

# MINUTES

**The Challenge Academy Trust  
Members Board  
Monday 15 June 2020, 11am**

## **PRESENT:**

David Mowatt (DM) – Member  
Chris Penn (CP) – Member  
Steven Broomhead (SB) – Member  
Maureen Mellor (MM) – Member  
Peter Clause (PC) – Member  
Matthew Grant (MG) – CEO  
Howard Platt (HP) - Trustee  
Andrew Moorcroft (AM) – CET  
Tim Long (TL) – CET  
Vicky Briggs (VB) – CET

## **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Lisa Adams – Clerk

Part One – non confidential business

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### **1. Welcome**

The Members were welcomed to the meeting.

### **2. Absence and apologies**

Everyone was in attendance.

### **3. Declaration of personal interests**

There were no declarations of personal interest.

### **4. Membership**

MG reported that the members need to approve the appointment of Andy Moorcroft, CEO from 1 September as a Trustee. MM proposed and DM seconded the proposal. This was unanimously agreed.

Members were informed that Neil Pearson has resigned as a Trustee. HP reported that there are now 3 vacancies on the board which means it is moving away from the policy of having each of the schools represented. **HP**

**asked** that members consider prospective candidates that would add to the collective. **DM asked** if there are any specific skill gaps on the board. MG felt that primary expertise is required as there is only one representative from Broomfields Junior. **DM asked** if the board and enquired with the Local Governing Boards. **MG felt that the LGBs are not in the position to offer representation as the Trust are currently looking at ways to strengthen them.** HP felt that it would be more beneficial to talent spot potential candidates. **DM asked** how many Trustees there are. HP reported that there are 12 Trustees. **DM asked** if in terms of diversity there is anything as a board we can do to be more proactive. AM reported that the positions haven't been advertised widely and that other appointments have been made through word of mouth. AM suggested that it could be beneficial to advertise in the local press. SB suggested that contact is made with the Warrington Council of Faiths.

**Action: SB to send contact details of the chair of the Warrington Council of Faiths to the clerk**

**MM asked** if the position has been advertised locally or could it be wider. HP felt that there would be some disconnection if a trustee was appointed outside of Warrington. **CP asked** if a skills analysis has been carried out across the Trustees to help formulate a wider advert. HP felt that this had already been carried out and gaps have been identified. **MG asked** where CP had advertised for their vacancies. CP noted that it was through the Diocese. HP felt that the diversity across the Local Governing Boards is particularly low. **MM asked** what the diversity of staff is like. MG reported that it is 5% across all the schools.

## **5. Minutes from previous meeting**

**Action: Clerk to circulate Trustee CVs to members**

## **6. Covid-19 Update on wider open**

Members were informed that the Trustees met on Friday and agreed to the wider opening of schools within the Trust.

TL reported that it was expected that 75 pupils would be in school this morning and there were only 3 or 4 that haven't turned up. The bubbles will be doubled tomorrow.

SB expressed his thanks to TCAT for all their support across Warrington and AM for being part of the Local Authority planning group. **DM asked** if Warrington is in line with other Local Authorities. SB noted that it is in line with the majority of the other Local Authorities.

**DM asked** if an impact analysis has been carried out on the pupils. MG reported that as a Trust it doesn't have this information but the Education Endowment Fund have done some national research. The schools have

been focusing on the pupils that have been struggling working from home. AM reported that 70%-80% across the Trust have been engaging with the online offer. In terms of the impact of not being in school and the virus has had on their mental health is a priority for all schools. DM noted that this situation will have had a detrimental impact on the pupils in their final year at Priestly who left in March with fewer job prospects. MG noted that he is concerned that some post 16 pupils who don't get the grades will want to re-sit which Priestly won't be able to accommodate and similarly the Year 11s.

**MM asked** if any discussion have taken place around the plans for September. AM informed members that the government's plan was to have all pupils back however this has since changed to 'hope' that all will be able to return in September. It was also noted that there is potential for another lockdown period. **DM asked** if there was any reason why schools shouldn't re-open to all pupils in September. AM reported that public health feel that this should be possible and that only 2 children under 15 have died of coronavirus. MG informed members that the Trust have already started to think about September and how this can be managed. The schools have been learning from each other and working across Warrington has been hugely beneficial. **DM asked** if the plan is to open as normal in September subject to guidance. AM and MG reported that this is the plan. SB noted that there is a focus group that meets to look at all the guidance and this will continue going forward.

MG reported that the Trust has produced a newsletter of good news articles to lift the spirits of staff. It was felt that by working together the Trust have been able to tackle a lot of the problems.

VB reported that the biggest challenge has been around space in schools and staffing. She noted that it has been brilliant seeing more children return to school. There have been 70% of pupils returning across the Trust. The schools re-opened to Nursery and Reception today and this has been really positive. There were a few nerves from parents but schools have made sure that it all looks friendly, inviting and warm. DM noted that he thought the document from Great Sankey Primary was really good. VB noted that it was important to ensure that staff were confident with the plans before letting pupils return.

MG reported that schools are completing the daily returns for the DfE.

**Action: MG to send the number of pupils returning to members**

DM noted that the statement issued makes reference to opening on the 8 June 2020 and asked was this the plan. AM reported that the schools were ready to return however the Local Authority decided that it would be better to put it back a week. The change allowed public health to issue a statement before the schools opened. DM asked what had changed between the Sunday and the public health statement being issued on the Tuesday. AM reported that the Trust were happy to re-open and were reluctant to delay it but didn't want to go against the Local Authority. Public Health had felt it was safe but hadn't issued a statement informing parents of this. DM noted that

the reason he asks this is that the same thing could occur come September. AM noted that there is a fixation on COVID-19 but there are more risks by the pupils missing school. MG informed members that if the Local Authority had decided to move the date again the Trust would have continued with the opening on 15 June. AM noted that there are some schools in Warrington which are not re-opening until September. DM asked why this was. It was noted that they feel that the restrictions they would need to put in place would not be worth the offer.

## **7. Any other business**

MM asked that the members thanks to Neil Pearson be formally recorded.

**CP asked** that the challenges that the leadership team has faced at Sir Thomas Boteler is recorded and thoughts are with him and his family. It was disappointing that at the start of the lockdown the school were ready to be externally validated and that this is not likely to happen for a while. He noted that it needs to be recognised that they are doing well and progress is being made.

It was agreed that the next meeting will take place in the second half of August.

**Action: Clerk to arrange a meeting in August**

The meeting closed at 11:43am