

Anglian Learning Trust Board Meeting Minutes



14 July 2020

Virtual meeting

Trustees Present

Claire Lawton (CL Chair), Jon Culpin (JC CEO), David Lamkin (DL), Richard Cowling (RC), Sue Speller (SCS), Ken Murphy (KM), June Cannie (MJC), Helen Abrahams (HA) and John Morgan (JM)

Others Present

Prue Rayner (PR Executive Primary HT), Duncan Cooper (DPC DCEO), Charity Main (CM Finance Director) and Kerrie Jones (KJ Clerk)

	ITEM	ACTION
1.	Acceptance of Apologies for Absence	
	There were no apologies. HA attended parts of the meeting but had significant network issues.	
2.	Declarations of Interest with regard to agenda items	
	There were no declarations of interest.	
3	Agree minutes of last meeting and Matters arising not on this agenda	
	The minutes from Trust Board meetings on 14 May, 29 May and 12 June were agreed as accurate records and will be signed when face to face meeting resume. It was confirmed that HA will join the Audit Committee from 1 Sept.	
4.	Risk Register	
	There have been no revisions to the risk register since the last review in May. The impact of Covid-19 will continue to be included within the main risk register as the pandemic crisis will have ongoing implications. Attention of the Board is drawn to the very high risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EDU3/OP8 – the Board will be updated on the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable pupils and the effects on their behaviour in the autumn term. The Trust safeguarding group will be issuing guidance to schools Q <i>What about children at risk whose parents decide they don't want to send them back?</i> A We have issued DfE guidance to schools. The Trust view is that a punitive response is not desirable. Schools should make every effort to engage and work with those families. Some pupils had poor attendance before lockdown and a bespoke approach will be needed for each student. FIN2 – Sports Centres are to open from 27 July in reduced form. There is a challenge of dual use - using facilities during the day for both pupils and public. OP7 – H&S remains a concern and is closely monitored 	Board update on vulnerable pupils – autumn term

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEA4 - Governance has become more of a concern since the new schools joined. There are particular concerns around sustainability and relationships at the Primary school LGBs. This risk may increase and TLT will therefore be reviewing LGBs and the governance structure. The Scheme of Delegation will need to be re-visited and in particular delegated tasks such as HT performance review and finance responsibilities considered • EDU4 - Curriculum response to current situation, how the Trust is supporting children to thrive. Also consider opportunities for blended learning • HR1/2 – absenteeism is reducing, there has not been a high turnover of staff • OP1 – no imminent risk of suppliers becoming insolvent <p>It was agreed that the risk profile will remain unchanged for the present with TLT conducting a comprehensive review before the autumn term. They will set out a programme of activity to tie in with the audit programme.</p>	<p>Board agenda item - Governance review</p> <p>Board agenda item – development of curriculum</p> <p>Board agenda item - Risk Register activity programme</p>
5.	Management Accounts P9 (CM)	
	<p>The current forecast deficit in light of Covid-19 is in excess of £500k but is reducing. It is a reflection of community activities which includes Sports Centres, Adult Education and out of school activities at primary schools and is based on the assumption of no income from these activities. Sports Centres will be open in a limited way from the end of July but income will be significantly reduced.</p> <p>Q <i>When reopening commercial activities how will we be sure there is a positive contribution?</i> A The reopening is to be gradual using flexible furlough and no recruitment. The impact will need to be reviewed once we have reopened. The new finance system allows granular reporting so we will be able to readily see the impact. We need to open in the summer as users may go elsewhere if we do not.</p> <p>Q <i>Will we be surveying customers to ask if they will return?</i> A Michelle does have plans for this.</p> <p>Q <i>Are you optimistic about the Covid-19 related grant?</i> A We are likely to get some funding but not a huge amount as there are restrictions. Also schools must have a deficit so schools such as the Pines are not eligible. JC and CM will review all school claims before submission. We have been informed that there will be no additional funding from September.</p> <p>Q <i>Are LGBs prepared for moving cash balances between schools?</i> A Moving cash balances on a temporary basis is a well-established practice. Reserves need to be looked at again in the autumn.</p>	
6.	Approve Academy Budgets (KM/CM)	
	<p>CM had prepared a comprehensive Budget Setting Report which sets out the Trust's financial strategy and assumptions for budget setting and brings together the budgets proposed by LGBs.</p> <p>Schools have budgeted for core school operations on the basis that all pupils return full time in September 2020. There are likely</p>	

	<p>to be additional costs but these are unknown. Schools that have significant commercial income have been asked to prepare 'Covid' and 'non Covid' budgets.</p> <p>Most schools are in a deficit position. Reserves will come under pressure in the short term and schools may need to be prudent but the longer term view is more optimistic.</p> <p>It is proposed that there is a mid-year review of budgets</p> <p>Q <i>What are the implications of setting deficit budgets which is against AFH guidelines?</i></p> <p>A The AFH states that we can set a deficit budget if we have accumulated reserves. Questions and/or a visit may be triggered but CM has no concerns with this and recognises that many Trusts will be in the same position.</p> <p>Meadow Primary school have submitted a reserves request which is detailed in the report.</p> <p>Trustees thanked CM for her comprehensive report. Having reviewed this in detail, the FEO Committee recommends that the Board approve the budgets and the reserves request.</p> <p><i>The Board resolved to approve the academy and central Trust budgets and the reserves request</i></p>	
7.	CEO Monthly Update: Trustee questions	
	<p>The CEO's monthly report had been circulated. There were no questions.</p>	
8.	Planning for Covid 19 Safe and Secure Schools: government direction and our response, planning for the autumn term curriculum (DC/PR)	
	<p>Trustees had been asked to watch the 'Build Back Better' webinar with John Hattie (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzk9ztTJ8jU)</p> <p>TLT have used a variety of evidence to inform their approach for school re-opening and the autumn term curriculum. A timeline and FAQs have been drawn up for school leaders who in turn have submitted their school plans to the Trust. Risk assessments will be revised versions of those already in place.</p> <p>Primary Schools</p> <p>PR explained that in the primary schools there is a positive message of building back something better rather than a catch up curriculum. There is strong engagement with families and a focus on rebuilding relationships. There will be a focussed approach to assessment and an acknowledgment that many pupils will have had additional learning which is very different to what they would do in school. There will continue to be online elearning opportunities.</p> <p>Safeguarding issues are likely to increase and the Trust must ensure all practitioners are well prepared to deal with this. Pupils with EHCPs need to be assured of a smooth start to the year which may mean staggering some returns.</p> <p>HTs are being supported by the Trust but reopening of schools presents logistical challenges and increased demands on limited resources.</p>	

	<p>Q <i>How are staff coping with this?</i></p> <p>A There is some anxiety, some are still shielding, but on the whole staff are positive. It is important we continue to monitor staff wellbeing</p> <p>Q <i>Is it a good idea to have a staggered start for those with challenging behaviour– isn't this segregating them?</i></p> <p>A That is not our intention. There are many unknowns and some children will find it difficult. Staggering over a short period may allow rebuilding of relationships. There is also staff anxiety about some of the pupils with complex needs and how they will be managed if they all start together.</p> <p>Q <i>Are we confident we have sufficient PSHE resources to cover any issues that may arise?</i></p> <p>A We have engaged with many external organisations around children's mental health and provide signposting. We are reviewing the Relationships and Sex Education Policy and giving more curriculum time to PSHE with increased activities around wellbeing. Responsive teaching will be important.</p> <p>Q <i>Can we learn from our most challenged families and see these relationships as positives rather than problems, as was suggested at the Education Committee meeting?</i></p> <p>A Many pupils have responded positively, managing their own resources, and working better not being crowded by others. Bubbles have provided a tight-knit team which works well for some.</p> <p>Secondary Schools</p> <p>DC explained that HTs have done well in identifying key priorities. Many are planning a staggered start in September which usually happens anyway. There are logistical and timing challenges but in general schools are putting Y7-9 in year group bases with teachers moving between bubbles. Y10-11 and Y12-13 will move within their year group. Some are using a staggered start to the day though this is not an option for those reliant on school buses. There are challenges around shared spaces such as laboratories and IT but the Trust is confident that solutions will be found.</p> <p>Teachers will need to identify pupil needs when they return to school and use responsive teaching methods.</p> <p>School will look very different and staff and students may find this difficult. There will also be changing guidance that will need to be adapted to. All staff are expected to have a break over the summer.</p> <p>The Trust is awaiting advice on catch-up funding and how this will be spent.</p> <p>Updated guidance and the outcome of results day will be reviewed by the Trust Board at an additional meeting after 21 August.</p>	
9.	Trust Self Evaluation Exercise	
	<p>A MAT organisation self-evaluation had been sent to Trustees to complete. TLT have completed the same exercise and will also be working with HTs and looking at their buy-in to the Trust and its vision and values.</p> <p>This evaluation will allow assessment of where we are as an organisation and assist with future planning.</p>	Trustees to return completed forms to KJ

	<p>Trustees initial thoughts: Main MAT strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School improvement - have the right people in place. • Infrastructure – high calibre of central team, clear vision • Governance – Board functions effectively <p>Areas of concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining school improvement – dependant on capacity, need to ensure sustainability. May not be scalable - as Trust grows may not be able to maintain the visits or the close knowledge of our schools. • Governance – significant concerns with local governance LGBs – some LGBs not able to discharge current duties. <p>With regards the Trust ‘brand’ and communication of its vision and values, Trustees were unsure of what the buy-in from schools actually is. Looking at how schools relate to the Trust is a key focus of the Trust improvement plan. Success should improve recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Trustees pointed out that the current situation provides an opportunity for the Trust to communicate with wider stakeholders as they support the schools through the Covid-19 pandemic. This will be greatly valued by parents.</p> <p>Trustees were asked to consider further growth and a 3-5 year vision for the Trust. Initial observations were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient capacity is essential so growth must be planned. Any expansion needs to be carefully managed, eg creative ways such as peer review. • LGBs – feel we have made some progress - LGB Handbook is an excellent resource • It would be sensible to allow any catchment primary schools to join 	
10.	Committee Reports	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Finance, Estates & Operations • Remuneration & Governance • HR <p>Committee minutes had been shared with all Trustees. There were no questions.</p>	
11.	Whistleblowing and Complaints	
	<p>The termly report had been circulated for information. There had been one stage 2 complaint and no whistleblowing incidents.</p> <p>It was confirmed that JC, CL and KO are added as contacts to the recently reviewed Whistleblowing Policy. Reports can also be referred to the LA. Posters in schools are being updated</p>	
12.	Policies	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical Needs Policy is unchanged but a first aid Covid-19 addendum has been added. In future responsibility for reviewing this policy will sit with the FEO Committee. • Health & Safety 	

	<p>A Covid-19 addendum has been added.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and Pecuniary Interests Trustees and Governors are responsible for updating any changes to declarations during the year. The new form contains a statement to this effect In future responsibility for reviewing this policy will sit with the FEO Committee • Furlough Outlines the approach taken by the Trust in respect of furloughed staff • Admissions Framework The framework sets out the annual process for determining the academy admissions arrangements. Stone King has confirmed that it complies with legal requirements. Oversubscription criteria now includes an allowance for the children of academy staff. Q <i>When we set the PAN for schools is there a requirement to consult with anyone?</i> A We work in partnership with the LA and wider school communities. There is a process for consultation <p>All approved subject to any comments on the Medical Needs Policy being received by Friday 17 July</p>	
13.	Reappointment of Trustees	
	Trustees resolved to propose that a written resolution to re-appoint Ken Murphy, David Lamkin, Richard Cowling and Sue Speller as Trustees is circulated to the Members. Reappointments will commence 1 September with 4 year terms of office.	KJ to organise written resolution
14.	Election of Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees for 2020-21	
	<p>A nomination for Chair of Trustees had been received for CL and a nomination for Vice Chair of Trustees for SS. Candidates were asked to step outside of the meeting whilst votes were cast.</p> <p>Both were re- elected unanimously.</p>	
15.	Governance	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment/reappointment of governors Requests for approval of the following appointments/reappointments had been submitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shelley Monk (NHL) - Michael Garcia (JFAN) - Lorna Summerfield (JFAN) - Chris Roope (BAS) - Dushy Chetty (BAS) <p>All were approved</p> • Appointment of LGB Chairs/VCs Requests for approval of the following appointments/reappointments had been submitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Alison Brolly/Alan Sharp (Co-Chairs BVC) - Claire Jefferey/Nicky Odgers (Co-Vice Chairs NHL) <p>All were approved</p> <p>Trustees acknowledged the difficulty of recruiting Chairs of Governors and were supportive of trying a co-chairing</p> 	

	<p>approach. The R&G Committee will be asked to look at an assurance process for these appointments and will also look at the processes followed by LGBs for recruitment as not all currently follow a formal interview process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance Planner The planner for 20/21 had been circulated 	R&G Committee agenda item
16.	AOB	
	<p>JC thanked the Board for all their support during this challenging time.</p> <p>CL informed the Board that the Board Development Programme is proceeding and there will be a strategy workshop w/c 14 September. The skills audit will be sent out for completion in the autumn.</p>	KJ to send skills audit at start of autumn term
17.	Meeting dates for 2020/21	
	<p>The meeting dates for 20/21 had been circulated. An extraordinary Board meeting will be required after 21 August to look at the updated guidance.</p> <p>Meeting ended 1.10pm</p>	

Items for Future Meetings	
Meeting	Item
Extraordinary Board meeting Aug	Reassurance for Trustees around readiness to open Outcomes of centre assessed grades
Autumn Board meetings	Update on vulnerable pupils Governance review Development of curriculum Risk Register activity programme
R&G meeting	Assurance process for Chair and VC appointments Consider processes followed by LGBs for recruitment

Action Log			
ITEM	ACTION	DEADLINE	RESPONSIBILITY
9	Complete and return evaluation forms		All
13	Organise written resolution to re-appoint Trustees		KJ
16	Send skills audit	autumn term	KJ