

Minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting
Tuesday 2 July 2024
Held on Teams

Present:

Peter Cooper (Chief Executive Officer)
Jonathan Godfrey
Marion Hawkins
Craig Holden
Ken Hopkins (Chair)
Peter Jackson
Rachel Salter
Shirley Tully

In attendance:

Sallyanne Griffiths, (Chief Finance Officer)
Andrea Marshall (Director of Improvement)
Linda Watkins (Director of Governance)
John Hodt (Chair of Governors, King Edward VI Sixth Form College)

1. Apologies for absence

Sheila Boniface, Katie Jackson and Daniel Pearce-Higgins.

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 John Hodt, Chair of King Edwards VI Sixth Form College Local Governing Body, to the meeting. The Chair, Director of Governance, Principal of KE VI and PA to the Executive, visited Dormston School meeting with the Chair and Headteacher, also fitting in a brief tour at KEVI. The Chair and Director of Governance have started one to one conversations with Trustees which are both enjoyable and useful.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

- I. The Board agreed to approve the minutes and confidential minute of the meeting held on 25 April 2024.
- II. An action list was provided evidencing progress of actions and matters arising.

5. CEO's Report

The CEO presented his report highlighting the Trust's work with partners to strengthen links and collaboration with other Trusts to share best practice and utilise each other's expertise.

Action

There was generic discussion about the Trust providing central services to academies. Some of these services could have been provided by Local Authorities previously are funded by the Trust requiring a marginal cost to each academy to fund the central team, however, this will decrease as more schools join the Trust. The Chair of KEVI LGB supported drawing on central and specialist resources from the Trust.

The Trust meets eligibility criteria for School Condition Allocation (SCA) capital funding. Academies have contributed to the Trust's accommodation strategy whilst also developing their local capital strategies. The approach was supported which meets the Trust's ethos giving autonomy to its academies.

Discussion continues with several local schools who are interested in exploring academisation. Transition is underway following the appointments of the new Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher at The Chantry; both appointed from within the Trust. Mentoring is in place provided by the Headteacher of an associate school. The Trust develops its staff and provides CPD from within which also creates modest financial savings. Some of the executive team have taken on additional leadership roles to oversee secondary provision, sixth forms and compliance within the Trust. Discussion progressed to growth of the Trust and transition of new schools joining noting that it is crucial to have people with the right skills and experience as the Trust evolves. The Trust operates with a small senior team. JKHS is anticipating an inspection before June 2025 with a number of staff across the Trust working closely with the school.

The CEO is working with the DfE advisors who had recently requested his input into a post-16 review of education in Devon.

The Trust had been shortlisted for the MAT Excellence Award for Staff Development which was a good achievement.

[Discussion about growth of the Trust and potential schools who are interested in joining the Trust was recorded in a confidential minute]

6. Strategy: strategic plan 2024/27

The final draft strategic plan 2024/27 had been issued. The document approved in principle at the last meeting had been divided into the strategy and an operating plan including dates to monitor progress and implementation of the objectives. This will be regularly reported to the Board showing progress against dates. There was a suggestion to consider including expected outcomes in the plan. A Director enquired how the Board evaluates if the process is working agreeing that there would be opportunities to amend the plan if necessary. The Board confirmed its approval of the strategic plan.

7. Trust budget 2024/25 and 3-year financial forecast

The CFO presented the budget which had been discussed in detail and recommended for approval by the F&R Committee. There are uncertainties regarding funding and the pay award with a 2% funding increase and a 3% award allocated for the next academic year. The Teachers' Pension Funding increase has not been received to date for 2023/24 in sixth forms. Inflation remains an ongoing issue regarding some aspects of expenditure including transport and IT. The Trust operates in a competitive environment including a possible free school being opened in Stourbridge and a competitive offer of education provision affecting JKHS. A

breakeven of the EBITDA over the 3 years forecasted very low surpluses. The CFO is working closely with academies to manage pay costs as a percentage of income. Efficiencies are considered when staff resign or retire. In the event that the pay award agreed for the sector is higher than the budget this will create shortfalls to the budget. There are uncertainties regarding funding in the autumn term.

The Chair of the F&E Committee reiterated that the Committee acknowledged that the budget is extremely tight, but is confident that finances are being managed carefully regardless of the challenging circumstances and uncertainties.

The Board approved the budget 2024/25 and 3-year financial forecast for submission to ESFA.

SA Griffiths

8. Summary from Committees and reports from Committee Chairs

The summary from committees outlined key issues with the following items approved by the Board at the recommendation of committees:

- I. Audit & Risk Committee: 13 June 2024
 - a. Thorne Widgery external audit strategy memorandum and letter of engagement to 31 August 2024
 - b. TIAA internal auditor's audit needs strategy 2024/25-25/26
 - c. IT Strategy
- II. Finance & Resources Committee: 13 June 2024
 - a. HoM estates strategy 2024
 - b. Health and safety policy which is an overarching document for the Trust
- III. Curriculum & Quality Committee: 13 June 2024
 - a. Equality, diversity and inclusion policy
 - b. SEND policy
 - c. AI policy which had not been presented to the Committee due to timing of the policy forum but presented directly to the Board and approved for implementation in September.
- IV. Search & Governance Committee: 23 May 2024
 - a. Appointed Eve bound and Huw Lewis, Governors JKHS with immediate effect
 - b. Appointed Wendy Pickess, Governor WSFC with immediate effect
 - c. Appointed HSFC Jonathan Godfrey, Governor HSFC from 1 August 2024
 - d. Co-opted the following to Trust Board Committees:
 - i. C&Q Committee: Jamie Fox
 - ii. S&G Committee: Jonathan Godfrey (HSFC)
 - e. Appointed Peter Jackson as member of the S&G Committee
 - f. Agreed the Directors' self-assessment (using the NGA model questions) would be issued to Directors for completion during the summer

L Watkins

9. Governance:

The Board agreed to make the following appointments for 2024/25 at the recommendation of Committees:

- I. Chair: Ken Hopkins
- II. Vice Chair: Sheila Boniface
- III. Audit and Risk Committee: Craig Holden
- IV. Finance and Resources Committee: Shirley Tulley
- V. Curriculum and Quality Committee: Sheila Boniface
- VI. Search and Governance Committee: Peter Jackson

- VII. Remuneration Committee: Craig Holden
- VIII. The Director of Governance would invite Directors to express their interest in becoming the Careers, Information and Guidance Designated Director

L Watkins

The Chair thanked Jonathan Godfrey for his commitment to the Trust and ongoing support as a Governor of HSFC's LGB; everyone reiterated this.

10. 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
- II. Finance & Resources Committee
 - a. Estates report
 - b. Health and safety report
 - c. HR report
- III. Curriculum and Quality Committee
 - a. Student performance headline data
 - b. Safeguarding report
 - c. Student progression
- IV. Search and Governance Committee
 - a. Academies Code self-assessment (RAG rated)
 - b. Training and development report 2023/24-2024/25
 - c. Calendar of business 2024/25
 - d. Governance development plan 2023/24

11. Summary from LGB meetings

- I. WSFC 5 June 2024
- II. KE VI 12 June 2024
- III. HSFC 27 June 2024 to follow
- IV. JKHS 8 July 2024 to follow
- V. The Chantry 11 July 2024 to follow

Several Directors had attended LGB meetings this term. Directors' role at LGBs to be a link between the Trust and LGB; however, Directors are not expected to answer questions from Governors. Communications between the Trust and LGBs was discussed noting that current practices include circulation of summaries from Trust Board meetings, three LGB Chairs' meetings and regular meetings between the Director of Governance and LGB Clerks. It was agreed that the CEO would prepare briefings for LGBs each half term which will assist Directors in their role at LGBs.

L Watkins

12. Any other business

John Hodt commented that the meeting had been very useful supporting LGB Chairs being invited to attend a meeting once a year.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 17 October 2024 commencing at 6.00 pm HSFC (TBC).