whether it should be the HR manager rather than the Clerk to whom questions regarding the Whistleblowing policy should be addressed had been followed up. Legal advice confirmed that it was appropriate for this to be the Clerk.

5. **Executive Principal's Report**

Peter Cooper and Andrea Marshall outlined the key points:

The attendance and retention data at all 3 colleges reflected the national picture which was the impact of Covid. Absence was attributable to actual illness, self-isolation and risk aversion. The increase in drop-out rates was thought to be a result of the grade inflation at GCSE level causing weaker students to embark on A level programmes. The relatively low figure for retention on foundation courses at WSFC reflects the greater pressure on adult learners but also the small total number such that one or two additional drop-outs significantly impact on the data.

Progress on ongoing projects was noted:

The new virtual college platform, 'canvas, will include good navigation systems and menus to avoid overload and complexity. Content will be centrally determined but staff are also suggesting areas for development.

The Quality Improvement visit to KEVI by a team of MAT staff and senior staff from other colleges was led by Jo Trump, Principal of Hills Road College which has been recently inspected. It was positively received by staff and constructive criticism has been taken on board.

The report highlighted the many strengths of the college and good practice which could be employed at HSFC and WSFC. A key feature was the opportunity for senior staff to be involved in the 'deep dives' which comprise detailed discussions with Heads of Departments, conversations with students and staff and lesson observations. Evidence for the quality of work within the subject is sought but also on the impact of cross-college areas such as careers and pastoral care. Areas for a deep dive by inspectors could be selected on the basis of the size of the subject, a previous record of underperformance and also the expertise of the visiting team. A similar event is planned at WSFC in the autumn term.

Peter Cooper gave an update on discussions with schools which have expressed an interest in joining the MAT – a Herefordshire 11-18 school, a local SEN 16-19 college and a Worcestershire 11-16 school. All are essentially good schools in terms of quality outcomes and are financially sound but have expressed an interest in joining the MAT in response to national policy and recommendations from the RSC. In addition, discussions continue with an 11-16 school in Worcester on establishing another 11-16 Free School in the city to meet demographic growth. The Board fully supported further progression of these proposals. Issues surrounding broadening the age range of schools in the MAT were discussed which include the need to ensure pre-16 expertise is available, the reduction of the risk of demographic change and the impact on the workload of the central team, not least the EP.

PC/AM

The possible impact on KEVI of a new 16-19 school proposed for Dudley, to be sponsored by Eton College, was discussed.

## 6. **LGB reports**

The reports were noted.

Hereford SFC:

Adrian Allan has resigned. Ian Archer, CEO of the Courtyard Theatre has become a local governor. James Miller reported that the Hereford LGB had decided not to appoint a named governor with special responsibility for Equality and Diversity as it was felt this should be a priority for all governors. Whilst recognising that this was true the Board suggested that it was not contradictory to have a named governor if only to meet best practice as recommended by DFE and hoped the LGB would revisit this issue.

KEVI:

Owing to the inability to recruit a teaching staff governor, current rules which suggest there should be a teacher and a non-teacher have been amended to allow two staff members regardless of whether they are teaching or support staff to be appointed.

John Hodt reported on the recent appointment of an excellent candidate as the new Principal, Holly Bembridge, currently a Deputy at Sir George Monoux College and thanked those MAT Directors concerned for their involvement in the interviews.

WSFC:

The college is currently engaged in a review of staff workload covering actual workload and perception of workload.

## 7. **MAT Strategic Plan**

Peter Cooper introduced the plan which comprises background information, a summary of the Trust's vision and values, strategic objectives and a 3 year plan. The plan represents the options discussed at the MAT annual conference.

A progress report to be regularly updated was appended. Following discussion the Strategic Plan was approved and commended for its lucidity. Each college's strategic plan will be informed by the overall plan.

## 8 **Minutes of Committee Meetings**

### **Remuneration of 15<sup>th</sup> February:**

Ken Hopkins apologised for the timing of the meeting which was to ensure pay awards could be made before the end of the financial year to enable any salary increase to be reflected in the pension of a retiring member of senior staff. This resulted in the committee actioning the award prior to the Board meeting. In addition, Toby Hooper was thanked for his work in producing an up to date Pay Policy and Procedures. Toby stressed this was not a change to the existing policy, rather a revised statement making explicit the statutory and regulatory documents which needed to be followed. Following discussion the minutes of the meeting, pay policy and procedures and pay awards were approved. It was noted senior postholders, despite significant increases in workload, had requested to receive the same increase as had been awarded to other staff.

It was agreed the inclusion of flexibility given to the Executive Principal to set salaries within the overall pay framework was helpful in making appointments in a competitive environment. The timescale between appraisal, national pay awards and remuneration discussions will be reviewed by the Clerk and Executive Principal.

**Audit of 3<sup>rd</sup> March:**

Following a summary of the key issues by Marion Hawkins and discussion, the Minutes of the meeting, Committee Terms of Reference and Self-Assessment of school Resource Management were approved. Changes to the level of risk associated with cyber security and growth in the size of the MAT were discussed and the changes in the Risk Register to reflect increased probability of the risks and the additional mitigating actions were approved.

**Finance and Resources of 3<sup>rd</sup> March:**

Shirley Tully summarised the main points. Following discussion the Minutes of the meeting, Committee Terms of Reference and January Finance Report were approved. It was noted that that all three colleges and the MAT were in a secure financial position. Peter Cooper explained the rationale behind delaying production of a detailed accommodation strategy which would integrate financial forecasts until the outcome of recent Condition Improvement and Growth Bids for funding are known.

Summaries of the agreed projects and proposed projects were discussed, including detailed figures showing the likely MAT, College and grant funding. WSFC had initially been unsuccessful in its growth fund bid but had recently been informed that it now could be made as DFE funds needed to be used before the end of the financial year. Peter Cooper will negotiate with the funding agency before the deadline to try to secure an inflationary increase to the grant. It was agreed, however, that if this could not be achieved the Board would approve the project up to an increase in its contribution of 20%.

The post-16 growth bid from KEVI and CIF bids from HSFC for double glazing and roof repairs, from WSFC for lab refurbishment and KEVI for doors and windows, roofs were discussed. The matched funding required from the MAT should these projects gain DFE approval was approved. It was noted that the cost of refurbishing Science labs at KEVI was likely to be funded by the KEVI Trust.

PC

**9. Appointment of new Directors**

It was agreed that appointment of new Directors should be postponed pending the outcome of discussions relating to expansion of the MAT which will inform areas of expertise required and provide potential Trustees drawn from joining institutions.

**10. Any other business: none**

**Date of Next Meeting:** 23<sup>rd</sup> June at WSFC

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