



MINUTES

**The Challenge Academy Trust
Trust Board Meeting
Wednesday 11 December 2019, 6pm**

PRESENT:

Trustees

Howard Platt (HP)
John Monaghan (JM)
Linda Waterson (LW)
Neil Pearson (NP)
Stephen Whatmore (SW)
Stuart Titchard (ST)
Susan Richardson (SR)

CET

Vicky Briggs (VB)
Matthew Grant (MG)
John Carlin (JC)
Tim Long (TL)
Andrew Moorcroft (AM)
Adrienne Laing (AL)
Damian McGuire (DM)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Part One – non confidential business

1. Welcome, absence/apologies

Apologies were received from Lacy Muir, Jane Griffiths and Toby Macormac.

Trustees were informed that flowers have been sent to Lacy Muir on their behalf.

It was reported that Toby Macormac has resigned from his position as a Trustee. There are currently two vacancies on the Trust Board. Howard Platt asked Trustees to be mindful of anyone who would be interested in filling the positions.

2. Declaration of personal interests

Trustees completed the declaration of personal interests forms and returned them to the clerk.

Action: clerk to e-mail signed declaration forms to DM

3. Minutes of Trust Board meeting on 23 October

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record subject to the following amendments:

LW to be added to the attendance register.

SR name to be altered to Richardson.

The action in relation to attendance be altered to say 'committees'.

Action: Safeguarding report to be sent to SR

Acton: SR to send clerk wording for section 13 in the minutes

The remuneration committee will meet on 14 January 2020.

4. Executive report

MG updated Trustees.

Structure

A copy of the latest Challenge Academy Trust structure was shared with Trustees.

Ben Logan has been appointed as HR Manager and will take up post on 3 February 2020.

Chris Penn, Chester Diocesan Board of Education and Peter Claus, Oxford University are new members and will be agreed at the Members Board on Monday.

Carolyn Williams has been appointed Chair at Penketh South and replaces Maureen Mellor.

Funding

MG reported that the Trust have applied for capacity funding, however the government is in purdah. The in-year funding is yet to be received and this will be chased up.

Attendance at Academies

JC reported that attendance at Penketh High today was 78%. Public health have been contacted and their advice has been followed. NP asked how staff absence was. It was noted that there were 11% of staff absent. JC informed Trustees that 40 students went home ill today.

Broomfields and Meadowside

The first months funding has been received. There were some issues with the accounting system and the customer Manager has been in to rectify the issue. Trustees were assured that staff will be paid on time. DM is due to visit the school to carry out some checks.

CEO and Priestley Principal

MG informed Trustees that he has tendered his resignation for both positions at the end of the academic year. The governors at Priestley have advertised for the position, unfortunately it was felt that there wasn't enough high calibre candidates to shortlist. The position will be re-advertised during the week commencing 6 January and interviews will take place on 3 and 4 February 2020. The governors considered employing an agency to support with the process however it was felt that this wouldn't help get a better calibre of candidate. It was noted that more prospective candidates have been to speak to MG.

The appointment of CEO will be addressed at the Trustee meeting in March. The CET are currently working on a proposal for going forward which will be presented to Trustees. It is not anticipated that the new principal will be the CEO. It was agreed that the proposal will be shared with the Chairs of the Committees before being presented to the Trustees in March.

5. Committee

Audit and risk

Governors received risk management training from the internal auditors which was really useful. The only area that needs to be addressed is risk appetite.

The internal auditor presented his report on the HR functions across the Trust. The Trust was given substantial assurances. It was noted that the recommendations will all be addressed with the appointment of the HR Manager.

The external auditors presented their report and the Trust was given a clean audit. It was highlighted that there have been some exceptional expenses this year with the purchase of the Roger Hunt building and the issue with the split site funding. Concerns were expressed about the academies with a deficit budget and this becoming a long term issue. JM noted that the auditors wouldn't be doing their job if they weren't providing members with warnings and concerns. Trustees were informed that the headline in year deficit reflected the impact of the withdrawal of the split site funding from Bridgewater High School and purchase of the Roger Hunt building. HP felt that this is an acquisition and if these are removed then it would show a more positive overall position for the year.

MG shared the Risk Management Plan with the committee. There have been some risks removed and the 'general election' has been added. A risk around growth has also been identified. The plan reflects best practice guidance. An update will be provided at each meeting. The risk plan has been shared with the CET who have been asked to ensure it is shared with the Local Governing Boards. There are some risks that have been identified at specific sites.

Finance, HR and operation

The committee reviewed the statutory accounts and the capital works programme. The replacement boiler and associated work at Sir Thomas Boteler will be higher than £32k. It was noted that it is going to cost £2k for the plan alone. The work will be commissioned this week and the plan will be completed in January.

There are only 3 outstanding projects from 2018/2019:

- Perimeter fencing at Sir Thomas Boteler – delayed due to planning
- Link corridor and classroom at Sir Thomas Boteler – summer term 2020
- Retaining wall at Bridgewater High – Easter 2020

There are a number of projects ongoing in 2019/2020 including the boilers at Sir Thomas Boteler and Penketh South.

The DfE are due to visit Padgate Academy to see all the work that has been carried out. **A trustee asked** about the costs and implications around the asbestos at Padgate. It was noted that the asbestos is under the floor which is why it wasn't picked up earlier. Two quotes have been obtained - £7k for removing a small area and £11k for removing it all. It has been decided that it will be more cost effective to do it all in one go. The work will commence at the weekend.

It was noted that priority has been given to health and safety works. There is a requirement to report to the DfE on what has been spent so far. If there is any shortfall an explanation is provided on where this money has been committed. AL reported that all the 2018/2019 allocation will be spent by March 2020. **HP asked** if there can be an overspend. It was noted that there can and that it will come from the reserves or next years allocation.

6. Finance

- Annual Report and Financial Statements as of 31 August 2019

It was reported that the Trust had a clean audit report.

The statutory accounts will be signed off tonight. The signed declarations of interests will be collated and sent to the auditor. There is some outstanding information from the banks however this is not likely to hold it up.

There were some alterations suggested at the Finance, HR and Operations meeting which have been included. The document also includes the performance data. There are details about how the trust is managed in terms of finance and performance. JC reported that the progress 8 data at Penketh High is better than what is recorded due to

some papers being remarked. These will be updated for the final version of the document.

HP thanked the team for putting together this comprehensive document and felt that it is a credit to all concerned. SW felt that it provides a full picture of the Trust and how it is performing.

Trustees approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

7. Risk Management Plan

This item was covered earlier on the agenda.

8. Capital Works

This item was covered earlier on the agenda.

9. Policies for approval

Trustees thanked AL for the list of Trust policies and procedures. ST asked if this information could be shared with Local Governing Boards. AM noted that there are some communication issues with Local Governing Boards which are being addressed.

Action: AL to send list to Local Governing Boards and School Business Managers

- **Support staff appraisal**

Trustees approved the policy.

- **Equality information and objectives**

Trustees approved the equality information and objectives

Action: AL to send Equality information and objectives to Local Governing Boards.

10. Academy admission arrangements

MG reported that there are a number of the academies who are consulting on changing the admission arrangements. These are mainly around ensuring that a child in the nursery of a primary school has a place at the school and Penketh High is reducing the PAN. As part of the consultation process the Local Authority have been notified. Legally the Trustees are the admitting body and therefore are required to agree any changes. Due to the timescales these changes will be agreed that after the consultation closes the final decision would be ratified under Chair's action. Trustees felt that if there are any significant changes that these should be presented to them prior to going out for consultation. It was suggested that the timings of these meetings are reviewed in terms of consultation for admissions. It was noted that the consultation period

is always at this time of the year. It was proposed that any suggested changes are presented at the first autumn term meeting of the Trust Board ahead of the launch of any public consultation.

Action: Admission arrangements to be added to both autumn term agendas

11. Any other business

a) Penketh South

HP reported that Penketh South have appointed a new Chair. It was noted that there are a number of vacancies on the Local Governing Board. Trustees were asked if there is anyone they feel would be interested to contact him.

b) UTC

It was reported that the Trust is not interested on working with UTC at this time. TL noted that with the general election anything could happen. AM noted that two more UTCs have been approved however it is felt this is not a viable model.

SR asked about the implications if UTC join another MAT. It was felt that the current model isn't sustainable. DM reported that the numbers don't stack up and this is something that can't be altered. It was noted that even if the UTC was full the finances don't work. Trustees expressed concerns that the current students futures are at risk. SY noted that the school is still teaching the students and received 'good' in Ofsted.

It was noted that the Trust has submitted an application for a free school therefore this is priority. A discussion took place about UTCs.

c) Documents

AM circulated a copy of the Educational Principals strategy and information document to Trustees.