



GIRLS' LEARNING TRUST

MINUTES OF MEETING

Meeting Type Trust Board

Date: 9 December 2021 at 7.00pm

Venue: Meeting held via Zoom video conference call

Members: Hamza Aumeer (HA), Alex Clark (AC), Robert Etchell (RE), Sandy Gillett (SG, Chair), Marie Grant (MG), Malcolm Munro (MM), Nigel Pepper (NP), Jennifer Smith (JS) and Philip Taylor (PT, Vice-Chair)

Others present: Helen Latham (HL, Chief Operating Officer) and Andrew Horrod (AH, Clerk)

* denotes member absent from meeting

Item	Item Description and Minute	Action
1	Apologies for absence and declarations of interest	
	There were no apologies for absence or declarations of interest. SG advised the Board that HL had a new job title of Chief Operating Officer and a revised job description.	
2	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	The minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2021 were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.	
3	Matters arising from the minutes	
3.1	A matters arising sheet had been circulated and the Board noted that all but two of the items had been closed. The first open item related to a reference in the Risk Register to risks posed by the recent fuel crisis. It was agreed that as the crisis had passed the item could be closed.	
3.2	The second open item concerned a single policy document covering equality issues. JS confirmed that she was working on this with WHSG Deputy Head Cat Godyn and there should be something for the Board to consider at its next scheduled meeting. Therefore the item remained open.	
3.3	There were no other matters arising from the minutes.	
4	CEO's report	
4.1	JS had circulated a detailed report on issues affecting GLT schools during the Autumn term. Her introduction summarised the Covid	

	<p>vaccination programme for 12-15 year olds and PT asked about the take-up. JS said there had been a 50-65% take-up across the three schools. The Trust did not know how many students had made their own arrangements with walk-in vaccinations. Replying to SG about encouragement for an even higher take-up, she said the Trust could not go further than providing the venue for testing. The next step was to provide Covid tests for the youngest students; the break out of infection was mostly amongst Year 7, who had not been eligible for testing so far.</p>	
4.2	<p>JS's report included statistics and commentary on student outcomes, including targets for 2022. Ofqual had announced that exam grade boundaries would be set by exam boards at a "midway" point between 2021 and 2019, the last time exams were sat before the pandemic. Heads had therefore proposed key performance indicator (KPI) targets to reflect those expectations. While results were expected to be higher than pre-pandemic exams, the exact position may vary by subject and grade because of a shift in entry profiles, for instance, more higher-attainers taking a particular subject. It was worth noting that this year's A-level students had not sat formal GCSE exams as they had been cancelled and replaced with centre assessed grades in 2020. Heads were mindful therefore of the need to give students plenty of practice under test conditions. Replying to a question from NP on how the CHSG A Level ALPS target of 4 had been arrived at, JS said the school had simply pitched the target between the figures for 2019 and 2021. This was also the case for the other schools because of a lack of national attainment data to do proper comparative assessments. 2022 will be a transition year. She acknowledged NP's point that the percentage of 4+ grades at CHSG had been trending downwards over the last few years; she did not wish to speculate as the figures did not show the nature of cohorts but she would follow it up to see if she could find out any more information. There were no other questions regarding the KPI targets for 2022 and the Board approved the targets set out in the report.</p>	JS
4.3	<p>NP said it was not clear from circulated LGB minutes how much scrutiny there was of school development plans (SDPs). JS said she scrutinised the plans and discussed them with the Headteachers. She intended to discuss the SDPs with LGB Chairs on 17 January and the next round of LGB meetings would have a focus on SDP issues. MG said governors asked good questions at Nonsuch LGB on what the school was doing and MM provided input regarding Carshalton, where he held monthly meetings. The January 2022 meeting will be about SEND. HA said Wallington LGB carried out a SDP evaluation each term.</p>	
4.4	<p>A section of the CEO's report concerned admissions and attendance, including information about the selective entry tests for 2022 admission to NHSG and WHSG. The Trust had been working hard on its commitment to increase the numbers of Pupil Premium (PP) students who gain entry to the selective schools. Amy Cavilla was leading a working party looking at how the Trust can improve outcomes for PP students, while Jamie Parkinson at Wallington had kick-started the primary outreach programme, details were in the report. JS said issues discussed at Trust Admissions Committee included the slightly off-putting application process. Sharing good practice across the Trust regarding PP students was needed. Amy's working party had started meeting and there was likely to be a report back to Admissions Committee in January.</p>	
4.5	<p>JS answered questions about attendance and the impact of Covid-19.</p>	

4.6	<p>Analysis of numbers was being done constantly by pastoral staff and senior leadership. There had been some staff absences due to stress and illnesses other than Covid. There was nothing to highlight from the current staffing and recruitment/leavers parts of the report. The Board discussed student welfare and safeguarding, noting some welcome comparisons with the previous year's figures. It was clarified that "previous year", as used for the tables, related to the corresponding September-November period in 2020, not the whole of last academic year. JS said she would not go into the detail of a Stage 2 complaint in case it escalates and trustees are asked to serve on a complaints panel.</p> <p>SG thanked JS for her report.</p>	
5	Feedback from Admissions Committee	
	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October had been circulated for information. NP said there had been two main themes during the meeting: a focus on admission of PP students to the selective schools and more broadly, having full cohorts in Year 7. JS added that the Committee had also discussed Sixth Form admissions, noting that Nicola Deer no longer dealt with these so she had more time to deal with other admissions. MM provided an update: CHSG had 137 internal applications for the Sixth Form for 2022, the school needs now to 'convert' them to admissions.</p>	
6	Feedback from Finance Committee including the Annual Report and Accounts	
6.1	<p>The minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 11 October had been circulated for information. NP said the 2 December meeting had been chaired by Andrea Cooke in his absence. He recorded his appreciation of the support from HL and Hamish Lungany in meeting with him, Andrea and JS beforehand. He asked HL to go through the key points from 2 December and her briefing note for tonight's meeting, including recommendations to the Board in relation to the 2020/21 accounts.</p>	
6.2	<p>HL said the accounts had been circulated in two parts: Trustees' Report and Governance Statement; and the Annual Report and Financial Statements. The GLT had closed the year ending 31 August 2021 with £5.1million in reserves. She and Hamish considered that the Trust had 'clear' reserves of £4.3m. The Trust's auditors Baxter & Co had experienced difficulty with obtaining pension liability information (FRS102 report) from actuaries at the London Borough of Sutton. When the information was supplied last week, the numbers were wrong. The two-part accounts were therefore labelled draft and the Board could see issues requiring amendment in red type on the Financial Statements cover sheet. All were working towards getting the accounts finalised by the end of next week. The resolutions of Finance Committee and recommendations to Trust Board reflected this situation.</p>	
6.3	<p>HL asked Board members whether they had queries on the accounts. NP observed that GLT reserves were healthy but the Trust had a number of large building projects. The rising cost of inflation would have an impact. SG asked about the deadline for submission of signed accounts. HL said the Trust was on track (17 December was proposed for signing) but if it did submit accounts late then they would be 'qualified accounts' and the ESFA would knock off points for its Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids. Both should be avoided.</p>	

6.4	<p>HL's briefing note summarised the resolution of Finance Committee: that it regarded the proposed GLT Trustees' Report and Financial Statements, year ended 31 August 2021, as being a 'true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company' as required by law (with the exception of the LGPS Pension information and minor changes as highlighted), and it recommended them to the Trust Board for approval. HL asked Board members to approve a 5 point proposal for the signature process, which is set out in resolution (ii) below.</p>
6.5	<p>HL moved on to another significant item considered by Finance Committee: the four major capital projects at GLT schools. She said the London Borough of Sutton's People Committee was meeting now, one of the agenda items being requests for funding of building projects at local schools. GLT Estates Manager Jack Rendle was sitting in on the meeting.</p>
6.6	<p>The following is a summary of the GLT projects:</p> <p>Carshalton – Expansion</p>
6.7	<p>This involved provision of 8 classrooms and 2 Science labs. The GLT had put in a proposal to LBS, which was being considered by the People Committee this evening. The Trust was working with a firm of consultants on the tender process.</p> <p>Carshalton - SEND</p>
6.8	<p>The Trust had put a bid together with Chris James, SENDCO at CHSG, asking LBS for a contribution of £220k to improve SEND facilities at the school.</p> <p>Nonsuch – Fire Compliance Phase 2</p>
6.9	<p>This project was nearly complete. Finance Committee had agreed submission of a CIF bid with 30% contribution from the Trust/school.</p> <p>Wallington – Dining and Sixth Form space</p>
6.10	<p>The revised scheme that centred on the school's library building had been put out to tender. The estimated cost of the project was £4.5m. Finance Committee had agreed the submission of a CIF bid; the bid would be submitted next week with a 30% contribution from the Trust/school.</p>
6.11	<p>HL outlined the impact on GLT reserves. Proposed contributions to major projects amounted to nearly £3million. The next steps were: to obtain the result from this evening's People Committee; tender the larger CHSG project; finalise the CIF bid for the WHSG project; and hold an extra Board meeting before February half-term. The Trust needed to make decisions then so a building programme from Easter onwards could be finalised.</p>
6.12	<p>Resolved: (i) To approve the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements (accounts) for the year ended 31 August 2021 subject to any necessary changes, and to note that the GLT Members will receive the accounts at their meeting immediately following this one;</p> <p>(ii) To approve the Proposal for Signature Process:</p>

	<p>1. Baxter & Co to document the changes (sections/page numbers) of changes based on FRS102.</p> <p>2. Accounts signature to be dated 17 December 2021 (not 9 December as currently presented).</p> <p>3. Jennifer Smith/Helen Latham/Hamish Lungany to have delegated authority to check Baxter's changes.</p> <p>4. Jennifer Smith to sign the Annual Report and Accounts as CEO when satisfied.</p> <p>5. Sandy Gillett to sign as Trust Chair based on Finance Committee and Trust Board approval, subject to these changes.</p> <p>Action: HL/HKL/JS/SG</p>	HL/HKL/ JS/SG
7	Feedback from HR Committee	
	<p>PT reported key points from the Committee's 25 November meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee had been satisfied with staff performance appraisals. • The Committee had agreed a proposal from the Executive Team for a one-off payment to staff of £250 each, as a thank-you for their work during the pandemic. The cost was being met from a rebate from the exam boards. The proposal had been approved as affordable by Finance Committee. The payment was pensionable and staff would receive it in the December pay run. The decision was being communicated to staff via a letter from SG. 	
8	Feedback from the LGBs	
8.1	<p><u>Nonsuch</u></p> <p>The minutes of the 30 September meeting had been circulated for information. MG said that Alexis Williamson-Jones, the new Deputy Head, had attended her first LGB meeting. She was doing a lot of work on pastoral care. Governors and staff had received the appropriate Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) updates. The progress of under-achieving students in English and Maths were being tracked. As part of a parents engagement strategy, a focus group involving parents had been established.</p>	
8.2	<p><u>Carshalton</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October had been circulated for information. MM said KCSIE/safeguarding requirements had been completed. The school was still looking for another Appointed Governor but the overall composition of the LGB with its newer members was good. Headteacher Moe Devenney had brought in a company to help with increasing some students' expectations for university entry. The school had held a very successful Sixth Form open evening; 200+ people had attended school that evening and a related video was available online.</p>	
8.3	<p><u>Wallington</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October had been circulated. HA reported that the school was planning to take part in a World Challenge event which involved a student trip to Malawi. A Parent Governor election had been held recently and Dr. Souad Mohamed had been</p>	

	<p>elected. The Board ratified this appointment. HA said that the LGB had an Appointed Governor vacancy and Headteacher Richard Booth was following this up with someone who had attended a prize-giving, to see if they were interested in the post.</p> <p><i>MG left the meeting at this point, at 8.10pm</i></p>	
9	Feedback from Audit and Risk Committee	
9.1	<p>RE said the Committee had met for a second time and was finding its feet. It was overseeing the review of the Risk Register. A draft risk management document would be submitted to the Committee's next meeting in January. It was hoped that Board members would have a working example to look at, at their March meeting. The basic aim was to make the Risk Register a more active tool, for consideration at the front end of meetings. Committee Chairs would be asked to (re)write their respective parts of the Risk Register.</p>	
9.2	<p>SG said this sounded positive and she thanked RE for the update.</p>	
10	Trust Governance update	
10.1	<p>SG said that she, MG, NP and JS had met with Sofia Spiers, a prospective co-opted trustee. They had invited Sofia to join the Board as a co-opted trustee, subject to a DBS check. Sofia had accepted in principle, she needed to check some things with her employer. It was hoped, therefore, that Sofia's appointment could be confirmed shortly.</p>	
10.2	<p>SG said that she and JS had met with another prospective co-opted trustee (Raeesa Chowdhury) yesterday. Raeesa had been found via the Inspiring Governance Network/NGA. The meeting had been positive and the Trust would be back in touch with her after Christmas. MM and NP confirmed that they would be happy to meet with her then and perhaps MG would like to meet her too.</p>	
10.3	<p>SG said she had received six returns on the 'NGA 21 Questions' discussed previously at Trust Governance Committee. The matter would be brought forward to the New Year with an external review of how the Board was functioning to follow. Those who had not yet completed the 21 Questions were asked to do so.</p>	
10.4	<p>SG said the Remuneration Committee had met for the first time on 29 November and all had gone well. There were no questions from Board members about this or the other items reported on by SG.</p>	
11	Safeguarding update	
11.1	<p>JS reported on two issues. Firstly she had met with the three Designated Safeguarding Leads this term and meetings would continue at least once per term. It was possible that a new post may be created to lead this area of work and support other staff, whose safeguarding workload was increasing significantly. At the moment Helen Holmes at CHSG was the lead contact.</p>	
11.2	<p>Secondly the GLT's Whistleblowing Policy had been reviewed and a version with proposed changes highlighted in yellow had been circulated. JS said AC had commented on paragraph 7.2, which needed to be expanded along the following lines: if there is a concern about a Headteacher it should be reported to the CEO and if the</p>	

11.3	<p>concern is about the CEO it should be reported to the Chair of the Trust. She acknowledged PT's point about who support staff should report to and it may be necessary to include Chief Operating Officer or 'principal leader'. HL said the Policy needs to be totally consistent throughout with naming and safeguarding concerns. It was noted that her job title in Appendix 1 and the sub-numbering of paragraph 7.5 needed changing. SG suggested that the Policy be tightened up outside the meeting, including cross-reference to the allegations against staff policy. She asked that JS implement amendments to reflect the issues that had been raised and recirculate the Whistleblowing Policy to trustees; with this action, the Board gave its in-principle approval to the Policy.</p> <p>AC said he had held a very useful meeting with the three safeguarding governors and Helen Holmes. They had gone through responsibilities delegated to the safeguarding governors. He relayed Helen's view on the main worries amongst students. GLT schools were aware of and monitoring a gang culture issue in central Sutton. He and JS commented briefly on the GLT safeguarding register. He noted that safeguarding governors were copied into some emails and informed of key actions taken at their respective schools.</p>	JS
12	Risk Register	
	<p>The latest version of the Risk Register had been circulated. PT suggested there ought to be an item about the difficulty/inability with sourcing supplies (whatever they may be) and obtaining quotations for work from companies. A probability score of 2 and impact score of 1 was suggested. SG thought this was a fair point and RE said firms that construct modular buildings were now extremely busy. The suggestion was agreed, HL and JS were asked to work it into the Risk Register.</p>	HL/JS
13	Any other business and date of next meeting	
13.1	<p>The Board agreed that an extra meeting was required and set the date of Thursday 10 February; the Trust Governance Committee meeting scheduled for that day could be superseded.</p>	AH/NO
13.2	<p>JS said she would present GLT strategic plans to Trust Board in February 2022.</p>	
13.3	<p>It was agreed that evening meetings should continue online for the time being. There was no other business and SG thanked everyone for their contributions to this evening's meeting.</p>	

The meeting ended at 8.38pm

Signed:

Dated:

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