

**Suffolk Academies Trust**

**Company Number: 09702333**

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

**Minutes of the meeting held at 4.30pm on 14 December 2015**

**Present:**

<b>M Humphreys</b>	<b>E D'Souza</b>
<b>A Whatley</b>	<b>H Lay</b>
<b>C Gibson</b>	<b>C Higgins</b>
<b>N Savvas (Chief Executive)</b>	<b>A Whittaker (Principal)</b>

**In Attendance:** **S Jones, Chief Financial Officer**  
**G Kirkham, Larking Gowen**  
**J Bridges, Clerk to the Trustees**

**Action**

**1 Declaration of Interests**

Trustees confirmed that they had no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to the items of the agenda.

**2 Apologies for Absence/Notice and Quorum Requirements**

Apologies for absence were received from I Morgan, Chair and M Wagner, Vice Chair. In the absence of the Chair the Board nominated E D'Souza to Chair the meeting.

**3 Minutes of the meeting held on 2 September 2015**

The minutes of the meeting (minute book pages A409-A414) were agreed as a correct record.

**4 Matters Arising from 2 September 2015**

The matters arising from the meeting were summarised in the report (minute book page A415) and all actions reported had either been completed or, where appropriate an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.

The Chief Financial Officer had been asked to invite External Auditors, Larking Gowen, to provide a training session to the Board to detail their obligations under the Academies Financial Handbook. G Miles of Larking Gowen attended the meeting and provided Trustees with an Autumn/Winter 2015 paper briefing and verbal presentation with question and answer session to explore and discuss the responsibilities of the Board.

**5 Principal's Briefing**

Trustees received and considered the summary report (minute book pages A416-A437).

The indicators of student performance reported in the summer were realised in the best ever set of results for One. The Academy has been visited by a former HMI Inspector, Ian Seath, who came to validate the Self-Assessment Report for 2014/15. The main focus now is to concentrate on pushing up the A\* to B grades on A Level programmes and closely monitor the performance of the most able students.

The Curriculum and Standards Committee of the Local Governing Body have challenged the self-assessment report, results, outcomes for learners and areas for improvement; asking questions of curriculum directors with an open dialogue and rigorous monitoring.

Applications are at similar numbers to the previous year and are on track.

**6 Growth of SAT – Next Steps**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages A438-A445).

The Board received an update on the educational landscape in Suffolk and beyond in relation to the academisation of Schools and the push for Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) with a strong track record to grow. The report presented provided a summary of the next steps that the Trust would need to take should it consider transferring in a suitable Academy or Free School.

Trustees agreed that the Trust should establish a set of key and minimum requirements and denominators agreed to accept an entity to join the Trust. Timelines for transfers to have completed, ready for September 2016, would include submitting a case to the EFA by the end of January 2016 as to why the Trust is applying for growth. Trustees felt strongly that those wishing to join the Trust must share the same philosophy, ethos and values of the Trust before consideration would be made. The biggest challenge for the Trust is being able to demonstrate the benefits to a school of joining the Trust and alleviating any fear that by joining they don't lose their identity, autonomy and/or control of their own destiny.

Trustees agreed to hold a half day strategy session to undertake an assessment of the strategic growth direction of the Trust. Specifically the group will be tasked to look at why a school, free school or academy would want to join the Trust (the USP of SAT), explore the criteria by which the Trust would accept an entity into the MAT and to determine the timeframe within which the Trust would aspire to grow.

Local School Heads are to be approached by Trustees to gather a sense of the appetite to join SAT and/or other Multi Academy Trusts (market intelligence). Trustees were confident that careful consideration of each approach must be made. Legally the Trust would be responsible for each entity and the reputational damage to the Trust could be significant.

AWhittaker  
CGibson

The Clerk is to convene a half day session for the Board to consider both the market intelligence and to assess the strategic growth of the Trust. H Lay, C Gibson, A Whatley, A Whittaker and N Savvas will consider the educational values of the Trust prior to the half-day session to inform the strategy session to be attended by the Board.

JBridges

**7 Financial Position**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages A446-A448).

The Finance Committee looked at three specific items at the meeting held in November; 1) the authorisation route concerning the payment of unbudgeted costs; 2) the approval process to make accelerated progression awards; and 3) to ask the Board for delegated power to approve such discretionary payments up to a set limit and any payment over that threshold is to require full approval of the

Board. In hindsight however the process instigated by the Clerk under Chair's Action sought full approval of the Board by electronic means and this process expedited the authorisation process and decision. It is therefore proposed that delegated power is not awarded to the Finance Committee and the Board remains responsible for approving the payments of accelerated progression awards. The board **approved** by a show of hands.

Income is performing slightly ahead of budget and overall expenditure, staffing and non-pay, are under budget as at the end of October 2015. Cashflow is being monitored closely during the year since there are limited cash reserves to cushion any swing in income or expenditure.

The Academy is forecast to remain within the year end budgeted surplus of £80,516 (before repayment of £80K to the EFA) but possibly ahead of budget by the year end. The year-end forecasted surplus prior to the EFA repayment monies is £86,786.

Following a meeting with the auditors it is felt that the Academy may not need to register for VAT, and certainly not in the immediate future. It will be reported to the Finance Committee and Board if One reaches the VAT threshold and is required to register.

## **8 Financial Administration and Control Handbook**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages A449-A519).

The Trust has developed a Financial Administration and Control Handbook for the purpose of ensuring that it maintains and develops systems of financial control which conform to the requirements both of propriety and of good financial management. The Board gave its confidence that the Handbook met the needs of the Trust and insisted that the document be subject to regular use and review. Where the Handbook contradicts policies and procedures inherited from the Academy (approved at the 2 September 2015 meeting) it is proposed that the Handbook has precedence. The Board agreed and **approved** the Financial Administration and Control Handbook by a show of hands.

## **9 Business Continuity Plan**

Trustees received and considered the Plan (minute book pages A520-A536).

In accordance with the Academies Financial Handbook all new Trusts are required to comply and respond to the Financial Management Governance Statement within the first four months of opening. Under the FMGS the Trust is asked to confirm that it has a contingency and business continuity plan prepared. The Board was asked to adopt and approve the plan of the Academy. Trustees asked that the plan includes the responsibilities of the Trust and that the Principal tests the plan in the year. Subject to these requests the Board **approved** the Contingency and Business Continuity Plan by a show of hands.

## **10 Financial Management Governance Statement (FMGS)**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages A537-A542).

Academy Trusts need to complete their financial management and governance self-assessment using an online form within 4 months of opening. The majority of compliance areas in the assessment are green status. Of the seven yellow areas to progress it was noted that six of the requirements are now met (i.e. are green status) further to the Board considering and approving the Trust's Financial

Administration and Control Handbook (covered under item 8 above). The Clerk confirmed that the remaining yellow status item concerning publishing the relevant business and pecuniary interests of Trustees to the website will be completed by 18 December 2015. The Board will be notified by email from the Clerk that the action has been completed. The Board **approved** the submission of the FMGS by a show of hands.

**11 Risk Management Update**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages A543-A545).

The risk register of the Trust has been compiled and identifies the key risks to the Trust in the 2015/16 academic year. Trustees agreed that risk number R007 concerning Devolution is not a risk to the Trust but more applicable to the GFE sector. The Board agreed that the risk is to be removed from the register. The Board asked that each Committee of the Trust reviews the register at each of its meetings and that the Curriculum and Standards Committee of the Local Governing Body also adds the review of the register as a standard agenda item.

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**12 Any other business**

***SAT Logo/Branding/Vision***

Trustees agreed to consider the branding, ethos and values at the half day strategy session to be convened.

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***Due Diligence***

The Chief Executive has been approached by a School who has expressed interest to join the Trust. The Board agreed that it is too early to enter into a formal agreement before due diligence but that the Chief Executive should continue discussions and consultation and proceed with due diligence.

NSavvas

***Information sharing with West Suffolk College***

The Resources Committee of West Suffolk College has requested that the quarterly accounts of the Academy are shared with their Board. The Trust **approved** to share the quarterly accounts on the understanding that the Clerk draws up a Memorandum of Agreement to detail how the information is to be treated, handled, stored, filed and/or transferred and how any query concerning details is to be resolved (i.e. referred to the Chair of the Board).

JBridges

**13 Date of next meeting**

Monday 21 March 2015 at 4.30pm, Suffolk One Board Room.

The meeting closed at 6.40pm