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Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE: 19 th March 2024	TIME: 6pm	LOCATION: Centre for Excellence, Waterton Academy Trust
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Attendees

Chair:	S Johnson	
Trustees	S Bates	A Goudie
	J Henson (<i>attending virtually</i>)	J Shaw
	L Harrison	J Wathen
Attending:	D Dickinson (<i>CEO</i>)	M-C Bretherton (<i>DCEO</i>)
Clerk:	L Clark (<i>Head of Governance</i>)	
Apologies:	K Davies, P Knox (<i>COFO</i>)	

ITEM	ACTION
1. Welcome	
The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. J Henson joined the meeting virtually on Teams and confirmed she could see and hear the attendees at the Centre for Excellence.	
2. Apologies for Absence	
Apologies of absence were received and accepted from K Davies (trustee) and P Knox (COFO). Trustees sent their condolences to P Knox following a bereavement.	
3. Declarations of Interest	
The standing register of declarations of interest was noted and no further declarations were made.	
4. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising	
The minutes and confidential minutes of the meetings held on 6 November 2023, 6 December 2023 and 17 January 2024 were available for review in advance of the meeting. Trustees confirmed they had read the minutes and there were no further questions or points raised.	
It was confirmed that all actions had been undertaken or would be picked up during this meeting.	
The minutes and confidential minutes listed above were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate reflection of the meetings.	
5. Safeguarding, Risk Register and Conditions of Care	
Trustees were updated that there are no qualifying safeguarding issues to report to trustees. Safeguarding is considered to be effective at Waterton, with audits currently ongoing across the trust.	
The risk register will be covered under item 6.	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>6. Audit and Risk Committee Feedback</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided a brief summary of the committee meeting which had taken place prior to this trust board meeting. The risk register has been updated showing actions / mitigations which have been implemented since the last meeting, which ensures that the committee have a clear oversight and are provided with assurances that effective controls are in place. The risk register will be shared on Teams for trustees for further comment and review and will be part of the reports for the trust board.</p> <p>Risk Appetite had been discussed in detail with the resolution from the committee that the ELT should bring the updated version to the next meeting, with a tolerance spectrum for each aspect of risk and an accompanying narrative to guide trustees.</p> <p>The internal scrutiny report which had been initially been prepared for the AGM had been updated to ensure that progress / recommendations can be tracked and addressed appropriately, and to provide assurance to the committee. There is a section on the scope for this year's internal scrutiny work which had been formulated from previous discussions of the committee and proposals from ELT. The scope had been agreed as follows; business continuity planning, succession planning, and reporting protocols for all stakeholders. Resolution: Trustees were asked for approval of the scope of internal scrutiny – this was agreed.</p> <p>Cyber-security had been added as a standing agenda item for the committee based on a recommendation from the recent cybersecurity internal scrutiny review, and it had been agreed that this remains as a stand-alone agenda item and that a brief summary be provided on cybersecurity each time for the committee to provide assurance in this area.</p> <p>A question was asked by a trustee whether there was an increased risk around pupil numbers and intake as he was aware that there have been fluctuations at other schools locally. The CEO explained that using birth rate projections schools have been identified where numbers may be lower and work is ongoing already to review staffing structures. Mobility clauses in contracts allows for staff to be re-deployed to another trust school. The situation is being monitored very closely. There was also a discussion and questions on risk associated with SEND figures and funding and ensuring that appropriate ECHPs are in place and that funding is achieved.</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee also highlighted that locality risk registers will be reviewed by ASCs with reporting mechanisms in place to escalate to Hubs/Trust Board, and risks around pupil numbers and SEND are prime examples of this.</p> <p>It was put on record that the Audit and Risk Committee meeting had been extremely robust and productive.</p>	HoG
<p>7. CEO Headline Report</p> <p>The Chair confirmed with the board that all had read the report in advance of the meeting. The CEO provided a brief top-line summary of the report with opportunity for questions.</p> <p>The conversion of Kings Oak Primary Learning centre (KOPLC) is still ongoing. Local Authority (LA) capacity is limited thus PFI documentation is expected shortly. Once received, the ELT will carry out due diligence and make recommendations to the trust board, for their scrutiny.</p> <p>A question was asked by a trustee on the risks involved with PFI and are there sector colleagues who have been through similar PFI conversions who could share experiences? The CEO advised that he uses networks regularly to explore best practice and the trust are also working closely with the solicitors who are specialists in this field.</p> <p>Newstead Academy is progressing well; given this the LA have approached the trust to extend with another provision. However, negotiations are ongoing with the LA due to the uplift in commissioning</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>cost from the trust. The CEO remained positive that this will be resolved and will report back to trustees at the next meeting.</p> <p>The work regarding the new build at Charlston is progressing well and further updates / plans will be provided in the next few months.</p> <p>The CEO & DCEO continue to conduct school visits, with invites extended to ASC governors, and trustees.</p> <p>Leadership Movement- Following a rigorous recruitment process the trust have appointed L Oldroyd as Headteacher at Charlston Community School. L Oldroyd is currently DHT at Normanton Common Primary Academy and will be taking up post in September 2024. Thanks were recorded to trustee L Harrison for being part of the panel. A DHT has also successfully been appointed at Cherry Tree Academy. An appointment has been made to the position of Head of People and Partnerships. Thanks were recorded to trustees J Wathen and A Goudie who were members of the interview panel. The first day of the Director of Standards interviews have taken place today and have been positive so far. Thanks were recorded for S Johnson and Member, A Warboys for supporting this process.</p>	CEO
<p>8. Governance Headline Report</p>	
<p>The Head of Governance drew attention to the report and the key points.</p> <p>L Harrison, Link Trustee for quality of education highlighted to trustees she had conducted monitoring visits to five schools to date, focussing on access to arts for pupils, and how the school has adopted strategies to promote a positive reading culture and reading for pleasure. Reports from all visits had been shared with trustees on Teams. L Harrison commented that the positives were that all schools were aware of the need to deliver this, but all were at differing stages of implementation. However, it was clear that schools are on the correct trajectory. A question was asked by a trustee about how support from home varied across schools. L Harrison explained that schools are working hard on engaging with parents, with varied results. It was noted that communication with the pre-schools could be improved further with more collaboration across settings with the schools. The CEO indicated that the EHT of pre-schools is encouraged to meet HTs of schools with a pre-school on site monthly to ensure collaborative working. In further discussion it was highlighted that this joined up practice should also be at schools without a pre-school. J Henson provided context to trustees on the importance of a cohesive early years curriculum and collaboration with schools. The CEO confirmed that this will be reiterated to HTs and the EHT of pre-schools to ensure this strategic collaboration is in place at all schools.</p> <p>In discussion and through further questions thanks were given to L Harrison for this powerful piece of work, providing trustees with a real insight into the arts and reading, and allowing the trust board to triangulate information. Once all schools have been visited, there will be common themes to pick out and action accordingly, with a summary of recommendations to be provided for trustees.</p> <p>The HoG drew attention to the Allowances Policy which required review and approval. The policy statement has been developed in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance, which states that boards in academies are free to determine their own policy on the payment of allowances and expenses, in line with their Articles. Payments can only be paid for expenditure necessarily incurred to enable the person to perform any governance duty. Trustees discussed in detail its applicability to Academy Standards Committee Governors (local level) taking into account potential costs and administrative workload and balancing this with recruitment and retention of governors and transparency. The importance of removing barriers to volunteer were raised, and the need to be open and transparent. However, there is also a risk in increased expenditure. An equality impact should also be added. It was agreed that the policy should add a section which states that allowances for governors will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.</p>	HoG

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Resolution: the Allowance Policy for Trustees was approved, with the additional section outlined above.</p>	
<p>9. People Committee Proposal <i>(separate paper)</i></p>	
<p>The DCEO began by drawing attention to the report which had been shared in advance of the meeting. The trust is at a pivotal growth point with an expanding apprenticeship offer and an increasing range of partners, and a dedicated People Committee will align with the appointment of Head of People and Partnerships and the broader objectives within the trust development plan, as well as providing focused governance and strategic oversight. As an apprenticeship provider the trust are due a full Ofsted inspection in 2024-25, and as such need to be prepared to demonstrate effective oversight and governance of this arm of work.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the paper, commenting on the complexity of apprenticeships and how it's essential that this governance scrutiny is in place.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees approved the establishment of the committee, with 3 trustees (quoracy of 2) to be members (HoG to contact trustees to seek members) and agreed that the first meeting of the committee be arranged for June.</p>	HoG
<p>10. Operations Main Report</p>	
<p>The report had been shared in advance of the meeting. The CEO summarised top level information and an opportunity was provided for questions and further discussion on key points.</p> <p>There has been a significant reduction in supply costs indicating that challenge provided to budgets are yielding results – at this point in time there is a 68% decrease from last year. There is a correlation of the work on management of staff absence and staff wellbeing, and the reduction in sickness absence.</p> <p>HTs receive the '5 priorities' report which focusses attention on these key areas and is proving to be very effective. A question was asked about the rates of support staff absence and the variance between schools and hubs. It was explained that there are a small number of long-term absences, for various reasons, which are skewing figures, particularly within the west hub. Further forensic work is ongoing, but indications show this is not a trend. If the long term absences are removed from the data then the support staff absence rate remains higher – this has historically always been the case, in part as support staff are often carrying out more than one role within a school and therefore the absence is logged within more than one section (e.g. a TA and a lunch time supervisor). The headline information is that when comparing absence rates from this time last year there is a decrease across all groups, which is a very promising picture. Further work is ongoing to embed a more rigorous stage one and two sickness absence management process and the response to absence triggers, and HT are working hard on this, as well as continuing to develop the trust wide culture.</p> <p><i>(J Henson withdrew briefly from the meeting at 19:05)</i></p> <p>Estates-</p> <p>The Charlston school rebuild, and the West End Academy decarbonisation project are still ongoing. Hub Supervisors continue to conduct repair works and provide valuable cost savings to academies. The Trust SLA for Health and Safety matters has come to an end. The trust plan to appoint a Health and Safety Officer on a part time basis, three days per week to support compliance in a more proactive way than has been seen with previous SLAs. This individual will also support with fire and other health and safety related matters.</p> <p>A question was asked around the snapshot of compliance and the element in red (overdue) and whether any of these posed a significant risk as the report does not give a sense of the nature of these issues. It was confirmed that these are not serious areas of risk – some have been delayed whilst other works take place and some are awaiting certificates, but none are a significant health</p>	CEO / COFO

ITEM	ACTION
<p>and safety risk to the school. A suggestion was made that where awaiting a report/certificate but where there was no compliance risk, these should not be represented in red within the report. It is vital for trustees that they can clearly pick out the 'red' risk areas on compliance and scrutinise these further.</p> <p>An overview of the range of projects across the trust was summarised, including a roofing tender. The Chair will re-visit KMA which has been transformed in the last six months. The estates team were praised for their work. Comments from trustees visiting schools and pre-schools were positive around the welcoming environments they had observed.</p> <p>Trust IT support is now provided by TurnIT On. TurnIT In employ technicians as well as educational consultants. M Berry, Data Officer is working with educational consultants on power BI reporting matters.</p> <p><i>A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to a set of confidential minutes.</i></p> <p>Trustee finance training was discussed and the possibility of holding this in a hybrid manner or recording the session. The priorities report for finance will also be reviewed to ensure it captures the most relevant information for trustees.</p> <p><i>(J Henson rejoined from the meeting at 19:15)</i></p>	COFO
<p>11. Standards Headline Report</p>	
<p>The DCEO summarised the key points within the report which had been shared in advance of the meeting, with opportunity for questions and discussion.</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the published progress data, now in the public domain, which is largely in line with what was anticipated.</p> <p>Cherry Tree Academy have recently undergone an Ofsted inspection. The academy began as a school that requires improvement. Following the inspection the school remains as requires improvement though it was detailed that the academy has made positive progress in the majority of individual elements. As was the case before the inspection key priorities are clear and it is hoped that the recent recruitment of a new Deputy Headteacher will support the delivering of key priorities.</p> <p>Newstead Academy have undergone a material change inspection following their opening inspection and can now take KS1 pupils. A further inspection is expected.</p> <p>The Ofsted inspection overview table was discussed. In response to questions the DCEO explained that based on the current evaluation (Feb 2024) there are three of schools who are 'good', but the quality of education requires improvement. In all three cases, the HT agrees with the evaluation and leaders have responded with urgency to make the necessary improvements. As a trust-wide area for development, noted within the trust development plan (1.2 Ensure the quality and impact of curriculum in each school, embedding secure subject leadership and assessment in both core and foundation subjects) a range of activities have taken place to support leaders in improving the quality of education. There is confidence that the schools will get to where they need to be when Ofsted inspect.</p> <p>Trustees asked questions on the early years data and the DCEO confirmed it was anticipated to be broadly in line with last year. Priority will be given to areas of provision that develop aspects of the curriculum in which children have low attainment when they start in EYFS – mainly communication and language, PSED and physical development. Analysis will be undertaken on early years outcomes in schools which have a Waterton pre-school compared to those which do not, and also scrutinising outcomes of pupils who attended Waterton pre-schools compared to those who did not. This year again there are high numbers of children with a high need SEND, some of whom may in the future</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>need specialist support. The Head of SEND and Inclusion is undertaking a piece of work to create a range of resources to support these children. There was also a discussion around CLL and how this can be used.</p> <p>Phonics outcomes also appear similar to the previous year. KS1 outcomes require some focus in specific academies. There are some gaps around writing, and although a more subjective judgement there are robust moderation processes in place.</p> <p>For KS2 outcomes, monthly data drops and pupil progress meetings are ensuring continuous focus on identifying pupils not on track, gaps in learning, next steps, and the timeframe to measure progress. There is still more work to be done on this but there has been improvement on producing accurate assessments and realistic forecasting. Moderation is critical to this. Trustees discussed specific challenges in relation to SKA, KMA and CTA (as detailed within the report).</p> <p>A wider piece of work around SEND is ongoing, led by the Head of SEND and Inclusion (Head of S&I), and a key focus of this is ensuring consistent approaches are applied across all schools within the trust. There is a review of TAs taking place, including their training and development and how they are deployed. This will have a very positive impact over time.</p> <p>Questions were asked by trustees on gaps within maths and the use of technology/AI to analyse this and address. The Trust Data Officer has been conducting work on this and supporting HTs.</p> <p>Attendance remains a significant focus for all schools though it is evident that some schools face greater challenges. A review of how the EWO (education welfare officer) and staff with attendance responsibilities at schools are deployed is taking place, to ensure the sufficient and appropriate use of time and resources. ASCs have had presentations from the EWO to provide information and context to governors on attendance and to support with how they scrutinise attendance data at their school.</p> <p>Whilst there are still challenges around suspensions and exclusion, in three schools in particular, on the whole there is an improving picture across the trust. There has been one permanent exclusion at SKA this year. This was reviewed by a panel in line with policy and upheld. An 'Avoiding Exclusions Toolkit' has been produced to support school leaders as they assure themselves that they are doing all they can to ensure that suspensions are being used appropriately. Through questions, trustees discussed that there is often an undiagnosed SEND or unmet need. An excellence document on behaviour, restorative practice and meeting the needs of pupils is in production. The CEO highlighted that he sits on two CEO boards and whilst the current Waterton picture is improved this is not the case for the Wakefield or Barnsley boroughs. The work which the DCEO and H of S&I is undertaking is making a significant difference, alongside quality first teaching.</p> <p>The DCEO highlighted the update on apprenticeships contained within the report and the interest in the level 3 TA provision. The work to lay the foundations for apprenticeships has been excellent, and now the trust is in a strong position to grow this area and drive it forwards. A question was asked by a trustee about the capacity to do this and how the delivery of programmes will be managed. The appointment of the Head of People and Partnerships builds capacity to expand, and the newly formed People Committee (of trustees) will monitor and have oversight.</p> <p>At this point feedback from the recent Pre-school Trust Board was raised by L Harrison who chairs that group and from the DCEO. There had been a detailed discussion at their meeting and a number of questions raised from the Executive HT of Pre-schools. A summary of the queries was provided, but the Chair drew this to a close and requested that a paper be prepared for trustees to allow appropriate time to review and disseminate information and questions, in order to make informed decisions.</p>	<p>COE / DCEO / EHT</p>

ITEM	ACTION
Trustees agreed and requested a written paper and that this be brought to the next trust board meeting for consideration.	pre-schools
12. Policy Management / Policy Update	
An update was provided that the policies referenced had all been considered, reviewed and approved by the Hub Boards. Resolution: Trustees confirmed approval of the policies set out within the report.	
13. Strategies Update (separate paper) - Sustainability Strategy (NGA Greener Governance campaign)	
<p>The CEO directed trustees to the strategies update summary which was available on Teams in advance of the meeting. It was noted that all strategies were on track or had been completed within the agreed time frames.</p> <p>K Davies, Link Trustee for Safeguarding had met with the DCEO around the Safeguarding strategy. Trustees commented positively on the summary which gives a clear picture of the strategic work to date and the progress made.</p> <p>The CEO is currently working on the sustainability strategy – part of the CEO appraisal focussed on this with the panel tasking him with this piece of work as part of the CEO objectives. An update will be provided at the next meeting.</p>	CEO
14. Trust Development Plan Progress Report (separate paper)	
<p>A progress update was provided by the CEO on the trust development plan framed around the ‘five pillars of an effective MAT.’</p> <p>A question was asked if there were any areas of concern on the one objective highlighted red around the Waterton ‘best practice’ guides - it was confirmed that more work is needed in this area and will be scheduled in.</p> <p>A question was asked on retention and professional development, and what needs to be actioned to ensure this objective moves to green. It was confirmed that there is an appropriate level of professional development but sometimes the capacity within the school can impact on this. Part of the work of the Head of People and Partnerships will be to drive this forward.</p>	
15. Water10 Update - verbal	
<p>A brief update was provided, including on communications to parents and children around what they would like to see as part of the celebrations of the anniversary.</p> <p>There will be a launch in September of the ten entitlements of all Waterton children during their time at a Waterton school.</p> <p>Trustees commented positively on this work.</p>	
16. Any Other Business	
<p>Trustees were invited to ‘Waterton’s Got Talent’ (on Thursday 21st March, Normanton Junior Academy 5-7pm).</p> <p>J Wathen briefly updated trustees on the digital transformation strategy which he was supporting on, and the exciting work around this.</p> <p>L Harrison updated the board she was part of a band which would be playing at Kings Meadow to give children the opportunity to see live music performed.</p> <p>K Davies had submitted comments/questions to the Chair in advance as she was unable to attend. The Chair noted these had mostly been covered within the agenda items. A further comment was on the</p>	

ITEM		ACTION
	level of detail of the trust board report and whether trustees are able to clearly see the evidence of the impact of the work which is taking place. However, it was also noted that the monthly key priorities report works very well to pick up those key areas and the progress made against them.	
17.	Feedback to/from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Comments and Concerns	
	The Chairs of the Hub Boards provided a brief summary of their recent meetings, and the HoG drew attention to how the Hub Board draft minutes are shared with trustees which provided assurance to the board of the robust scrutiny and challenge. It was confirmed that the KMA and WA access to reserves had been reviewed and approved by the Hub Board.	
18.	Identification of Confidential items	
	A discussion within agenda item 10 was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes.	
19.	Confirmation of date and time of next meeting –	
	16 July 2024 6pm	

MEETING CLOSED 20:05

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 19 March 2024

Agenda Item N°	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
6	The risk register will be shared on Teams for trustees for further comment and review and will be part of the reports for the trust board.	HoG	asap
7	Update of extension of Newstead provision following negotiations with LA	CEO	Next mtg
8	Allowance Policy for trustees – to be updated	HoG	asap
9	Establish a People Committee (seek 3 trustees to be members) and schedule a meeting for June.	HoG	asap
10	Amend compliance report to clearly show 'red' risk areas	CEO/ COFO	For next mtg
10	Trustee finance training - arrange	COFO	asap
10	Ensure 5 priorities report captures most relevant financial information for trustees	CEO / COFO	For next report
11	Trustees requested a written paper on pre-schools (queries raised) and that this be brought to the next trust board meeting for consideration.	CEO /DCEO / EHT pre-schools	For next mtg
13	Update on the sustainability strategy	CEO	Next mtg