



# ACES ACADEMIES TRUST

**Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting held on  
Tuesday 9 February 2021, 5.15 pm, via Zoom**

**Present:** Brian Message (BM), Chair and Trustee  
Cliff Fluet (CF), Trustee  
Gary Weston (GW), Trustee  
Raj Joshi (RJ), Trustee  
Dan Lewis (DL), Trustee  
Ian Phillips (IP), Trustee  
Claire Rose (CR), Trustee  
Rebecca Ryan (RR), Trustee  
Jefrey Matamba (JM), Trustee  
James Nicholson (JN), Trustee  
Andrew Goulding (AEG), CEO

**In attendance:** David McMillan (DRM), Finance Director  
Debbie Warner (DW), Clerk

<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for absence</b>
	There were no apologies for absence.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Declaration of interests</b>
	No conflicts of interest were declared.
<b>3.</b>	<b>To approve the minutes of the last meeting of 15/12/2020</b>
	<p>The minutes of the last meeting were deemed to be an accurate account of proceedings and were signed off by the Chair.</p> <p>Action points were discussed. There was one action point to carry over: Invite chair of Governors to a meeting with Trustees – CEO advised a report is being written by LGB Chairs and suggested timeframe for a meeting should be sometime after the Easter break.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> <b>MEETING WITH LGB CHAIRS ONCE REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED/AFTER EASTER BREAK – CLERK</b></p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Finance review (JN/FINANCE DIRECTOR)</b>
	<p>JN advised that the Finance Committee had met prior to this meeting. Work on the January accounts is now underway. The committee discussed the digital poverty project and proposed appointments to the ACES Central Team. Proposed capital expenditure was also discussed.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the increase in Year 7 PAN at Hinchingsbrooke School and acknowledged that this strategy will help secure the financial forecasting for the next couple of years. The Finance Director highlighted the proposed student growth at GBA but advised any funding in student numbers will be lagged. He added that the indicative figures from CCC funding levels have increased per student in with the exception of students in GCA, which has gone down.</p> <p>The CEO reported that the Finance Committee were proposing a sum of money from reserves, not exceeding £50,000, be used to address digital poverty in the schools within the Trust. Details of the proposed purchase of IT equipment had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting. The Chair confirmed that the Trust will spend up to £50,000 and any differential will be passed back to reserves. The Board approved the proposal.</p> <p>The Finance Director referred to the minutes of the last meeting where the Board agreed to support the work necessary to the swimming pool at Hinchingsbrooke School. The cost of the work has come in at £35,000 and therefore needs approval by the Board. The Finance Director advised Trustees that the income generated from this facility was in the region of £100,000 pa and is therefore financially viable. He proposed that the work is undertaken during lockdown in order to maximise income as soon as lockdown is lifted.</p>

**Signed:**

Date: 21/04/21

	<p><b><u>Questioning/challenge:</u></b></p> <p>A Trustee asked what the life expectancy is of the swimming pool.  The Finance Director estimated the work will have a 10-year life.  A Trustee asked if it would be a good opportunity to smarten up the swimming pool area whilst the pool is out of action.  The Finance Director confirmed that, during the last lockdown, the changing rooms have been updated and re-tiled and the area looks significantly better.</p> <p>Trustees approved the funding for the swimming pool at Hinchingsbrooke School.</p> <p>The Finance Director was able to confirm to Trustees that the annual accounts were submitted on time.</p> <p>The Finance Director provided details on the 3 CIF bids which have recently been submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Sixth Form building £3M project with £300,000 funded via DfE loan;</li> <li>• Funding for replacement roofing at middle school at Hinchingsbrooke School at £475,00 with £10,000 from reserves;</li> <li>• Replacement of heating system at GCA at £206,000 with £21,000 from reserves.</li> </ul> <p>The Finance Director informed Trustees that should the bid for the sixth form building be successful, it is intended that the Foundation hands Hinchingsbrooke House to ACES. Income generation will be from an office complex, function centre and will also be used as ACES headquarters for the central team.</p> <p>The Finance Director confirmed that should any of the bids be successful, they would subject to Board approval.</p>
5.	<p><b>CEO report (CEO)</b></p>
	<p>The CEO provided Trustees with an update on the key points contained in his report:  All schools have published their remote learning provision on their websites. Parental surveys on provision of education during lockdown are contained in the report which have confirmed good levels of satisfaction.</p> <p><b><u>5.1 Appointments</u></b></p> <p>With support from the Standards &amp; Innovation Committee, the CEO put together a proposal to appoint an EdTech Leader and IT Technician. The CEO advised Trustees that, although it is a good idea, an alternative senior appointment may be more beneficial to the Trust and therefore may be prudent not to rush into making such an appointment at this time. However, he felt that it is imperative to appoint an IT Technician to cover the work undertaken by the LA contract which is due to expire imminently.</p> <p><b><u>Questioning/challenge:</u></b></p> <p>A Trustee was in agreement that an EdTech appointment should not be appointed which is likely to be an unnecessary appointment once the pandemic is over and development could be effectively achieved through consultancy work.</p> <p>A Trustee thought that work with technology is likely to continue and, because of the need for structural and cultural changes within the schools, is an important and necessary appointment. It is also common place for MATs to have a Trust wide IT expert to provide central support. It would also be a valuable appointment to progress the digital strategy.</p> <p>A Trustee agreed that a senior appointment would be of great benefit and a restructure should be considered in order to provide a Trust wide IT service to maintain more consistency throughout the schools in the MAT.</p> <p>A Trustee voiced concern that the strategy element may be missing going forward and could result in a missed opportunity to develop blended learning and deliver it effectively across the Trust but agreed it could be delivered through a consultancy project.</p> <p>A Trustee supported moving away from the LA contract to gain local support and control.</p> <p>A Trustee referred to the recovery from COVID-19 and the likely unknown challenges. Extra money could be invested to meet risks that become apparent as the lockdown is eased rather than to commit to an appointment of this kind.</p>

	<p><b>A Trustee was in favour of a person focused on the strategy within the Trust but acknowledged it could be done by a consultancy project. The Standards &amp; Innovation Committee should look to move this forward and not lose this opportunity.</b></p> <p><u>5.2 Growth</u></p> <p>The CEO explained that as and when the Trust grows there would be a need for a central IT services team and a central estates management team but this is currently unaffordable. The CEO asked Trustees if they agreed, in principle, that this would be the preferred structure. Trustees were in agreement that this was likely to be the best way forward.</p> <p><u>Questioning/challenge:</u></p> <p><b>A Trustee agreed that the model of a large central team was currently unaffordable but the current IT department at Hinchingsbrooke School could be restructured to create a centrally funded group in order to support all the schools.</b></p> <p><b>Another Trustee also agreed that a central IT function could be realised by a restructure of existing IT staff.</b></p> <p>Trustees agreed to appoint an IT Technician but to put the EdTech position on hold for now. It was also the agreement of the Trustees to look at expertise via a consultancy project.</p> <p>The CEO advised Trustees that he has been invited to an LGB with a view to Spaldwick Primary School joining ACES. He added that the development of a second hub has not made the anticipated progress due in part to COVID but has been talking with Premier Advisory to engage their services for a 3 month period to search for opportunities. Previously, geography played an important part in finding other secondary schools but this is unlikely to bear fruit and will need to consider areas further afield.</p> <p><u>Questioning/challenge:</u></p> <p><b>A Trustee voiced concern over the size of Spaldwick School and sustainability.</b></p> <p><b>The CEO was aware of falling numbers at the school but is very keen to incorporate the school in the Trust as it is a feeder school to Hinchingsbrooke School.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <p><b>FURTHER CALL WITH PREMIER ADVISORY GROUP – CEO/BM</b></p> <p><b>GROWTH STRATEGY TO BE ON AGENDA AT NEXT MEETING – CEO/BM</b></p> <p>The CEO provided key points from the remainder of the report which included an update from the Headteachers from each of the schools. He advised Trustees that a Co-Headship is being considered at GCA and will attend their LGB to present the proposal. The CEO was pleased to confirm that morale amongst staff was good.</p> <p><u>Questioning/challenge:</u></p> <p><b>A Trustee enquired about the possibility of increasing the PAN at Cromwell Academy</b></p> <p><b>The CEO did not think it was the right time to address this issue as, although the school is becoming increasingly popular, they are not currently at full capacity.</b></p> <p><b>A Trustee expressed concern that the pandemic may have a negative effect on students who did not qualify for sixth form. He requested that information is provided on NEET students.</b></p> <p><b>A Trustee urged the Trust to explore Trust apprenticeships or similar opportunities.</b></p> <p><b>The CEO will provide NEET information for the next meeting.</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b></p> <p><b>NEET STUDENTS TO BE PUT ON THE NEXT AGENDA – CEO</b></p> <p><b>POTENTIAL INITIATIVES FOR HINCHINGBROOKE SCHOOL LEAVERS TO BE EXPLORED – CEO/MARK PATTERSON</b></p>
6.	<b>Determine risks</b>
	<p>IP referred to recovery from COVID and advised a need to consider what the Trust can do to mitigate risks that come from this in order to protect staff and students.</p>

	<p>Other risks were identified from Trustees:</p> <p>Succession planning for the CEO</p> <p>Succession planning for Sponsor</p> <p>Staff morale</p> <p>The Finance Director asked where the risk lies about screen use and eye-sight deterioration amongst students due to continued remote learning. A Trustee thought that the risk of eye deterioration in students is likely to come under the responsibility of the government rather than individual academies or schools. Relevant workplace assessments will continue to take place. The CEO was aware of the roll out for free eye tests amongst staff.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> <b>CIRCULATE DETAILS OF WELLBEING PROGRAMME – JM/CEO</b></p>
<b>7.</b>	<b>AOB</b>
	<p>A Trustee recommended that common training days within the Trust should be implemented. The CEO reminded Trustees to complete any outstanding mandatory training. The timings of meetings was discussed and whether the current timings were convenient to all Trustees.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> <b>DETERMINE CONVENIENT MEETINGS TIMES THROUGH SURVEY – CLERK</b></p>
<b>8.</b>	<b>To confirm the date of the next meeting</b>
	Date of next meeting is confirmed at Tuesday 27 April 2021, 4.15pm via Zoom.

Meeting finished at 5.45pm

Signed:

Date: 27/04/2021