

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 at Hereford Sixth Form College on 6th October, 2022

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

In attendance: Jonathan Godfrey (Clerk to the Trust), Sallyanne Griffiths (Finance Director),
Andrea Marshall (MAT Quality improvement Officer)

		ACTION
1	Apologies for absence: None	
2.	Declaration of interests and gifts None was declared	
3.	Minutes of the meeting of 23rd June, 2022 The minutes were approved	
4.	Matters arising and outcomes of action points Item 9- Trustee Recruitment Peter Cooper is preparing a Trustee Profile to be posted on the 'Aspiring Governor' Website. In addition, he has reviewed the list on the website and has invited potential Trustees to contact him. A number of parents from an ethnic minority background have also been contacted and an advert for Trustees will be placed in the regional press.	PC

5. Local Governing Body Updates

The reports were noted. It was confirmed that Annual Safeguarding Reports are received by LGBs annually but the timing varies from college to college. Each college LGB reviews its own finance Report and also receives the MAT finance report.

6. Executive Principal's Report

The report was noted and Peter Cooper enlarged on a number of issues:

Attendance and Retention have fallen in all colleges, particularly Hereford and Worcester. This is a national issue but efforts are in place to address it. Drop out has been aggravated by students with teacher/centre assessed grades being unprepared for the demands of some courses.

Pay negotiations will be difficult this year. Although staff are aware of the financial difficulties facing colleges, Teacher unions are balloting for strike action.

Although the Capital Bid at Worcester Sixth Form College was withdrawn it may receive grant support from ESFA following further discussion.

The development of cross MAT activity and the assimilation of further schools has required some changes in governance and management structure. An additional PT (0.4), 1 year appointment has been made. Ceri Morgan, ex-deputy Regional Schools Commissioner will work as a Director of Strategy, reviewing and advising on further expansion of the MAT. He is preparing a bid for a £70K of grant to support this work. The revised structure was approved. LGB Chairs will now not attend the Board as observers but meet the MAT Chair and EP regularly at a separate time. The Chairs of Governors of the schools currently in the process of joining the MAT will be invited to attend.

As part of the Due Diligence on John Kyrle High School, a Quality Improvement visit has taken place – essentially a mini-inspection. This was at the invitation of their new Headteacher and comprised a visit from a team of MAT staff and local secondary school Heads and senior staff. The report was noted. It provides an excellent starting point to inform the school's development plan. Teaching and learning was generally good but communication between departments, safeguarding processes, staff development and lack of awareness of the preparation required for Ofsted inspection were identified as weaknesses. The structure and cost of the Senior Leadership team needs to be reviewed.

Assembling the inspection team for the visit to JKHS had brought together Heads of local secondary schools who were able to see the strength of the MAT's collaborative work. Expressions of interest in joining the Trust have come from a number of local schools. Copies of a recent Benchmarking Report on MATs were tabled which comments on MAT expansion generally. It was agreed that the MAT growth plan should consider the pace of growth and the benefits of expansion weighed against increased bureaucracy and reduced effectiveness in dealing with a large number of academies. Although there was a risk attached to assimilating failing schools, a possible approach would be to provide informal but structured support aimed at bringing about improvement which would allow their consideration as a possible member academy.

Minutes of Committee Meetings of 22nd September, 2022

7.

Audit Committee

Marion Hawkins summarised the key points and following discussion, the Minutes of the meeting, Internal Audit Reports, Internal Audit Plan, Annual report of the Committee, External Audit Plan and Data Protection and Retention Policy were approved.

Finance and Resources Committee

Shirley Tully summarised the key points. It was noted that the figure for reserves in part 5 of the minutes was incorrect. This amendment having been made the minutes were approved. The KEVI Foundation Trust have been asked to provide a written assurance they would fund the proposed capital project at KEVI. The Trust is meeting next week when it is hoped they will approve this.

Following discussion, the Finance Report, MAT Budget and Financial Forecast, Accommodation Strategy, Communication Strategy and Complaints Policy were approved. It was noted the amendment to the Complaints policy in respect of the circumstances when the MAT Board could hear a final appeal had been made.

Curriculum and Quality Committee

Daniel Pearce-Higgins summarised the main points in the minutes and these were approved. HSFC have advertised for a Ukrainian speaker to work with the 21 refugee students who have joined the college.

Strategic Plan Update

8.

The updated progress report was noted.

Assimilation of Chantry and John Kyrle High Schools

9.

Jonathan Godfrey presented an update on the application to the Regional Schools Commissioner to expand the MAT. The application will be presented to the Head Teacher Board in November. A paper on the rationale for the assimilation of John Kyrle High School and Chantry High School was discussed and the proposal was approved subject to the appropriate due diligence being carried out by the MAT legal advisers.

Any Other Business

10.

Remuneration Committee

It was agreed to hold a remuneration committee meeting at 6.00pm on Thursday, 10th November. The committee will comprise Ken Hopkins, Sheila Boniface, Shirley Tully and Craig Holden. The Clerk and EP will attend but will withdraw when their salaries are discussed. The committee will review which staff should be designated as senior post-holders (currently the EP, College Principals and Deputies, FD and Clerk) and determine salary recommendations for approval by the Board.

Safeguarding

Ken Hopkins stressed the importance of safeguarding, the need to ensure the Board meets its obligations and ensures all appropriate records are in place should the MAT be inspected by Ofsted. SFA have recommended that all Trustees and Members have an enhanced DBS check and this be noted on the 'Central Record'. It was agreed a check will be repeated if a Trustee starts a second term of office.

Jonathan Godfrey will check the record is up to date and how the MAT uses the DBS updating service.

JTG

Annual Conference: Friday 18th and Saturday 19th November

It was agreed that there would be a dinner and accommodation for Trustees and Senior MAT staff at a Worcester Hotel on Friday evening. Chairs of the governing bodies of JKHS and the Chantry and the associate school, St Mary's would be invited to attend the dinner. The conference will run from 9.00am to lunch time and will include discussion of the strategic plan, presentations on cross-MAT issues including the VLE and safeguarding and a talk by Sallyanne Griffiths on how her role has changed since the MAT was formed and expanded. LGB Chairs, Chairs of the schools to be assimilated and St Mary's and also the MAT members will be invited to attend on Saturday.

Date of Next Meeting: 8th December, 2022 at WSFC

