

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of the virtual extraordinary Trustee Board meeting held on 26 March 2021 at 2pm

Present:

E D'Souza, Chair (items 1 -11)	M Whittingham (items 1 -11)
A Maltpress (items 1 -14)	N Savvas, CEO (items 1 -11)
C Higgins, Vice Chair (items 1 -11)	R Inman (items 1 -14)
C Ridgeon (items 1 -14)	R Murray (items 1 -6.1)
J Wakelam (items 1 -11)	S Clarke (items 1 -11)
K Points (items 1 -12)	S Daley, Vice Chair (items 1 -11)
	S Healey Pearce (items 1 -14)

In Attendance:

- Felicity Gillespie – DfE Advisor (items 1 -10)
- A Thorpe, ASFC Student Services Manager (items 1 – 4, 5.2 - 10)
- D Gartland, ASFC Principal of ASFC (items 1 - 10)
- G Chittock-Nash, OSFC Vice Principal – Students (items 1 - 10)
- J Raffel, Group Finance Director (items 12 -14)
- J Robson, OSFC Vice Principal – Curriculum (items 1 - 10)
- K Haisman, ASFC LGB Committee Chair - (items 1 - 6.1)
- M Ward, MAT Governance Adviser (items 1 -14)
- R Bamford, SAT Vice Principal, Quality, Data and MIS (items 1 - 10)
- R Stevenson, Group Operations Director (items 1 - 10)
- S Graham, Group HR and Shared Services Director (items 1 -14)
- S Gales, Board Secretary (items 1 -14)
- S Jones, CFO (items 1 -14)
- T Elkin, Clerk (items 1 -14)

Apologies: D Wildridge

ED'Souza summarised that following the extraordinary meeting on 3 February 2021, we agreed the composition of the Board which creates a majority non-conflicted Trustees and to wind-down the Related Party Transactions Committee. As such, the agenda is in three parts and attendees will be asked to leave as appropriate.

Welcome to Felicity Gillespie – DfE advisor who is observing the meeting today.

- | | <u>Action</u> |
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| 1 <u>Declaration of Interests</u>
CHiggins, ED'Souza, JWakelam, NSavvas, SClarke, and SDaley declared their roles as Governors of West Suffolk College. | |
| 2 <u>Apologies for Absence</u>
Apologies for absence were received from DWildridge. | |
| 3 <u>Minutes and Matters Arising from meeting on 11 December 2020</u>
The minutes of the meeting on 11 December 2020 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting. The matters arising from the meeting had either been completed or, where ongoing, the update was included within the papers.
MA3 SGraham is liaising with the ESFA and DfE to discuss possible solutions to formalise the common CEO/CFO employment contract between WSC and SAT. Once the proposal has been finalised, a proposal paper will be brought to Board to approve. | |
| 4 <u>CEO's Briefing</u>
NSavvas summarised the journey the Trust has been on since the last meeting, responding to the latest government guidance about Covid-19 mitigation (including setting up and staffing lateral flow testing facilities, track and trace, lockdown, home-testing kits, etc.) and in regards to assessments (including the cancellation of exams, preparing for | |

teacher assessed grades, developing the methodology for collecting and fairly grading assessment evidence, and supporting staff, students and parents).

The Board received and reviewed the report summarising the work this term, including the rapid transition to remote learning and working, and the work undertaken by departments to make remote learning effective and engaging, and to trial innovative practices and to share best practice. During lockdown, departments continued to work on projects with industry partners, to have virtual talks/Q&As with leading employers in their sector and to showcase their work in competitions and publications. DGartland noted that use of the testing centre at University Studies was particularly helpful as it enabled ASFC to focus resources and management time on teaching and learning. DGartland also observed that the switch to remote learning was seamless and, since re-opening students have transitioned really well back to physical learning environments and continue to be very compliant with Covid-19 mitigation measures. Feedback from students and parents is very appreciative of all the support put in place by the Trust.

Trustees queried whether the level of positive Covid-19 cases was in line with the national average. NSavvas noted that the numbers are very low and are indicative of the effectiveness of our mitigation measures and track-and-trace teams, especially given the wide region from which students travel. RStevenson summarised the array of ways the Health and Safety teams are proactively working with staff and students in order to ensure awareness of the mitigation measures and track-and-trace processes; and to continuously review and improve risk assessments and practices at the sites.

JRobson noted that following the announcement of the cancellation of the summer exams, the Leadership Team considered whether to continue with exams this term and decided to extend the option to students in order to recognise their work preparing for the exams and their desire to have a sense of normality and recognition. JRobson noted that there was a good turnout for the exams (197 students) and 53% of students who sat the exams achieved distinctions. JRobson also summarised some of the examples of extra-curricular events, student awards and collaborations which occurred during the lockdown.

Trustees queried whether there was scope for cross moderation of assessed gradings across the Group. RBamford answered that the process for Teacher-Assessed Grading (TAG) has been standardised across the Trust and has also been shared and sense-checked with other outstanding SFC institutions. RBamford noted that the Trust's TAG process has been created in consultation with teaching staff, managers and the quality teams, in order to make them fair, consistent and remove opportunities for unconscious bias. RBamford also noted that they are preparing the process for potential grading appeals to best position the team to support students and parents. RInman noted that OSFC LGB reviewed the TAG proposal and in doing so, noted lessons had been learnt from last year's centre-assessed gradings (CAG) to remove any grading discrepancies against protected characteristics; and also proposed creating a central TAG appeals panel with a few LGB Committee members to support the Executive as required.

GChittock-Nash noted that during lockdown personal support continued, with all students RAG rated to identify the most at risk and vulnerable who were then contacted daily, with all students contacted weekly as part of their wrap-around support. Feedback within these personal support sessions and subsequently directly from students and parents, suggests that this has been really valuable for our students, especially as nationally there has been significant impact on mental health and wellbeing as a result of lockdown. We have also provided training and put in place support for staff, to help them deal with the increasing numbers of serious and complex mental health and wellbeing needs. GChittock-Nash noted that there is a rising rate of suicidal thoughts and attempted suicides; so we are working to join the 'suicide safe' scheme, to train staff to identify signs and support students. GChittock-Nash also noted that we are working with the NHS to offer our staff regular opportunities to speak to trained psychologists to give them the opportunity to decompress; and working across the Group to share best practice and resources.

The team also recognise the impact of lockdown on student's confidence to progress and so are also working across the Group to support students with information advice and guidance to ensure they progress to an appropriate next step for them.

Trustees queried whether the student support team have sufficient resources to meet the students needs. GChittock-Nash answered yes, as the Executive are all very supportive and are working together well.

AThorpe noted that before the return to college on 8 March 2021, a survey was sent to ASFC students and of the respondents 18% of the students were worried/extremely worried about the return to college, which allowed resources to be prioritised on supporting these students with their anxiety. AThorpe shared that Suffolk Police have reported that the number of county lines has reduced further to 6.

Trustees queried what access there is for students to mental health professionals, and whether there is anything further we could be doing to support students access to trained professionals. AThorpe notes that while waiting lists are lengthy, we are able to refer directly to GPs and this is proving quite prompt. GChittock-Nash noted our best way to support students, is to train our staff to provide that first line of support; extend our counselling team; continue our partnerships with NHS and crucially to identify welfare needs upon enrolment, so we can provide support for students as soon as they join us. All of which we are working on. We are also exploring how we can work more closely with secondary schools and parents to support pre-16 students. NSavvas is also working with the Clinical Commissioning Group to create partnerships and pilot programmes to coordinate welfare support. Trustees queried whether our partnerships with feeder schools is enabling further communication and sharing of information about progressing students' needs. AThorpe confirmed that the DSLs work very closely together.

NSavvas noted the extensive best practice sharing between ASFC, OSFC and WSC and the impact this is having; and invited Trustees to attend future best practice sharing meetings.

SGales

AThorpe left the meeting at 3.05pm

5 Committee Chairs' Summary Reports

5.1 LGB Overview

KHaisman commended the integrated work between the student support and ASFC curriculum teams which has supported students effectively as evidenced in the attendance and progress data (Year 12 students: 89% are at or above their aspirational grades, Year 13 students: 75% are at or above their aspirational grades). RInman similarly commended the staff at OSFC. The Board received the minutes from both LGB Committee meetings.

5.1.1 Update on Assessment Grading and student welfare

RInman and RBamford summarised the plan to establish a panel of Trustees / LGB Committee members (RInman, LChapman, JHarlock have volunteered from OSFC LGB Committee) to act as an appeals panel who will provide ad hoc governance input between now and summer holidays and, to be on hand to support any appeals during the summer holidays. Trustees **agreed** with this approach and for RInman, to Chair this as a joint sub-committee of the LGB Committees.

Trustees queried that given the latest guidance references that students will only be assessed based on the syllabus they have been taught; given the impact of Covid-19, how much of the syllabus has been taught and how will this impact on grades. RBamford answered that curriculum progress has been varied, especially for practical courses which were delayed by the lockdown, however now that we are back in the physical learning environment plans are underway to expedite practical learning, assessments and observations in order to catch up learning.

Trustees queried whether, given the data suggests a lower working grade relative to the main cohort, for disadvantaged groups this is due to lacking parental engagement and/or parental aspirations and if so, whether there is anything we can do to support them to be more aspirational for their child. GChittock-Nash agreed that there is a need to support parents to have high aspirations for their children to support them to aspire and achieve. GChittock-Nash noted that throughout the last year we have laid the groundwork for this, having communicated with parents most weeks so parents are more engaged than ever so we are well placed to help parents with the messaging to use with their children. We have also added information about our teacher-assessed grading plans, including an FAQ, on our websites to assure parents and students that it is fair and transparent.

Trustees queried how staff are coping with the impact of Covid-19 and lockdown. SGraham noted that we have an award-winning Employee Assistant Programme for staff offering them (and their spouses) 24-7 specialist and confidential support. We also have a central HR team who have gone the extra mile to provide individualised support for staff and to signpost them to appropriate support. NSavvas noted that we have an extensive programme of welfare for staff including virtual coffee mornings, lunch breaks, weekly meetings, etc. DGartland added that regular proactive communication has also been an invaluable and effective way of providing the leadership direction and reassurance to manage concerns. We have also provided numerous resources and training to support staff to work remotely confidently.

AThorpe re-joined the meeting at 3.28pm

5.2 Audit Overview

The Board received the minutes of the Audit Committee and JWakelam summarised the discussions at the last Committee meeting. There was 1 data breach this term (in March 2021 at OSFC) which has been investigated and appropriate actions have been put in place. There were no subject access requests this term. Staff working from home have been sent reminders about keeping safe online, how to handle data whilst working from home, and the importance of reporting potential or actual data breaches using the GDPRiS online system. We continue to review staff training to identify additional areas in using systems / service to keep data safe and secure; and the focus remains on compliance and prevention.

JWakelam added that as part of best practice, the Committee is currently investigating additional training for Committee members to ensure their skillsets are up to date and comprehensive.

5.2.1 Risk Register

The Board received and considered the Risk Register. JWakelam summarised the current status of risks that the Audit Committee identified and noted there are currently 5 red, 6 amber, 2 yellow and 4 green status risks. 2 new risks were added to the register: one relating to the Health and Safety audit at ASFC and one to the unbudgeted financial pressure of affording Covid-19 related costs and mitigation measures; and 1 risk was removed, relating to the risk failure to open of ASFC as ASFC is now open and the Trust has full possession of the new building.

5.3 Finance Overview

The Board received the Finance and KPI reports of the Finance Committee and SClarke summarised the discussions at the last Committee meeting. Despite lower student numbers at ASFC and significant impact as a result of Covid-19 (on both income and expenditure), the financial position is in balance. The year to date position is a contribution to reserves of £831k and full year forecast position has increased slightly to a contribution to reserves of £82k (though remains much lower than the budgeted surplus of £347k). The overall income is behind profiled budget by £320k, but savings in both staffing and non-pay costs almost neutralises the shortfall. Forecast staff costs for the whole year are 76% of income (higher than the full year budget of 71% due to reduced ASFC income without matched staffing cost reductions and one-off grants with related staffing expenditure) and cash balances are at £3.8m (a slight reduction on the £4.0m reported

for December). SClarke noted that there is a potential for a contribution to reserves in the region of £249k, if identified staffing costs savings are made.

The Committee considered and approved the Treasury Management policy and will be considering a review of banking services at its meeting in May. The Committee also considered the proposed updates to the Trust's Financial Regulations and discussed how best to modify the regulations to be more agile in order to respond to short lead times for funding opportunities and agreed to consider an updated Financial Regulations document at its May meeting, in readiness for the Board to review and approve in July.

5.4 Property Overview

The Board received an update of the discussions at the Property Committee and RStevenson summarised the discussions at the last Committee meeting. A statutory servicing compliance check has been completed, and all servicing has been completed on time or has been booked for completion in advance of its due date. The most pressing item of future works is the Heating Ventilation and Air Condition (HVAC) system at OSFC, as following an independent survey and report, this system needs renewing. The team are investigating the use of grant fusing for this work via the Capital Improvement Fund; as the project is estimated to cost circa £1.5m. As part of the tender process we will ask interested parties to design energy savings into their proposals. Snagging and handover of the building including training of systems, continues at ASFC and the team are setting up the future maintenance plans.

Covid-19: A booking in procedure was used during lockdown and general protocols were issued to staff about attendance onsite and where possible 3m physical distancing was in place. ASFC students and staff have been using the Lateral Flow Testing facilities at University Studies Campus and OSFC students and staff have been using the onsite Lateral Flow Test facilities and the Suffolk County Council Test facilities at the Waterfront. Ahead of reopening, one-way systems signage was checked and social distancing mitigation and risk assessments were reviewed, information was given to staff and students and cleaning rotas were increased. Now that we have reopened the track and trace and test distribution teams are working well to support students and staff.

Trustees queried whether the Trust's application for the Decarbonisation Fund was successful. RStevenson answered that the Trust was not successful.

6 Trust and Academy Policies

RBamford updated that as policies are reviewed communications are sent to all staff to indicate what significant changes have been made and they are uploaded to a central site for staff to refer to. We are also starting to check staff awareness of policies through quizzes as well as by continuing to monitor mandatory training completion.

6.1 SAT Complaints Policy

The Board received and reviewed the policy which is based on the model DfE policy. Trustees noted several typographical amendments and discussed various sections which would benefit from further amendments to add further clarity. Trustees agreed to feedback amendments to SGraham and, RBamford to check the policy with the Trust's lawyers after which ED'Souza to approve the policy using Chair's actions.

Trustees asked RBamford to consider the process for complaints to be reported to the Board.

Trustees
SGraham
ED'Souza

RBamford

KHaisman and RMurray left the meeting at 4pm.

6.2 SAT Corporate Health and Safety Policy

The Board received and reviewed the policy. Trustees queried whether the lead Trustee for H&S needed to be identified in the policy. Trustees agreed to feedback amendments to RBamford and, RBamford to check the policy with the Trust's lawyers after which ED'Souza to approve the policy using Chair's actions.

Trustees
ED'Souza

7 **Statutory Compliance Report**

7.1 **Safeguarding**

The Board received a paper summarising safeguarding concerns and the support in place for students and, noted that discussion of this is also within *Agenda items 4 and 5.1.1*. GChittock-Nash noted that all students have been RAG rated based on the level of risk to their well-being and safety, and tutors or student support staff maintain regular contact with the most vulnerable students according to the need. There have been no Prevent referrals. Between 1 September 2020 and 31 January 2021, there were 252 safeguarding concerns (41 at ASFC and 211 at OSFC) of which 184 have been closed (no further action required or the appropriate support has been put in place) and 68 remain open (30 at ASFC and 38 at OSFC) and student support staff and DSLs monitor and update the records and these students closely. The largest area of concern across both ASFC and OSFC is mental health; with self-harm, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts being reported and the team look at the KCSiE every week to ensure they are providing appropriate support. GChittock-Nash noted that we have invested in our counselling and chaplain support, so we have more specialist capacity to support students.

We are supporting staff training; with staff supported to complete Level 2 Safeguarding alongside the mandatory Safeguarding and Prevent Training. We are also running training and awareness webinars, working with the Police and the NHS, for parents and governance professionals to raise awareness of the specific threats posed to post-16 students online; and we have also sent an online safety bulletin to parents and students. AThorpe attends regular Prevent meetings with the local Prevent Lead and is working with them to develop an Action Plan to supplement the Safeguarding Policy. GChittock-Nash is working on a pilot with the NHS to provide online counselling for all personal progress tutors to support them to deal with the emotional impact of supporting students with complex and serious emotional support needs, which if successful, will be rolled out across the county.

7.2 **Health and Safety**

The Board received a paper summarising the accidents, incidents, RIDDOR, fire and first aid data and, noted that discussion of the Trust's Covid-19 response is covered within *Agenda items 4, 5.1.1 and 5.4*. During the Autumn term, ASFC reported 3 student incidents resulting in minor first aid treatment being administered; none were related incidents and OSFC reported 12 cases of work-related injuries, of which 3 were in September (all student), 5 were in October (2 contractor, 2 staff and 1 student), 1 in November (student) and 3 in December (1 staff and 2 student). No RIDDOR reports were logged with the Health and Safety Executive. RStevenson noted that in response to a falling number of first aiders at ASFC and OSFC; more volunteers are being sought and a further 3 members of staff have been trained with 'First Aid at Work' and 8 members of staff receiving 'Emergency First Aid at Work' training to boost immediate first aider coverage. Similarly, we are recruiting and training new volunteers for fire and Evac Chairs to ensure required coverage to fulfil statutory fire duties. RStevenson noted that successful fire drills were conducted at ASFC and OSFC and the minor faults with magnetic door holders at OSFC were discovered and corrected and, at ASFC a fire risk assessment was undertaken on the 2 December 2020 and the Fire Detection and Alarm Systems were declared suitable, sufficient and fully compliant. RStevenson noted that the risk assessment recommendations are being addressed within agreed timelines as part of a rolling maintenance programme.

There has been significant progress in actioning the items identified in ASFC Health and Safety Audit and in developing a culture of Health and Safety and to develop a Health and Safety Board. The team are also looking to procure a CAFM software to provide a full and comprehensive, centralised reporting system for the Trust/Group in respect of statutory service and inspections, planned and preventative maintenance, regulatory compliance obligations, etc.

8 **Gender Pay Gap Report**

SGraham noted that the Government have delayed the submission date until 31 October 2021, so the Trust will complete the Gender Pay Gap report in time for consideration at

the July 2021 meeting so that the final report can be submitted ready for the October deadline.

9 Governance Report

9.1 Updating Funding Agreements

MWard informed that the ESFA have requested that SAT adopt a single Master Funding Agreement with separate Supplemental Funding Agreements for ASFC and OSFC, based on the latest model agreements. MWard noted that there is no scope to change or alter the model agreements; and that the impact of adopting the agreements as requested by the ESFA relate to the noting that ASFC has now moved into its own premises and to align to the latest terms used by the ESFA. MWard noted that to update the funding agreements the Board needs to sign a new deed. Trustees **approved** the draft agreements and **agreed to delegate** authority to ED'Souza to sign the deed on behalf of the Trust.

9.2 Membership

The Board received a paper outlining the membership of the Members, Trustee Board and of the Trust's Committees and noted the resignations of Richard Carter as a Member on 10 March 2021 and of Louise Nash as ASFC LGB Committee member on 2 February 2021; the removal of Karen Hinton following the end of her term of office as a OSFC LGB Committee member at Christmas, and the appointment of Sarah Howard as the Member representative of WSC as Sponsor (pending formal approval of new Articles).

10 Any other business

No items discussed.

Date of next meeting

- Thursday 8 July 2021 at 2pm

FGillespie, AThorpe, DGartland, GChittock-Nash, JRobson and RBamford left the meeting at 4.22pm

Meeting closed at 5.39pm