

Board of Trustees

Monday 22nd March 2021

Minutes

Present: Richard Craster
Delia Goldring
Peter Green (Chair)
Lucy Harrison
Linda Horbye
Adrian Marrocco
Helen Pettifor
John Rubinstein
Jeremy Ruff
Zubair Shaikh
Ellie Smith
Andrew Tebbutt

In Attendance: Ian Hooper
Lubna Hussain
Josh Kane
Claire Mugridge
Peter Thompson
Beth Yap

1.	Governance
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting
3.	Matters Arising
4.	Strategic/Training Item – Mission Statement
5.	Report from the CEO
6.	Woodhouse SAR
7.	Confidential Minute
8.	Financial Report
9.	Reports from Committees
10.	Risk Management Plan
11.	Any Other Business
12.	Dates of Next Meetings

Minute	Decision /Action	D/A
3.8	Staff to meet new the trustees when a face-to-face session is able to take place.	A
4.	To agree the Frontier Learning Trust mission statement - <i>Frontier Learning Trust (FLT) is a sixth form academy trust that inspires and enables ambitious young people from all backgrounds to progress to top class destinations at universities and in their careers.</i>	D
5.	John Rubinstein would discuss this with HR ways the College could show its appreciation to staff, such as the distributing of wellness hampers.	A
5.	Lubna Hussain to include a full breakdown of the safeguarding issues along with comparative data from previous years in the next CEO report.	A
7.	Confidential action.	D
8.	Claire Mugridge to confirm the depreciation costs in the management accounts.	A
8.	To approve the management accounts for January and February 2021	D
9.2	Chair and Clerk to discuss how feedback from Local Governing Boards are presented at Trust meetings.	A

The Board welcomed Josh Kane, Chair of Governors at Dollis Primary School, who would be observing the meeting, and introductions were made.

1. Governance

1.1. Apologies

James Marshall.

1.2 Declaration of Interest

None declared.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

The minutes of the meeting of 8th February 2021 were reviewed and approved as a true and accurate record of the events that took place and would be uploaded to the Trust's website.

3. Matters Arising from the Previous Minutes

3.2 The Clerk confirmed that all trustees have completed a register of interest form.

4. A high-level tutorial on academy finances will be presented to trustees on Monday 29th March 2021.

6. The Clerk confirmed that the FMGS will be submitted before the end of March 2021.

8. It was agreed that staff should meet the new trustees when a face-to-face session is able to take place.

Action

4. Strategic/Training Item: Mission Statement

The Board reviewed the proposed mission statement for Frontier Learning Trust, agreeing that it was fit for purpose.

Decision

Frontier Learning Trust (FLT) is a sixth form academy trust that inspires and enables ambitious young people from all backgrounds to progress to top class destinations at universities and in their careers.

In response to a question from trustees, the Chair agreed that 'sixth form' should remain in the mission statement but this may need to be reviewed in the future, if it limits any potential expansion of the Trust.

The Board also noted the current mission statement for Woodhouse College: *The mission of Woodhouse College is to be an inspirational and nurturing community that is committed to excellence and equips high-achieving, ambitious students with the skills to thrive on their preferred university course and in the wider world of work.*

5. CEO Report

John Rubinstein presented the CEO report, informing the Board that the return to College has gone smoothly and passed on his thanks to Ian Hooper, Claire Mugridge and Mark Jarvis for their work in setting up the mass testing programme. The Board noted that 4,000 tests were conducted over a two-week period, with only two positive results. John went on to explain that, whilst some are a little anxious, the majority of students and staff are happy to be back

in College.

Plans for the A Level gradings have begun and the College is preparing for a regime of assessments with each student completing one test per subject per week. John reminded the Board of the proposed timeline, highlighting that the lengthy appeals process will take place when staff should be on holiday. John also explained that no guidance has been received from Ofqual as of yet.

In response to a question from trustees, John explained that discussions are taking place to ensure that there is adequate staffing during the summer holidays to deal with appeals. However, John explained that this will be decided by Sugra Alibhai once she has taken up the post of Principal.

In response to a follow-up question from trustees, John stated that it is important that staff are rewarded for their hard work and suggested that, if they work an additional two weeks during the summer holiday, then this should be taken in lieu during the autumn term. The Board agreed with this and also suggested additional ways of showing appreciation to staff, such as distributing wellness hampers. It was agreed that John Rubinstein would discuss this with HR.

Action

The Board acknowledged the challenges being face by the College and also emphasised the need to work closely with its partner schools, such as the Archer Academy, regarding the GCSE gradings.

Regarding the staffing report, Ian Hooper informed the Board that the College has received one further resignation. **In response to a question from trustees**, Ian confirmed that, whilst there have been few resignations, there have also been very few applications for vacant posts. This has meant the College has had to approach agencies in some cases.

Ian informed the Board that, whilst the staffing levels look appropriate for the next academic year, these are always subject to change due to the take up in particular subjects. Ian emphasised that the landscape is particularly volatile this year, as GCSE results are likely to be higher and this could lead to an unpredictable high number of students meeting their conditional offers. This means that staffing may not be able to change quickly in order to meet the subject demands.

Claire Mugridge presented her report, explaining that the mass testing programme has taken much of her time and effort. Claire explained that the College is anticipating to receive around £25k of government funding to offset Covid-related costs but reminded the Board that this could change or be withdrawn.

In response to a question from trustees, Claire confirmed that there are still plans to implement a new accounting system but progress on this has not yet been made due to the finance team being so stretched.

The Chair explained that, whilst the Board does not involve itself in operational matters, the day-to-day finance work is a priority for the College and, if required, additional support for the finance team should be sought.

In response to a question from trustees, Claire confirmed that the sports hall roof was repaired in December, but the leak has returned this term.

Lubna Hussain presented her report, informing the Board that there has been an increase in safeguarding and welfare issues as a result of lockdown. The College seeks to combat this by training a large number of staff to become mental health first aiders and ensuring that students and parents know where they can receive external support. **In response to a question from trustees,** Lubna explained that the mental health first aid training is a two-day intensive course provided by MIND.

Delia Goldring, in her role as safeguarding governor, thanked the Senior Leadership and Safeguarding Teams for their work over the past few months in dealing with the increased pressures as a result of the pandemic.

In response to a question from trustees, Lubna confirmed that there has been an increase in eating disorders, suicide attempts and anxiety in students since the lockdown. It was agreed that, in her next report, Lubna should include a full breakdown of the safeguarding issues along with comparative data from previous years.

Action

Finally, John presented the data dashboard, drawing attention to the change in admissions as a result of the pandemic, with 43% of year 12 students coming from Barnet, compared to 46% in year 13.

6. **Woodhouse College SAR**

The Board received Woodhouse College's 2019-20 Self-assessment Report (SAR), noting that the College is required to prepare and submit this annually to Ofsted. Ian Hooper reminded the Board that the SAR is written to reflect the Ofsted framework; leadership and management, behaviour and attitudes, personal development and quality of education (intent, implementation and impact).

Ian informed the Board that the SAR was completed in the autumn term and includes the initiatives that have been implemented this year in response to the pandemic. The key areas covered by the SAR are progress, progression and achievement and this year the College has graded itself as outstanding. Ian acknowledged that, whilst it is hard to compare some factors, such as achievement to that of previous years, the College could not have done any more for its students this year.

Ian went on to explain that the SAR enables the College to reflect on the areas for development and the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is drafted as a result of this. The Board noted that the QIP was written in September but, as a result of the additional lockdowns, there has already been a number of changes, including the removal of exams.

In response to a question from trustees, Ian explained that the College has only had access to disadvantaged data in the last few years. Whilst the College has done more in this area, there is still a way to go, but the pandemic has

really brought disadvantaged students into focus.

In response to another question from trustees, Ian explained that historically there has been a gap between male and female students in STEM subjects. Whilst girls join the College with high GCSE results, they often do not make as much progress as boys in STEM subjects. However, this was not the case in 2020, so this may be due to the pressure of exams which was removed last year.

In response to a final question from trustees, John Rubinstein explained that the College uses its external partners for validation, such as St Dominic's and the Archer Academy, but also reminded the Board that the College is now part of the Barnet school's family.

Finally, the Board suggested that, to strengthen future SARs, the College includes the external relationships and partnerships that it has.

7. Confidential Item

Confidential item

Confidential decision.

Decision

8. Financial Report

Claire Mugridge drew attention to the management accounts for January and February 2021, reminding the Board that these are the first presented accounts since the Trust's opening. Overall, the Trust is on track for the year.

Claire also drew attention to the financial KPIs, explaining that payroll costs as a percentage of total income is expected to be 77%, slightly above the 76% target. However, overall, it is expected that staff costs will be in line with budget. Claire reminded trustees that due to Covid, the budget included a large provision for temporary staff and only a small amount of this budget has been used to date.

Confirmation of exam costs is still awaited, and it is likely that the same process as last year will be followed; whereby the College will pay for these in full and then be reimbursed.

The Board also noted that there has been no lettings income since January due to the lockdown and the projected income has been reduced from £75k to £30k.

Claire explained that the ESFA have confirmed the main funding allocation for 2021-22 which sees a reduction of £130k from this year's funding. **In response to a question from trustees,** Claire explained that this change is due to a new metric that is being used, which negatively affects London institutions. Claire also reminded the Board that next year's budget will see the College receive the benefits of academisation, including a saving in VAT and receipt of the teachers' pensions grant.

In response to a question from trustees, Claire agreed that she will confirm

Action

the depreciation costs but suspected that this change is due to the inclusion of the CIF projects (installation of new boilers and alarm system) which may not have been factored in initially.

Finally, the Board considered the College premises spending noting that this will be updated monthly and circulated with the management accounts. Claire informed the Board that a number of laptops were received from the DfE and issued to students. The College has also applied for the 2021 CIF bid with a proposal for phase 2 of the fire alarm system.

The Board approved the management accounts for January and February 2021.

Decision

9. Reports from Committees and Local Governing Boards

9.1 Audit & Compliance Committee

The Board reviewed the minutes of the Audit & Compliance Committee of 1st March 2021. The Committee Chair informed the Board that UHY Hacker Young has been appointed as the Trust's internal auditor.

9.2 Woodhouse College Local Governing Board

The Board reviewed the minutes of the Woodhouse College Local Governing Board. Noting that none of the members sit on the Board of trustees it was agreed that the Chair and Clerk would discuss how feedback from Local Governing Boards are presented at Trust meetings.

Action

10. Risk Management Plan

John Rubinstein drew attention to the risk management plan, explaining that many of the items had been covered as part of the agenda, such as safeguarding issues, potential challenges around student enrolment, and progress on the maths school.

John informed the Board that Ofsted inspections will resume after Easter and it is likely that the College will receive an inspection in the next 15 months.

The Board noted the adverse effects that lockdown has had on the College students, with many of them not yet feeling like part of the College.

Around staffing and morale, John informed the Board that Sugra Alibhai has met with a number of staff ahead of joining the college, which has received positive feedback.

The Trust questioned what the biggest risk to the College would be if there was to be another lockdown. John explained that the biggest concern would be the year 12 students, who are already struggling and feeling isolated. There is also a risk of some staff leaving as many have not enjoyed online learning. John went on to explain that there may be a large amount of rebuilding work to do, as there has been a year with no extra-curricular activities, and it is important not to lose the heart of the College.

11. AOB

The Chair informed the Board that he and the Clerk are currently meeting with all governors who were formally part of the Woodhouse Board to discuss their experience and improve the governance process. This has been a useful exercise and feedback will be shared with the Board.

The Board noted that this is the last meeting of John Rubinstein after 8 years as Principal of Woodhouse College. Trustees thanked John for all he has done for the College and wished him a happy and relaxing retirement.

12. Dates of Next Meetings

17th May 2021

28th June 2021

The meeting concluded at 8:15pm