

Minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting
Thursday 25 April 2024
Held at Worcester Sixth Form College

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: Sallyanne Griffiths, (Chief Finance Officer)
Andrea Marshall (Director of Improvement)
Linda Watkins (Director of Governance)
Sean Devlin (Chair of Governors, WSFC)

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies.

2. Opening standing items

- 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.

3. Chair's Report

The Chair welcomed Sean Devlin, Chair of Worcester Sixth Form College Local Governing Body, to the meeting. The Chair congratulated Sheila Boniface on completing the National Governors Association (NGA) Leading Governance Development for Chairs programme. NGA are holding a governance conference on 12 July at the Birmingham Conference and Events Centre; details would be forwarded to Directors who were invited to attend. The Chair had attended evensong at the Cathedral celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of HSFC. He had also attended Stour Vale Academy Trust's Board meeting with the Executive's PA recording appreciation to Rachel Salter, CEO of Stour Vale Academy Trust, for the invitation; comparisons and contrasts of meetings would identify best practice. Some of the executive would also attend meetings.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

- I. The Board agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2024.

Action

L Watkins

- II. An action list was provided evidencing progress of actions and matters arising.
- III. The resolution dated 20 March 2024 which had been passed to appoint Nicola Clear as Headteacher of the Chantry School was acknowledged. The CEO updated Directors that following Nicola Clear’s appointment as Headteacher this created a vacancy for Deputy Head which was advertised nationally. Sally Johnson has been appointed to the role who is currently employed at WSFC.

5. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Briefing

The Vice Chair gave a presentation outlining the purpose of the Equality Act 2010, the role of the Board and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The presentation would be issued to Directors.

L Watkins

6. CEO’s Report

The CEO presented his report commending King Edward VI on the good judgement, with some outstanding features in behaviour and attitudes, from their recent Ofsted inspection. The Trust has been shortlisted for the MAT Excellence staff development award.

Networking continues with other Trusts. There have been meetings with several primary schools to begin to establish strategies and understand challenges in the primary sector. The breadth of experience and knowledge within the Trust is fundamental to support schools. The Trust operates with a lean staffing structure; specialist staff knowledge and best practice is shared across academies.

A Director raised growth of academies in the Trust and the challenges to visit each of the academies. Following discussion, it was agreed that the current model of Directors attending different LGBs works effectively; however, this may need to be revisited subject to growth with an option to link a Director to a single academy.

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

7. Strategy

- I. The draft strategic plan 2024/27 had been developed taking account of initial input from Directors, Members and the Executive Group. In tandem with this, the previous strategic plan had been considered along with the DfE quality descriptors for academies. There was discussion about the purpose of the strategic plan and its vision and values, confirmation that RAG rating is useful which provides a snapshot at the current time, but is subject to change, and agreement to add dates. The Board approved the draft strategic plan in principle noting that the strategic plan will be finalised at the next meeting.
- II. A draft growth plan was presented setting out the background for the Trust’s growth. The objectives were purposely collated broadly to allow the Trust measured consideration of expansion opportunities. The plan reflected discussion at previous Board meetings. There was a question about a hub model with confirmation that this would be the geographical areas covered by the Trust; however, expansion could increase these areas further. Following discussion, amendments were agreed to growth objective 4 “to develop the hub model, adding a school/small Trust from other regions which are sustainable and achievable”. Key considerations should also include “Does the Trust

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A Marshall

A Marshall

have an appropriate working model and the correct skills set to accommodate expansion of a school/Trust?”. The Board approved the growth plan subject to minor amendments, which would be published.

A Marshall

8. Finance Report – March 2024

The CFO presented the finance report highlighting key challenges in the sector. Budget planning for 2024/25 has commenced following receipt of the allocation statements for the academies. The CFO is working closely with each academy to ensure consistency and gain input from the finance teams. Finances are being centralised across the Trust noting that there were challenges with the schools joining the Trust this year which are being addressed.

Overspend of £673k will result in a negative forecast on the EBITDA at the end of the financial year. JKHS recruited c50 fewer students this year affected by the Ofsted requires improvement judgement. The Trust had agreed to carry the loss whilst implementing strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and leadership and management. Positive progress is being made.

Additional income included receipt of £2.5m SCA, £150k T-Level capital funding for WSFC, £100k for HSFC to convert a classroom into a laboratory, funding for Ukrainian students and an increase in catering income.

Additional expenditure includes an increase to the employer contribution for the Teachers’ Pension Scheme from 1 April (the increase is funded this year). Oncosts for teaching and leadership staff are c40%. Exam fees and transport costs at HSFC have also increased.

The balance sheet remains strong with net current assets of £4.558m forecasted to be £3.121m at the end of the financial year.

9. Summary from Committees and reports from Committee Chairs

The Chair thanked the Director of Governance for preparing a useful summary from committees requesting Chairs to highlight key issues with the following items approved:

- I. Audit & Risk Committee: 19 March 2024
 - a. The tendering process for internal and external auditors would commence in November 2024 which was timely.
- II. Finance & Resources Committee: 19 March 2024
 - a. Central charges policy
 - b. School condition allowance policy
 - c. Senior postholders’ disciplinary policy
- III. Curriculum & Quality Committee: 19 March 2024
 - a. Quality assurance policy and framework
 - b. Safeguarding supervision policy
- IV. Search and Governance Committee: no meeting

10. Governance

The Board approved the following items:

- I. Trust’s Scheme of Delegation which included revisions to the matrix agreed following discussion by the Executive Group. There was discussion about appointments to LGBs, including appointment of Chairs, which the Director of Governance would ensure was clearly articulated.
- II. Appointed Paul Deneen as the independent Chair of JKHS LGB.

L Watkins

- III. Appointed the following Independent Governors to KEVI's LGB:
 - a. Luke Smyth
 - b. Jules Singh
 - c. Alison Bissell
 - d. Sian Fletcher
- IV. Appointed the following co-optees to Trust Board Committees, some of whom had attended the committees last meeting as observers:
 - a. A&R Committee: Sam Wilson (WSFC)
 - b. F&R Committee: Paul Cumming (WSFC/The Chantry)
 - c. C&Q Committee: John Hodt (KE VI) and Kelvin Hard (WSFC)

11. Items for information

The following items had been discussed by the Committees which were presented for Directors' information.

- I. Audit and Risk Committee
 - a. Risk register
 - b. Cybersecurity, data protection and fraud report
 - c. ESFA schools resource management self-assessment
- II. Finance & Resources Committee
 - a. Estates report
 - b. Health and safety report
 - c. HR report
- III. Curriculum and Quality Committee
 - a. Gatsby Benchmarks and audit 2024
 - b. Student performance data
 - c. Ofsted inspection report KE VI February 2024
 - d. JKHS quality improvement visit report February 2024
 - e. Safeguarding report

A Director referred to the high number of mental health issues recorded at HSFC with confirmation that these had not increased, but due to improved reporting. Data for safeguarding is being aligned across the academies. The Designated Safeguarding Director confirmed that she meets termly with the Trust's DSL.

12. Summary from LGB meetings

- I. KE VI 6 March 2024
- II. WSFC 6 March 2024
- III. HSFC 7 March 2024
- IV. JKHS 11 March 2024
- V. The Chantry 21 March 2024

Several Directors had attended LGB meetings.

13. Any other business

There were no items.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 2 July 2024 commencing at 6.00 pm at KE VI, Stourbridge.

[A confidential agenda followed with a separate minute recorded]

Signed as a true and accurate record:

Chair Date