

MINUTES  
GREAT HEIGHTS ACADEMY TRUST  
**MAT BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING**  
Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2023 (5.00 p.m)

**Present:** A Bennett OBE (CEO) J Power - **zoom**  
J Fryer, from Item 3 - **zoom** J Midgley  
K Inwood J Nellis (Vice Chair of Trustees)  
Dr A Birt – **zoom** C Midgley (Chair of Trustees)

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

27.3.23-

1. Apologies – E Brooke, J Firth (COO)
2. Declaration of Interests  
C Midgley (Chair of Trustees), J Midgley (Trustee) and A Midgley (Principal) are related.

3. Opening remarks and governance update  
The Chair reminded Trustees that the Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation were due to be re-visited when the current period of significant change (MFG Trust joining) was complete. Trustee roles and responsibilities had already been summarised prior to Autumn Term (email 16.9.22) and new Terms of Reference are now in hand. The Scheme of Delegation was a CFO agenda item.

Kay Brennan (Trustee at The MFG Trust & Local Governor, CVHS) had been confirmed as a fourth Member, prior to submitting GHAT's annual return to Companies House. Trustee Terms of Office (J Fryer) were reviewed.

The Chair reported three key items of 'Chairs Action':

- (i) **Workforce restructure (SCITT/Research School)**. Peer review had reinforced the view of the SCITT Board that restructuring was needed to separate leadership and accountability. Staff are to apply for amended posts and be held to account as separate Heads of SCITT and of the Research School.  
=> Trustees accepted the proposal, noting that Standards Committee had been fully supportive at their meeting earlier in the day

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J Fryer joined the meeting

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- (ii) **Local Governing Bodies joining GHAT**. GHAT's vision includes a local governance strategy (MAT Board meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2022): handbook, consistency of agendas and reporting, a model of 6 Local Governors (Principal, Staff governor, 2 Community governors, 2 Parents) and a strong educational chair - in light of recent positive experiences with Ofsted. This has been implemented in all five existing academies and any schools joining should realign with these practices.  
=> Trustees confirmed that it was a clear expectation of their committees (all LGBs are committees of the Trust Board) that there would be common practice across all MAT schools i.e. for LGBs to restructure, to submit reporting at the same time in advance of MAT Board meetings, and to a common standard.

(iii) **Secondary Headship.** The two secondaries joining do not have permanent Principals and it is proposed to advertise Mirfield Free Grammar (joined on 1<sup>st</sup> February) after Half Term. A financial risk but Jimmy Christian (Interim CEO at The MFG MAT) assures that funds are available – the school has operated all year without a Head.  
=> Trustees were unanimously in favour of proceeding with the appointment

4. Minutes of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022

5. Matters Arising - The draft minutes were agreed.

6. Correspondence, including ESFA

**GHAT IT Proposal** (COO email, 11.01.23) – confirmed that Trustees had agreed the comprehensive ICT plan and supporting costings/quotations by email, including hiring an apprentice to cover all schools in the Trust. The collective amount of all contracts, as set out in the email, had required full Board approval. Trustees were thanked for responding promptly and for raising questions answered by the central team.

7.1 MAT reporting – CEO (A Bennett)

CEO Report and linked documents circulated in advance. Key points highlighted:

- **Admissions.** Early indications that Bowling Green is slightly oversubscribed (the only Elland school fully requested at the present time), but the remaining GHAT academies are expecting a shortfall (lowest in memory). Current 1st choice figures for Sept 2023, still to be confirmed = Greetland 37, West Vale 5. Need ways forward for West Vale.
- **Focus on data**
  - Autumn 2 (December) data remains on track and forms the basis of challenge at all typicality conversations; in all likelihood aspirational targets will be achievable.
  - New Arbor data system (real-time data) outlined at Standards Committee. Bespoke Pupil Premium reporting being created for the Trust Board and LGBs.
  - Secondary data positioning discussed at Standards with Deputy Director of School Improvement - a baseline measure for Headship appointments. Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees keen to better understand the secondary data, including the accuracy of predictions, pupil numbers and concern for core subjects; but recognising that one secondary yet to join and the other has had no permanent Head - Deputy Director of School Improvement thanked for the basic data provided to date. Watching brief.
  - The Chair of Trustees summarised that overall the Trust remains 'good' or better.
- **Marsden Junior School.** MJS keen to participate and align reporting structures.
- **Nields Junior, Infant and Nursery School (feeder school for CVHS).**  
Nields has applied formally to join GHAT. The Chair of Trustees & CEO outlined the current position and ongoing due diligence. Draft letter of consent prepared by Chair of Trustees. Requires approval by Regional Director Advisory (Headteacher) Board.  
  
=> **The Trust Board were in unanimous agreement for Nields Junior, Infant and Nursery School to join GHAT**, subject to the usual approvals and checks.

7.2 MAT reporting – CFO & COO

**Financial reporting – CFO Report**

The CFO (A Rawson) presented a slimmed down CFO Report, with more detailed reporting to follow at the Termly F&P Committee. This report covered the following:

1. Finance Summary

Trustees received the Management Accounts providing detail on the overall position of the Trust (EOY forecast as at 31.12.22, £1,499,060) and individual entities, including supporting explanatory notes; balance sheet; cash flow; and reserves, for 2022/23.

Income variances noted including:

- New Mainstream School Additional grant from April '23 (announced 16.12.22): £95k estimate for 22/23; £228k in future years
- Trust growth: **REDACTED**

2. Financial process and compliance

Internal audit sub-group met Wheawill & Sudworth, 24<sup>th</sup> January. Agreed 2 visits p.y.

Trustees agreed that the draft School Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist (42 questions) reflects the Trust's governance and financial controls. The annual return was approved for submission to meet the deadline 15.3.23.

3. MAT growth

**REDACTED**

Other items discussed (full proposals received) were as follows:

**Contract cleaning at Raynville** (Leeds CC), 10.5% mid-contract increase back-dated to April. Re-approved as a continuing contract, subject to review and comment by J Power.

**Contract cleaning at Greetland** (a new approach - Carroll cleaning). Agreed, with the contract to start after TUPE completed for existing one member of Greetland staff.

**Photocopier lease, Raynville** (4-year tender from Riso). Agreed, noting oversight and challenge from the Business Support team, to leverage the scale of the Trust.

**Payroll contract (CMBC)**, continuation of current service provision, all entities: total contract value est £37,344. Agreed.

**Standards reporting – COO Report**

The CEO presented the operational management report in the absence of J Firth, which had been covered in detail at Standards Committee. Key points noted were:

- With the addition of secondary, future reporting will be high-level staff changes only (N.B. Sports Co-ordinator shared post West Vale/Bowling Green– has now been advertised twice and regraded to attract further candidates without success)
- Continuous wellbeing support
- Data Protection/ICO & SCITT correspondence, both ongoing
- Phase 4 of the LA's A629 works is on hold indefinitely due to escalating costs. This included a 'Green Screen' at West Vale, a one way system around the school's side streets and re-surfacing works adjacent to the SCITT entrance.

Trustees were alerted that the MAT may now need to release funds for essential WV elements, in lieu of the LA/West Yorkshire Combined Authority funding.

- Feasibility studies ongoing at Bowling Green.

J Fryer questioned whether any additional MAT central team recruitment would be needed, given the latest additions to the Trust. The CEO explained that a 100 day plan (alignment phase) including round table discussions was ongoing with joining schools, which might identify new finance, IT, premises, or primary/secondary oversight roles by the next MAT Board meeting, or a fit within existing job descriptions.

The Director of School Improvement, Dani Worthington thanked the central team for their support during the ongoing NEU strike action.

### 7.3 MAT reporting – Trust policies

The Chair of Trustees recommended the updated **Scheme of Delegation and Finance Procedures** (in Track Changes for clarity) for approval, as key control documents. The Scheme of Delegation was last reviewed in February 2022 but needed to reflect secondary schools joining and changed circumstances nationally. LGBs will receive a slimmed down version.

The CFO outlined the review process: the Scheme of Delegation has been considered in detail by the Core Team, including Deputy Director (Secondary), as well as the Trust Chair and Chairs of Committees. Both documents have been informed by The MFG Trust existing policies. Changes (informed by internal audit and sense check with NGA) include: reference to ‘Trust’, ‘Academies’ & ‘Entities’ (formerly Designations); separating out the ‘Core MAT Team’; and amended limits reflecting increasing volume at secondary level.

**=> Trustees approved the updated Scheme of Delegation and Finance Procedures Manual, to reflect the 2-18 Trust offer.**

The CEO added that minor changes to three operational policies (**Pay, RSHE & Safer Recruitment**) had all been accepted at Standards Committee.

- 8 AOB - LGB Points to note: see Agenda Item 3(ii), aligning reporting structures

9 Standing Item - specific MAT Board decisions

Chair’s Actions (Workforce restructure, LGBs joining, Secondary headship) – **approved**  
Minutes of previous meeting 12.12.22 – **approved**

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

School Resource Management self-assessment checklist – **agreed for submission**

Financial approvals – **agreed, as itemised in CFO item 3**

Financial policies (Scheme of Delegation and Financial Procedures Manual) – **approved**

Operations policies (Pay, RSHE, Safer Recruitment) – **updates received**

Agreement for Nields Junior, Infant and Nursery School to join – **unanimous approval**

10 Future Meetings (Riverside Mills)

27<sup>th</sup> March 2023      **(Finance and Premises 4pm / MAT Board\* 5pm)**

\*Vice Chair (J Nellis) to chair in the absence of C Midgley

*N.B. the Vice Chair and A Birt will be absent for the Board meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> May*