



ACES ACADEMIES TRUST

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting held on Tuesday 26th May 2020 4.30 pm
Via Zoom

Present:

Trustees

Mr Brian Message (BM), Chair
Mr Paul Fenney (PF)
Mr Cliff Fluet (CF) (from 5pm – 6.15 pm)
Mr Gary Weston (GW)
Mr Andy Rankine (AR)
Mr Bev Curtis (BJC)

In attendance

Mr Andrew Goulding (AEG), CEO
Mr Dave McMillan (DRM), Finance Director
Mrs Andrea Squires (Winckworth Sherwood Solicitors) (to 5.15pm)
Mr Mark Patterson (MJP), Principal – Hinchingsbrooke School
Mrs Hannah Connor- James (HC-J), Headteacher – Cromwell Academy
Mrs Debbie Warner (DW), Clerk

1. Apologies for absence
Apologies were received and accepted for Ian Phillips.
2. Declarations of interest
No conflicts of interest were declared.
3. To approve the minutes of the last meeting
Minutes of meeting of 21 st April 2020 were considered to be an accurate record of proceedings.
4. Matters Arising
There were no matters arising outside the agenda points for discussion.
4. Update on OLT (CEO/Andrea Squires)
<p>The CEO explained to Trustees that, since the last meeting, he has had an opportunity to speak with the CEO of OLT and was pleased to report that CCC has admitted there is an issue with the drainage on the playing field at GBA following a site survey. He added that the DfE are keen for all the schools within OLT to transfer at the same time requiring ACES to commence the TUPE process of OLT.</p> <p>Andrea Squires or Winckworth Sherwood Solicitors informed Trustees that she has reviewed OLT paperwork and prepared a report which she will circulate outside the meeting. She noted that OLT have only a tenancy at will in place and not a 125 year lease. She advised Trustees that it would be good practice to obtain the lease and ensure the building contract is novated in the case of any building defects identified in the future. She added that, although CCC have accepted responsibility, they have not indicated how to move forward, neither is there any certainty they will have the funds to rectify the issue.</p> <p>Trustees proceeded to questioning:</p> <p>Q: Should we proceed without the 125 year lease and novation of the building contract?</p> <p>A: It would be desirable to obtain the 125 year lease but CCC could grant this directly to ACES. She added that a tenancy at will, which is currently in place, will not prevent ACES from running the school but is not ideal.</p> <p><i>Cliff Fluet joined the meeting at this point.</i></p> <p>Q: In order to move into the TUPE process, does the Board need to agree to proceed based on the current situation?</p> <p>A: Agreement by the board is required to proceed further but there is no transfer liability until the final stage of the process.</p> <p>Further discussion by Trustees concluded that they were enthusiastic for OLT to transfer to ACES and acknowledged the educational benefits to the students and further opportunities to staff within the Trust. Trustees highlighted reservations about the drainage at the GBA site but agreed to move forward on the assumption a solution will be found with CCC, and in a reasonable timeframe.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed there were no objections to this proposal.</p> <p>Action: Winckworth Sherwood report to be circulated to Trustees – AS</p> <p><i>Andrea Squires left the meeting at this point.</i></p>

Signed:

Date: 09/06/2020

5.	Finance Report (FINANCE DIRECTOR/PF)
	<p>The finance report had been circulated prior to the meeting and the Chair noted that the forecast was looking more optimistic than the previous report. It was noted that the Hinchingsbrooke School forecast table was not included in the report and will be circulated separately.</p> <p>The Finance Director advised that the Trust forecast is £34,000 in surplus which is in part due to COVID-19. Additionally, the Principal of Hinchingsbrooke School, Mark Patterson, has been effectively recruiting good quality NQTs and there is efficient management of timetabling budgets. Hinchingsbrooke School Leisure continue to be furloughed and is therefore having no financial impact on the Trust. DRM referred to a potential Issue with Kids Club at the Cromwell Academy site with staff who are also employed at the school and cannot be furloughed. The impact of this is likely to be in the region of £10,000. The Finance Director also advised that the schools within OLT will also have reserves of their own.</p> <p>Q: Are the OLT reserves unrestricted?</p> <p>A: Yes, unrestricted, for education purposed.</p> <p>Q: Are there reserves because the schools are shut? Should we be looking at using our reserves to put more innovative learning in place for students to improve outcomes for these students.</p> <p>A: New initiatives are in place. Hinchingsbrooke School is looking to lease new laptops to help staff provide better online learning for students. Other online programmes are being considered and Zoom licences purchased.</p> <p>Q Is there any danger that CCC will refuse to finance the drainage issue at GBA if the MAT's reserves are identified?</p> <p>A: It is not thought that CCC will request this information.</p> <p>The Finance Director referred to the master budget which shows a Trust surplus of £182,000 for next year. This is based on assumptions of receiving maximum funding from the government. There are good student numbers at both Cromwell Academy and Hinchingsbrooke School and Sixth Form which is having a positive impact on the surplus. In addition, the Principal at Hinchingsbrooke School intends to restructure his SLT from September 2021.</p> <p>Some risks for Trustees to be aware of are that the pay award for support Staff is still unknown and the pay award for teaching staff is expected to be government funded but this is not confirmed.</p> <p>Action: Hinchingsbrooke School forecast to be circulated to Trustees – FINANCE DIRECTOR</p> <p>End of year reserves figure to be circulated to Trustees – FINANCE DIRECTOR</p>
6.	CEO's Report (CEO)
	<p>Contained in the report is a proposal for 2 further Trustees to be appointed to the board, Daniel Lewis and Chris Meddle. The CEO provided some background on their expertise and careers to date. Trustees unanimously agreed they should be appointed.</p> <p>The CEO informed Trustees that Academy Ambassadors will assist in identifying 2 new members.</p> <p>A brief discussion regarding rotation and succession planning of the board took place. The Chair stated that any Trustee who wished to be rotated out, should contact the Chair separately. This will be discussed in further detail at the board meeting in July.</p> <p>The CEO referred the previous meeting, where he felt a sense of urgency by the board to increase the MAT and is compiling a spreadsheet of secondary schools who are standalone academies. Furthermore, he has identified an opportunity to bid for a free school, due to open in September 2022 and is currently working on this.</p> <p>Action: Trustee rotation and succession planning to be discussed at July board meeting – CLERK</p>
7.	MAT Development (CEO)
	<p>Trustees confirmed they had read the report on MAT development prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The CEO advised that schools are unlikely to return to normal by September but was confident that by December 2020, the 2 schools in OLT should be part of ACES and another secondary school would be identified as a possible addition to the Trust by Easter 2021. The board were in agreement that the Trust, for the time being, was viable as a 4 school MAT and a lot of work would be involved with the OLT integration. A Trustee warned that concentrating efforts into the expansion of the MAT should not be detrimental to the outcomes of current students, especially in the current climate. Furthermore, it was easy to identify the benefit to primary schools as part of the MAT but this was less evident for Hinchingsbrooke School and this view was echoed by another Trustee.</p>

The CEO felt there had been a turnaround in the board's thoughts from the last meeting when a degree of urgency about growth of the MAT was indicated. He assured the board that now MJP has been appointed and leading Hinchingsbrooke School extremely well, he has more time to concentrate on expansion of the MAT. AEG informed trustees that he has submitted a TCAF bid to finance a survey of IT growth with a view to upgrading to more consistent IT equipment across the schools and make an appointment to drive ICT strategy forward. A Trustee stressed that it was important to identify what it required as there may other models to consider such as recruiting consultants on a project by project basis as and when required. It was agreed that the Chair will produce a paper on this and set up a meeting with a small group of trustees to map out the benefits. The newly appointed Trustee, Daniel Lewis, should be included due to his expertise in this area.

Action: Paper to be produced regarding ICT Strategy and meeting to be arranged with a small group of Trustees – CHAIR

8. Update from Cromwell Academy and Hinchingsbrooke School

Mark Patterson (Principal of Hinchingsbrooke School) and Hannah Connor-James (Headteacher of Cromwell Academy) joined the meeting at this point.

Cromwell Academy

Hannah Connor-James provided an update on the reopening plans for the school. Additionally, a video has been made to inform parents of the arrangements that have been put in place for the childrens' return on 1 June 2020. The board had seen the video and remarked that the reopening plans were well thought out and the video should provide parents with some reassurance. HC-J added that nearly two thirds of children were returning to school which was more than anticipated from a recent survey to parents.

HC-J answered questions from Trustees:

Q: How are the teaching staff feeling about returning?

A: A couple of members of staff have expressed difficulties in returning due to their personal circumstances. Several Zoom meetings have taken place, providing staff with an opportunity to air any concerns.

Q: Any hostilities from staff?

A: No, staff, on the whole, staff had been supportive of the reopening

Q: Would safety be compromised if any teachers were not in school?

A: Each fully qualified teacher is supported by a HLTA and there are some groups of children that could be run by a HLTA if lesson planning is supplied by a teacher. If 2 teachers in one group were absent, potentially that year group would be required to close.

Q: What provision is in place for the year groups that are not returning to school?

A: Home learning will continue and school closure on Friday afternoons will allow planning time for these learners. Additionally, children in Years 1 and 6 who are not returning to school will receive the same learning as those children in school.

Hinchingsbrooke School

Mark Patterson provided an update to Trustees on the wider reopening plans for the school. The plan for the wider reopening has been shared with all Hinchingsbrooke School staff and has been positively received.

Areas of responsibility have been split amongst teaching staff:

- To provide home learning for Years 7 8 9
- To provide teaching for key worker and vulnerable students
- To provide teaching for Years 10 and 12

From 15th June 2020, it is expected that Years 10 and 12 will be split into groups with each student attending school one day a week. Home learning provision will be upgraded from half term.

MJP added that, despite some anxieties from staff over the reopening, morale remained good.

MJP answered questions by Trustees

Q: How about unions?

A: Unions are sceptical about the wider opening but the opening of the school is predicated on a risk assessment.

Q: What are parents views?

A: Once more clarity for reopening is received a survey will go out to parents.

Q: How will the bus companies operate?

A: It is expected that the bus companies will continue to provide transport and will be able to deal with social distancing due to the low numbers expected. Furthermore, students will be encouraged to cycle,

walk or parents to provide transport to and from school. MJP will obtain clarification from bus companies on their plan if numbers of students are high.

Q: How much of the curriculum will you be covering?

Y12 will receive as much of the curriculum as possible with only 2 subjects areas not able to provide face to face teaching. Y10 programme will receive face to face tutor group teaching and PSHCE. It is expected that they will also receive teaching in English, Maths and Science.

Q: Is there anything you could do to make your provision better?

A: A review before half term identified a need for more innovative remote learning and this will be upgraded after half term with more interactive activity. Staff have received training to assist them with interactive and online lessons.

Q: How will you manage students' behaviour to and from school?

A: It is anticipated that numbers will be relatively small but students will be reminded of the school's expectations.

Q: Is there any support for Years 11 and 13 who are not going into higher education?

A: The school has already been in contact with these cohorts.

Q: Are there any interventions that have not been added to the risk register due to financial constraints?

A: No.

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee acknowledged that the risk assessments for both schools were reasonable but will be required to continue to consult with the board regarding planning. Trustees were happy to accept the risk assessments for both schools.

The Chair thanked them both for their reports.

9. AOB

It was agreed that a further meeting should take place before the scheduled meeting on 7th July 2020. The Heads for both Cromwell and Hinchingsbrooke School should be invited to provide a further update.

9. Date of next meetings

Tuesday 9th June, 4pm (additional meeting)

Tuesday 7th July 2020, 5.15pm

Meeting finished at 6.45 pm