



Address:
 Waterton Academy Trust
 The Grove
 Walton
 Wakefield
 WF2 6LD

Waterton Academy Trust

Minutes of a Trust Board Meeting

DATE:

18th March 2025

TIME:

6pm

LOCATION:

Centre for Excellence, Waterton Academy Trust

Attendees

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

ITEM		ACTION
1.	Welcome	
	The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and those online confirmed they could see and hear those at the Centre for Excellence.	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
	Apologies of absence were received and accepted from J Henson.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	The standing register of declarations of interest was noted.	
4.	Review of minutes and matters arising	
	The minutes and confidential minutes of the meetings held on 5 th November, 16 th December 2024, and 30 th January 2025 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.	
	The Head of Governance provided an update on the actions, and it was confirmed that all actions had been undertaken or would be covered during this meeting.	
	The minutes and confidential minutes listed above were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate reflection of the meetings.	
4a.	Minutes and feedback from committees - People Committee	
	J Wathen, Chair of the People Committee provided a brief summary of the meeting of the committee held on 14 th February 2025 which had included; reviewing progress on the People	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Strategy; the enhancement of HR reporting; the work of the wellbeing network; the acknowledgement of the challenges around recruitment especially in the more challenging schools; HR KPIs and the assurance on these.</p> <p>There had been a robust and in-depth review of the apprenticeship business plan and using the platform of being an outstanding provider to invest further and grow the provision to the next phase. There has been success to date through secondments and the work of the DCEO and CLT, but appointing someone to lead this area will be key to the development and growth of the provision. The committee supported and approved the business plan and reiterated the need to invest sufficiently for the success of the apprenticeship provision.</p> <p>- Audit and Risk Committee</p> <p>J Wathen had chaired the Audit and Risk Committee held prior to this trust board meeting, and he provided a brief summary of the committee meeting. There had been a focus on cybersecurity and assurances sought that following an audit, that the IT services provider had appropriate back-up systems in place across the trust and that outstanding recommendations had been actioned. A review of their work by an external advisor had been requested as part of the next cycle of internal scrutiny / audit work. There had been an incident today whereby an email account had been compromised and the committee had requested a report on this for their next meeting. The risk register had been amended to reflect these matters and cybersecurity increased to a red rating. There had been positive work on the risk appetite statement and the committee had asked for a link to be included between this and the risk register as one informs the other.</p> <p>A question was asked about how prepared is the trust at any level of the organisation for cybersecurity attacks? The CEO responded that there is a trust lead, regular reporting, a standard operating procedure in place, and any learning is communicated to all across the trust.</p>	
5. Safeguarding / Health and Safety	
<p>Trustees' attention was drawn to the update on the CEO report regarding the ongoing qualifying safeguarding issue, highlighting that there had been no communications on this as per guidance from external authorities, and the LADO has indicated that more will be known on the investigation by the end of the month when the case is submitted. No further discussion was held.</p> <p>The CEO also briefly outlined a health and safety claim which had gone to the insurers involving a child who had climbed a fence and injured themselves. An update will be provided to trustees in due course.</p> <p>There were no other safeguarding or health and safety matters to bring to trustees' attention.</p>	
6. CEO Headline Report	
<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 range of networking and system leaders' activities was highlighted. An update on the conversion of Kings Oak was provided with delays continuing, in part, to the fact that this is a PFI conversion. This will be formally discussed at item 7.</p> <p>Jump Primary School in Barnsley has made numerous visits to the trust and since trustees last met, the ELT has visited Jump and presented to governors. The school have now communicated that it is their ambition to join the trust and as such the formal due diligence process has now commenced with a September 1st date being put forward. A due diligence report will be provided to Trustees prior to conversion.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Things are progressing positively with Altofts Junior School. Governors were impressed with the trust offer and have since visited a number of Waterton academies and it is looking likely that they will present a formal request to join the trust. Given that the children from Lee Brigg feed into AJS, this would be a very important development.</p> <p>As previously communicated with trustees the conversation with a trust regarding them joining Waterton has come to an end, as it had become apparent that the trusts were not aligned in their values.</p> <p>As shared at the Autumn Board, the trust was invited by Wakefield LA to submit an expression of interest (EOI) to open an academy under the same arrangement of Newstead. The EOI was successful, and work is now underway to progress this in readiness for a September.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees confirmed their approval to submit the application to the DfE for Hammer Lane.</p> <p>The CEO provided a leadership update that Claire Love has been appointed as CFO and joins after Easter. The HR Manager has settled in well and has brought innovative approaches from his previous organisation.</p> <p>The Audit and Risk committee had discussed the issues and frustrations with the IT Services contract, with the challenge set that a review is required, and confirmation that the trust will be going out to tender if matters are not resolved.</p> <p>Yvette Cooper, The Home Secretary and Labour MP for Pontefract, Castleford & Knottingley, has requested a visit to CTA during this academic year. Once a date is confirmed, trustees will be alerted.</p>	
7. Approval of conversion(s) (due diligence reports)	
<p>The CEO drew attention to the detailed due diligence report on Kings Oak (KOLC) which had been uploaded in advance of the meeting. This had been prepared by the ELT and CLT following meetings with KOLC staff, visits to the school, and detailed robust review of reports.</p> <p>A top line summary was provided including that the building was in good condition and well maintained; standards were good, with some issues but these could be rectified; some concerns around staffing and budget including that leadership costs were high for a primary school with a lot of non-contact time; the number of support staff is quite high; suspensions are high; the location and future growth into Barnsley makes this a good opportunity; the school meets the profile of Waterton and their vision and values are well aligned.</p> <p>A question was asked about what the community feels about the conversion? The CEO replied that feedback has been positive. Letters had been sent out, and a parents / community evening was held which he had been part of; albeit there had only a small number of attendees, but all had been receptive.</p> <p>A question was asked around the financial picture of the school, with reference to the discussion at the Audit and Risk committee about risk appetite.</p> <p><i>A discussion was deemed as confidential and moved to the confidential set of minutes.</i></p> <p>A question was asked about admissions and if there was a risk to not achieving the full intake? The DCEO explained that this has not been tracked in detail, but the school achieves the full intake each year and this has not been highlighted as a risk area.</p>	

ITEM		ACTION
	Resolution: Trustees reviewed the due diligence and formally approved the conversion of Kings Oak.	
8.	Trust Development Plan – update	
	<p>The DCEO provided a brief summary of the trust development plan (TDP) highlighting how the trust had evaluated against the 5 pillars of a successful MAT as set out by the DfE with a review in place each year. There is general positive progress to date, with two areas slightly not on track. IT issues have been covered; HR is partially on track and with the HR Manager now in place there is confidence that this will move forwards quickly. Behind the TDP is a detailed operational plan for each area with termly milestones, priorities and clear ownership.</p> <p>The DCEO asked trustees if this was a useful summary and do trustees find it beneficial as an agenda item each meeting. Trustees confirmed they do, and that it provides assurance that the key strategic priorities are being met.</p>	
9.	Strategies in development - progress	
	<p>The DCEO highlighted the progress report which provides a synopsis of where the trust is in relation to the range of strategies in development. There are a significant number of projects and lots of work ongoing.</p> <p>The piece of work around the digital transformation strategy has some progress but is not on track. Some aspects of the work have moved forwards significantly, but others are limited by the issues faced with the IT services provider, as previously highlighted.</p> <p>A question was asked about whether the report could be improved with an impact assessment? There was a discussion and questions about the mechanism for measuring the impact of the strategies, and if a trustee link visit could review this piece of work, or if a committee(s) could focus on the areas pertinent to them, and how to make this explicit on the report. The DCEO will add a column on the report with a high-level impact analysis, and review if it could work well for committees to look in more detail at the strategies within their remit.</p>	DCEO
10.	Governance Report	
	<p>The Head of Governance (HoG) drew attention to the report and the key points, highlighting the piece of work around the Scheme of Delegation (SoD) which had been reviewed and benchmarked against other trusts, using the NGA (National Governance Association) and CST (Confederation of School Trusts) guidance tools to ensure the document is relevant, appropriate, and in line with current sector documents. The proposed new version had been uploaded to Teams for review, comment, and approval. It was noted that a new key has been utilised to make it explicitly clear where the accountability is; where responsibility for delivery lies; where consultation is required; and those groups to be informed. It was further explained that are no fundamental changes proposed to the way in which responsibilities are delegated; these are largely in line with current practice. The way in which responsibilities are grouped has been changed to a more easily understandable format aligned with the statutory accountability of the trust, and with greater detail on each area. Once approved it will be uploaded to the trust website and communicated to Hubs and ASCs.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees reviewed, commenting positively on the new format and approved the SoD.</p> <p>The HoG also drew attention to the People Committee reporting overview and trust board oversight, referencing the report and the details of what is reported to where to ensure that the right information reaches the right governance levels, supporting both effective oversight and informed</p>	HoG

ITEM	ACTION
<p>decision-making across the trust.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees were assured by the reporting arrangements and concurred with the approach.</p> <p>An update was provided on the re-appointments of Joanne Henson and Kate Davies for a further term of office (to 21/02/2029) by the Members board.</p> <p>A trustee posed a question around the summer term budget approval reporting schedule and whether trustees should have an additional meeting in advance of the summer board meeting to review the budget in more detail before approval is required? There was a robust discussion and challenge around the role of the hub boards and their input into the scrutiny of financial information, and whether, as this was not a holistic trust-wide scrutiny but a school/hub level analysis, did it afford trustees the level of assurance required around the trust budget. The chairs of the hub boards explained that the hubs were able to delve deeper into each school and had the time to do so. Trustees agreed that this approach allowed a greater level of detail for hubs, but equally, it was still felt that the trustees should have more time allocated to provide their overarching scrutiny and challenge of the trust-wide budget in keeping with their core strategic function of monitoring the financial performance of the trust. A suggestion was made that the summer trust board meeting be brought forwards. However, the HoG explained that this would then impact on the hub boards as these had been scheduled in for two weeks ahead of trust board and the reporting schedule would not be effective if these meetings were not ordered this way.</p> <p>The ELT and HoG were tasked with reviewing the current approach and proposing an appropriate way forwards to ensure trustees have adequate time to scrutinise budgets in the summer term; and also the governance reporting and schedule for the next academic year.</p> <p>L Harrison, link trustee for the quality of education provided a brief summary of the visits she had conducted since the last meeting and drew attention to the reports uploaded to Teams. Trustees thanked L Harrison for her time in undertaking these visits commenting positively on how it provides the board with context alongside the standards report.</p>	<p>ELT and HoG</p>
<p>11. Operations Main Report</p>	
<p>11.1 Finance</p> <p>The COFO summarised some of the key points within the finance report. In the autumn budget announcement, the new Labour government announced a £2.3 billion increase in core funding for schools, with £1 billion allocated for SEND provision, of which £740m was to increase the number of places for SEND pupils in mainstream settings. The COFO detailed that although this may be seen as an increase, in real terms, in reality the number of pupils with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) has risen dramatically and is a constant strain on schools' resources as allocated funds do not meet costs. Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) is to be increased as well as pupil premium rates which is of some aid though this falls short of the substantial funding that the sector needs.</p> <p>The COFO drew representatives' attention to the Kreston report made available via teams. The report highlights the uncertainty over future funding levels. The COFO also highlighted the reporting available on the new analytics platform within the trust financial management software and expressed that the intention was to make interactive data available for more in-depth exploration for reporting to trustees.</p> <p>The COFO reiterated that the trust is still in a strong financial position despite the continuing funding challenges, assuring trustees that financial management remains robust and that the trust is not complacent in their approach.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>The COFO advised that four applications from schools for access to reserves had been received since the autumn meetings. All applications have been approved by ELT as works were urgent and needed to be accommodated into installation and capital works programmes. A brief update was provided on the successful grant application for the EV chargers, and that CTA had been successful in securing funds from a local energy plant to purchase a minibus which can be used across the trust. The COFO is supporting the Headteacher with the procurement process for this to explore all possibilities. A brief update was also provided on the issues relating to the catering provider and the lack of consistency in quality across the trust. The Hub Board has discussed this in more detail, and the challenge to the ELT that there must be equality in the catering offer for all academies.</p> <p>The Salix bid to replace the boilers with ASHP, solar panels, insulate where appropriate and replace any inefficient windows has been successful and the project is in total £2.7M.</p>	
<p>11.2 HR</p> <p>Attention was drawn to the HR report. Recruitment challenges relating to HLTA roles were discussed. It was also highlighted that whilst some of the leadership roles are still out for advert, others have not been successfully recruited to. There is a trust-wide piece of work on succession planning to identify future leaders and provide development opportunities which, in time, will address this. Recruitment to TA positions, however, has been very good.</p> <p>The sickness absence rate is improving, and HR casework continues to be managed well.</p> <p>The new HR Manager has settled in well, using innovative approaches in particular around HR data reporting.</p>	
<p>11.3 Estates</p> <p>A significant amount of work has taken place around the new build at Sharlston, including a number of client engagement meetings, with things moving forwards exceptionally well.</p> <p>Discussions have been taking place with department leads regarding capacity, particularly in the estates function. Systems and efficiencies are being reviewed at this stage rather than recruiting to departments, and as schools join the trust it may be that there are individuals employed at the schools who have the skillset to add capacity to the central team as the trust grows.</p> <p>The trust compliance SLA is ready for review. The trust will approach this by breaking down this large SLA into smaller SLAs to ensure that schools are getting an equal, efficient and best value for money offer.</p> <p>Investment in hub supervisors continues to be maximising efficiencies for in-house maintenance works, with middle level works continue to be undertaken by a best value company, and large works go to tender.</p> <p>The COFO also highlighted that Zurich insurance are tightening insurance conditions and have visited each site to assess, and therefore it may be prudent to look again at the RPA (risk arrangements for schools). In response to a trustee question, it was confirmed that the insurers are paying out for the health and safety claim outlined in item 5.</p> <p>A question was asked about the legionella checks, and it was confirmed that the trust is awaiting certification on these.</p>	
<p>11.4 IT Services</p> <p>It was noted that the current level of service had already been covered in detail earlier in the meeting and plans are in place to address the issues.</p> <p>Other IT updates were summarised including the gifting of some clever boards which are no longer used to schools and charities not connected to the trust and that issues with the phone system are now resolved. There was a discussion around a tender for a new IT services provider and confirmation that the current provider would be advised not to tender.</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>11.5 Data governance There had been no reportable data breaches. No further questions were raised.</p>	
<p>12. Education and Standards Headline Report</p>	
<p>The DCEO introduced the report, beginning by drawing attention to the page of the report outlining the updated school categorisation criteria to provide clearer distinctions between the levels of support required or capacity available. An overview was provided on how schools have been categorised into; capacity giver, core, targeted, intensive and intensive plus. This model focusses school improvement (SI) support. Only one school falls within intensive plus (KMA) and two within intensive (WPA and SKA).</p> <p>There will be some changes to the model of school improvement as the trust is consulting on how to create more collaboration formally among schools, to include clustering schools together, adding an Executive Headteacher (EHT) following the retirement of the Ackworth Mill Dam HT, portfolio leadership, succession planning, and a trust SENCO model. Trustees were updated that C Holloway, current EHT at CIS and LBIS has been appointed as EHT to AMD, and that L Welsh, current HT at NJA has been appointed as EHT of NJA and LBIS. Both are extremely competent, have the NHPQ qualification and this gives them career advancement and an opportunity to elevate their practice in line with the developing SI strategy.</p> <p>Since the trust board last met there have been four Ofsted inspections. Wrenthorpe Academy and Sharlston Community School were judged to have taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection, and both schools remain good. West End Academy underwent a section 8, ungraded inspection, evidence gathered at the inspection indicated that outstanding may be expected at the following graded inspection. Kings' Meadow Academy underwent a section 5 graded inspection achieving a 'good' judgment in four areas; and a 'requires improvement' judgment for quality of education. The school is receiving the intensive plus support from the SI team, but this is not a sustainable position and remains a risk. Trustees were assured that the HT is aware of the position. Trustees were thanked for their significant support in advance of, and during the Ofsted inspection, providing evidence of the improvement of the effectiveness of governance.</p> <p>The Director of Standards is driving forwards improvement, leading the education team, and the impact is tangible across all schools. HT and school collaboration is excellent, and this will further translate to raising outcomes. The monthly priorities reports sent to trustees summarises progress, and work to be done, and the latest report shows that the trust is still targeting 64% for combined outcomes at KS2 which is a significant move forwards from last year. Attendance across the trust is 95% which is above national. Suspensions are lowering, but there is still more work to be done on this.</p> <p>A question was asked by a trustee on how the KS2 outcomes forecasts were arrived at and were they benchmarked using a national tool? The DCEO explained that a forensic approach is used, based on each individual pupil and recent assessments, rather than using benchmarking data. This approach is felt to be accurate and gives confidence in forecasts.</p> <p>Trustees thanked the DCEO for the comprehensive report.</p>	
<p>13. Teacher Pension Scheme (TPS) Eligibility</p>	
<p>The CEO drew attention to the report uploaded in advance of the meeting, summarising that a debate is currently taking place across the educational system regarding the inclusion of senior leaders within MATs, particularly CEOs and DCEOs, in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS).</p>	

ITEM	ACTION
<p>Trustees discussed the report, noting that the current postholders joined on TPS and removal would be unjust and unfair. It was highlighted that the CEO and DCEO engage directly with schools strengthening their connection to the teaching profession, unlike some leaders in national / multi-regional MATs.</p> <p>Trustees felt it was an important conversation to have within in the changing landscape and should be reviewed holistically alongside remuneration and benefits, with new senior recruits having the option to withdraw TPS.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees unanimously supported the current arrangement that the CEO and DCEO remain within the TPS, as their roles provide direct leadership to schools, and an enforced removal from the scheme would be unjust. Future appointments to these position will have an option to withdraw from TPS as part of wider considerations of remuneration packages.</p>	
14. Policy Update	
<p>An update was provided that the policies referenced had all been considered, reviewed and approved by the Hub Boards.</p> <p>Resolution: Trustees confirmed approval of the policies set out within the report.</p>	
15. Any Other Business	
<p>The CEO and trustees expressed their thanks to P Knox for everything she had done for Waterton since its inception and wished her all the best for the future in her retirement. P Knox thanked the board stating how she had loved her time with the trust and working with wonderful colleagues.</p>	
16. Feedback to/from Hub Board and ASCs – Questions, Comments and Concerns	
<p>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.</p>	
17. Identification of Confidential items	
<p>There was a discussion within agenda 7 which was deemed as confidential and which has been removed to the confidential set of minutes.</p>	
18. Confirmation of date and time of next meeting –	
<p>The next trust board meeting will be held on 15th July 2025 at 6pm.</p>	

MEETING CLOSED 20:05

SIGNATURE:

DATE:

Actions from the Trust Board meeting held on 18 March 2025

Agenda Item N°	Summary of Action	Who?	When?
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9	Strategies in development; DCEO will add a column on the report with a high-level impact analysis, and review if it could work well for committees to look in more detail at the strategies within their remit.	DCEO	Before next mtg
10	Upload scheme of delegation to trust website and communicate to Hubs and ASCs.	HoG	asap
10	ELT and HoG were tasked with reviewing the current approach to governance and proposing an appropriate way forwards to ensure trustees have adequate time to scrutinise budgets in the summer term; and also the governance reporting and schedule for the next academic year.	HoG (and ELT)	Before next mtg