



Company Number: 07977368

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Directors

Thursday 21st May 2020, 6pm via Zoom

Present:

Liz Holmes (LH) Chair
Duncan Millard (DM) CEO
Ian Wright (IW)
Paul Walker (PW)
Paul Turner (PT)
Mark Greenwood (MG)
Helen Turner (HT)
Christine Price-Smith (CPS)
Jeremy Twynam (JT)
Anthony Cook (AC)

In attendance:

Anne Lynn (AL) COO
Alexandra Molton (AM) Clerk
Louise Warren (LW) DofE

Apologies:

PROCEDURAL MATTERS		
1	Welcome, Apologies and Resignations	Action
	LH welcomed Trustees to the meeting. No apologies were received. No resignations have been received.	
2	Notice and Quorum Requirements	
	The meeting was quorate.	
3	Declaration of Interest / Pecuniary Interests	
	None were made at this point in the meeting.	
4	Accuracy of the Minutes of Board Meeting held on 31 st January 2020	
	Trustees were happy to sign off the main meeting minutes as an accurate record of the meeting. The confidential minutes were also agreed. ACTION: LH to sign a copy of the minutes when the current restrictions on meeting in person are lifted.	
5	Matters arising from 30 th January 2020 and previous meetings	
	Approval has been received from the schools of the addendum to the Safeguarding	

	policy which is now in force across all of the schools and part of the plans being made for children returning to schools.	
ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY		
6	Central Team Restructuring	
	This was taken in closed session due to the confidential nature of the item	
7	Approval of Central Budget	
	<p>AL explained that the budget has been put together on the basis of the proposed structure. The Proposed budget for next year reflects pension increases and cost of living pay increases. It has also factored in teacher salary increases from Sept 2020. Operation costs remain the same as last year; only staff costs have increased for next year.</p> <p>Heads had the opportunity at the recent Leadership meeting to look at the proposed structure and question this. Some posts in the Central team are mandated and the rest reflect what direction the Heads want the Central team to move towards.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked is the Trust not moving away from a commercial insurance provider to save money?</p> <p>AL explained that this is something which is reviewed every year but DfE RPA policy only covers building works up to £250,000 and further cover from other providers for anything over this cannot be provided. We are not paying over the odds to stay with Zurich they have price matched with the RPA and it is worth it for the improved cover. LH asked for Trustees to vote on the proposed budget; Trustees voted in favour of the budget and it was passed.</p>	
8	Update on matters to be noted by Trustees from May's ARC meeting	
	<p>Trustees had been sent a copy of the meeting minutes before the Board meeting. LH asked AC if he had anything to add to the meeting; AC informed Trustees of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial status against budgets <p>The Trust is seeing financial benefits through the Covid-19 crisis and deficits are reducing due to a lack of spending. The Central team and schools have been busy recruiting for new roles and these should be filled for the next Academic year. ARC is expecting budgets back from schools virtually by 8th June and these should be presented to ARC on 18th June and coming to the Board in July.</p> <p>AL explained that there are some risks around costs associated with catering and an increase in cleaning costs but with savings elsewhere these should not impact on school budgets that much. OCC is providing PPE for all schools free of charge. Most schools are likely to return either a balanced or a surplus budget for this year.</p> <p>AL explained that the Trust is still unsure whether our CIF bids have been successful so cannot take this into account in the finances, the latest date for announcements is June 2020. Two months of project work have been lost. Pupil numbers in Faringdon remain tight and a few pupils who would have attended FIS have been given spaces in Watchfield as the PAN at FIS has been capped at 75. The Trust is hoping to get the money for FJS work so we can increase the PAN for September 2021. The JBL classroom build has been delayed; this should have been completed by 4th September and now likely to not be completed until mid-December. OCC will fund a temporary classroom on the site to enable JBL to take their full cohort for this year.</p>	

	<p>- IT project:</p> <p>AC has reviewed and approved the business case for this. The Trust went out to tender at the end of last year for migration consultancy. The Trust is looking to move to the Cloud as this is more secure and will be easier for schools to share information. This is a large project as we need to migrate data, install a new firewall and broadband system and implement further Microsoft access for schools. AL is hoping this will be in place for 1st September although timings are quite tight. As staff are all working at home this has helped to improve staff knowledge and experience of the various parts of the Microsoft packages, with virtual meetings and other software being used to keep in touch. The total cost of the project will be £240,000 over the next three years. The migration costs will be funded by extra money which has already been given by schools and ongoing costs have been factored into the budget.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked for the reason behind the delay in hearing back about our CIF bids. AL explained that CIF bids are delayed due to the number which have been received. She is hoping that when the bids are announced the deadline for these will be extended but this is unlikely. However there is also a risk that all bids will be cancelled for this year – which would force a decision on whether FAoS would fund the FJS project themselves in the meantime in order to get the school up and running at full capacity as soon as possible.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked if we are paying extra for school cleaning in the current conditions? AL confirmed that cleaners are being moved around the Trust to meet needs at the moment. We are not sure what will happen in the future as schools return it is something that is being monitored closely.</p>	
9	<p>Opening of Trust schools to additional groups of pupils</p>	
	<p>DM explained to Trustees that there have been lots reported in the media about what schools should be doing after half term. The Department for Education (DfE) will confirm on 28th May whether schools will return on 1st June. The Government has issued guidance for schools but there is not one model for each school and Heads have worked together to create plans for each of their schools on an individual basis. The Trust is encouraging Heads to spend the first week after half term getting staff comfortable and ready to deal with the children returning the following week. Part of the process is rebuilding confidence within the staff and this will then help everything to run better when the children return.</p> <p>LW reiterated that some Trusts have been more prescriptive with their schools about how they should be operating when the children return but our Heads have felt empowered to be able to make their own decisions about their own schools and make the best plan for them.</p> <p>AL explained that the Trust has been encouraging those staff that are able to be going in to school on a rota basis to maintain contact with colleagues and familiarity with the new setting. The time after half term is not about getting children back to school to ‘teach’ them but to concentrate on improving their confidence, mental health and general wellbeing.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked whether we think there will be a problem with parents comparing the actions of schools with each other?</p> <p>DM has written a letter from the Trust to go out with a letter from the Heads about their unique plans for their own school. Heads should be explaining why certain choices have been made for their own school. Hopefully these two letters will explain</p>	

	<p>to parents why different plans have been created for different schools. AL will upload the letter from DM to Teams for Trustees to see.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked what if Heads look to close their schools due to problems with maintaining the necessary levels of cleaning?</p> <p>AL confirmed that the Trust will work with schools to help them if they feel they need to close the school – we have been moving around resources so far to cover need and will continue to do this if appropriate.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked if we have Trust-wide learning to take forward if a second wave should hit?</p> <p>DM confirmed that schools have become very adept at providing home-learning during this recent period of school closure. As time has gone by schools have refined this to provide a suitable format and amount of work for those at home. This will continue for those not returning to school as not all children will return before the summer holidays.</p> <p>LW explained however that it is too much for teachers to be teaching in school and providing the same level of home learning as they have been doing until now. New skills have been learnt by pupils and staff which will be beneficial for them in the future.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that Heads should encourage staff to return to school to become familiar with a new working environment from the first week of June and get accustomed to this before children return. Trustees need to have sight of each school’s strategy for returning children to school.</p> <p>DM explained that once the DfE have announced when schools are reopening it will be clearer how the plans will unfold.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked if the Trust could look at providing alternative support for Y6s at FCC to relieve the pressure of them returning to their primary schools? Also how is the Trust addressing the potential effects and added risk on older siblings by younger children returning to school?</p> <p>DM explained that Heads have debated the issue of keeping children in bubbles in schools and how this would be affected by what happens outside of school. Final decisions will be taken on how FCC might be able to support these children later this term.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked what will happen when the other year groups return?</p> <p>DM confirmed that guidelines from the Government would need to change to accommodate this. FIS have already reached capacity according to their plans and therefore are only offering spaces to Reception children after half term.</p> <p>ACTION: Once finalized each school’s risk assessment and operational strategy which will support them being open to more pupils must be circulated to Trustees.</p> <p>AGREED: FAoS would have a Headteacher-led school specific approach to opening each school to more pupils and school should only open on 1st June for staff to return.</p>	
10	<p>Update on matters to be noted by Trustees from May’s Q of E meeting</p>	
	<p>As Chair of Quality of Education Committee, PT provided a summary of the main findings from the recent QoE meeting:</p> <p>Some health checks have been carried out but many were postponed due to the lockdown</p>	

	<p>A follow-up review took place of the 6th form which concluded that numbers need to grow to provide financial stability.</p> <p>LW has been impressed with reading and writing at FJS and the positive culture developing here among staff and pupils.</p> <p>Urgent matters need to be addressed at WAT regarding Safeguarding but the SCR is now compliant. Safeguarding at FCC is overall very strong.</p> <p>FIS have provided good results in EYFS from Term 4; above their target for GLD which was great to see. There has been improvement at Watchfield and .reading writing and maths at FJS was above target.</p> <p>EYFS was below target in some schools which is common for this time of the year as the final term often shows the biggest change in the children’s learning.</p> <p>There are some challenging SEND children at JBL and Shrivenham which have made differences to their data.</p> <p>LW confirmed that no primary school data needs to be submitted nationally or to County this year but as a group of schools we need to check the progress of these children to assess them properly before the next year begins. There are concerns that some children may have regressed whilst they have been learning at home so schools will be using the data from the end of March as a starting point for assessment. The Trust wants to move the children up to the next year in the Autumn to set up a positive year for them but may adjust the Curriculum to reflect learning which has been missed in terms 5 and 6. PSHE, reading, writing, number and physical development will be assessed in the EYFS children.</p> <p>Y1 phonics tests will not happen now until September and this will be tested again at the end of Year 2. The focus will be on a wellbeing curriculum for those children that return to school after half term.</p> <p>Y6 children across the Trust are largely up to speed with their curriculum as they were ready to sit their SATS; only Shrivenham and John Blandy were showing as below target. Results from Y6 mock SATS will be moving up with the children to Year 7. KS4 and KS5 results will be based on their mock results and teacher assessments of where students were at the point of lockdown. A-Level results will be published 13th/20th August.</p> <p>LH proposed a Governors seminar at the start of the next academic year to explain plans for how the year will look and be shaped to reflect the effects of this year and plans for next year.</p> <p>DM informed Trustees that from September four Trust schools are due an OFSTED inspection. It is not yet clear how these will resume but the Autumn conference will need to reflect these changes.</p>	
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MONITORING AND OUT OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITY		
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11	Wellbeing of Pupils and Staff	
	<p>6 children across the Trust have been removed from their homes during lockdown – 3 of which were imminent. Getting vulnerable children back into school has been resisted by some families but social workers have helped with encouraging this.</p> <p>LW informed Trustees that Heads have been very proactive in encouraging those not on the list of vulnerable children but clearly in need to be back into school. Each school has made contact with parents each week – FCC have been asking for sight or sound of their students every 2 weeks.</p> <p>Staff wellbeing:</p>	

	<p>LW explained that our Heads are an amazing group of people – very resilient and working incredibly hard in their schools. They have also been great at supporting their staff teams and making contact with them regularly, as well as running appraisals with staff remotely. All have enough staff to open from 1st June but are mostly going to be at capacity. There are some staff that have been anxious about coming back to the workplace and Heads are dealing with this well.</p> <p>LW explained that the Trust recently moved to new pay provider Edupay and this has enabled documentation to be given to all staff to support them during this period. There is also an Employee Assist programme in place which can provide a range of support to all Trust staff.</p> <p>AL confirmed that the Trust has also been in touch weekly with Heads and have also asked that they maintain weekly contact with all their staff to make sure they are well and feeling supported.</p> <p>DM informed Trustees that there have been some issues in other Trusts with staff being pushed into coming back into schools when they are not ready or feel unhappy about doing so but the Trust is giving Heads the autonomy to resolve issues in their own schools, whilst supporting their decisions.</p> <p>LH confirmed that the fact that the Heads feel happy and supported is testament to the work of AL, LW and DM in recent times which has filtered down to staff at all school levels to improve morale.</p>	
12	Risk Register	
	<p>Trustees thanked MG for his work on this.</p> <p>MG confirmed that he has made some cosmetic changes to the Register – like changing the scale and numbers in the matrix. The content remains largely the same and relative to impact and likelihood this has not been altered.</p> <p>MG has separated a conglomeration of risk that the Trust Board need to take ownership of and others that schools and LGBs could take on at a local level. He will provide a guide of what should be included in the school's Risk Register and can then quantify and assess how each school is doing this in comparison to each other.</p> <p>The Board were pleased with the direction of travel and re-alignment of the Risk Register.</p>	
13	Governance and Policies	
	These were deferred to the next Trust Board meeting.	
STRATEGIC MATTERS		
14	Review of Trust Vision and Values	
	<p>A new Trust website and rebrand is imminent so the Central team have started reviewed the Trusts' Vision and Values.</p> <p>LH asked for Trustees to look more closely at the Strategic Plan and Visions and Values of the Trust ahead of the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Trustees asked how do we take the reality of how the Trust is working together and bring this into the Vision?</p> <p>DM confirmed that the Trust is asking Trustees for thoughts about the content of the Strategic Plan for next year. On Teams there is a document for Trustees to complete with ideas and reflections on what they see at the current time and what they think needs to be included in the Plan for next year. LH asked Trustees to provide their thoughts and ideas by 27th June so these can be pulled together ready for the July</p>	

	meeting. ACTION: Trustees to think about Vision, Strategic Aims and what this might look like in a rebrand sense.	
15	Launch of a new logo and website for the Trust	
	<p>DM, AL and LW have been working on a new logo for the Trust. DM unveiled the new icon for the Trust of three figures joining hands. The theory is that this reflects how we work together across the Trust. They have chosen a colour which was neutral and not associated with any of the schools and asked designers to provide logos with 'FLT' rather than Faringdon Learning Trust as the acronym is likely to be used more than the full name. AL confirmed that the logo looks better on a website with images and other text.</p> <p>Challenge Trustees asked if the shape of the curve in the logo is supposed to evoke the White Horse? DM confirmed that this was not deliberate.</p> <p>Challenge Some Trustees were not keen on the colour as they felt it was very evocative of country sport. AL confirmed that it is hard to select a colour as all of our schools use particular colours. This is a very subtle green on screen.</p> <p>Challenge Trustees asked if the three people in the logo represent the Infant/Junior/Secondary phases of the Trust schools.</p> <p>Challenge Trustees suggested that the logo should link and flow better into the text as this is not very balanced. Trustees also suggested that the font should be simpler as serifs are not good for dyslexia. Trustees also asked if the font is free and easily available DM will provide a link to the mock website at the next meeting for Trustees to see. ACTION: DM/AL to check if the font is dyslexic friendly and also that it is a free font which is compatible with all of our Trust IT systems. LH confirmed that the Trust hopes to hold a Governor seminar on 10th September 2020.</p> <p>Challenge Trustees asked if this meeting will be virtual if we cannot meet in person? LH: Yes.</p>	
16	Any Other Business as notified to the Chair before the meeting	
	None.	
	<p>Date of next meeting: 9th July 2020</p> <p>2019/20 Future Meeting Dates</p> <p>Autumn Governors Conference 10th September 2020</p>	

Meeting closed at 8.42pm.