



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 on Teams, 9th December, 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),
Jo Payne (MAT Marketing Officer and Clerk to WSFC LGB)

		ACTION
1.	Apologies for absence: None	
2.	Declaration of interests and gifts None was declared	
3.	Chairs opening remarks Ken Hopkins apologised for having to revert to meeting by Teams, hoped the next meeting could be in person and thanked all who came to the November conference for their engagement and positive contributions. Toby Hooper was asked to give an update on his review of a Senior Staff Pay policy: A draft document will be prepared for 14 th January which can be discussed at College LGBs prior to the MAT Committee and Board meetings in March. Peter Cooper raised the issue of the impact of back payments on tax liabilities if the pay awards are delayed and will liaise with Toby on this.	
4.	Minutes of the meeting of 7th October, 2021, matters arising and outcomes of action points	

The minutes of the meeting were approved and it was noted action points had been implemented. The invitation for Directors to attend LGB meeting was reiterated. It was agreed the calendar of meetings would be circulated and Directors could approach LGB Chairs to suggest possible dates to attend.

JTG

5. College Updates

The College updates were noted. John Hodt reported that the KE VI Board was just quorate but three potential governors are being interviewed shortly.

6. Executive Principal's report

Peter Cooper summarised the key points:

(i) November Conference

Thanks were expressed to those who participated in the conference. Feedback from Directors had been very positive. The discussion on strategic options will inform preparation of the MAT Strategic Plan to be presented to the Board in March. Colleges will still produce their own plans within this overarching framework, in line with the MAT's commitment to institutional autonomy. It was agreed that the climate of uncertainty surrounding educational policy militated against a detailed long-term plan but a document outlining options and current proposals for the future was important for internal strategic oversight and external scrutiny.

(ii) Impact of Covid

All staff and students are required to wear masks in communal areas. Attendance has decreased slightly owing to infection in the community but also increased levels of risk aversion in parents and students.

(iii) Published data

The only published data on colleges will relate to destinations. The relatively low progression to HE figures for WSFC and HSFC could reflect their comprehensive nature. Some concern was expressed about the methodology of the data generally.

(iv) Ofsted inspection of Farnborough SFC

The questions posed to LGBs were noted and will prove useful in preparation for future College inspections. It was agreed the issue of special responsibilities for Governors was not intended to blur the distinction between management and governance but to ensure the board had informed oversight on key issues such as Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs provision and Equality and Diversity.

(v) MAT Website

The three College websites will continue to be the independent, outward face of colleges but will be moved to a common platform to allow easier updating and incorporation of developments.

7. Heart of Mercia MAT Marketing strategy

Jo Payne explained the rationale behind the strategy:

It was not intended to replace individual college marketing which was regarded as very successful.

The aim is:

To summarise the ethos and achievements of the MAT which could inform decisions made by and influence external bodies such as the RSC and Ofsted.

PC

To provide information to schools and colleges who may be considering academisation.
To provide information to all staff, students and parents on the role and work of the MAT

Jo was thanked for her work which had already resulted in the excellent MAT newsletter. Craig Holden who runs a marketing company and has significant experience of website development offered to meet Jo to discuss future plans.

CH/JP

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Minutes of Committees

Audit of 25th November, 2021

Marion Hawkins thanked Sallyanne Griffiths and her team for their work and for achieving a clean audit on accounts and regularity. The responses in the management letter had been noted. Following discussion it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting, Accounting Policies and Statement of Accounts be approved, the latter subject to their also being approved by the Finance and resources committee.

Following discussion, the Whistleblowing Policy was approved. It was agreed that the language was necessarily rather formal and the MAT HR manager should be asked to prepare a briefer summary document in more accessible language. The role of the Clerk in the policy was questioned in respect of being the person to whom staff should seek advice on whether they should be pursuing a grievance as opposed to whistleblowing. It was suggested this could be the HR manager, although their involvement in managing any future grievance procedure could lead to a conflict of interest and the Clerk was truly outside the system.

It was agreed that Peter Cooper would seek clarification from Remley Mann on why the Clerk had been put in this role.

PC

Finance and Resources Committee of 25th November, 2021

Shirley Tully echoed the Chair of Audit's thanks to Sallyanne and the Finance team. The MAT had finished the financial year with a strong balance sheet and sound cash position. The significant difference compared with the budget was the result of grants relating to pay, pension contributions and Covid, not announced when the budget was set.

Following discussion and, noting prior approval by the Audit Committee, the Statement of accounts was approved.

The October Finance Report, Budget update and Financial Forecast were discussed. The uncertainty over income in years 2 and 3 of the forecast results in significant deficits but government announcements suggest that funding will rise with inflation and grants for employee costs will continue which will ameliorate the position.

The minutes of the meeting, October Finance Report, Budget Update and Financial Forecast were approved.

The revised Financial regulations were discussed. A further change in the regulations relating to the level of proposed spending requiring the need to seek tenders had been proposed by the Finance Committee. The revised Financial Regulations, including raising the threshold to seek tenders for proposed spending from £40k to £100K, were approved.

The revised Capital project was discussed. Following the recommendation from the committee it was agreed that, in addition to the £220K agreed for the 2 storey project, approval be given to fund the costs of adding a 3rd storey up to £900K.

Ken Hopkins thanked Sallyanne Griffiths and her team for their excellent stewardship of MAT finances.

Curriculum and Quality Committee

9.

Toby Hooper thanked Peter Cooper and Catherine Brearey for their work and the minutes were approved. The SFCA report on TAGs was discussed and the rigour of implementation of the approach adopted by the SFC sector was noted. Peter Cooper pointed out that the difficulty of abiding by Ofqual requirements to stage mock exams in one sitting for a whole subject cohort was virtually impossible with current Covid guidelines.

MAT Board self -assessment Report 2020/21and action Plan 2021/22

Jonathan Godfrey outlined the methodology adopted and summarized the strengths and areas for development. It was noted that all actions planned as a result of the previous self-assessment had been implemented.

Areas for development this year related to:

- 1.Strategic Planning Options being the subject of the Annual Conference
- 2.An ongoing review of MAT policies
- 3.A revision of Financial Regulations to reflect changes to the MAT
- 4.A review of Performance Indicators and the production of a data dashboard for use by the Board
- 5.Further support for developments in IT delivery of courses (the Virtual College) to support face to face teaching.

Any other business: none

Date of Next Meeting: 17th March, 2022 (venue tbc)
