

MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 12th December 2022 (5.00 p.m)

Present: A Bennett OBE (CEO) J Power - **zoom**
J Fryer - **zoom** E Brooke - **zoom**
J Midgley K Inwood
J Nellis - **zoom** Dr A Birt - **zoom**
C Midgley (Chair of Trustees) - **zoom**

In attendance: N Oliver (Governance professional) - **zoom**
J Firth (COO), A Rawson (CFO), N Foulkes (PA)
Deputy Director of School Improvement, Roz Wood-Ives
Director of School Improvement, Dani Worthington

A hybrid meeting was held due to a combination of weather conditions and illness.

1. Apologies – I Jaffar

2. Declaration of Interests

C Midgley (Chair of Trustees), J Midgley (Chair of Finance and Premises) and A Midgley (Director of Governance) are related.

3. Opening remarks and governance update

The three Members had held their AGM earlier in the evening. Ken Inwood, Jackie Nellis (w.e.f. 4.12.22) & John Midgley (w.e.f. 17.1.23) had been re-appointed Trustees for a four year period. Plans are also in hand to recruit additional Members (four better, five DfE preferred): MFG have been offered a place and ideally this will be confirmed by January prior to submitting GHAT's annual returns to Companies House.

The CEO (A Bennett) confirmed that growth opportunities continue at pace. DfE have not accepted PFI issues delaying MFG joining. At least 2 of the 3 schools will now join in February, with Colne Valley (PFI) later (Feb/Mar). New opportunities are being pursued.

The Chair of Trustees (C Midgley) confirmed that an LGB Chairs meeting had now taken place, as part of making governance as effective as it can be across the Trust at the earliest opportunity prior to MFG joining. LGB Points to note (AOB) had also been circulated to Trustees, including several positive messages.

4. Approval of Annual Report and Accounts (from Finance and Premises Committee)

The Annual Report and Accounts 2021-22 (including Trustees Report, Governance Statement and Income & Expenditure) were approved unanimously, as recommended by Trust Members and F&P Committee - after an extended session with Simpson-Wood Accountants earlier in the evening (Audit Findings Report).

- The Chair of Finance and Premises confirmed that the accounts were in good order. Trustees noted that there were no findings or concerns in Simpson-Wood's Letter of Comment; the only reference being to Wheawill & Sudworth's (internal audit) comment in-year, which had been answered previously. Simpson-Wood and Wheawill & Sudworth had been re-appointed for external audit and internal control, respectively. As in 20/21 the scope of internal scrutiny 2022/23 will be discussed by a sub-group.

J Midgley 6/2/23

5. Minutes of 3rd October 2022

6. Matters Arising

The draft minutes were agreed, with the Chair to email approval in lieu of a wet signature. In response to J Fryer, the CEO confirmed that the 2022 Schools White Paper had been withdrawn, but that policies were unchanged and there should be no impact on the Trust.

7. Correspondence, including ESFA

Riverside Mills expansion proposal (COO email, 14.11.22) – the timeline has now slipped to February, see Agenda Item 3.

8.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

CEO Report and linked documents circulated in advance. To support awareness of MAT offers, the Director of School Improvement and CEO had presented an overview (Trello has a PDF copy of the Powerpoint slides used) to all staff at the October training day.

Admissions and attendance continue to be an issue. The CEO reassured Trustees that academies and senior leaders are doing all they can. Exclusions (BG and WV) noted.

School Improvement targets remain as previously reported. Two schools (BG and RV) are in the Ofsted window and continue to be the focus of specific reporting to Trustees.

Other notable risks highlighted include

- The MFG Trust joining GHAT (see Agenda Item 3);
- Secondary-specific offers – see below;
- behaviour at WV (legacy from Ofsted Report – the Director of School Improvement, D Worthington answered questions from Trustees)

QA Framework, self-evaluation next steps areas to be developed as follows:

- MAT data dashboard development
- School Improvement Q&As - subject expertise & how we use our best leaders
- MAT recruitment and retention strategy
- MAT peer review (MAT to MAT)
- Governance succession planning

The CEO introduced the MAT Board to a new central team member, Deputy Director of School Improvement (Mrs Roz Wood-Ives), who had completed a 25-day (funded) secondment to MFG developing a CQI model to scope, explore and diagnose school improvement needs within a current priority area (6th form). The model (which originated in primary) and associated QA toolkit would then be trialled as a template to cascade across secondary settings, ready to embed into any future 2-18 delivery offer - summary presented. Trustees were keenly interested and there was a Q&A for further insight.

As part of a continuous focus on data at GHAT's five existing academies, the Director of School Improvement gave a detailed insight into pupil-level systems and monitoring, which feed in to pupil progress and attainment meetings, year group and category dashboards. Standards Committee will receive full reporting on the recent data drop, but all schools are on track to meet predictions and/or aspirations.

8.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

CFO (A Rawson) and COO (J Firth) 'headlines' were noted as summarised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing/Agenda. The COO Report was taken as read, but the CEO thanked the COO and Business Support team for recent ICT developments.

J. Fryer 6/2/23

Financial reporting – CFO Report

The Chair of Finance and Premises confirmed that the financial position had been discussed in detail at prior meetings. The Trust Board received the latest Management Accounts which provided the overall position of the Trust and individual entities, including supporting explanatory notes, as at 28th November 2022. The accounts included comparison to the original 2022/23 budget, set in July 2022 - as required by the Academy Trust Handbook – and to the 2021/22 financial year. Key points agreed were:

- **Reserves position:** to move £80k from the Research School to central funds.
- **Central retention:** the top slice for MFG would be 4% (to exclude school improvement offer), as at February 2023; the other academies remain at 6%.
- **Revised central MAT position:** end of year central MAT balance is £335k (not £318k as reported in the management accounts) - assuming estimates of, MFG joining in February 2023; adjustment to their school improvement secondment offer; the costs of second floor offices at Riverside Mills from February 2023.

Financial approvals (Raynville) required at Trust Board were summarised in CFO item 4 and the accompanying paper, CFO item 4a: minibus lease, minibus purchase (Reserves position plan) and catering contract. **All agreed by Trustees, at the recommendation of F&P Committee.**

The Chair of Finance and Premises added that the forthcoming electricity contract renewal at Bowling Green was an opportunity to take advantage of market pricing. Trustees acknowledged that prices shift daily and were in agreement with flexible (quorate) approval arrangements on the day, whether via F&P Committee (12 month term) or MAT Board (24 months).

E Brooke left the meeting at this point for a prior work commitment

8.3 MAT reporting – Trust policies

Financial Procedures, Competitive Tendering & Antifraud and Corruption policies were agreed, at the recommendation of Finance and Premises Committee.

9 AOB - LGB Points to note: see Agenda Item 3

10 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

Minutes of previous meeting 3.10.22 – **approved**

Annual Report and Accounts 2021-2022 – **approved**

To receive the Trust Management Accounts – **approved**

Financial approvals – **Leeds CC catering (contract value c. £93k) and BG electricity contract renewal arrangements agreed**

To consider the expansion of Riverside Mills (second floor) – **agreed**

To consider reserves position plans – **Raynville (minibuses) & Research School agreed**

Financial policies x3 – **approved**

11 Future Meetings (Riverside Mills)

6th February 2023 (Standards 4pm / MAT Board 5pm)

27th March 2023* (Finance and Premises / MAT Board – timing tbc)

*N.B. The Vice Chair (J Nellis) to Chair in the absence of C Midgley

It was noted that the Vice Chair will likely be absent for meetings on 22nd May, 17th July

 6/2/23