

DRAFT MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST (GHAT)
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 23rd May 2022 (5.00 p.m) – hybrid meeting at Riverside Mills

Present: C Midgley, Chair A Bennett OBE (CEO)
 J Nellis J Fryer
 J Midgley – **by zoom** A Birt – **by zoom**
 E Brooke – **by zoom** I Jaffar – **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 and K Inwood.
2. Declaration of Interests
C Midgley (Chair of Trustees), J Midgley (Chair of Finance and Premises) and A Midgley (Raynville Academy / Director of Leadership and Governance) are related.

3. Opening remarks and governance update
The Chair (C Midgley) had circulated a paper on Local Governance, which had its origins in his involvement with CST’s governance leadership programme.

GHAT’s vision has always included effective local governance. As the Trust grows, this will become even more important for overall strategic governance and has been reinforced by the recent White Paper “*all trusts should have local governance arrangements*”. It was explained that GHAT’s proposed local governance implementation strategy now includes a disaggregated LGB scheme of delegation, renewed terms of reference, termly meetings and - with the assistance of A Midgley (Director of Leadership and Governance) - a series of Ofsted-related Governance Guides (‘Attendance’ sample attached).

The CEO thanked the Chair for taking the lead and acknowledged that this initiative was key for stakeholders (parents). Trustees endorsed the proposals as set out in the paper.

The Chair confirmed that the second part of the Trust Board self-review would be undertaken in 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. Peta Cocker (Member) had been introduced as the Chair of Greetland LGB, replacing G Newton (retirement) from September.

4. Minutes of 28th March 2022
5. Matters Arising
The draft minutes were agreed, with the Chair to email approval in lieu of a wet signature. There were no matters arising, not already on the agenda.
6. Correspondence, including ESFA
The CEO notified Trustees that an email had been received (23.5.22) from the RSC Advisory Board approving the joining of The Mirfield Free Grammar Academies Trust (‘MFG’ themfgmat.co.uk), with no conditions, but recommending that the expanded GHAT maintains its sound finances and separation of duties at all levels. ‘MFG’ is a

multi-academy trust comprising three schools, Mirfield Free Grammar School, Colne Valley High School and Marsden Junior School. Due diligence is ongoing – see Item 7.2.

As a new joint sponsor trust (both GHAT and MFG separately are approved sponsors), an additional sponsor request has already been proposed via the Regional Director, Lancashire and West Yorkshire. Initial papers were submitted by GHAT and successfully shortlisted. A final decision on this ‘pitch’ was deferred by the RSC; next steps awaited.

The CEO and Chair added that, although there were some short-term risks to sponsoring an additional secondary school, the longer-term benefits were triangulation opportunities (alongside Mirfield Free Grammar & Colne Valley High School) and moving closer to the White Paper view of a secure Trust (at least 10 schools or 7,500 pupils). The CEO also acknowledged that - while GHAT would be financially more secure including secondary schools - it would need to review the wider skills and experience available (ongoing). In order to boost capacity, the Trust had already advertised proactively for a Deputy Director of Secondary School Improvement, with a requirement to be on-site at schools requiring improvement - to strengthen its central capacity in curriculum and assessment.

7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

The CEO Report and linked documents had been received in advance and discussed in detail at Standards Committee - accompanied by a written commentary on the Pre-Meeting Briefing. As a result, the CEO provided MAT Board with high-level feedback:

- Attendance and PA all improving
- SEND reviews positive; watching brief to note re West Vale
- SIP, SDP and Ofsted positioning also reflect an additional focus on West Vale (a number of issues of concern). A sub-group of Standards Committee will meet to discuss short term and longer-term options. The quality of provision is not at risk, but the pace of change and viability of roll. Will be brought back to a future meeting
- Ofsted are inspecting Carlinghow Academy this week

7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

CFO (A Rawson) and COO (J Firth) headlines noted - as summarised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing; COO items discussed in full prior to the Board meeting at Standards Committee.

Financial reporting – CFO

Management Accounts were accompanied by a CFO Report for further context, especially re the summary position. The CFO also outlined the initial 3 year budget planning factors (income, pupil numbers, expenditure, staff salary increments tbc and non-teaching pay awards) ahead of the Trust’s July meetings.

Comparison to the revised budget presented at the February Board meeting was provided; also to the original 2021/22 budget as per requirements of the Academy Trust Handbook. The overall revenue income of the Trust 2021/22 is forecast to be £10,136,08, with expenditure of £10,652,725, resulting in an in-year deficit of £516,638. The overall revenue balance at 31.8.22 is forecast to be £1,680,722. The CFO also noted:

- finances will change due to 31st May teacher resignations and appointments deadline
- reserves will be used to support school improvement (recognising the requirement to meet school improvement needs vs. balancing budgets)
- the continuing decline at CA around Pupil Nos. may be reversed by the Ofsted visit

- an unexpected amount on the WV business card has been credited back; no further action

Trustees were supportive of a proposal to identify centralised accommodation for the MAT finance team, to suit the needs and growth of the Trust.

Approvals required at Trust Board were agreed as documented in CFO items 2, 2a-c:

- **Pre-school shared used agreement:** to continue, minor increase in charge noted
 - **Photocopier renewal:** overall saving c. £68k across three academies; work done by the Business Support Administrator acknowledged
 - **Lightning conductor works:** essential work across the Trust's schools, following the 2021 incident at Greetland KS2
 - **Fire doors works (RA):** approved, subject to final quote comparison
 - **KS1 improvement works (£80k/GA):** approved in principle, subject to quotes
 - **Contract cleaning (RA):** supporting evidence accepted, following previous discussion (March MAT Board meeting)
 - **Minibus tender:** following the options proposal (March MAT Board meeting), there had been a 4.4% increase from £64,604 to £67,456 (now price protected)
- => **Trustees approved all the above items, as recommended**

Following a question from J Fryer re financial due diligence around the expansion of GHAT (joining of MFG MAT), the CEO explained that comprehensive external due diligence of HR, estates management and finance has almost concluded; the broad summary has been 'no significant issues identified, some good people with opportunities to better utilise and streamline and centralise processes'. It was also confirmed that there is a private finance initiative (PFI) affecting Colne Valley High School - part of the same contract as Carlinghow Academy ('Kirklees Group Schools Project' / KSSL Ltd).

Operational reporting – COO

The following were reported to the Board:

- Safeguarding: a full report has been shared with A Birt, Safeguarding Trustee
- Organisational Effectiveness: Leadership update + BG Areas of focus; samples shared
- RPA Cyber protection: Trustees/Local Governors to undertake mandatory NCSC training to meet insurance requirements (YouTube)

7.3 MAT reporting – Trust policies

The COO presented three documents from Standards Committee: NJC Structure across the Trust; Health and Safety Policy (a full re-write); Use of Digital Technologies Policy (updated). It had been agreed to re-circulate the two policies (without tracked changes - Digital Technologies Policy) for any questions and/or approval by 10th June.

Standards Committee had supported the alignment of non-teaching staff pay with their own LA payscales - from 1st September 2022, to aid recruitment and retention.

=> **Trustees agreed to transfer the identified staff (Raynville & Carlinghow) to the new role profiles and salary grading from 01.09.22.**

Trustees noted that the two recent CIF bids (RA roof, WV heating) had been rejected. Outcomes (scoring) to be circulated.

8 AOB - None

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

- Local Governance vision and accompanying documents – **agreed**
- To approve (and publish) minutes of previous meeting 28.3.22 – **approved**
- Trust Management Accounts – **received and approved**
- Financial approvals (x7) required – **all approved, as presented**
- Trustees/Local Governors to undertake NCSC Cyber Security training – **agreed**
- Alignment of staff within their Local Authority pay structure – **approved from 1.9.22**
- H&S & Use of Digital Technologies Policies – **recirculated for approval by 10 June**
- To note the calendar of meetings 2022-2023 – **see below**

10 Future Meetings

18th July 2022 (F&P Committee **5pm** / MAT Board **6pm**).

- Note: one-off later times; hybrid meeting at Riverside Mills
- Note: A Birt sends apologies in advance / unable to attend

Trustees noted the Calendar of meetings 2022-23. This maintains the times used for the last two Terms (4pm, 5pm / but to be reviewed at each Trust Board meeting).