

MINUTES  
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST  
**MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 (5.00 p.m)

**Present:** A Bennett OBE (CEO) J Midgley  
K Inwood J Nellis (Vice Chair of Trustees)  
Dr A Birt – **zoom** I Jaffar – **audio**

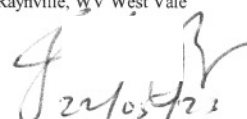
**In attendance:** N Oliver (Governance professional)  
A Rawson (CFO), J Firth (COO)  
Director of School Improvement, Dani Worthington

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**The meeting was chaired by J Nellis (Vice Chair) in the absence of C Midgley (Chair)**

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1. Apologies – E Brooke, J Power, J Fryer, C Midgley. The meeting was quorate, with four Trustees attending in person and two remotely.
2. Declaration of Interests  
C Midgley (Chair of Trustees), J Midgley (Trustee) and A Midgley (Principal) are related.
3. Opening remarks and governance update  
Trustees were reminded that the MAT Board Terms of Reference had been under review during the current period of significant change (MFG Trust joining). After consultation with the Trust’s Director of Leadership & Governance (A Midgley) and the Governance Professional, the Chair of Trustees was now recommending an update to the existing TOR (Section 3 - Summary added, in place of Covid wording) for approval and adoption.  
**=> Trustees accepted the proposal to adopt the updated Terms of Reference.**  
  
The Vice Chair (J Nellis) provided a verbal update on the successful Trust appointment of two Secondary Principals from a strong field, a good indicator of the reputation of the Trust; neither were existing Heads. The CEO (A Bennett) and Director of School Improvement summarised the robust recruitment exercise which has been undertaken.  
  
The CEO informed Trustees that the Regional Director had requested to visit the Trust, re. commissioned work for DfE. The Regional Group team would also be visiting.
4. Minutes of 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023
5. Matters Arising - The draft minutes were agreed for publication, subject to noting that (after liaison with F&P Trustees) a reduced offer had been agreed with Leeds City Council for contract cleaning at Raynville. The CFO added that the contract will be exited at the earliest opportunity. References to ‘Trust Growth’ (page 3) to be redacted.
6. Correspondence, including ESFA  
Four emails had been circulated to Trustees between meetings (details on the Agenda).
- 7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)  
The updated CEO Report and linked documents had been circulated in advance, now with schools new to the Trust included. Key points highlighted:
  - **Admissions, Attendance & Exclusion.**  
With new schools joining, reporting is increasingly on an exception basis, with LGBs



expected to track the underlying detail via their Principal's reporting. At the request of Trustees, the CEO will amend future exclusion reporting to provide further insight (breakdown by EHCP, SEND etc) via a linking Arbor Report.

- **School Improvement**

Summary reports were received from the Director and Deputy Director of School Improvement and data had been shared recently for comment by the Chair of Trustees, Vice Chair and Chair of Standards (K Inwood). In response to questions, the Director of School Improvement reassured Trustees that questions continue to be asked of staff (and interventions continue) re primary predictions and that secondary data will be updated after Easter. An interesting future exercise would be for the MAT Board to compare how close predicted data is (whether over or under) to actual outcomes.

- **Current risks**

- MFG Trust schools joining: mitigated by the 100 day implementation plan
- Trust growth: possible future Tcaf bid  
Trustees acknowledged that the growth strategy needs to include a hub model and were in agreement for Chairs (Chair of Trustees, Vice Chair, Chairs of Standards and Finance and Premises) to authorise appointments to an initial Kirklees Hub.
- Designations reporting: restructuring ongoing; Trustees received a verbal update

- **Local Governing bodies**

The Trust Board received a paper from the Trust's Director of Leadership & Governance. Recommendations were agreed unanimously as follows:

- (i) new LGBs to move swiftly to GHAT's calendar for meetings
- (ii) new LGBs to use GHAT's standard agendas and reporting format
- (iii) new LGBs to be re-structured to match GHAT's format of six governors: Principal, staff member, 2 parents and 2 community governors (to improve effectiveness and ensure focus on the impact of key agenda issues)
- (iv) current governors who wish to continue to serve on their LGB to re-apply (final selection to match GHAT's format and take account of the skills offered)

LGB points (Spring 2 meetings) were noted.

In response to a question, it was noted that the Additional Resourced Provision (ARP) with Carlinghow will be managed by Kirklees as part of their offer, but with Trust staff.

## 7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

### **Financial reporting – CFO Report**

Trustees received a CFO Report which had been discussed in more detail at F&P Committee earlier in the evening. Despite a number of apologies, the meeting had been quorate, with the Vice Chair (J Nellis) attending on behalf of the Chair of Trustees (C Midgley). The CFO Report and Agenda had briefed Trustees on the following:

- proposals for Central Retention charges 2023/24
- tendering for 2023/24 Audit services during Summer/Autumn term 2023

- (i) **Finance Summary**

Trustees received the latest Management Accounts 2022/23, accompanied by detailed comments on income & expenditure variances – an overall decline of £78,614 (EOY forecast as at 28.02.23, £1,420,446). The CFO (A Rawson) added that growth

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estimates are largely on track, with Teachers Pay assumptions also discussed at F&P. The CEO added that future budgets are soundly planned and consistent with the wider environment and press reporting re. pay claims.

(ii) **Central Retention**

The Chair of Finance and Premises reminded Trustees that every school is currently charged 6%, except schools joining from the MFG Trust (4%, excluding school improvement charges) and Bowling Green (no top slice initially, as part of a short-term strategy to stabilise the school and to support essential school improvement).

Following detailed discussions of GAG allocations and affordability at Finance and Premises Committee (CFO Items 2 & 3), the recommendation to MAT Board was for equity (6% top slice) across all the Trust schools from academic financial year 23/24, including Bowling Green and The MFG academies x3 from September 2023; but offset by individual financial support on a needs basis. During discussion, the views of the Chair of Bowling Green's LGB (K Inwood) were heard.

In response to a question, the CFO noted that there is no unique structure for a MAT, but GHAT is now highly regarded for its core offer and 6% is 'on a par'.

**=> Trustees unanimously accepted the recommendation for an equal and fair contribution (6%) from all schools, as part of a unified GHAT model.**

(iii) **2023/24 Audit services**

The CFO Report noted the following:

*On an annual basis, Members appoint external auditors (to complete end of year audit and financial accounts) and internal audit, following recommendation from F&P Committee. Formal tendering for audit services was last completed for 2019/20. Simpson-Wood (annual audit & accounts) have been re-appointed in successive years. BHP were appointed for internal audit for one year and then replaced by Wheawill & Sudworth. Trustees are asked to consider the approach for 23/24 audit services. Recommendation: formal tendering during Summer/Autumn term 23 for appointment December 23.*

**=> Note: Trustees to consider progress at the May MAT Board meeting**

Financial approvals required at Trust Board were summarised in CFO item 4:

**PFI (Carlinghow; to 2033).** Repayment of capital costs. To note actual figure £320,522.

**Staff Absence Insurance 23/24.** For the first time, the total cost estimate exceeds the actual (22/23) claimed amounts (c. 2x) – a good Health & Wellbeing position. Trustees were in unanimous agreement for the Central Team to work with individual Heads to establish whether they have an ongoing need for SAI, as part of further investigation / discussion re Best Value.

**Standards reporting – COO Report**

The COO report was taken as read, following discussion and approval of perceived risks across the Trust (Risk Registers - 'RAG'-rated), noting that further work is required to align MFG and MJS - for consistency across the Trust as part of the implementation plan.

8 AOB - None

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

Minutes of previous meeting 6.2.23 – **approved**

Trust Board Terms of Reference – **adopted**

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

To receive updated Risk Registers – **approved**

To agree Central Retention approach 23/24 (6%) – **unanimous approval**

To agree the approach for 23/24 audit services – **to consider progress at next meeting**

Financial approvals required – **agreed, as itemised in CFO item 4**

10 Future Meetings (Riverside Mills)

22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 (Standards 4pm / MAT Board 5pm)

*N.B. A Birt will be absent for the meeting. J Nellis will be in attendance by Zoom.*

*Jc JR 22/05/22*