



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 SFC on 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2021

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

		ACTION
1	<b>Apologies for absence:</b>  None	
2.	<b>Declaration of interests and gifts</b>  Jonathan Godfrey declared he was Chair of Trustees of the English Symphony Orchestra and withdrew while a letter from him to the Chair was discussed. The ESO had requested financial support for a joint event with HSFC, Messiah in Malvern Priory in December. It was agreed that this event would be more appropriately sponsored by HSFC rather than the MAT and the financial contribution would be made by the College.	PC
3.	<b>Minutes of the meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> June,2021 and Remuneration Committee of 30<sup>th</sup> June</b>  The minutes were approved.	
4.	<b>Matters arising and outcomes of action points</b>  Discussion of the top slice due to be discussed at the Finance committee in September had been postponed to the next meeting.	PC

5. **College Updates**

The new format summarising the minutes of each college was welcomed. It was suggested that WSFC include recent financial data as in the other College reports. The LGB Chairs added-

**HSFC:** Very pleasing Oxbridge data which would have placed the College 19<sup>th</sup> nationally in a recent Spectator table. Ken Hopkins had attended the last meeting. It was agreed this strengthened communication between the MAT and LGB and, if possible, should be a regular occurrence at all Colleges with the MAT being represented by the Chair, Vice-Chair or another Director.

**KE VI:** The section in the report giving data on counselling, a strength of the College was noted.

**WSFC:** A recent LGB conference had been very successful and included peer appraisal of governors.

JP

6. **Executive Principal's report**

Commenting on the report Peter Cooper stated:

Recruitment had been very good to all three Colleges. WSFC currently having an additional 100 students, KE VI over-subscribed. Jonathan Godfrey commented that on academisation, colleges should have an admissions policy and this should be updated to reflect the approach KE VI was adopting in selecting students.

A number of issues were raised resulting from students studying at a distance during lockdown:

Standards in key skills, IT skills and performing arts subjects were lower. Workshops in Colleges are seeking to address this. In addition, participation in enrichment activities this year was disappointing.

Attendance has so far been good, unlike in schools where the lack of vaccination has caused significant problems. Systems are in place to allow students to see lessons at home if they need to isolate but this has led to a need to stress this is in exceptional cases and not an alternative to attending in person.

The DFE and RSC applying pressure on schools to academise and join MATs was discussed. This has been exacerbated by Local Authorities seeking to shed responsibility for a diminishing number of schools under their control. The situation in each College area varies. The strategy to meet this challenge will be a key item for the conference. The current 16-19 specialism of the MAT was agreed to be a strength and expansion could include SFCs not in our region. Addition of schools could, however, protect supply lines for recruitment and prevent the formation of new sixth forms. Peter Cooper is continuing to meet local stakeholders and is also meeting James Kewin, SFCA Deputy CEO to discuss developments in the academisation of SFCs generally.

Action Points for the MAT executive team were noted. There will be an update on the 'Virtual College' project at the conference.

7. **Minutes of Committee Meetings of 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2021**

**Audit Committee**

Following discussion the Minutes were approved. The assurance provided to the Audit Committee and Board on the effectiveness of governance and financial oversight were noted. The audit plan for next year will cover activities in the Colleges more, as opposed to MAT systems.

Marion Hawkins commented on the thorough report on cybersecurity provided by Mark Ridgway and the robust approach

being taken across the MAT.

The timing of the self-assessment questionnaire on governance was discussed. Jonathan Godfrey explained that given the conference aimed to discuss and formulate the MAT strategic development plan it would be better to ask Directors about their understanding of this after the event.

### **Finance and Resources Committee**

Shirley Tully summarised the reasons for the better than expected year-end outcome, largely a result of additional DFE income. Following discussion the minutes of the meeting and August Finance report were approved. The verbal update on the Financial Forecast was noted with particular reference to the 'cliff edge' from August 2023 which reflects the possible loss of £1.5m DFE contribution to pay and pensions.

Sallyanne Griffiths reported on progress in producing revised Financial regulations. These will be circulated shortly to Finance Committee members and will be an agenda item at the next meeting.

SAGR

### **Curriculum and Quality Committee**

Toby Hooper summarised the main points and the minutes were approved. The importance of providing individual workshops and tutorial support to address weaknesses arising from lock down was noted. Preparation for inspection is underway in all 3 Colleges. Toby Hooper will produce a table of resources for Directors summarising the information provided by Catherine Brearey on College inspection and Jonathan Godfrey on Ofsted evaluation of MATs. It was agreed that, in addition to Safeguarding, Equality and Diversity was a key issue for the MAT as a whole. Strategies to increase the diversity of Board Membership were discussed- recommendations from current directors and targeted adverts stressing the aim to recruit directors from particular groups. Sheila Boniface will also investigate using the Birmingham University Governor Network.

8

### **November Conference Programme**

The draft programme was discussed. The main purpose of the conference is to:  
Establish more strongly the identity of the MAT formally and informally  
Provide an opportunity for the Board to meet the Executive Team and other staff  
To learn more about KE VI College by meeting staff and seeing the college  
To discuss key issues and start to formulate the MAT development plan

It was confirmed that the MAT Members will be invited to the event.

9.

### **Any other business:**

Ken Hopkins asked for feedback on the return to 'in person' meetings. All present felt it was good to return to this format.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021, 6.00pm at WSFC