

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

Meeting held using 'Teams' on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2021

Present: Ken Hopkins (Chair),  
Sheila Boniface, Marion Hawkins,  
Toby Hooper (vice-chair),  
Shirley Tully, Peter Cooper (Executive Principal),  
Angela Perry, Craig Holden

In attendance: Jonathan Godfrey (Clerk to the Trust),  
James Miller (Chair HSFC LGB), John Hodt, (Chair KEVI LGB),  
Gill Slater (Chair Worcester SFC LGB), Catherine Brearey (Deputy Principal HSFC)  
Julie Ferman ( WSFC Designated Leader for Safeguarding for agenda item 7)

**ACTION**

1 **Apologies for absence:**

Daniel Pearce-Higgins, Sallyanne Griffiths

2. **Minutes of Search Committee- appointment of new Directors**

The minutes were approved and the recommendations accepted. Ken Hopkins welcomed Craig Holden and Angela Perry to the Board.

3. **Declaration of interests and gifts**

None was declared.

4. **Minutes of the meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, matters arising and outcomes of action points**

The minutes were approved. There were no matters arising and no action points.

## 5. Executive Principal's Report

Peter Cooper summarised the key issues:

**a. Completion of Teacher Assessed Grades (report by Catherine Brearey)**

Colleges have completed a number of internal exams including a final exam in May and have followed internal quality assurance procedures. The Appeals process comprises 2 stages. Both will be administered by senior staff at the colleges who will ensure a common approach is followed. Stage 1 is an admin/procedural check, Stage 2 an appeal regarding the selection of evidence used to determine the grade. The college role in this is to summarise the evidence used and submit to the exam board for their decision. Given that students have been made aware of the results of internal assessments it is hoped that the number of appeals will be low. The initial messages from the Boards and DFE suggests that although formal exams will take place next year they will be significantly modified.

- b. Recruitment** continues to be strong in all colleges. At KEVI they are the highest ever and the issue will be reducing the waiting list to the desired admission number. Normal open events will not be able to take place this term which is a potential risk since visits to colleges and seeing the excellent facilities can be the determining factor in whether students stay at their school sixth form or come to a college.

**c. Capital Bids**

The Condition Improvement Bids were not successful. These have been awarded to schools with urgent needs. The result of the Expansion Fund Bids (discussed at the Finance Committee and a full Board meeting) is expected in August.

**d. Cross-Trust projects (report by Catherine Brearey)**

Senior Staff from the colleges were joined by staff from Hills Road, Cambridge, and QE Darlington for a presentation on the new inspection framework from Richard Huish, Taunton staff who have recent experience of it.

A College Deputies group has been formed to further collaborative work on quality assurance. This will be chaired by Catherine Brearey who is mentoring the two new deputies at WSFC.. A project to develop an online core enrichment programme is being led by Luke Mosely (one of the WSFC deputies) and Jeremy Sheen at KEVI is developing a common and improved approach to recording and using data.

- e. HESA data on outcomes of College Students in Higher Education** was noted to be good with KEVI outstanding.

- f. Top Slice** : The level of top slice has been reviewed at the Executive Group. It was noted that the current level of 5%, although initially a condition of a formation of the MAT set by DFE, is not mandatory. It was agreed the use of the top slice should be clearly delineated and that a lower figure may be appropriate. This will be an agenda item at the next Finance and Resources Committee meeting.

**g. MAT expansion**

Peter Cooper gave an update on the Worcester LA proposals to establish an 11-16 free school in the county owing to demographic growth. The MAT has been approached to be a possible sponsor or for the school to join the MAT.

Discussions have been initiated with Nunnery Wood High School, the 11-16 school co-located with WSFC regarding a possible collaborative approach. The Board approved the continued exploration of these options.

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It was noted that although there is no formal policy to expand (beyond an aspiration to reach a total of 5 academies to acquire the Capital funding allocations which automatically accrue), circumstances would arise in which individual cases would be considered on their merits.

**6. College Updates (verbal reports by Chairs of LGBs)**

HSFC: no issues to report.

WSFC: Congratulations to Julie Ferman who was a runner up in the Well Being College category and to WSFC college as a whole and Ed Senior individually who were runners up in the Covid and Beyond categories of the recent SFCA awards.

KEVI: All key performance indicators look good for the year. Chris Baker, Estates Manager was also named in the Covid and Beyond category of the SFCA awards. The LGB is currently reviewing its working practices in the light of its now being part of a MAT.

**7. Safeguarding Issues (Presentation by Julie Ferman)**

Ken Hopkins thanked Julie for attending to provide an update.

**Collaboration across the MAT**

In the Heart of Mercia Trust the 3 DSLs (Julie, Helen and Sarah) work collaboratively. HSFC & WSFC have the same systems which can make it easier when we are looking at reports. We share resources, discuss trends across the colleges and nationally. We offer each other advice and guidance like peer supervision and we have a good offload as being a DSL is a huge responsibility and can be quite an isolated role.

The 2 most important national documents are:

**Keeping Children Safe in Education 2020 – Statutory Guidance** covering:

Safeguarding guidance for all staff, management of safeguarding, safer recruitment, allegations of abuse against teachers and staff, child on child sexual violence and sexual harassment

**Working Together to Safeguard Children** - Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

**Role of the Trust Board:**

Trust board must have professional curiosity – holding the colleges to account over safeguarding. Ensure training up to date, have a designated Safeguarding Trustee, liaise with the DSL on Prevent, Exploitation, DSL training, FGM, online, Safer Recruitment. Ensure the college websites have an Early Help offer, the SG policy, college SG team on the website

**Two key Current Issues:**

**1. Impact of COVID**

Huge increase in poor mental health. Increased feelings of anxiety, isolation, a loss of coping mechanisms or a loss of motivation. Finance, bereavement. Domestic abuse,

family conflict, worry about key workers in the family. Colleges have put huge efforts into supporting students through lockdown and after, including Pastoral tutors having one to ones, referring for counselling, working with self help strategies, Wellbeing campaigns for promoting positive mental health, MH student ambassadors (at WSFC these are trained by University of Worcester).

Counselling has evolved to meet the needs - face to face, remote, group workshops and Mental health Training for staff inc bereavement training.

Tutorial content has included health and wellbeing (with particular focus on anxiety in the context of COVID and promoting positive mental health), sleep, online safety and cyber bullying, healthy relationships and consent, sexual harassment, Regular safeguarding e-mails have been sent to students and parents and parents evenings on online safety have been held.

Early Help offer and extra links are on the website signposting to external services such as Worc Healthy Minds and Reach4Wellbeing

## **2. Sexual Harassment – HSB ‘Everyone’s Invited & Ofsted review**

There is a draft of ‘Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges’ out for consultation - Colleges must do staff training on sexual harassment. Local authority DSL network groups are meeting to tackle this. Our colleges are doing education around the subject and have been for years via the pastoral programme. We have also sent out student surveys, and free online training for students. We will be setting up focus groups with students to help us inform our processes A separate policy for peer on peer abuse will be produced.

### **Summary of key questions Trustees need to pose to DSLs:**

- Do they have a good working partnership with their Local SG partners. In Worcs this is Chief Exec of WCC, the Chief Constable of West Mercia Police and NHS Commissioning groups
- Are they seeking input on the policy from students, staff, parents and other key stakeholders? It may be helpful to conduct a number of focus groups with students, parents and staff.
- Do we have a clear and full understanding of what constitutes peer-on-peer abuse?
- What have we experienced as a college community in the past in terms of peer-on-peer abuse, and have we learned from it? If so, how?
- Do we take a whole-college community Contextual Safeguarding approach to preventing and responding to peer-on-peer abuse? (outside family – neighbourhood Hotspots like bus station, parks, online
- Do we have any concerns about existing peer-on-peer relationships and, if so, what are these?
- Are there particular features or types of peer-on-peer abuse that our students are exposed to, and do our policies and procedures appropriately address these? For example, are any of our students exposed to gang violence? Do any of our students carry weapons? Is prejudice-based bullying a problem? What about cyber-bullying or online grooming? Homophobic harassment

· Do we have a comprehensive and age appropriate programme of relationships and sex education delivered by expert staff? If so, is it effective and designed in such a way that our students engage positively with it?

· Have colleges got appropriate internet monitoring?

Ken Hopkins thanked Julie for her excellent presentation.

8.

### **Minutes of Committee Meetings of 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021**

#### **Audit Committee**

Following discussion the Minutes of the meeting, Internal Audit Report and Annual Audit Plan were approved. The Risk Register and Action Plan were approved. It was agreed that the Risk 7- HoM fails to be able to deliver a balanced budget- should include mitigating actions to reflect the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the Financial forecast which shows a large deficit owing to DFE teacher pay and pension grants ceasing.

The recommendation to re- appoint the current External and Internal Auditors was Approved.

#### **Finance and Resources Committee**

Following discussion the Minutes of the meeting, Management Accounts for April and May and the Budget and Financial Forecast were approved. It was noted that the 2021/22 budget was accurate but the forecast for the following 2 years was subject to the usual uncertainties and the 2023/24 figures include the impact of the possible discontinuation of the support for Teacher Pay awards and Pensions.

Peter Cooper summarised the building plans which are the subject of Capital Expansion Bids by HSFC and WSFC. It was noted that the committee had recommended that the Board approve the applications and this approval had been given at an extraordinary meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> June, 2021. This was necessary owing to the very tight deadline for return of applications imposed by DFE.

IT Capital Projects are proposed at HSFC and WSFC. Both require funding greater than £50K and require Board approval. Mark Ridgway, MAT IT Manager, joined the meeting to outline the two projects which will commence in the Summer break:

WSFC: Significant Upgrade to improve the Network Infrastructure £200K to be funded by the MAT and repaid as an internal loan. This work arises from an internal review of systems at Worcester and an independent audit by JISC.

HSFC: replacement of classroom projectors with digital whiteboards £100k.

It was noted that both projects had been discussed with the Finance Director. Following discussion both projects were approved.

#### **Curriculum and Quality Committee**

The minutes of the meeting were approved. It was noted that the main issues had been discussed as part of the Executive Principal's report. The importance of recognising the additional work of staff in producing TAGs was noted.

9.

### **Minutes of Remuneration Committee of 1<sup>st</sup> April and 18<sup>th</sup> May,2021**

Following discussion the Minutes of the Remuneration Committee meetings and pay awards to Senior Postholders were approved. Peter Cooper left the meeting during the discussion of his salary. Ken Hopkins thanked Toby Hooper for his note on the procedures adopted in determining senior staff pay. This will inform an ongoing review to be led by

Toby. It was suggested that the current policy does not include a role for LGBs to be involved in discussions on the salaries of Local Principals and Deputies. This is consistent with the Scheme of Delegation but will be taken into consideration as part of the review.

**10. Annual declaration of interest forms**

The Clerk asked for the Annual Declaration of Interest Forms to be returned to him by the end of this term. This could be done on-line or by printing off a copy and posting it to the college or requesting a hard copy to be posted out with a return envelope.

All Directors, EP,  
FD and Clerk

**11. Calendar of meetings and committee membership**

The dates of meetings for next year were noted. Angela Perry agreed to join the Finance and Resources Committee and Craig Holden the Audit Committee.

**12. Any other business: none**

**Date of Next Meeting:** 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2021









