

DRAFT MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 28th March 2022 (5.00 p.m) – hybrid meeting at Riverside Mills

Present: C Midgley, Chair A Bennett OBE (CEO)
J Nellis – **by zoom** J Midgley – **by zoom**
E Brooke – **by zoom** I Jaffar – **by zoom**
K Inwood (self-isolating) – **by zoom**
N Oliver (Governance professional)

In attendance: J Firth (COO), A Rawson (CFO), N Foulkes (PA)

1. Apologies – apologies were received from J Power, J Fryer and A Birt.
2. Declaration of Interests
The family relationship of C Midgley (Chair of Trustees), J Midgley (Chair of Finance and Premises) and A Midgley (Raynville Academy) was again noted.
3. Opening remarks and governance update
The CEO (A Bennett) and Chair (C Midgley) updated the meeting re the Schools White Paper ‘Opportunity for All’ released earlier in the day. Further information to follow.
The Chair alerted Trustees that the second part of the Trust Board self-review would be undertaken May/June with outcomes collated for the July meeting.
Member vacancies and Trustee terms of office were again noted and would be re-visited later in 2022 as part of MAT growth plans. Arrangements for replacing the Chair of Greetland LGB (retirement of G Newton) would be confirmed at the May Trust Board.
4. Minutes of 14th February 2022
5. Matters Arising
The draft minutes were agreed and signed in person by the Chair of Trustees, subject to minor amendments highlighted by J Midgley (Item 2/Interests to include A Midgley and 7.2 Internal Controls meeting was JM and CEO only, following input from CM by email).
6. Correspondence, including ESFA
[18.3.22] COO email re. Energy Contract Decision, now signed.
Trustees noted a likely shift in ESFA role from April 2022 (non-financial policy & regulatory roles brought in-house at DfE, with oversight of academy governance, safeguarding etc moving to DfE regions; Academy Trust Handbook under review).
- 7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)
An updated report with high-level data and linked documents 1-11 had been received in advance from the CEO - building on aspects since the February meeting and accompanied by a written commentary on the Pre-Meeting Briefing.
Trustees were updated on attendance and persistent absence. The MIS System, Arbor, went live 17.03.22 and schools have begun to record absences onto the new system; a much better platform to track and monitor absence and persistent absentees and for the MAT Board to continue to hold the Trust to account.

Due to Covid, zoom then hybrid meetings were held during 2021-22. The Chair (C Midgley) sent a confirmation email to the Clerk dated 27 th May 2022, to record that these minutes were reviewed and approved at the next Board meeting (23 rd May 2022).
--

All Academies issued the Trust-led Ofsted staff survey during late February/early March. Trustees were provided with a data summary and report back for each Academy; an example staff response letter; and a summary of four focus areas. Next steps will include policies and promotional activities, mindful of DfE's 'Education staff wellbeing charter'.

A multi-academy trust of 3 schools joining GHAT (subject to consultations, time allocations and due diligence outcomes) is a new SI risk, alongside the continuing risks of changes in leadership and low pupil numbers at West Vale and persistent absenteeism across the Trust. A strong deputy (external applicant) has been appointed at West Vale.

Trustees were reminded of current school SEF grades - as self-reviewed by each Academy leadership, together with SDP Targets: all 'RAG'-rated for progress. Improved grades and amber areas of focus noted, with SIP visits to follow March/April.

Current Ofsted Positioning in all five academies (as of Spring 1; Spring 2 due) was noted. Raynville moved out of 30 day plan. Early Years practitioner appointed Bowling Green. Greetland follow-up actions re Ofsted (SEND/SENCO). West Vale as noted above.

LGB feedback (Director of Leadership reporting) noted.

On the recommendation of the Chair of Trustees and Chair of Standards (K Inwood), the Trust Board accepted a comprehensive designations update (Research School, English Hub and SCITT; CEO item 11) from the Director of School Improvement, which included notice of an application (by 16th May) to continue as a Research School 2023-2026. A new English Hub report has been developed and will be used in the summer reporting cycle, then to report to Trust Board against KPIs.

MAT growth plans (3 schools joining; current documentation as listed below) were discussed further, with comments received from Trustees:

- Rationale overview
- Consultation launch day/week timetable
- FAQs
- Consultation webpage
- PowerPoint
- Timetable

The process is: joint consultation, then in-depth due diligence followed by application to the RSC and Headteacher Board summer term. Once successful: TUPE (Autumn Term) and contracts review/changes, with 3 schools to join starting January 2023.

7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

CFO (A Rawson) and COO (J Firth) headline items noted - as itemised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing/Agenda; discussed in full prior to the Board meeting at F&P Committee.

Financial reporting – CFO

Management Accounts were received showing a current forecast (as at February 2022) of £1,682,879, a net reduction of £217k compared to January reporting: due to £205k Trust growth deferred to 22/23 (when it increases) and £10k overall change across the schools.

Following the December Trust Board meeting ("*The Chair added that all Trustees, not just F&P Committee, should routinely receive the full KPI comparisons report*"), the CFO presented a bespoke KPI self-assessment for all five Academies (DfE's School Resource Management Self-Assessment Tool is no longer available). Trustees noted Red/Amber ('RAG') areas and next steps actions proposed, no further questions; to share with Principals and LGBs, as discussed and agreed at F&P Committee.

Due to Covid, zoom then hybrid meetings were held during 2021-22. The Chair (C Midgley) sent a confirmation email to the Clerk dated 27th May 2022, to record that these minutes were reviewed and approved at the next Board meeting (23rd May 2022).

Approvals required at Trust Board, following initial consideration at F&P Committee:

- **PFI** (Kirklees) £283,803, ongoing/business as usual
 - **Staff Absence Insurance** (CMBC/across the MAT) CFO Item 3
 - proposed to continue with existing arrangement despite 12% increase, due to 21/22 claims history; to review again next year
 - **Minibus renewal** (leased) CFO Item 3a
 - a thorough options proposal and recommendation had been circulated in advance
 - **Contract Cleaning** (across the MAT) CFO Item 3 (N.B. Raynville/LCC £48,092)
 - proposed to continue with existing SLA arrangements, as alternative provider (marginally cheaper) is being monitored
 - **Bowling Green:** £80k support (2022/23), to maintain current SI structures
 - **Research School:** £60k successful EEF bid (“Early Pipeline Innovation Project”)
 - due to the additional amount, a summary paper (CFO Item 4) had been circulated
- => **Trustees unanimously approved all the above items, as recommended**

Operational reporting – COO

Key areas of the COO Report had been discussed in detail at F&P Committee:

- **Cybersecurity:** all recommendations from NCC have been actioned, with no response from ICO to date. A new provider will continue the SLA from 1st April 2022 and the risk protection arrangement (RPA) will provide cyber insurance from May (subject to information supplied). The COO is supporting DfE with user survey research.
- **Energy:** (see correspondence) the 18 month fixed term contract has now been secured for electricity contracts across the Trust, a 300% increase to previous costs. LGBs have been made aware and budgets will be updated accordingly.
- **Fire Safety:** RV and CA fire safety remedial actions will be cascaded across the Trust. K Inwood asked for an update re. steps onto outdoor spaces (CA) – report awaited.

7.3 MAT reporting – Trust policies

The CFO presented three policies, recommended for approval by F&P Committee (minor updates): Gifts & Hospitality; Staff Expenses; Trustee Expenses Guidance & Policy
=> **Trustees approved all three CFO documents, as above.**

8 AOB

- **CMBC Local Plan:** The Planning Inspector issued a Post Hearings Letter (23.3.22). Not a final decision but appears to sanction 900 new houses in the immediate vicinity of the Trust: 450 at Sunnybank and 450 Elland Bridge. Final Report in due course.

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

- Minutes of previous meeting 14.12.21 – **approved**
- Trust Management Accounts – **received and approved**
- Financial approvals (x6) and policies (x3) – **all approved, as presented**

10 Future Meetings

23rd May 2022 (Standards Committee 4pm / MAT Board 5pm)

- timings of future meetings to be re-visited meeting-by-meeting, but where possible in-person at Riverside Mills, especially re. ‘new’ Trustees; N.B. K Inwood unable to attend Standards Committee in person.

Due to Covid, zoom then hybrid meetings were held during 2021-22. The Chair (C Midgley) sent a confirmation email to the Clerk dated 27th May 2022, to record that these minutes were reviewed and approved at the next Board meeting (23rd May 2022).