



ACES ACADEMIES TRUST

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Extraordinary Meeting held on Tuesday 7th July 2020, 5.15 pm, July via Zoom

Present: Mr Brian Message (BM), Chair and Trustee

Mr Paul Fenney (PF), Trustee

Mr Cliff Fluet (CF), Trustee

Mr Gary Weston (GW), Trustee

Mr Andy Rankine (AR), Trustee

Mr Bev Curtis (BJC), Trustee

Mr Ian Phillips (IP), Trustee

Mr Daniel Lewis (DL), Trustee

In attendance: Mr Andrew Goulding (AEG), CEO

Mr Dave McMillan (DRM), Finance Director

Mrs Debbie Warner (DW), Clerk

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| 1. | Apologies for absence |
| | No apologies were received. |
| 2. | Declaration of interests |
| | No conflicts of interest were declared. |
| 3. | To approve the minutes of the last meeting of 9th June 2020 |
| | The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate account of proceedings and were signed off by the Chair - electronically. |
| 4. | Update on the process for GBA and GCA joining ACES |
| | <p>The CEO provided a verbal update on the acquisition of the 2 Godmanchester schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting with RSC representatives has taken place. Andrea Squires from Winckworth Sherwood (the Trust's solicitors) attended and produced notes from the meeting which were available for Trustees to view prior to the Board meeting. • A letter has been drafted to Cambs County Council (CCC) and copied to RSC in order to expedite a resolution of the drainage issues at GBA. CCC have accepted responsibility. • GBA lease paperwork needs to be signed by ACES. • TUPE process is now complete. • Novation of contracts completed. <p>The CEO informed Trustees that the 2 Godmanchester schools are currently on track to join ACES from 1st September 2020.</p> <p>DRM updated Trustees on the reserves coming on board which are in the region of £400,000 and, in the worst case scenario of ACES having to cover drainage costs at GBA, this could be funded from these reserves. DRM referred to the pre-funding for growth which would be considered a risk moving forward if the Trust had to utilise this money.</p> <p>DRM reminded Trustees that there are some costs committed by GCA for work on the school's EYFS play area which is due to be carried out over the summer break. This is in the region on £25,000. DRM added that there may be an opportunity for the ACES Site Team to be involved to reduce costs.</p> <p>A Trustee was aware of some parental disquiet over the cleanliness of one of the schools and enquired about the possibility of a deep clean by the ACES site team in preparation for September opening. The CEO remarked that if there is an issue with the cleanliness of the school, it will be addressed. Furthermore, DRM is looking to align contracts across the MAT but if there is an issue, the cleaning company will need to be held to account.</p> <p>Q: A Trustee asked for further clarification on the risk for allocation of reserves for growth?</p> <p>A: DRM explained to Trustees that GBA would need to have sufficient funds available to fund another teacher if the Y5 class needed to be split and, as this is funded in arrears, funding from these reserves would need to be available for this purpose.</p> <p>Q: Is there a reporting requirement for pre-funding?</p> <p>A: DRM is not aware of this and the CEO added that the MAT will map the need for any additional teaching requirements and will be planned for in advance.</p> |

Signed:

Date: 02/09/2020

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| | <p>Q: A Trustee asked the CEO if he was working with the 2 schools who were likely to be feeling a bit in limbo until they were fully on board in September.</p> <p>A: The CEO was happy to report that there is a lot going on in the way planning. He has been in contact with the Headteachers of the schools and Zoom meetings have also taken place. He will offer to meet with them again before the end of term.</p> <p>The CEO added that ACES has appointed Sarah Spira who is currently OLT's Business Manager. She will be appointed as HR Manager to the Trust and will also be responsible for communication between the central function and schools in the Trust. There is an Inset day planned on 2nd November 2020 for ACES learning with a planning meeting taking place on 14 July. The CEO is also putting together a leadership development programme for Headteachers within the Trust.</p> <p>Q: A Trustee asked if there was a way to mitigate the delay in the Trust's schools getting together before 2nd November 2020 as this seemed a long time after the start of the autumn term.</p> <p>A: The CEO added that he will be in schools on a weekly basis and Bonnie Goodwin, Primary Education Lead Practitioner, has already been appointed and will be going into the schools from the start of September. The CEO agreed that it would be a good opportunity to attend part of the inset day at GCA and GBA in September.</p> <p>Q: A Trustee asked if ACES had good visibility of reception numbers of both schools and whether this was accounted for from a financial point of view.</p> <p>A: The Finance Director is aware of numbers and there are no financial implications arising from this.</p> <p><u>ACTION: ADDRESS ISSUE OF CLEANING IN GODMANCHESTER SCHOOL – DRM/AEG</u></p> <p><u>ACTION: CEO TO ATTEND GCA/GBA SEPTEMBER INSET DAYS – AEG</u></p> |
| 5. | Further discussion of responses to the BLM and the HBK statements |
| | <p>The Chair asked if the Trust was aware of any feedback from the recent open statement from Hinchingsbrooke School on Ensuring Equality and it was pleasing to hear that some students had taken the time to respond positively. A discussion followed on how to take this forward and effect change regarding BLM. One Trustee was concerned that by spreading the message to all sorts of discrimination, the message would become bland and diluted and may lose its impact; there is a need to stay focused on BLM over the next 6-12 months. This view was shared by many of the Trustees present. Another Trustee highlighted that currently it is only Hinchingsbrooke School that has submitted a statement and the other schools in the Trust should also follow suit. It was agreed that right course of action is for the schools to deliver their own message, supported by a statement from the Trust.</p> <p><u>ACTION: DRAFT A STATEMENT ON ACES APPROACH TO BLM – AEG/BM/CF/DL</u></p> <p><u>ACTION: WORK WITH HINCHINGSBROOKE SCHOOL ON HOW IT TACKLES BLM – CF/MARK PATTERSON</u></p> <p><u>ACTION: BLM TO BE AN AGENDA POINT AT NEXT BOARD MEETING - BM</u></p> <p><u>ACTION: ACES STATEMENT ON BLM TO BE UPLOADED TO WEBSITE - CLERK</u></p> |
| 6. | To review Equalities policy |
| | <p>The CEO advised Trustees that the policy is not yet in a position to be adopted by the Board. The policy needs further input from Tony Heath from Hinchingsbrooke School and requires discussion on how the Trust feels the policy should be updated. Thoughts to be brought back to the next meeting.</p> <p>The Chair said the policy needs to be looked at in reference with the statutory framework from the DfE but more context could be added, especially at this moment in time.</p> <p>A Trustee noted that the Trust was not fulfilling its obligation set out in the legal framework of the policy: A member of the Board to have a watching brief on implementation of policy. He also remarked that he has not seen published annual information at Trust level and this needs to be looked at further.</p> <p><u>ACTION: FURTHER WORK REQUIRED ON EQUALITIES POLICY – BM/CF/DL/MARK PATTERSON/TONY HEATH</u></p> <p><u>ACTION: EQUALITIES POLICY TO BE ADDED TO AGENDA AT NEXT BOARD MEETING – BM</u></p> <p><u>ACTION: ENSURE THE TRUST IS MONITORING THE EQUALITY POLICY APPROPRIATELY – ALL TRUSTEES</u></p> |
| 7. | CEO's report |
| | <p>Information on the acquisition of the 2 Godmanchester schools has been discussed in item 4.</p> <p>The CEO outlined details of the schools' preparation for reopening and practical operational detail. He updated Trustees on the options of how the schools could return in September. Additionally, the Trust will be required to sign off the risk assessments of all 4 schools before they return in September and this should be done at an extraordinary meeting before term begins.</p> <p><u>ACTION: EXTRAORDINARY MEETING TO BE ARRANGED BEFORE START OF TERM FOR BOARD TO SIGN OFF RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR ALL 4 SCHOOLS – CLERK TO ARRANGE MEETING</u></p> |

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| 8. | Finance update (DRM) |
| | <p>The Finance Director advised Trustees that the outlook for the year is less optimistic than presented in his last report. This is in part due to both Hinchingsbrooke School and Cromwell Academy being obliged to pay Chartwells for income from FSM. This is in the region of £5,000 for Cromwell and £25,000 for Hinchingsbrooke and this had not been forecasted. The schools are also obliged to fund invigilators and Kids Club workers who have other contracts within the school and therefore are not allowed to be furloughed. This was also not forecasted in his last report.</p> <p>The Chair asked how the Trust can ensure that errors in the forecast are not repeated. The Finance Director outlined a checking process going forward which included bringing the Finance Manager up to speed with the Trust's forecasting procedures and to implement a process of double-checking for errors or omissions. The Chair of the Finance Committee, Paul Fenney, commented that it was disappointing that the forecast has dropped and there will be a need to look at the forecast for the next few years to ensure the revised forecast does not affect future years. He added that it is also likely to affect the availability of reserves earmarked for the 2 schools currently in the Trust for IT development.</p> <p>Q: A Trustee asked if the Trust was looking to make cutbacks at HBK Leisure due to the current situation.</p> <p>A: The Finance Director has scheduled a meeting with the Manager of HBK Leisure to analyse income predictions from September 2020. He also said it was important to note that HBK Leisure gives an amount of profit to offset costs in the school and this will not be forthcoming. When furlough comes to an end, there will be a need to consider what to do with staff and the Trust may need to take a view on viability but the Finance Director said he did not want to wish to rush into this. On a more positive note, the HBK Leisure Manager is confident that outdoor pursuits will generate a reasonable income but acknowledged that the fitness suite closure will have a significant impact. The Finance Director remarked that the Board will ultimately need to consider whether it is prepared to accept a deficit in this area or look to make cuts.</p> <p>On other finance matters, the Finance Director stressed to Trustees that there is an expectation for the Trust to have a reserves policy. A bid has been submitted to the Foundation of Hinchingsbrooke for the cost of laptops for teaching staff. The Finance Director also confirmed that the recently submitted CIF bid had been unsuccessful.</p> <p>ACTION: FINANCE MEETING TO BE ARRANGED TO LOOK AT FORECAST FOR NEXT YEAR - BM/AEG/PR/DRM</p> |
| 9. | Investment initiatives |
| | Not discussed in detail. The Chair advised that investment initiatives should be reviewed again once a better view of the forecast for next year is known. |
| 10. | Proposed committee structure |
| | <p>The CEO prepared a proposed committee structure taking account of the recent skills audit and likely succession planning requirements. The CEO asked Trustees to consider the composition of the committees.</p> <p>He proposed that 3 further Trustees should be appointed to the Board: Claire Rose, Rebecca Ryan and Chris Meddle. CVs are attached in the documentation for Trustees to consider. All Trustees unanimously agreed to the proposed Board appointments. Claire Rose and Rebecca Ryan to be appointed to the Board of Trustees with immediate effect, Chris Meddle's term of office will not start until 1st September 2020.</p> <p>Trustees were also in agreement with committee structure.</p> <p>The Chair informed Trustees that it was Andy Rankine's intention to step down in December 2020 and consideration will need to be given on who will take on the position of Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee. Furthermore, he added that both Paul Fenney and Bev Curtis were likely to step down in the next 12 months.</p> |
| 11. | AOB |
| | <p>Prior to the meeting, the CEO had received a reminder from the Trust's HR Department that some mandatory training and paperwork was outstanding:</p> <p>DL, AR and IP – required to submit documentation for DBS check.</p> <p>GW - KCSIE and documentation for DBS check.</p> <p>BJC, DL - Online safeguarding (CF's online Safeguarding is current until September 2020).</p> |

Meeting finished at 6.45pm