

DRAFT MINUTES
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST
MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

Monday 14th February 2022 (7.00 p.m) – hybrid meeting at Riverside Mills

Present: C Midgley – **by zoom** A Bennett OBE (CEO)
J Power – **by zoom** K Inwood, Acting Chair
J Midgley – **by zoom** Dr A Birt
E Brooke – **by zoom** N Oliver (Governance professional)

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

After a two year absence due to Covid, face-to-face meetings resumed on 14th February at Riverside Mills (new MAT offices). Due to space limitations, Trustees had the option of attending in person or by zoom. The Chair of Trustees, C Midgley, had sound issues on the evening and so K Inwood (who had chaired Standards Committee earlier in the evening) acted as chair - with the agreement of Trustees.

1. Apologies – apologies were accepted from J Nellis, I Jaffar and J Fryer.

2. Declaration of Interests

The family relationship of C Midgley (Chair of Trustees) and J Midgley (Chair of Finance and Premises) was noted ~~– both in attendance.~~ and A Midgley.


3. Opening remarks and governance update

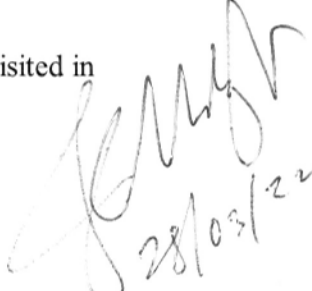
The acting chair (K Inwood) invited the CEO (A Bennett) to make an opening statement. A small academy trust of three schools (full details given) is looking to join GHAT to secure itself as a strong trust. Discussions had been ongoing, culminating in a resolution (10th February) to join GHAT - subject to stakeholder consultation, RSC approval and further due diligence (finance to be probed in greater detail). In response to questions, the CEO explained the implications:

- the three schools would close their own MAT and join GHAT (not a merger)
- GHAT would be unchanged, except for becoming an age 2 to 6th form provider (+ITT)
- places on the GHAT Board were not being sought, but Members were offered
- the opportunity would bring three good schools (with school improvement needs), strengthen pupil numbers (+3,000) and move GHAT into a stronger category: School Condition Allocation (rather than annual CIF bidding) is automatically awarded by ESFA to MATs with at least 5 academies and more than 3000 students
- GHAT would access relevant expertise via Oldham Sixth Form College (Research School) and by commissioning NLE specialists in secondary education
- due diligence would explore whether any IT or finance staff would become available
- as a five school Trust, now with its own MAT offices, GHAT was ready for growth

Resolution: following a proposal from the acting chair, Trustees were unanimously in agreement with the intent to pursue the growth opportunity, as set out above; subject to RSC approval, ongoing due diligence and any legal matters.

Member vacancies and Trustee terms of office were noted and would be re-visited in 2022 as part of any MAT growth.


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4. Minutes of 13th December 2021

5. Matters Arising

The draft minutes were agreed and signed in person by the acting chair.

Pay Policy (non-teaching staff): work ongoing and will be brought to a future meeting.

6. Correspondence, including ESFA

[20.1.22] request for an early Ofsted (Carlinghow) - acknowledged by HMI 1.2.22.

- CA had been reviewed in detail at Standards Committee earlier in the evening. CEO confident of being good in all categories, exceeding good in some. The main concern is persistent absenteeism, but the school is felt to be doing everything within its control.

7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

The CEO Report was accompanied by a commentary on Spring Term areas of focus – summarised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing. The Chair of Standards (K Inwood) confirmed that these had also been discussed in detail at Standards Committee earlier in the evening.

Notable SI risks are:

- Limiting factor of persistent absenteeism in 3 schools
- Changes in leadership at West Vale: time needed to secure leadership knowledge, articulate school improvement and push forward curriculum developments
- Low pupil number indicator for West Vale
- Two grade 4 Academies: requested Ofsted visit for Carlinghow (see correspondence)

The importance of attendance was discussed - a DfE high priority, especially persistent absenteeism. Carlinghow and Raynville remain focus schools and will continue to be reviewed with targets (KPIs) set. West Vale is purely COVID-related. In response to J Midgley and K Inwood it was agreed that nurseries should be taken 'off roll' in future reporting to avoid any confusion.

The West Vale interim position (consultant head; deputy stepping up) is working well and the quality of T&L is good, not at risk, but the CEO consulted with the Board on the intention to now seek an experienced Principal, within the scheme of delegation (reverting to structure). The CFO added that, although West Vale is financially secure for two years, it will need additional income in future years. In response to a Trustee who is a Local Governor at WV, the CEO confirmed that this would be a permanent appointment, open to internal applications. The Trust Board were in agreement with the way forward.

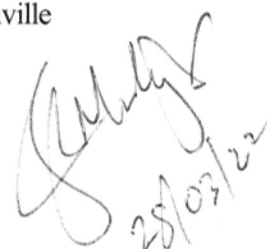
Current Ofsted Positioning in all five academies (updated with Spring Term monitoring, as of January 2022) was noted. Raynville remains a watch (30-day plan) school, but with positive examples continuing to be received by Trustees. LGB feedback was noted and Local Governor training is being sourced via the Trust's 'Gold' membership of NGA.

7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

CFO (A Rawson) and COO (J Firth) headline items were noted, as summarised on the Pre-Meeting Briefing/Agenda.

Financial reporting – CFO

Management Accounts were received showing a current forecast (as at 31.8.22) of £1,899,691, a net reduction of £66,422 compared to December: due to £25k Raynville plan; £22.4k additional energy costs; West Vale additional costs.



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The CFO reminded Trustees that the Trust is required to submit a School Resource Management Self-assessment Checklist by 15th March 2022, which pre-dates the next Finance & Premises Committee. **The Trust Board approved the draft SRMSAT submission, noting all 42 positive “Yes” answers - as detailed in CFO document 3.**

Contracts requiring approval at Trust Board (in lieu of Finance & Premises Committee):

- **Staff contracts, payroll and Pensions** (CMBC/5 schools) £27,211
- **MIS** (Arbor/5 schools, 2022-23 cost within a 36 month contract) £20,681
- **[Minute and supporting documents CONFIDENTIAL – commercial sensitivity]**

Financial reporting – Internal Controls

Following proposals at Finance & Premises Committee on 13th December, a sub-committee of Trustees (JM, CM, CEO) had met to discuss the internal audit approach 2021-22. The proposed internal controls paper had been circulated to Trustees, together with a ‘track changes’ comparison with 2020-21. This specifies the programme of works by the newly-appointed external auditor (Wheawill and Sudworth), including an additional section on IT / cyber-security in light of recent events. MAT Board agreed the proposal.

Operational management – COO Report

Key areas of the COO Report had been discussed in detail at Standards Committee:

- **[Minute and supporting documents CONFIDENTIAL – due to data protection]**
- **[Minute and supporting documents CONFIDENTIAL – commercial sensitivity]**
- **IT Infrastructure Manager:** Standards Committee had approved the intent to appoint an IT Mgr as the next central appointment - at a higher (market) salary tbc. The proposal had been supported by a financial impact paper from the CFO. Trustees ratified the proposal, subject to any further review in light of Trust growth.

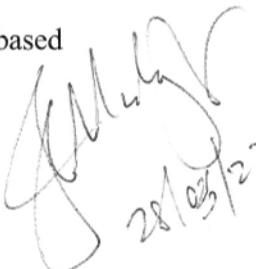
The Chair of Standards added that the central team had been asked (at Standards Committee) to review the quality of PE provision across the Trust’s schools, as part of meeting grant requirements. The new Arbor MIS system had also been highlighted (see contracts approval, above) which should aid data capture - bringing together all existing systems under one umbrella; the COO confirmed that training is underway.

7.3 MAT reporting – Trust policies

COO/Equality Policy and Objectives (3 documents)

Standards Committee had recommended an updated policy (existing provider) for approval, supplemented by four proposed Trust Objectives: two educational/pupil-based equality objectives, two operational/staff-based. In addition to the Trust’s own

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overarching objectives, each academy could set and work towards its own, context specific, objectives. Trustees requested a common approach to monitoring, evaluation, recording and benchmarking (possibly KPIs) at all levels across the Trust.

=> **The suite of equality documents was approved, subject to amendment**

CFO/Financial procedures

The CFO explained that the Financial Procedures manual had been updated to include the role of Finance Manager (since 2022); to better align procedures and practice, as part of internal scrutiny; and to increase processes around potentially fraudulent activities.

CFO/Scheme of Delegation

Incorporation of Finance Manager role and responsibilities, in conjunction with Academy Principals. Will continue to develop as Finance Manager embeds and Trust grows.

CFO/Fundraising Policy Statement

Updated to give clarity on events, non-uniform days and common practice across the Trust, in light of feedback from the Director of School Improvement.

CFO/School Improvement Commissioning Policy

Updated to include rates for administrative staff.

=> **Trustees approved all four CFO documents, as above.**

8 AOB

- **CMBC Local Plan:** The probably final hearing (air quality, including West Vale) was held 11.1.22; the Government's Inspector may now soon decide if the draft plan to build 600+ homes (over 10-15 years) in Greetland and environs is sound.

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

- **Resolution:** to pursue a growth opportunity (three schools to join GHAT) – **agreed**
- Minutes of previous meeting 13.12.21 – **approved**
- Trust Management Accounts – **received and approved**
- Financial approvals required (x3) – **approved**
- SRMSAT submission to ESFA – **approved**
- Equality Policy and Equality Objectives – **approved, subject to amendment**

- IT Infrastructure Manager – **approved in principle**
- Updated Financial Procedures, SoD and policies (x2) – **approved**

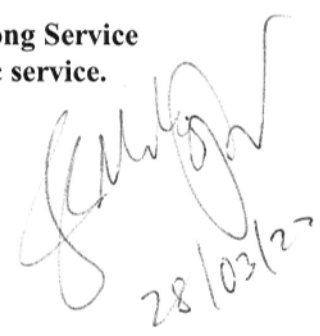
10 Future Meetings

28th March 2022 (Finance and Premises 6pm / MAT Board 7pm)

- where possible to be in-person meetings at Riverside Mills HX5 0RY, tbc

In closing the meeting, the acting chair thanked the CEO, COO and CFO for their outstanding work across the MAT's schools, in conjunction with the leadership teams.

On behalf of Calderdale MBC Local Authority, the acting chair presented Long Service Awards to Amanda Bennett and Jayne Firth in recognition of 25 years public service.



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