

Minutes of the Board of Directors' Meeting
Thursday 1 February 2024
Held at The Chantry School, Martley, Worcester

Present:

- Sheila Boniface
- Peter Cooper (Chief Executive Officer)
- Jonathan Godfrey
- Marion Hawkins
- Craig Holden
- Ken Hopkins (Chair)
- Katie Jackson
- Peter Jackson
- Daniel Pearce-Higgins
- Rachel Salter
- Shirley Tully

In attendance:

- Andrea Marshall (Director of Improvement)
- Linda Watkins (Director of Governance)
- Revd Paul Wilcox (Chair of Governors, The Chantry School)
- Andy Dickenson (Headteacher, The Chantry School, item 2 only)
- Nicola Clear (Deputy Headteacher, The Chantry School, item 2 only)

The Chair welcomed Revd Paul Wilcox, Chair of The Chantry School Local Governing Body, to the meeting. He also thanked the Headteacher for facilitating a tour of the school.

	Action
<p>1. Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Sallyanne Griffiths, (Chief Finance Officer).</p>	
<p>2. Presentation The Chantry, secondary education and challenges The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher of The Chantry School gave an informative presentation; a copy of the presentation would be issued to Directors.</p>	LJW
<p>3. Opening standing items</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. There were no new declarations of interest. II. Items deemed to be confidential would be identified during the meeting. III. There was no urgent business to be transacted at the meeting. 	
<p>4. Chair's Report The Chair requested the CEO to summarise progress of the Ofsted Inspection at King Edward VI College. He verbally reported that a positive outcome is anticipated.</p>	
<p>5. Minutes of the last meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. The Board <u>agreed</u> to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2023. 	

- II. An action list was provided evidencing progress of actions and matters arising.

The senior team will prepare an outline strategic plan for 2024-27 for Directors' consideration which will incorporate views from Members, Directors and the executive team. The Director of Governance proposed that the Directors' self-assessment review is completed later in the year using the seven principles in the Academies Trust Governance Code which the Search and Governance Committee recommend for adoption.

The Trust's annual report 2023 had been issued which is available on the Trust's website. This outlined numerous successes of each academy within the Trust.

PC/AM

LJW

6. CEO's Report

The CEO presented his report for discussion drawing Directors' attention to key issues including progress of Wigmore Academy Trust to join the Trust in August 2024. An update on discussion with other schools was summarised; detail was recorded in a confidential minute.

There are ongoing discussions with some primary schools who have expressed an interest to join the Trust in the future. The Director of Improvement outlined collaborative work with some primary schools including conducting a reading review at a local school recently.

A Director asked about management capacity within the Trust as it expands. The CEO responded that the Trust has a minimum of five academies and is therefore eligible to receive Schools Condition Allowance (SCA) funding. The executive team have agreed that 50% of this funding will be held centrally by the Trust which could be used to fund central services. Allocation of the SCA funding will be overseen by a small group within the Trust as opposed to a bidding process by academies.

The Trust has been identified in the top percentile as a financially stable academy by an independent sector evaluator, Plimsoll.

The Director of Improvement has arranged a 2-day quality review at JKHS to work with Heads of Department to raise teaching and learning standards, and as part of preparation for Ofsted. The Director of Improvement is working as an associate headteacher to support the school on a part time basis. A Director enquired how long this arrangement would be in place; it has been implemented until the Ofsted inspection which is anticipated before July 2025.

Discussion progressed to the role of the central team and different levels of support allocated to individual academies. Overall, the Trust provide support based on the effectiveness of crucial areas, such as teaching and learning, safeguarding, information, data and technology. The CEO confirmed that a staff appointment had been made to the central team to work closely with the Chief Information Officer on IT systems support. It may be necessary to make additional appointments in the future to dovetail to growth in the MAT. A question followed if there is capacity within the staffing structure to backfill roles; this is already in place. There was another question about financial management in the Trust noting

that the executive team had discussed this key area and fully supported reorganising the staffing structure of the finance teams across the Trust.

There was a follow up question about risk in the event that a key member of staff was on long term absence which would cause significant disruption. This could be mitigated with support from colleagues or by another Trust if necessary. This led to generic discussion about risks associated with growth, particularly the high-risk strategy of schools joining the Trust, and if there is sufficient capacity amongst the Trust Board; it was confirmed that the Search and Governance Committee had considered this when analysing the Directors' skills audit which confirmed that there are Directors with professional level experience in the schools' sector.

The Trust's strategy has been for good schools to join where possible; however, growth must be balanced against the chance that opportunities could be missed. Expansion of the Trust also brings expertise within the Trust which can be shared between academies.

Clarification was sought how frequently the Trust's risk register is reviewed noting that this is at least termly and reported to the Audit and Risk Committee. The Executive team are also in receipt of the risk register and have developed distinct risk registers for their academy.

Wigmore Academy will bring a secondary, primary and nursery school to the Trust. In response to a question, it was noted that a controlled growth strategy whilst being supportive of growth should be followed. There are no plans for other schools to join the Trust currently.

[Some items discussed were deemed confidential and recorded in a confidential minute]

7. Summary from Committees and reports from Committee Chairs

This term only the Search and Governance Committee had met this term with no reports from other Committee Chairs on this occasion. The Chair of the Committee outlined the following items,

- I. Search and Governance Committee:
 - a. The Committee had discussed the Trust's responsibility for equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) and how it is embedded throughout the Trust. Each academy is embedding EDI at a local level. The Director of Improvement has been assigned responsibility for EDI at Trust level. It was agreed that the Vice Chair, who has professional experience of EDI, would provide a briefing on the Equality Duty, EDI and responsibilities at the next meeting. An NGA module on EDI for Trustees is available. Data on the protected characteristics, the socio-economic background for students and the staff profile are being collated which will be reported to the Board in future.
 - b. The Board agreed to appoint the following Designated Directors based on skills, experience and individuals' willingness to undertake the roles who would provide assurance how these are being addressed:
 - i. Safeguarding: Katie Jackson
 - ii. Careers Advice and Guidance: Jonathan Godfrey
 - iii. SEND: Sheila Boniface

SB/LJW

AM

- c. There was a confidential discussion regarding applications to an LGB.
- d. It was proposed to appoint up to two co-optees to Trust Board Committees to utilise skills from LGB Governors which would also be another collaborative channel. The Board agreed this should be progressed following guidelines, criteria and a timescale to offer the opportunity to LGBs to nominate co-optees to the Trust Board committees. LJW
- e. The Academy Trust Governance Code has been published which is a voluntary code drawing upon the Charity Governance Code and relevant Department for Education guidance. The Board adopted the Governance Code which would be used to measure continuous improvement of governance within the Trust. LJW
- f. Directors' one to one individual conversations with the Chair and Director of Governance would be arranged in the summer term which will be informal. These promote a positive culture of inclusive governance, consider practices and behaviours, and offer Directors an opportunity to suggest ideas or improvements to governance practices. LJW
- g. Directors' feedback was sought regarding the preferred time and venue for Trust Board meetings during 2024/25. It was concluded that these would remain on Thursday evenings at 6pm rotating across sites during the year. Committees would continue to conduct Committee meetings on Microsoft Teams. LJW

8. Items for information

The following items had been discussed by the Search and Governance Committee which were presented for information.

- I. Summary profile of the Board – skills, equality and diversity, training needs and attendance.
- II. Progress of the Governance Development Plan.

9. Summary from LGB meetings

- I. The Chantry School 1 December 2023
- II. JKHS 14 December 2023 and 22 January 2024

The timing of WSFC and HSFC LGBs meant that minutes were currently unavailable. The Vice Chair and Director of Governance had attended HSFC's Board meeting last week.

10. Any other business

There were no items.

11. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 25 April 2024 commencing at 6.00 pm at Worcester Sixth Form College.

[A confidential agenda followed with separate minutes recorded]