

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 31 March 2022 at 2.00pm

- Present physically:** C Higgins, Vice Chair
E D'Souza, Chair
J Wakelam
- Present virtually:** A Maltpress
D Wildridge
M Whittingham (part)
- In Attendance:** C Shaw, Group strategic lead for Quality Assurance, Improvement and SEND
D Gartland, Principal ASFC
G Chittock Nash, Group Vice Principal Students and Admissions
J Raffel, CFO
J Robson, Head of Centre OSFC
R Bamford, Group Vice Principal Data and MI
R Stevenson, Group Operations Director (part)
S Gales, Governance Professional
S Graham, Group HR Director
- Apologies:** C Ridgeon
R Murray
S Clarke

Action

- 1 **Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence**
C Higgins, E D'Souza, J Wakelam, N Savvas, and S Daley declared their roles as Governors of West Suffolk College. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.
- Apologies were received from R Murray and S Clarke.
- 2 **Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021**
The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2021 were **agreed** as an accurate record.
- The Board noted that on the 20 December 2021, the Chair and CEO utilised their delegated authority to review, approve and sign the Annual Report and Financial Statements. The Board also noted its electronic approval of the Trust's updated Scheme of Delegation on 10 February 2022 and its electronic approval of the Trust's annual Schools Resource Management Self-Assessment submission to the ESFA on 21 February 2022.
- 3 **Matters Arising from meeting on 16 December 2021**
The matters arising from the meeting were summarised in the report and all actions reported had either been completed or, where appropriate an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.
- MA1 The procurement team are working to review the metrics used when considering suppliers to ensure they align to our strategic values.
- MA2 We have been working with the ESFA's related party transaction team to create suitable value for money evidence in support of the Trust's 2022/23 submission of related party transactions to the ESFA.
- MA4 We have appointed a Finance Assistant Risk to oversee the risk register and this person will be developing a proposal for how we can distribute the risk register to their respective Committees.
- 4 **CEO's Briefing**

Trustees received and considered the CEO's Briefing summarising the performance and operational update of activities at the Trust and its Colleges; and of the Trusts sponsor (WSC).

D Gartland gave an overview of the activities and experience of students at ASFC. D Gartland also noted the outcome of ASFC's new provider Ofsted monitoring visit, which received the highest possible feedback "significant progress".

Trustees commended the Executive on successfully opening ASFC and achieving such strong progress despite the impact of the pandemic.

Trustees queried how our relationships are with the feeder schools local to ASFC. D Gartland gave an overview of the relationships with both the local secondary schools and with the other sixth form providers in the region.

Trustees discussed that the Trust is growing organically with ASFC recruiting students from across west and mid Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and west Norfolk; and with OSFC recruiting students from mid, south and east Suffolk, Ipswich, and east Essex.

J Robson gave an overview of the activities and experience of students at OSFC. J Robson summarised the work underway to, utilising feedback from West Suffolk College's recent Ofsted inspection, prepare OSFC for Ofsted. J Robson summarised the work the teachers are doing to prepare and support students for assessments and to engage them in community events.

Trustees discussed and commended their experience during 'first hand week' at OSFC.

Trustees discussed the disparity between male and female students studying A Levels, especially at ASFC and queried the reasons for this and whether this is in keeping with local and national trends. D Gartland noted that this is a national trend for A Levels and for ASFC the gap is closing with each year of operation. J Robson noted that we are looking at the curriculum offer to ensure that it is aligned to local and national priorities and is attractive for both male and female students.

N Savvas gave an overview of the common projects we are working on across the Group to share best practice and improve standards for all, and of the progress of our central Group teams.

C Shaw left the meeting at 2.49pm

5 Committee Chair's Summary Reports:

5.1 Educational Excellence Committee Overview

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Educational Excellence Committee meetings in the Spring Term.

The Committee reviewed both colleges progress against their 2021/22 Quality Improvement Plans, considered KPIs to monitor student progress and experience, received updates in regard to student welfare and support, including information on safeguarding and the results of student surveys, reviewed the complaints and compliments logs to ascertain any themes or concerns, received executive summaries and the minutes of the Executive Board meetings (EDI, Progression and Safeguarding), reviewed and recommends ASFC and OSFC's Careers Strategy and Careers Policy Statements, and received updates from the Executive as to how the Group is sharing best practice to improve quality and student experience

S Daley, as Committee Chair, noted that whilst the Committee is still within it's first year, it benefitted from the two new Parent Committee members one from ASFC and one from OSFC. The Committee are supporting OSFC to prepare for Ofsted.

Trustees queried how student and parent voice is run across the Trust. G Chittock-Nash summarised the significant work which the team have undertaken to develop a robust series of mechanisms to capture student and parent feedback, including surveys, student councils/representatives, forums, etc. and explained how this feedback is used to inform decision making. G Chittock-Nash and A Hurrell to share a paper outlining the intent for gathering student and parent voice, and the impact of this.

5.1.1 Safeguarding Report

Trustees received the termly safeguarding reports of both college's which had been scrutinised by both the Safeguarding Board and the Educational Excellence Committee.

5.2 Resources Committee Overview

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Resources Committee meeting in the Spring Term.

The Committee received an executive summary and the minutes of the Health and Safety Board and Sustainability Steering Group Board, considered key performance indicators for HR and operational updates for IT and Estates, reviewed the Trust's Covid-19 mitigation plan, reviewed the Trust's major works and capital investment.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, noted that the Trust managed the pandemic very well to limit the impact on operations; and all the resources teams continued to harmonise processes across the Group and improve performance despite the pandemic.

C Higgins noted that the Committee receives detailed HR data and this has evidenced the strength of the Executive in managing staffing throughout a very uncertain period. C Higgins noted the growing risk of recruiting staff given the national recruitment markets and summarised the progress to upgrade OSFC's HVAC system.

5.2.1 Health and Safety Termly Report

Trustees received the termly report which had been scrutinised by the Health and Safety Board.

C Higgins noted that the Board proposed amendments to the Trust's health and safety policies to strengthen guidance for trips and visits.

R Stevenson and M Whittingham left the meeting at 3.15pm

5.3 Finance Committee Overview

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Finance Committee meetings in the Spring Term.

The Committee considered the management accounts and KPIs to monitor financial performance, reviewed the Trust's student applications for 2022/23 compared to planned targets, reviewed and recommends the Trust's Treasury Management policy, reviewed the annual report on contracts awarded between the values of £50k & £100k, reviewed and recommended the ESFA's Schools Resource Management Self-Assessment, started work to reconsider the Trusts Reserve's Policy and reviewed the funding allocations from ESFA for 2022/23 and, post meeting, electronically reviewed and recommends the Trust's Financial Regulations.

C Higgins, in S Clarke's absence, noted that we are forecast to achieve a positive contribution to reserves. Trustees commended the successful financial management of the Trust, especially given the opening of a new sixth form centre in a pandemic, to regularly achieve positive contributions to reserves.

5.3.1 Financial Regulations

Trustees considered the Financial Regulations which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee. The Board **approved** the Financial Regulations.

5.3.2 Treasury Management Policy

Trustees considered the policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee. The Board **approved** the policy.

5.3.3 ESFA's Schools Resource Management Self-Assessment

The Board considered and **approved** the request of the Finance Committee to be delegated authority to approve the annual Schools Resource Management Self-Assessment submission to the ESFA. Trustees will continue to receive the submitted self-assessment at the following Trust Board meeting.

5.4 Audit and Risk Management Overview

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meetings in the Spring Term.

The Committee reviewed the Trust's Risk Register to ensure the college had identified pertinent risks and put in place appropriate and effective mitigations in place to minimise risk, reviewed the findings reports of the internal auditors and received updated in regard to GDPR, subject access requests, freedom of information and data breaches to ensure proper process was followed and effective measures put in place to lessen the risk to the organisation. The Committee also discussed training needs of the Committee.

R Inman, as Committee Chair, noted that significant work has been undertaken to improve the risk register to support oversight. R Inman noted that the red risk relates to the risk of not securing prior approval from the ESFA for our 2022/23 related party transactions, however the Executive are working with the ESFA to lessen this risk. J Raffel to try to capture the hidden costs associated with collating the value for money evidence for related party transactions with our sponsor.

JRaffel

5.4.1 Risk Register

Trustees received and considered the risk register, as reviewed by the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

The register currently identifies **1 red**, **7 amber**, **7 yellow** and **0 green** status risks. Of which, 14 risks have had no change in post mitigation score, 1 risk reduced in score, 0 new risks were added and 6 risks removed (to enable Trustees to focus on the most serious risks) from the register.

6 Policies

6.1 Appropriate Policy

Trustees considered the policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Resources Committee. The Board **approved** the policy.

The Board considered and **approved** the request of the Resources Committee to delegate future approval of this policy to the Committee.

6.2 Corporate Health and Safety Policy

Trustees considered the updated policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Health and Safety Board. The Board **approved** the policy.

ASFC Health and Safety Policy

Trustees considered the updated policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Health and Safety Board. The Board **approved** the policy.

OSFC Health and Safety Policy

Trustees considered the updated policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Health and Safety Board. The Board **approved** the policy.

6.3 ASFC Careers Strategy and Careers Policy

Trustees considered the updated policy which had been reviewed and recommended by both the Progression Board and Educational Excellence Committee. The Board **approved** the policy.

6.4 OSFC Careers Strategy and Careers Policy

Trustees considered the updated policy which had been reviewed and recommended by both the Progression Board and Educational Excellence Committee. The Board **approved** the policy.

7 Governance

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Nominations and Governance Committee meetings in the Spring Term.

The Committee reviewed the membership of the Trust Board and its Committees and noted the appointment of Jessica Bawden and Tom Miller as Parent members of the Educational Excellence Committee; and Steve Clarke's resignation from the Resources Committee in May 2022. The Committee also reviewed the feedback from annual 1:1 meetings with the Chair and the 360° feedback on the performance of the Chair, Governance Professional and CEO. The Committee reviewed our compliance with the action plan arising from the external governance review; and reviewed and recommend the role descriptions for the Chair and Vice Chair(s) of the Trust Board. The Committee also received an update on Finance Committee Chair recruitment.

Role descriptions of the Chair and Vice Chair(s) of the Trust Board

Trustees reviewed and **approved** the role descriptions for Chair and Vice Chair(s) of the Trust Board *subject to* inclusion of reference to promoting adherence to the Code of Conduct.

SGales

Appointments

Trustees **acknowledged** that the appointment of Jessica Bawden and Tom Miller as Parent members of the Educational Excellence Committee; and **accepted** Steve Clarke's resignation from the Resources Committee in May 2022.

Trustees **approved the reappointment of** Alan Maltpress, Debbie Wildridge, Karen Points, Sarah Healey Pearce, and Sue Daley for a further 4-year term

The Board discussed and **agreed** to appoint the Governance Professional as the Trust's Company Secretary.

External Governance Review

Trustees noted that all actions resulting from the external governance review are complete and we have received an email from the ESFA on 4 April 2022 confirming they are closing the case against the Trust.

Recruitment

E D'Souza gave a verbal update on plans to recruit a new Finance Committee Chair.

Strategy

E D'Souza gave a verbal update on the plans for the Strategic Conference now scheduled for 6 May 2022. Trustees asked to also discuss the White Paper.

S Gales gave a verbal update on plans to reconvene the Trust Board in the Summer term to review a formal collaboration agreement (and other associated governance

documents) to better facilitate and govern the strategic alliance with West Suffolk College and to prepare our 2022/23 related party transaction submission.

8 **Any Other Business**

• **Review of the meeting**

Trustees feedback that the improvements made to the meeting papers have significantly improved.

The meeting closed at 4.15pm