

# Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020 at 18.00

Virtual Meeting via Zoom
ACE Schools MAT
Unit 3 Ensign House, Parkway Court,
Longbridge Road, Marsh Mills,
Plymouth PL6 8LR

### TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs Annette Benny – Chair of Trustees. Mr Denis Parsons – Vice-chair of Trustees. Mr Peter Cubbon – Trustee. Mr Peter McDonnell – Trustee. Dr Tim Searle – Trustee.

### IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr Gavin Gracie – CEO.

Mr Tim Thexton – Observer and Trustee in waiting.

Mrs Hannah Smart – Head of ACE Tiverton.

Mr Lee Earnshaw – Head of Courtlands.

Mr Matt Bindon – Head of ACE Schools Plymouth.

Mrs Andrea Chick – PA to the CEO/Clerk to the Trustees/Administrator ACE MAT.

Minute No.	Agenda Item	Action
1.	WELCOME, SIGNING OF ATTENDANCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST REGISTER.	
	<b>AB</b> welcome everyone to the meeting. The video call was evidence of meeting attendance, no declarations of interest.	
	Mr Tim Thexton attended the meeting as an observer while he waits for his DBS check to be completed.	
2.	TO NOTE APOLOGIES.	
	Mr Denis Parsons would be arriving late.	
3.	APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25 <sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020 AND 16 <sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2020.	
	It was RESOLVED that:	
	<ol> <li>The minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.</li> </ol>	
4.	i. Matters Arising from the meeting of the 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2020.	
	4. Matters Arising: i. Education and Safeguarding Chair's Report: Parking at North Hill.	
	ACTION: AB and GG to follow up in August 2020. Carry forward.	AB/GG
	5. Flash Training:	
	Carry forward to next meeting to identify progress and priorities for training.	
	6. Head teachers' Update:	
	ACTION: HEADS to work with GG to start the short, medium and long term (September) planning and report back to Board meetings.	GG
	All planning is in progress, end of year forecast virtually completed with short term budget reviews starting next week with completion 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> week in June. Next F&A committee is in July but <b>GG</b> would like to complete as soon as possible	
	ACTION: Trustees to discuss with GG support and help for the staff. Carry forward.	Trustees
	ACTION: GG to discuss with Trustees and Members what will the wash up plan be. Carry forward	Trustees Members GG
	8. Chief Executive's Report:	
	ii. Medical retirement of the HR Manager. ACTION: AB and GG to discuss further.	AB/GG
	An approved final date of employment is 31st May 2020. <b>AB and GG</b> will arrange a gift and card.	Trustees

## ACTION: All Trustees to send AB wording for a card by the 29<sup>th</sup> May.

**Trustees** 

11. Meeting Planner:

ACTION: TRUSTEES to look at the meeting planner and report back to GG with any further comments.

No feedback has been received. The planner needs to be built around the business with a number of things still to be considered. The E&S committee and Clusters have identified some key priorities between now and the end of the academic year. Clusters have areas to focus on and they will feed through to the E&S committee to avoid the duplication of meeting material. Chairs' meetings will be instigated so the Board priorities are clearly communicated and understood by the Clusters.

# ACTION: AB and GG to set up the Chairs of Committee meetings.

AB/GG

- ii. Matters Arising from the meeting of the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2020.
- 3. ii Approval of the Business Case.

ACTION: GG to circulate the written project report as discussed.

The Business Case has not been circulated. Lengthy discussions with the working party have taken place along with movement from the ESFA. A draft response will be ready after the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2020 as per the CEO's report. The ESFA have moved some of the goal posts which have had to be re-addressed with **GG** in continuous dialogue with the ESFA and DfE. The ESFA have approved 5 days of funding for the RSMA who is an independent advisor to both parties, to work with the Trust who will come into to look at the business case, complete reports for the Board and the ESFA and DfE. Soft marketing has received a few parties of interest. **GG** thought this will be left with the working group and will circulate a short report. **TS** advised the working group had only met the previous week with several political hurdles to work through in order to progress. **AB** would like to be clear from the outset what the Trust is working towards.

18.28 **DP** entered the meeting.

ACTION: GG to circulate a short report.

GG

# 5. **SMRA REPORT.**

The report sets out certain benchmarks and the performance of the MAT focusing on certain areas. The ESFA gave the SMRA certain points to concentrate on and to go through the requirements set out eg governance and the ability to grow so the report is run from these points. The SMRA visited the schools and also mainly looked at the 3 year forecast. She was specifically looking for the nature of the meetings, dynamic challenges and how they have been recorded ie record the proposal, challenge and decision as minutes should not be too verbatim and records what was meant rather than what was actually said. **AC** stated there needs to be a balance as the context of the discussion also needs to be recorded for the challenge and decision to make sense. **TS** suggested an adjustment as some people would want the verbatim but be clearer in the frame work. **PC** advised the minutes should show what the Board is being asked to look at, the feeling of the debate and key points and the decision made.

Work is in progress with the F&A committee with a new 3 year forecast. The Financial Scheme of Delegation is on hold which ties in with the late arrival of funding. Risk around petty cash and credit card fraud is currently being reviewed.

The DfE Information About Schools is up to date.

PCC are cutting funding places which will deplete the budget; however this is being reviewed by PCC around concerns on the circulation of pupils within schools. The MAT are looking at various solutions and are trying to avoid staff redundancies. This is included on the Risk Register. **PC** asked if any external pressures could be placed on PCC. **MB** informed a national project is ongoing around national funding levels.

The contracts register/supply list is part of the purchasing project which is being monitored by the F&A committee and is ongoing.

The new Risk Register which is populated via the F&A committee is near completion and will be a continuum document at each Board meeting showing changes from the previous meeting.

It was **AGREED** to have the Risk Register on every Board meeting agenda.

### It was **RESOLVED** to:

- i. Focus on Governance and recording of meetings.
- ii. Produce a framework for key points each academic year.
- iii. Minutes to be read and feedback given as soon as possible.
- iv. Link each item back to the key objectives of the Trust and legislation.
- v. Trustees to be aware of their duties and responsibilities.
- vi. Papers authored to be referenced to the Financial Handbook and other documents.
- vii. Study the detail in the Governance Handbook which gives a clear focus for the Board and sub-committees.
- viii. Complete a half yearly check list and document resolutions completed.
- ix. Trustees complete a self-assessment of what has been achieved as a group and individually at year end.
- x. Have a formal end of year scrutiny report and be clear what will be reviewed over the next few months.

### ALL

### ACTION: ALL to re-familiarise themselves with:

- Academies Financial Handbooks 2019.
- Governance Handbook (updated March 20219).
- Governance Competency Framework.
- Governance Clerking Competency Framework.

### 6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT.

**GG** has been in discussions with the RSC and ESFA who are seeking reassurance on a number of points. **AB** asked if there were any particular areas which need to be concentrated on. **GG** and the working party are addressing all areas piece by piece and substantial progress is being made but the Trust still remains under scrutiny. 5 days funding to assist with the project has been approved by the regulators and the previous SMRA has been appointed to assist. **TS** had concerns about the regulators but understands the Trust is under scrutiny especially as the outsourcing of central services is a novelty for them. **GG** explained normally the concept of a MAT is to provide the benefit of scale to obtain a better level of service but the cost is very high even though costs have already been greatly reduced but still resulting in poor service levels. The question the regulators are asking is if costs are already driven down and the service level still poor, why don't the Trust re-broker the schools.

The MAT has demonstrated to be in control, following the least cost option for a workable platform which is making them excited about the outsourcing proposal. **PC** understands there is an element of pace as well as making sure the MAT doesn't slip back. Staff resources are low so Trustees can help by working the project through the F&A and E&S committees. Other experts have been brought in to lead and focus on certain areas.

Applications have been submitted for de-amalgamation of ASP (Plymouth, Cornwall and Exeter) but will be a slow process. Both LAs are relieved as they see this as a commitment

to longevity and the areas. Cornwall Council will do everything they can to find appropriate accommodation.

Project Blaze soft marketing is underway but is a little behind schedule due to Covid-19.

GG, Heads and Business Managers are drafting SLAs for Central Service functions.

Schools are closing for half term and plans for re-opening on the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020 are well advanced. The MAT schools model rotas have been picked up and used by other schools in the area.

**GG** has been sending a monthly report to the RSC and ESFA and will now send a weekly rather than monthly report to the Board and Members.

The Board noted the report..

PC left the meeting.

### 7 HEAD TEACHERS' REPORTS.

ASP have delayed their phased re-opening until the 8<sup>th</sup> June due to the risk to staff confidence in returning too early. A full JCNC meeting was held with the unions on the 19<sup>th</sup> May with a further meeting between **MB** and staff reps on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. This wasn't sufficient time to consult with members and renegotiate rotas to ensure reassurances to staff. The JCNC reviewed risk assessments for building and staff safety.

The Trustees asked for assurance the appropriate risk assessments are in place and how this assurance will be given. Trustees will oversee and challenge the assurances on the decisions made by the Executive team in an appropriate way.

**GG** confirmed school operating reports and plans are being submitted to him to monitor but any decision made and process needs to be dynamic due to the speed of events and changing government guidance and decisions.

**PM** had, via the E&S committee, received excellent safeguarding reports from all the Head teachers therefore has had assurance.

**TS** asked **GG** to include this topic on his weekly update as this will give the Trustees the opportunity to work through the challenge and be satisfied.

### ACTION: GG to include risk assessments in his weekly update.

**HS** reported successful recruitment to a full complement of staff ready for September. **AB** was happy with the schools' safeguarding and welling for all but had concerns for families who now had little or no income and would be eligible for free school meals. **HS** advised food boxes are being delivered and she is using the budget slightly differently but funding for free school meals will catch up in the end.

**DP** left the meeting.

Courtlands are having a slow staged increase in numbers and rotas are being prepared to move from a 3 week to a 2 week cycle as numbers increase.

The first exclusion in 12 years at Courtland took place earlier in the year with a MAT Exclusion panel held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2020. The exclusion decision was upheld by the panel which was challenged by the family. The matter is referred to an Independent Review Panel sitting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2020.

The Board noted the Heads reports

GG

### 8. PROJECT BLAZE.

**GG** detailed the IT and HR expenditure for carrying through the project until the beginning of September 2020. Delt have assisted with the IT project via staff working groups. This will give due diligence for the outsourcing project, IT assets and contract register. The first prototype will be completed within the next week to 10 days and will be issued to each working group member to test drive by the middle of June. Once testing is complete and agreed, the full-blown model can be developed. Full IP and ownership of the prototype with the timeframe enough to go with the preferred outsourcing option.

The HR project is six months behind for various reasons. The approach is:

- Looking at recruitment process.
- · Reviewing of policies and procedures.
- Appraisal processes will be built into a dynamic framework within the whole
  organisation with middle management starting to have 1-1s with their staff
  encouraging staff to have a strong development path within their career and the MAT.
  This will ensure a much wider process through the year. The purpose is to encourage
  management at all levels to have a management overview with the people they are
  trying to manage.

The second part of the quote is to provide temporary cover the HR and Payroll Manager for the current time. The benefit of doing this has already pulled a great deal of expertise into the organisation rather than using an external body for these skills.

AB asked GG to confirm if the quote was including VAT which he confirmed it did.

**AB** queried the financial functions of signing of a single tender action and what was required. **GG** advised the process was being done in accordance with the Financial Handbook and because of the speed in which things need to be completed for the new academic year there is no time to work through three tenders.

**PM** asked if there were any IP obligations with Delt. **GG** advised all IP elements are retained by the MAT and is written into the contract.

**TS** asked for confirmation the software was a combination unique to the MAT. **GG** stated the project is designed to facilitate a single log on across all platforms, simplify access to data platforms used, and to move to the Cloud. There is nothing unique to the MAT other than the overall system design. The IT project is approximately 2-3 days ahead of schedule and going well and HR have covered more ground than expected. Delt have fedback how motivated and engaged the MAT staff have been.

**TS** requested performance milestones to be constantly monitored along with interim contract reviews and performance tests. **GG** informed the software are starter packages which gets the MAT to certain stages, this then gives tools to implement internally and Delt will assist with the internal training. The initial financial request for Project Blaze was £50K to cover legal fees when the contract stage is reached.

AB asked for assurance the funding is available to continue, GG confirmed it was.

### It was **RESOLVED** to:

- i. Approve £30K including VAT for the IT project.
- ii. Approve £19K including VAT for the HR project.

# 14. **PART 2.**

 Approve the Part 2 Minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

	It was <b>RESOLVED</b> that the Part 2 minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees held on the 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2020 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.	
	ii. Remuneration and Nomination.	
	It was <b>RESOLVED</b> to accept the proposal of the CEO.	
	iii. Objectives of CEO. These are still to be completed and will be circulated as soon as by week ending 5 June ???	
15.	ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS.	
	An Extra-ordinary Board of Trustees meeting to be held during June regarding the business case.	
	The meeting closed at 20.15.	

Signed.	Date.
Chair	
Dates of Future Meetings:	

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 18.00 – 20.00

# ACTIONS ACE SCHOOLS MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING 20<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2020

Minute Number	Action	Who	Date to be completed by
4.	Matters Arising:		
	Re-appointment of Trustees:	AC	1 <sup>st</sup> week in
	ACTION: AC to send letters to the Trustees.	AG	June.
	i. Education and Safeguarding Chair's Report: Parking at North Hill.		
	ACTION: AB and GG to follow up in August 2020.	AB/GG	August 2020
	i. Matters Arising from the meeting of the 25th March 2020.		
	Flash Training:		
	Carry forward to next meeting to identify progress and priorities for training.	AB	6 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
	Head teachers' Update:		
	ACTION: HEADS to work with GG to start the short, medium and long term (September) planning and report back to Board meetings.		
	ACTION: Trustees to discuss with GG support and help for the staff. Carry forward.	Trustees	6 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
	ACTION: GG to discuss with Trustees and Members what will the wash up plan be. Carry forward	Members / Trustees/GG	6 <sup>th</sup> July 2020
	Chief Executive's Report:		
	ii. Medical retirement of the HR Manager.  ACTION: AB and GG to discuss further.		29 <sup>th</sup> May
	ACTION: All Trustees to send AB wording for a card by the 29th May.	AB/GG	29 Way 2020

A ii.	Meeting Planner:  ACTION: TRUSTEES to look at the meeting planner and report back to GG with any further omments.  ACTION: AB and GG to set up the Chairs of Committee meetings.  Matters Arising from the meeting of the 16th April 2020.  Approval of the Business Case.	Committee Chairs / AB / GG	ASAP.
	CTION: GG to circulate the written project report as discussed. CTION: GG to circulate a short report.	GG	ASAP
	MRA Report:  CCTION: ALL to re-familiarise themselves with:  Academies Financial Handbooks 2019. Governance Handbook (updated March 20219). Governance Competency Framework. Governance Clerking Competency Framework.	ALL	As soon as possible.
	CTION: GG to include risk assessments in his weekly update.	GG	Weekly