



Full Board and Members Meeting

Hybrid meeting held in person, and on Microsoft Teams

7th December 2022 at 6pm

MINUTES

Present: Sue Bailey (SB)(chair), Mark Williams (MW), Kim Taylor (KT), Jean Browning (JB), Rebecca Bierton (RB), Ilker Yoney (IY), Mike Westcott Rudd (MWR), Judy Ward (JW), David Olney (DO)

Apologies: Anthony Upshall (AU), Rebecca Ward (RW), Julie Perry (JP)

In Attendance

remotely: Genevieve Cowcher (GC), Tracey Richardson (TR), Stephanie Ward (SW)(Clerk)

No.	Minutes	Actions
1.	No pecuniary interests declared. SB introduced our members, Tracey Richardson attending from AZETS.	
2.	<p>Resignation of Ilker Yoney as Trustee, Appointment of Ilker Yoney as Member</p> <p>Sue Bailey asked if Agenda Item 5, the resignation as trustee and re-election as a member of Ilker Yoney could be brought to the first part of the meeting, to enable us to share the accounts.</p> <p>Ilker Yoney has come to the end of his term as a trustee, and SB contacted the members prior to the meeting to ask if they would welcome Ilker as a member. IY shared that his commitments at work have meant he has much less to commit to the trust. He felt that this was a good time for him to make the switch to member.</p> <p>SB formally thanked IY for his contribution and for his support with the acquisition of Riverside Meadows.</p>	

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	<p>IY left the meeting and SB asked the members about their thoughts. JB shared that her only concern was that IY had missed a number of meetings, but SB was assured that this was because of his external commitments and was assured that he would be committed as a member. DO and JW were also happy for IY to join the members.</p> <p>Therefore, IY is approved from this point forward as a member of the trust.</p>	
3.	<p>Annual Accounts</p> <p>TR explained the documents the trustees had which were circulated prior to the meeting. TR shared that the green pages pertain to the individual schools, whereas the main report covers figures for the trust as a whole. She then explained her reason for attending and that she would be explaining the annual accounts and answering questions, although not to the same level of detail as she did at the FPP meeting.</p> <p>TR explained the various sections of the report, and explained what each one is about. She noted that the first section had been amended to discuss Ilker Yoney's resignation as a trustee and reappointment as a member. She also noticed that the numbering on pages 7, 8 and 9 were wrong in the circulated copy, and had been corrected. As a result of the FPP meeting, some reserves have been delegated to recruitment and future training due to the opening of the new schools and to support the schools currently within the trust. The governance statement talks about governance within the year meeting attendance and internal scrutiny. There is a statement outlining trustee responsibilities, followed by the audit reports, and this shows the balance sheet and an assurance report which says during the course of the work of the auditors, they found nothing that would make the trust non-compliant. This is all standard wording.</p> <p>TR drew attention to a table which explains cash breakdown. This includes fixed assets, premises etc, but that the Local Government Pension Scheme valuation is what has made the biggest difference. At the end of the year, £1.18m is carried forward. £445k has been added to the training and recruitment pot, as we have identified as a trust that this will be needed to establish the new schools.</p>	

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	<p>The balance sheet runs from page 22, and page 40 note 19 marks the start of breakdown of funds between the different schools.</p> <p>TR opened to questions, and asked if anything needs to be explained further.</p> <p>MW asked, on the first page, heads of school were noted as Julia and Sarah. This suggests that they are the current heads. TR said that they were who were in post during the year to which the accounts refer, but that more information can be added. KT explained that this is detailed later in the report, with dates of resignation.</p> <p>SB asked the trustees and members if they had questions. MWR asked, on page 30, in the context of central services, that the services have been split 50/50 between SCA and RMA. Is this as an accounting device, rather than anything else? The institutions are different sizes, so is it to assume that it is for ease? GC said that it used to be different, but the time taken by the central team is closer to 50/50, and this is why. MWR thanked the team for clarification.</p> <p>MW thanked TR for her explanation and added that this was discussed at length by the FPP Committee, acting as Audit Committee, that there were no significant unresolved matters, no significant uncleared adjustments, and everything was within the realms of materiality, and thanked GC and the team for their hard work. MW therefore recommended approval.</p> <p><i>SB asked the trustees and members to vote to approve the accounts.</i></p> <p><i>All in attendance voted in favour of approving the accounts.</i></p> <p>SB said that at this point we need to sign the accounts, so TR can leave and take them with her. SB and KT signed the accounts and MW continued the meeting while this took place.</p>	
4.	<p>Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising</p> <p>MW asked if the trustees were happy for the minutes of the meeting to be approved, all voted in favour. No matters arising and all actions were completed,</p>	

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5.

Update from FPP committee and Audit committee

The bulk of the meeting held on 23/11 was discussing the accounts in detail. There was also a revisited discussion around the internal audit, and there remains a division of opinion. It was considered that we perhaps need to retender. There is the question of whether we need to continue, or go through the tender process again to find a new internal auditor. There was not much of an appetite to go through this again, but it is important to raise this now.

SB said that going through the process to find new auditors is not preferred, but rather that actually the concerns from the FPP/audit committee were taken into consideration for the next internal audit. GC said that she would recommend the internal auditor attends the next FPP meeting to discuss the process and the undertakings. SB added that the working papers were also suggested as something that could be presented at the meeting. MW noted that the preference was to continue to work with the current internal auditors to make sure we are satisfied with their processes and have seen evidence of their workings, MWR shared that retendering was not the preference, but it is important that we see the evidence that the internal auditor is compelled to share, so there is more transparency in how they arrive at their assumptions. MW will invite the internal auditor to the next FPP meeting.

Update from the TLW committee

The TLW committee met on 8th November.

One of the key things discussed, was the changes in safeguarding processes within the schools, which has been implemented. This has been a significant piece of work, and historic information has not been added to the system yet, due to the volume of work involved. Logs have gone down while staff get used to the new system. However, this is embedding well.

The Heads presented to the committee around key priorities. Alex Tomkins has a really deepened standing of how to build a curriculum and shared clear ideas on what he is working on with staff. RB attended the SCA AAG meeting and it is clear that Alex has lots of ideas to drive things forward. Andrew Armstrong delivered a presentation as

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	<p>co-head at Riverside Meadows, and introduced the new behaviour systems that have been implemented. The students have gotten used to the changes implemented well and incidents within the school have reduced. Students are now in a points system where they are rewarded with treats, or supported with therapeutic interventions. The students are also being supported to wear uniform more frequently. It was reported that things are consistent across both sites. The rewards systems however are bespoke to both sites to accommodate for student needs. Andrew also shared about students who had gotten their GCSEs in the summer. The teams have taken a strong stance against assaults directed towards staff which has been well received by staff, and staff feel supported that we will back them when incidents happen. The behaviour policy is ready to approve and the pupil premium policy is coming.</p> <p>SB noted that the communication between SCA and RMA is much better and the schools are working well together. RB shared that while both heads are new, their reports are appropriate and well-focused and the meeting was incredibly positive.</p> <p>KT added that since the meeting there have been some datasets produced for the website, which can be problematic for SCA. KT has been working to get Andrew and Chris settled. Chris is the head at Wisbech, and Andrew is the head at St Neots. It's useful to know Chris has set up another SEMH and so is well equipped for the role. Caroline Place continues to support with EHCPs, and KT will talk more in her executive head report.</p> <p>SB opened to questions; there were none.</p>	
6.	<p>Chair comments and remarks</p> <p>As some trustees are aware, SB has been attending AAG meetings, as has RB. MW also plans to attend a meeting soon too. The heads of schools and governors get this opportunity to get more familiar with the trustees and build relationships, and SB suggested it would be beneficial to all trustees to visit as there have been significant changes.</p> <p>SB is revising the scheme of delegation. Now we have successfully appointed three heads, we are looking at the role of the CEO, which needs to be tied up with the job</p>	

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	<p>descriptions of the people involved. She has been meeting with EPM to get more information to advise trustees on the CEO role, and the implications on the scheme of delegation. SB will be sending everything out next week.</p>	
7.	<p>Executive Head Report</p> <p>KT shared her executive head report.</p> <p>KT shared that Ian Trafford who visited the last board meeting had given us some insight into the pressures the council were facing. However, the Children and Young People’s committee has approved the build to go ahead for Alconbury Weald. KT did some work over the summer on the recruitment plan, and we also need to look at the additional work that the LA want from us with regards to additional placements and the setup of satellite units. This will depend on a number of things, including the viability of buildings etc. These will be pupils similar to the cohort accommodated at SCA. KT said there have been letters received about the plans for September, and the LA want 209 pupils at SCA. There is now a class at Huntingdon Regional College where ten of our students have been attending. This will allow us to open a new class in January too. SB asked about the plan for RMA. If the LA ask for 20% more, this is classed as a significant change, which needs to be agreed by the board and may trigger a visit from the DfE to make sure we can accommodate the increase. It’s not as simple that the LA can direct us to take more students, although 10% more is usually acceptable.</p> <p>SB asked what our capacities were across the schools, and KT shared 77 on roll at RMA, but there was another meeting to agree new placements, which was for 12 places, and an additional meeting was held for year 7 intake, which could take us over the 90 places. Even when pupils on a reduced timetable are approved, they still hold a place at the school. Reduced timetables are usually for six weeks only, with a planned increase.</p> <p>In January there will be a visit to another academy trust who run 5 special schools with the intention to learn from their example. Succession planning has been discussed. The additional pupils is part of the councils SEN transformation strategy. We did do a</p>	

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project for Mayflower Road, which was the music hub, which was rejected despite all the work involved.

KT has started working with heads about a leadership review. There has been discussion about an operational leadership role, looking at a job description and a structure chart will be made.

There is also a plan around estates and facilities outlined in KT's report.

KT had hoped to bring the latest safeguarding report from RMA. It is very positive and there will be some additional DSL training, and the new Head Chris will be doing his DSL training with the Cambridgeshire model. KT attended the safeguarding secondary conference, and there was some training on children who self-harm. SB commented that KT had met with Julie Perry to create a safeguarding strategy, which will go to TLW in January with the intention of it coming to the board at the next board meeting. JP was pleased that the Single Central Records are effective and compliant in both schools, and that more people are recording concerns with suitable follow-up. There were a few allegations at the beginning of the term which have been concluded. There have been no recent exclusions at RMA. There has also been work done at RMA about restorative practice, and it's been helpful to the staff by providing a framework for problem solving and has been supportive regarding complex behaviours.

Three-Year financial plan: Accounts indicate that the trust is in a strong financial position.

Jon and Kim are going to survey staff around wellbeing, culture and belonging, as well as identifying other needs within the staff body. Staff 'knew what they didn't know' and identified training needs which was very helpful.

Quality Assurance model; SEF review have been done in both schools which will be discussed at TLW. RMA's main area of focus needs to be adaptive teaching. SB asked about the SEF review and asked about the gradings from that. For RMA there is room for improvement, especially around behaviour. When Chris joins in January, we believe that leadership will be stronger, as we have limited capacity at the moment until Chris

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starts. KT has looked at the September 2022 guidance to help her to make the decisions on how things were graded. At SCA, Alex is going for Outstanding, and is working very hard around that. KT is trying to get Alex to identify 'What is Extra Special' as many outstanding schools are missing out on their outstanding judgments. The team at SCA are quite behind Alex, and SB noted that Alex had been working on curriculum knowledge with non-teaching staff. Alex is moving the school towards being bedded in research. SB likes how Alex works with media and communication, and he is very forward thinking when it comes to communicating with parents. He held a Teams meeting recently for parents, of which 44 attended, which was successful.

RMA just needs more management time to do the quality assurance. RB said that in September there will be two more schools, how will this affect the school improvement cycle. KT said we will know quite soon how many children will be at Wisbech, and it is hoped there will be a deputy head at Wisbech to support the head. If we have confirmations of numbers for Wisbech, we will be advertising to expand the team. Once the building begins for Prestley Wood, advertising for the vacancies should start by the end of next term. SB noted to members that some money has been held in the reserves to allow us to set up the new schools, including a strong, positive recruitment drive.

KT has asked GC to look at the impact of the pay awards, and how the council will passport money in special schools.

KT opened up to questions: there were none. SB mentioned that we haven't had a trustee governance audit, SB has put this off before because academy councils were not established in the schools. SB asked how trustees would feel about an NGA trustee audit. RB added she felt it would be very useful. JP also has experience of this. DO added he has not had a governance audit in a school, but they have done is in a business, using IOD. It might be better to do this ourselves first rather than NGA first. There are a lot of useful guides available for board audits. Ilker noted that in a corporate context, the composition of boards has been assessed. It would be helpful to see what the backgrounds are and what is useful to the board.

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	<p>DO shared this link, noting that attention should be paid to the appendices: https://rcaoseducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Self-Evaluation-and-Skills-Auditing-for-Governing-Bodies.pdf</p> <p>SB asked how the board feel about doing our own audit first? MW said that this would be something worth doing at the strategy day in the summer, but to what extent would we publicise this? SB said that it would be shared among ourselves only, unless an irregularity was discovered. MWR said he could share some of the things he had done in producing evaluation questionnaires, and how these have been successful in teasing out bad behaviours and practices within boards. KT said there are self-evaluation exercises and questionnaires out there.</p>	
8.	<p>Steph read out something she had prepared around the board admin going forward.</p> <p><i>I'd like to thank you all for your patience as I've settled in over the past 10 or so weeks – there's always a bedding in period as I get used to new systems and I'm grateful that you've given me the space and support to find my feet. Jon and Kim have been an excellent help.</i></p> <p><i>One of my strengths as a person is that I am a systematiser. I LOVE SYSTEMS. I also love improving systems and streamlining, and as I've found my feet at Horizons it's become clear that we could be using systems a lot better to help us all. When I was trying to get back all the pecuniary interest forms for the audit, there was a lot of back and forward. Julie was also very helpful to point out this week that actually, personal email addresses should not be used for trust business. It's sensible therefore to try and make better use of the systems we have available to us.</i></p> <p><i>I've been liaising with Sue and Kim, and with Amy Spittle who is doing comms for the trust, and so before Christmas, I will be sending out a form to you all with the intent of gathering some information. All your headshots and bios are due for an update on the website, and I'd also like to ask some questions, some of which will be about how you all like to receive information, to enable me to better serve the trust, but to also refine some of the processes and simplify it for everyone involved.</i></p>	

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	<p><i>I will be sending this form to your Horizons email accounts. If you do not have a Horizons email account, this is probably something we should resolve. I'll also send an email to your personal email accounts notifying you that the email is in your Horizons account, on this occasion, although it would be preferable not to do this in the future. If anyone needs support in accessing their accounts on their devices, I can provide support with this.</i></p> <p><i>I also wanted to ask the question about the agendas – usually in my experience the person chairing a meeting or meeting of a subcommittee would write the agendas. I am happy to support this but perhaps a discussion should be had about the practicalities of this.</i></p> <p>SB mentioned that the website has an ability to login and download board papers. While this might be useful, Teams has the benefit of being able to work with documents collaboratively in real-time. SW will send questionnaire out to the board before Christmas with more information.</p>	
9.	<p>Confidential items: Redacted</p>	
	<p>AOB</p> <p><i>Signage for the Wisbech school:</i> First impression of the sign was that it was quite boring, and concerns were raised over sizing and alignment of the lettering. KT will go back to the designer. We would also like the trust logo underneath. Needs to feel more like a senior school or a college, not a primary school.</p> <p><i>Mark has requested a meeting date for spring, to either the 7th or 9th of February</i> Steph to send out a doodle poll.</p> <p><i>Risk Log has been worked on by the risk working group.</i> MW asked where risk sits within the governance structure. MWR noted that most risk registers are written from a financial risk model perspective. What we tried to do was put a taxonomy on the main risks and how we would highlight them. The RAG ratings is now used in the DfE handbook, and we would like to use this matrix with a simplified version of the risk log. The handbook however suggests that we need to be more dynamic. Risk logs can</p>	

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also be interminable, and so the idea will be to provide a summary of movement, hopefully a single sheet, of where the risk log stands and will highlight important items, such as where risks have improved or worsened, with a colour coded reference guide.

KT envisages this working in a way that she will present TLW-relevant risks to that committee, FPP-relevant risks to that committee, and any significant issues to the board as a whole. BM challenged the trust to get all risks on one page, and that he personally didn't want to know about Amber or Green risks, and only Red risks should be escalated to the board. If a risk has been mitigated, it can be retired and doesn't need to be on the live document. SB asked how KT felt about the risk register being only one document. KT shared that she felt it was quite daunting, but she has picked out things that are red, or 'worsening' amber.

KT shared that the intention for managing risks at school level is that there will be risk owners who have had appropriate training and they will be responsible for a checklist of things they need to monitor to mitigate risk.

MWR said about software for risk management, that this was previously too expensive, but now we will have multiple schools, it might be time to make the investment. The software would hold a full risk log, rather than just a summary sheet, so if trustees wanted to check they could, and risk owners could track progress within that too.

Meeting ended at 20:07

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