

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of the meeting held at 5.00pm on 19 March 2018

Present: E D'Souza (Chair) S Howard
C Ridgeon J Wakelam
A Whittaker (Principal) N Savvas (CEO)

In Attendance: S Jones, Chief Financial Officer
J Bridges, Trust Secretary

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

Apologies for absence were received from C Higgins, R Inman and C Gibson. The Chair will contact C Gibson to discuss continued commitment to the Board.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2017

The minutes of the meeting (minute book pages B449-B455) were agreed as a correct record. **Proposed** by S Howard and **seconded** by N Savvas.

4 Matters arising from 28 12 December 2017 meeting

The matters arising from the meeting were summarised in the report (minute book pages B456-B457) and all actions reported had either been completed or, where appropriate an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.

5 Membership

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book page B458).

The Members of SAT have acknowledged the resignation of Howard Lay received in January at their meeting held on 26 January 2018. The Trust Secretary has filed the necessary and appropriate entries in the books and registers of the Company and has filed the necessary forms and documents at Companies House and the Website of the Trust has been updated. He has expressed interest in future vacancies at Local Governing Body level and the Chair will keep this in mind for any future vacancy on an LGB.

6 Principal's Briefing

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages B459-B460).

The term started with the Annual Student Awards ceremony that was well attended by both current and former students, their parents as well as staff and governors and supporters from businesses and other local organisations. This followed on from the staff iAwards at the end of the autumn term. Both events are a real celebration of the hard work and commitment of students and staff.

Action

ED'Souza

The spring Student Progress Review indicates that students are on track for an encouraging set of results in the summer along with the latest release of the DfE Performance Tables (January 2018), which the Board received for review. Staff and student surveys have been completed and responses to issues have been highlighted and fed back. The annual staffing structure has been reviewed to ensure that the Academy will be able to meet the challenge of maintaining standards in a difficult financial climate and it was pleasing to note that the structure has been costed and the Board was given the assurance that it is achievable within the proposed budget for the 2018/19 academic year.

Finances to date remain healthy with early indications that a surplus outturn is likely, enabling the Academy to deliver the planned improvements to the estate and infrastructure, as outlined in the Property strategy.

The three larger Managed Service Contracts have been reviewed and the Board **approved** the proposal to roll over the contracts into the 2018/19 academic year so that an uninterrupted service could be maintained to allow time for a comprehensive review of the contracts alongside the Trust's plans for the opening of Abbeygate Sixth Form College and to incorporate any opportunity to work in collaboration or under a shared services arrangement.

Student applications are above last year's figures so there is confidence that the Academy will experience healthy recruitment for 2018/19.

7 Key Performance Indicators

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages B461-B464).

As reported above the number of applications for 2018/19 are above the figures for this academic year with 1,601 applications to date compared to 1,541 at the same point last year.

There has been a fractional decrease in student attendance in the year but this remains above target. Similarly student retention is down slightly on last term, but remains above the target of 90%.

The overall A Level, A*-C predictions are positive compared to the previous years' results (81.9% vs 75%). A*-B predictions show a slight increase in comparison albeit relatively conservative with respect to the National benchmark.

ALPS for A Level reflect the positive predictions shown for A*-C (grade 3). Headline figures for the vocational L3 qualification show a distinct difference in D*-D than that has been shown in previous academic years. However, this is to be expected since the curriculum at the Academy has moved to the RQF L3 qualification with external assessment (40%) and significantly more robust requirements for all internally assessed units also.

Foundation Learning pass rate achievement predictions are in line with the previous reported success from last academic year. The performance of students on all AS/A Level and Vocational courses continues to be monitored at each Progress Review. Currently there is no overall significant impact on attainment A-E/A*-E or D*-P. There are differences however at the other comparators i.e. A-C/A*-C and D*-M which are reviewed by the curriculum and Student Services teams to help identify the reasons and possible opportunities to bring about positive impact.

The DfE Performance Tables were released in January 2018. The data released is for the 2016/17 academic year. Progress for vocational courses remain above average but have seen a slight reduction in value. However, in comparison to other Sixth Form Colleges in the area it remains one of the highest performing institutions.

The Applied General and Tech level courses are all well above the Suffolk County and national figures for 'points per entry' and were also above the values from the previous academic year.

Progress for English and Maths GCSE well exceeded the National values.

The performance of students in the 'disadvantaged' measures demonstrated excellent progress for all disciplines and were all above the National values.

From 1 September 2017 to 31 January 2018 the percentage time lost due to staff absence has decreased slightly to 3.62% despite long term sickness absence (10 days or more) of 15 colleagues.

Staff participation in the survey has decreased to 81% this year (85% last year) although the headcount of staff has increased from 165 last year to 176 this year so this still demonstrates a high level of staff engagement and provides valuable feedback. Responses have confirmed that overall staff satisfaction has increased by 1% to 98%.

8 H+S, Safeguarding and E+D Reporting Proposal

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book page B465).

KPIs around students and staff performance and financial position are reported regularly to the Committees of the Trust and the Board.

Annual Reports on Health and Safety and Safeguarding are also produced but the need to report these more regularly to the Trust Board is acknowledged. In recognition of this monthly figures in the Estates Update to the Finance Committee with data on work related accidents, incidents and near misses broken down by staff/students and contractors is now provided. It is further proposed that safeguarding data relating to reports of incidents/concerns and formal safeguarding referrals are also now reported at Board level. It was agreed that the latest months' data will be reported to the meetings of the Board in each term with the data put into context in terms of what has/is put in place to redress any issue.

The Equality Objectives of the Academy which performance is measured against are to be reported by exception alongside the analysis of student and staff groups are part of the KPI report received by the Board annually.

The Board **approved** the reporting proposal.

9 Review of Service Level Agreement

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages B466-B469).

As already disclosed the CEO and CFO declared their interests as participants of the SLA between SAT and West Suffolk College and that the CEO is also the Chair and Director of ACER. The Principal of Suffolk One is also a Director of ACER and the Clerk is also a participant of the SLA between SAT and WSC.

The reviewed SLAs with both ACER and West Suffolk College for the 2017/18 year were approved by the Board at its meeting held in December 2017 however the report detailed a proposal for the 2018/19 academic year.

The SLA with West Suffolk College (WSC) was established at the inception of the Academy Trust to document the arrangements between SAT and WSC in relation to the provision of key services such as that of the CEO, CFO, Clerk and Academy Secretary. The cost of the SLA is not proposed to increase for 2018/19 until details of collaborative working are clarified and/or approved. It is expected that any changes will result in an increased cost but the marginal costs will result in a net saving to the Trust as it expands.

The Trust also has an SLA with the Association of Colleges for the Eastern Region (ACER) for the supply of a Project Manager to support both the Abbeygate Sixth Form College project but also wider Trust projects. Unlike the WSC SLA which corresponds to a business year, the SLA with ACER was reviewed in the summer of 2017 and it was proposed should stand for the remainder of the duration of the project since there is not expected to be any significant change in the arrangement. This was approved by the Board in December 2017 and any deviations can be brought back the Trust Board for approval. A development since this approval is that from 31 July 2018, ACER will be subsumed into the AoC (Association of Colleges) as a result of a national review of activities by the AoC. In view of this, it is likely that further information will need to be sought from the AoC about what, if any, impact this will have on the Project Manager's availability and ability to fulfil the requirements of the SLA.

The cost for this SLA is within budget and covered by both the PDG funding but also the central SAT resource budget.

It is important that both of the SLAs stand up to scrutiny in terms of whether they offer the Trust good value for money. This information was brought to the Trust in December 2017 and those considerations have been revisited to ensure their continued relevance and were detailed in the report.

It was noted that costs of both SLAs are to be confirmed via a cost certificate appropriately signed at the end of the year by WSC and ACER respectively which is to be provided to the external auditors.

Eligible voting Trustees (i.e. those not holding an interest in either SLA) and a quorum still being in effect **approved** both SLAs. **Proposed** by C Ridgeon and **seconded** by J Wakelam.

10 **Financial Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages B470-B472).

At the end of January (month 5) the Trust is performing better than budget against the backdrop of a more challenging budget this year and some early cost pressures arising from a much larger student intake in September.

When the Board approved the 2017/18 budget in July 2017 it was informed that the 2017/18 financial year would be a more challenging budget to achieve than its predecessor in 2016/17 due to pay progression and reduction in certain grants. So despite some additional pressure caused by much higher than expected student numbers which in itself is a positive development for the Trust, the performance against budget is good so the Trust can reasonably

expect extra or accelerated investment in the Academy or alternatively, a stronger contribution to its reserves.

Actual income is higher than profiled budget by £129K. Forecast income for the whole year is predicted to be £57K more than the full year budget of £9.7m. The forecast is relatively conservative at this stage in the year.

Income is higher than budget due almost entirely to a positive performance against the Other Non Government Income Line which is also predicted to be higher than budget at the year end.

All other income lines are performing within 0.1% of budget for the time of year and are expected to at the year end.

Actual staffing costs year to date are less than budget by £81K but at this stage are forecast to be below the full year budget of £7.0m by £42K at the year end. As with previous reports, expenditure against staffing budgets is a mixture of savings and unbudgeted expenditure which has resulted in an overall net saving against budget. Spending is lower than budget due to a lower consumption of progression awards, reduced pension costs due to staff opting out and maternity savings being higher than expected. Overall, staffing costs are forecast to represent 71% of total income which is 1% lower than budget.

Non-pay costs are higher than budget at £24K and are forecast to be higher than the full year budget of £2.6m at the year end by £2K. The overall position on non-pay is that spend is ahead of profiled budget on the Premises and Other Costs budget lines but the impact of these is lessened by lower expenditure than budget on Educational Supplies and Services and Non-Educational Supplies and Services. The most significant variance against profiled budget is that of Premises spend but this is only due to accelerated planned expenditure and the forecast is still for this to finish below budget due to some savings identified.

At the end of period 5 the cash balance amounted to a total of £902K with an additional £1m on deposits. This represents 72days budgeted cash in hand including the deposits and 34 days excluding the deposits.

In summary the overall budgetary position is being adhered to and although it has come under some pressure as a result of higher student numbers, the budget is achievable and can be outperformed which will present the Trust with a number of positive options. The Chair added that in a recent article it was recognised that 8/10 Academy Trusts are reporting a deficit so the financial position and discipline of SAT was commended and staff congratulated for a positive forecast outturn in such a challenging financial landscape.

The Board was informed that due to an oversight with version control the copy of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 August 2017 that were submitted to the ESFA in December 2017 was not the version that included the minor textual amendments requested by the Finance Committee at its last meeting held on 5 December 2017: about the Level 4 outcomes at 67%; confirming that the Trust risk register has an associated plan; and the clarification point in the accounts that reinforces the point made in the reserves policy that the surplus achieved had not been at the detriment of students or under-reward of staff.

Advice was sought from external auditors, and from the Chair of the Trust, E D'Souza and Chairs of the Finance and Audit Committees, C Higgins and R Inman and it was agreed that, as the changes omitted from the submitted version were textual and not material to the accounts themselves, the copy filed with Companies House and the ESFA should stand. The Board **approved** leaving the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 August 2017 as filed with Companies House.

11 **Financial Administration and Control Handbook**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book page B473).

The Financial Administration and Control Handbook has been reviewed to ensure it remains current and a number of changes are required. In summary these include changing names such as EFA to ESFA, changes to reflect actual practice more accurately, the inclusion of more detailed procedures around VAT for example in order to create a One-Stop document for financial regulations and the inclusion of a section on Service Level Agreements. Other minor typographical and word changes have been made throughout the document and these were highlighted in the copy received by the Board.

The Finance Committee has considered and approved the changes made and seeks the approval of the Board to adopt the changes proposed. The Board **approved** the document. **Proposed** by S Howard and **seconded** by C Ridgeon.

12 **Accountability Framework**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book page B474).

It is a requirement under the Academies Financial Handbook 2017 that annual letters to Trust's Accounting Officers from the ESFA's Accounting Officer about the accountability framework must be discussed by the Board with action taken where appropriate to strengthen the Trust's systems.

The Board received copies of the letters issued in this academic year dated November 2017, December 2017 and March 2018. In addition the Chair of the Trust has received a letter from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the School System for the consideration of the Board.

The CFO confirmed that the filing requirements stipulated in the letters received in December 2017 and March 2018 so are fulfilled and diarised so compliance of these will be met.

In relation to the letter dated November 2017 and the letter of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State the Trust Secretary was asked to conduct a compliance and evidence assessment against the expected performance outlined in the letters for the Board to consider at the next meeting to be held in July 2018 in order that that Board can be satisfied that where systems need to be strengthened this has been identified and actioned.

JBRidges

13 **Sixth Form College Update**

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages B475-B477).

At the December 2017 meeting of the Board the Chair of the Trustee Board, E D'Souza was given delegated power to undertake the recruitment process in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation for the appointment of the Principal for a Sixth Form College with the joint responsibility of the CEO and the Trustee Board. To this end to conclude the process ratification to appoint

David Gartland as the Principal for Abbeygate Sixth Form College further to the interview days being held over 30 and 31 January 2018 was sought by electronic vote of the Board and the Trust Secretary confirmed a **unanimous approval** for this appointment.

David is well-known and well-respected across Suffolk and Norfolk as the Principal of Lowestoft Sixth Form College. In brief David has been instrumental in establishing Lowestoft Sixth Form College as a beacon of educational excellence on the Suffolk Coast and so is a natural fit for Suffolk Academies Trust, to help us establish Abbeygate Sixth Form as an Outstanding post-16 education institution to serve West Suffolk and beyond.

There were two interview panels involved in the process; the main interview panel comprised the Chair of the SAT Board, Elton D'Souza, the CEO, Nikos, SAT Member, Sue Daley, Sid Slater of the DfE and Ruth Sadler HR Director at WSC. The other panel led by Alan Whittaker, comprised of the Heads of the founder schools. The two day interviews were held over Tuesday 30 and Wednesday 31 January. Sid Slater commended our process as 'one of the best he has ever seen' in his many years of recruitment experience.

A Trustee commented that PR and Marketing in the Haverhill area in particular needs to be released to allay negativity about the closure of local Sixth Forms at the behest of alternative provision outside their immediate area and moving to Bury St Edmunds.

S Howard left the meeting at 6.00pm

Kier and Wates have been selected through the ESFA framework for the design and build contract. The planning application will be submitted to Suffolk County Council in the week commencing 5 March 2018. A decision is expected by the end of April 2018.

The Competition to design the Abbeygate logo went very well and attracted 48 entries from students across WSC, Suffolk One, Stour Valley Community School and Newmarket Academy. The final logo was unveiled at an event on 16 January 2018 and was detailed in the report.

The Abbeygate website is almost ready for launch and social media accounts are starting to attract followers.

14 Strategic Conference held over 18 and 19 January 2018

Trustees received and considered the report (minute book pages B478-B480).

i. *Summary*

The Strategic Conference held over 18 and 19 January 2018 was well attended by the Boards of SAT and WSC. The feedback from the conference has been positive with the majority of participants agreeing very good and/or good levels of satisfaction against achieving the objectives of the two days.

Words used to describe the conference were informative, collaborative, productive, positive and inclusive and the ideas to enhance the experience will be used to shape and develop the conference for next year.

ii. *Matters Arising*

The matters arising from the conference are all complete with the exception that the Common Strategy is to be written and the branding/identity of the Common Strategic Board is to be developed and created. This is being

progressed by the Governance Implementation Task and Finish Group and the CEO and Trust Secretary are to present a draft Common Strategy to the Board at the meeting to be held in July 2018.

NSavvas
JBridges

15 Strategic Alliance Governance Implementation Update

The Chair of the Board, E D'Souza who also sits on the Governance Implementation Task and Finish Group, reported that the group has agreed to form the Common Strategic Board to bring the existing Trustees together with the existing Governors of West Suffolk College. This will form the three tiered structure comprising the Members, Board of Directors (Common Strategic Board) and the Local Governing Bodies of each entity involved. The work of the Committees are currently being worked through and determined with more work and detail to be decided on how the Local Governing Bodies are to interact with the work of the CSB. A report will be presented to the Board at the meeting to be held in July with the intention to align our governance for operation as of 1 September 2018. The Board is not anticipating any barrier to changing our governance arrangements. It has been met with positivity at the Strategic Conference held in January 2018 with all parties supporting the need for change and aligning our work ethics and strategies.

JBridges

i. Draft 2018/19 Calendar of Meetings

Trustees received and considered the draft 2018/19 calendar of meetings (minute book pages B481-B482).

The Board was asked to consider the draft schedule of meetings for the 2018/19 academic year for the new governance structure of the Common Strategic Board and its associated Committees.

It is proposed that the CSB meets 3 times a year; December, March and July. The Audit Committee is to meet 4 times a year; October, November, February and June. Finance Committee to meet 5 times a year; November, December, March, May and June. Curriculum and Quality Strategic Committee to meet 3 times a year; November, March and June. Standards and Excellence of WSC and the LGBs of Suffolk One and Abbeygate 6 times a year; October, November, February, March, May and June. The Remuneration Committee to meet once a year; December and the Search/Nominations Committee (Members) to meet twice a year; January and May.

The Board of Trustees noted and **agreed** the proposed meeting schedule for the 2018/19 academic year and new governance arrangements.

16 Any other business

None.

17 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 3 July 2018 at 5.00pm Suffolk One Board Room

The meeting closed at 6.25pm