



# ACES ACADEMIES TRUST

Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting held on  
Tuesday 15 December 2020, 4.15 pm, July via Zoom

- Present:** Brian Message (BM), Chair and Trustee  
Paul Fenney (PF), Trustee  
Cliff Fluet (CF), Trustee  
Gary Weston (GW), Trustee  
Andy Rankine (AR), Trustee  
Bev Curtis (BJC), Trustee  
Ian Phillips (IP), Trustee  
Claire Rose (CR), Trustee  
Rebecca Ryan (RR), Trustee  
Jefrey Matemba (JM), Trustee  
James Nicholson (JN), Trustee  
Andrew Goulding (AEG), CEO
- In attendance:** Dave McMillan (DRM), Finance Director  
Debbie Warner (DW), Clerk

<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>
	Apologies were received and accepted from Dan Lewis.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declaration of interests</b>
	No conflicts of interest were declared.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Elections/Resignations/Membership</b>
	The clerk advised that Paul Fenney, Bev Curtis and Andy Rankine are stepping down as Trustees effective from 31/12/2020. The Chair took the opportunity to thank them for all their work as Trustees. Chris Meddle has agreed to be Vice Chair until July 2021 which was unanimously approved by Trustees.
<b>4.</b>	<b>To approve the minutes of the last meeting of 20/10/2020</b>
	The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate account of proceedings and were signed off by the Chair. JN and JM to be added to list of attendees at the meeting.
<b>5.</b>	<b>CEO Report</b>
	<p>The CEO updated Trustees with key points contained in his report:</p> <p>Update on national picture for schooling. Ofsted not doing inspections in spring term. Clarification on assessment and exams. ACES Central Team have completed their first term who and have made good relationships with the schools. CEO receives weekly updates from each member of the team and meets with them individually every 2 weeks. GBA received virtual Ofsted visit which is shared in the report. Growth aspirations of the MAT has seen the 2 Godmanchester primary schools fully integrated into the MAT. He advised Trustees of the possibility of identifying a secondary school but unlikely to sign heads of terms by the time stipulated. The CEO has made contact with key feeder primaries with an ACES marketing letter and confirm he will be in contact with to see how they could work with ACES. Also contained in the report were updates from Headteachers.</p> <p><b>Questioning/challenge:</b></p> <p><b>A trustee asked if there was a small surplus for the current year across the 4 schools</b>  <b>The Finance Director advised the board that the MAT was looking at a deficit at start of year which has now increased by £20,000. Furthermore, spending of reserves on for HBK's netball court and swimming pool £45,000k and £30,000 respectively and other the salary of the outgoing CEO of OLT has increased the deficit to £60,000. The Finance Director advised that the MAT will be carrying forward reserves of £1.6M.</b>  <b>The Chair acknowledged that this was a significant sum compared to previous years.</b>  The CEO referred to a board request that he make a statement about the MAT being a going concern. The figures have been updated by the Finance Director. Taking a worst case scenario, the CEO was able to confirm that the 5 year projections still look healthy and carry forward is likely to be closer to £2.4m. In his view, there was not question that the MAT continues to be a going concern.</p>

Signed:  
Date:

**Questioning/challenge:**

The Chair asked the outgoing Chair of Finance for his views.

PF explained that in September the MAT was forecasting a slight deficit and going forward this increases significantly. The PAN increase a HBK has improved the situation. He did, however, express the need for a more stable cost structure going forward and this has always been an issue and should continue to be monitored closely by the Finance Committee.

A Trustee asked if consideration had been given to increase the PAN at Cromwell Academy

The CEO indicated that it could be given some consideration but care would be needed not to take pupils away other local Schools, especially Stukeley Meadows.

A Trustee stressed the importance a strategy to how we bring more schools on board.

The Chair clarified that it has been a key intention to the MAT's development strategy to incorporate another secondary school which needs to be pursued. The growth strategy needs to be an agenda item for discussion at the next meeting. The CEO reminded Trustees that the growth strategy had been written some time ago when geography of the MAT was important and therefore was likely to be restrictive. He alluded to previous attempts with a small local MAT and free school. He informed Trustees that he has a spreadsheet of potential schools to consider but added that cold calling is likely to be ineffective.

**ACTION: DISCUSSION ON MAT STRATEGY TO BE AGENDA POINT AT NEXT MEETING**

A discussion followed on remote learning within the schools and how this was progressing. The CEO was pleased to report that HBK has been trialling remote learning and is in a good position to deliver remote lessons effectively in the new year. He added that the quality of remote lessons are unlikely to be consistently high with some teachers more advanced with the concept than others but this continues to improve with training that is underway.

The CEO had included in his report a request from the Chair of Governors of Cromwell Academy to change the way in which co-opted governors are elected to the local governing body. The proposal is that co-opted governors would be ineligible to vote on the co-option of other governors thus preventing the co-option of like-minded governors without accountability to parents. Discussion by Trustees did not support the proposal as the risk was minimal and could create 2 tiers of governors with some having less influence on the governing body.

**ACTION: CLERK TO ADVISE CoG OF DECISION OF PROPOSAL TO CO-OPTION OF GOVERNORS**

The Chair referred to the dashboard that is currently being put together for Trustees to monitor. He felt there was a mass of information and thought it would add more value to highlight/RAG rate areas for scrutiny in order to make it more user friendly. The CEO agreed to amend this for Trustees.

**6. Report from Chairs of LGB**

These are included in the CEO's report which Trustees had read prior to the meeting. It was decided that the Chair of Governors from each school should be invited to a special meeting in the New Year to meet the Board.

**ACTION: INVITE CHAIR OF GOVERNORS TO SEPARATE MEETING**

**7. Committee Update**

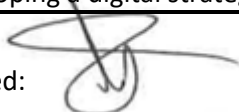
The Chairs of each committee provided Trustees with an update from recent committee meetings.

Finance Committee update (PF): Review of reserves policy is ongoing. Finance Director has been tasked with rewording the policy and progress further for approval at the next finance meeting. Decision on how much finance information should be presented to the Board. Quinquennial report on HBK House has reported that it is generally in good condition given the nature of the building. Main issue is the lead roof which will need replacing and the Estates Manager is in contact with the Foundation of Hinchingsbrooke School to arrange a maintenance remedial plan. Short term fix will go ahead on the swimming pool at HBK but a more strategic view will need to be considered on its viability.

S&I Committee update (IP): Two main workstreams will be to continue to develop a dashboard of information and data which allows the Board to compare other schools from a financial and educational perspective.

Developing a digital strategy which will see a staged innovation and first tranche being place next September

Signed:



Date: 09/02/2021

	<p><u>HR Committee update (BJC)</u>: Committee met for the first time in November. A brief report from each school on wellbeing in schools due to COVID. A significant time of the meeting was devoted to a large number of policies requiring development/approval. Schedule of policies were agreed. Capability/Absence/Recruitment and Section policies required only minor amendments and were therefore approved. RR appointed as Chair of Committee from 01/01/2021.</p> <p><u>Audit and Risk Committee update (AR)</u>: AR &amp; RJ met with auditors to go through the accounts. Decision to stop supporting personal emails and use Onboard and One Drive to keep within control of the school – AR to circulate guidelines. Agreement on risk appetite. All decision papers to include standard impact assessment paper to highlight risks and how decisions link to the Trust’s strategic objectives. AR &amp; RJ to share this with the Board. Top 10 risks facing ACES were identified and, going forward, will be regular agenda point at Board meetings. RJ appointed as Chair of Committee from 01/01/2021.</p> <p><b>ACTION: TOP 10 RISKS TO BE REGULAR AGENDA ITEM</b></p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>Review and agree Scheme of Delegation</b>
	<p>The CEO advised of 2 proposed changes:  Addition of pay review committee.  HR committee to be able to sit on staff appeal committee.  Remit of the RO and statutory accounts to go to audit and risk rather than finance.  The board were happy to adopt the proposed changes.</p>
<b>9.</b>	<b>AOB</b>
	There was no further business.
<b>10.</b>	<b>To confirm the date of the next meeting</b>
	Date of next meeting is confirmed at Tuesday 9 February 2021, 5.15pm via Zoom.

Meeting finished at 5.45pm