

MEETING	<b>BOARD OF DIRECTORS</b>
DATE	<b>Tuesday 13 October 2015</b>
VENUE	<b>Ninestiles School</b>
ATTENDEES	<b>Paul Ashdown, Ateef Azam, Abid Butt, Ian Carnell, Martyn Collin, Karen Crowston, Adrian Davies, Vrigu Dey, Bob Fear, Gaetano Ferrante, Sian Hartle, Karamat Iqbal, Cath Lavelle, Carol Phillips, Chris Quinn, Terry Smith, Chris Stevens, Penny Wagg, David Werry</b>
IN ATTENDANCE	<b>Hilary Barber, Steven Ralph</b>

**MINUTES**

**1. Welcome and apologies**

Bob welcomed all present to the meeting and introductions were made. Apologies were received from Sir Dexter and Dominic Davis. Bob informed the meeting that Peter Bennett has resigned after many years of loyal service to the school. To maintain his work with the schools he will visit each trust school with Chris Q. Vrigu suggested that a letter of thanks is sent to Peter and some flowers for his wife.

**2. Register of Business Interests**

The register has been compiled and will shortly be posted onto the website. Please check that all details are correct.

**3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests**

None were declared.

**4. Elections**

***Election of Chair***

The following nomination was received: **Bob Fear**

Proposed: **Vrigu Dey**

Seconded: **Nadeen Proverbs**

***Election of Vice Chair***

The following nomination was received: **Karen Crowston**

Proposed: **Nadeen Proverbs**

Seconded: **David Werry**

***Election of Safeguarding Lead***

The following nomination was received: **Vrigu Dey**

Proposed: **Penny Wagg**

Seconded: **Karen Crowston**

***Up to 2 directors elected to attend Finance and General Purposes***

The following nominations were received: **Bob Fear** and **Nadeen Proverbs**

Proposed: **Ian Carnell**

Seconded: **Terry Smith**

Proposed: **Bob Fear**  
Seconded: **Karen Crowston**

**Karamat flagged up the potential of missing important information relating to the meeting given the huge amount of paperwork circulated by email.** Bob suggested that in normal circumstances there would not be so many documents. Chris Q reminded directors that the board and its processes are still developing. Whilst the board takes ultimate accountability for the outcomes, the documents have all been scrutinised by the academy councillors and discussed in detail.

Along with the documents were sent the minutes of each meeting which evidence the level of challenge that has been brought to the Principals. The board meeting provides the opportunity for directors to question and challenge any issues raised in the minutes over which they have concerns.

Karamat suggested that it would be helpful to have this discussion noted in the minutes with a statement of the process for circulating minutes. This is as follows:

- *Agendas and papers circulated to Academy Councillors at least two weekends prior to meetings*
- *Draft minutes taken and sent to the Chair and Principal for approval*
- *Once approved, draft minutes sent to individual academy councillors for information re actions etc*
- *Meetings to be approved and ratified at the next academy council meeting at which point they become the formal record of the meeting and will be posted onto websites*
- *Depending on the timing of meetings either the draft or final minutes will be presented to directors at the first opportunity*

#### **5. Performance of Trust Schools Summer 2015**

Chris Q noted that the trust is not accountable for the summer 2015 outcomes at Lyndon or Cockshut Hill but these results have been circulated for information. Chris Q and Martyn have discussed the results with the Regional Schools' Commissioner and noted that with the implementation of the RSC model, academies are under increased scrutiny. Pank Patel, RSC is responsible directly to the Secretary of State for schools in the West Midlands area.

#### **Bob invited questions:**

**David asked about the impact of changes to grade boundaries this year.** Chris Q informed him that the biggest challenge had been with maths with an increase of 8 marks (56->64) to obtain a C grade this year. A significant number of students had been predicted to achieve a C grade based on internal assessments and performance in past papers. These changes are believed to be part of the calibration of all GCSE marking as it transitions to a numerical 1 to 9 grading.

**David asked if the impact of grade boundary changes was reflected in the national figures** and Gaetano said that he expected there to be a reported 2% drop in Birmingham. The national figures are not yet known. Paul confirmed that results of students at the Solihull Sixth Form College reflect this drop and noted that the grade boundaries could move again next year.

#### **6. CEO Report**

Chris invited questions about her report.

#### ***Item 1: Summary of key items and activity since last meeting***

Bob commended the work done by Sian and Chris Q to broker the best possible deal from the DfE and BCC to enable sponsorship of Cockshut Hill by the trust.

#### ***Item 2: Action Plan***

Paul commented on the Risk Register circulated and suggested that it should also include references to additional risks such as the failure of systems, services (eg banks or insurers), weather etc. He agreed to share the Risk Register from the Solihull Sixth Form College to help identify amendments that are needed.

### ***Item 3: Accounting Officer letter***

Chris Q drew attention to the Accounting Officer letter circulated which makes clear the new regulations imposed by the DfE. Chris Q emphasised the importance of the paragraph on page 2 relating to “financial health” and noted the comments in the management accounts commentary regarding the differences in funding across the trust. Chris Q suggested that a working group of directors is formed to examine the opportunities of possibly managing funding in a new and more effective way. The overarching principle would be to obtain and manage funding to ensure the best outcomes and progress for all children educated within the trust schools. It was suggested that it would be helpful to meet with a representative from the Education Funding Agency and also visit other MATs to see examples of how funding is managed.

**Paul agreed with Chris Q’s proposals and suggested the use of bench marking across the current schools to identify how savings can be made and reserves generated given the expected challenges to funding over the next few years.**

A group of seven directors was agreed as follows: Karen Crowston, Paul Ashdown, Vrigu Dey, Ateef Azam, David Werry, Bob Fear and Karamat Iqbal. Karamat suggested that visits to other schools should be made in small representative groups using an agreed pro-forma to assess visits and ensure consistency.

Chris Q noted the board’s responsibility in terms of the Prevent strategy referred to in the Accounting Officer letter. All directors and councillors were trained last year and repeat training will be arranged during the year. Chris Q pointed out that Kevin Hartwell (Vice Principal) is currently being trained and will be able to himself provide training in future. **Karamat expressed his hope that the training that Kevin would offer would be of a higher quality than previously provided by external providers.**

**Ateef pointed out the possibility of training via on-line courses but Paul pointed out that there were additional requirements in education and training had to be delivered by those trained in WRAP.**

### ***Item 4: Teaching School Alliance***

**Bob asked how the judgements of outcomes within the TSA were arrived at.** Chris Q explained that judgements had been made by Lizzie Ford, Director of ITT and Mark Taylor, former Director of Primary ITT and moderated by Bea Noble Rogers, a nationally recognised external consultant who had also supported the writing of the SEF. The SEF was compiled to reflect the formal joining together of the primary and secondary provision.

### ***Item 5: Communications strategy***

Chris Q presented to directors the format of the new website being developed across the trust and details of a communications strategy being developed. Discussion and consultation has taken place on how the schools communicate currently with a variety of audiences, eg twitter, blogging, digital communication etc in addition to more traditional methods such as newsletters. Training on the use of social media is being arranged for named individuals across the trust who will be involved in posting information. The need for planned, strategic communication was noted and **Karamat emphasised the importance of publicising trust events and activities.** Where possible this should be done on a planned, scheduled basis. Terry asked if there would be an opportunity to provide training for councillors and this was agreed. **Karamat also asked if other methods of communication are still used,** eg writing to the TES or other educational journals which in turn cascades to the web. It was noted that Lizzie Ford has recently written to the TES regarding the challenges of recruiting but this method is not exploited perhaps as much as it could be.

### ***Item 6: Admissions to The Oaklands Primary School***

The school has been asked to take another form of entry which will be funded in the first instance from September 2015 until the January census 2016. It was reported that the academy council had discussed this request at length and were clear about the moral imperative of providing places for pupils who are not currently in school when space could be made available at The Oaklands. It was recognised that Y3 would be two form entry from September 2016 in any case so an agreement to take additional pupils would only accelerate this growth.

**Chris S asked if pupil numbers going forward will justify the need for an additional teacher and the expense this will incur.** This was felt to be the case and a new appointment would facilitate some mobility across classes.

**Ian asked if the proposal posed a financial risk and was reassured that any risk was only short term.**

It was proposed that The Oaklands should take additional numbers as follows:

Proposed: **Terry Smith**  
Seconded: **Karen Crowston**

Directors agreed unanimously.

***Item 7: Ongoing relationship with the Solihull Sixth Form College.***

Chris Q reported that a review of Further Education provision across the Solihull borough had taken place recently (not including school Sixth Forms) and she had been asked to meet with reviewers. Results of the review will be published in January. Paul reported that he had been required to submit a financial budget modelling a 10% reduction in funding. The model needed to reflect and address the risks of which the board should be aware and enable the college to remain a fully viable organisation. The report specifically highlighted the relationship with the Ninestiles' trust and this was recognised by reviewers as a viable and strategic way forward. **Ian asked why schools had not been included in the review and Paul suggested this was politically motivated.**

**Nadeen asked how the 10% cut could be achieved** and Paul responded with confidential information about potential strategies that could be enacted to reduce costs.

***Item 8: Staffing update***

Chris Q reported staffing appointments made in trust schools in September and **Karamat commented on the increasing ethnic diversity of these appointments.**

**Vrigu asked if there is enough staffing capacity across the trust** to support Cockshut Hill as it becomes part of the trust next year and Chris Q reassured him this was the case. Chris Q explained that a restructure of both teaching and support staff had been presented to, and agreed by, governors. This would be completed on behalf of the Local Authority prior to conversion.

The difficulty of recruiting quality maths and English teachers was noted. This is a reflection of the national picture.

Abid noted that Lyndon needs further quality appointments to drive up standards.

Bob thanked Chris for her report.

## **7. Finance**

***Academies Financial Handbook***

This was circulated to directors prior to the meeting **and directors were asked to note the changes to the previous edition detailed on Page 5 of the document. Directors were asked to contact Kate if they required a printed copy.**

***Management Accounts August 2015***

Steve presented a summary of the management accounts commentary.

In addition to identifying details of both additional costs and income/savings, Steve noted that ongoing expense will be incurred in relation to employer staffing costs and there would be less capital funding available. He noted that a 1% cost of living increase would result in an increase in costs of £180k across the trust.

There was a discussion about how managing funding on a more centralised model could address discrepancies in GAG funding between authorities, ie Birmingham and Solihull. It was noted that a government decision on fair funding would also address this issue but it was acknowledged that in such a model Birmingham would be likely to lose out.

### **Capital expenditure requiring director approval**

#### ***Yarnfield Mezzanine***

A request to approve an initial spend of £30k to ascertain the viability of the project was agreed. This would provide additional teaching space **and Ian noted this was a real need if the primary curriculum is to be delivered effectively.**

Proposed: **David Werry**

Seconded: **Ian Carnell**

Details of the total cost will be brought to the December meeting.

#### ***Lyndon budget forecast***

Steve presented the budget alongside the Ninestiles budget to give a context and enable comparisons. It was noted that the funding per student at Lyndon is significantly less than at Ninestiles.

Discussion raised the following points:

- Ninestiles support staffing numbers include in-house cleaning and catering
- Support staffing numbers at Ninestiles include trust provision
- Additionality of teachers at Ninestiles allows for cover
- Grounds maintenance is an increased cost at Lyndon
- Lyndon IT budget – there may be may an opportunity to capitalise expense
- No carry forward allowed for on conversion (anticipated to be neutral)
- Ninestiles bears high costs for external providers for alternative provision
- There is no contingency in Lyndon’s budget
- Will need careful monitoring particularly during year 1
- Staff are committed to balancing the budget
- Current student numbers are below by 70. The need for caution if this lack of numbers is carried forward to future years was noted.

**Abid noted that other local schools have increased their admission numbers which has exacerbated the challenge in student recruitment but expressed his optimism going forward.**

**David commented on the high supply budget. Steve explained that this contained provision for some unfilled teacher vacancies and maternity cover. David suggested that the trust could offer supply.** Steve commented that the primary model of providing cover across schools will be monitored and Chris Q suggested that a secondary model could be even more effective than the primary model.

**Chris S commented that it is likely that it will take time for the full PAN to be achieved and to overcome the legacy of a lack of confidence by parents and it may prove necessary to restructure the staffing at some point.**

A discussion followed about the comparison between Ninestiles teacher ratios and Lyndon. Gaetano commented that staffing capacity was built into English and Maths at Ninestiles. Abid recognised that the curriculum at Lyndon had been restricted because of the constraints of the staffing budget.

Directors approved the budget as presented:

Proposed: **Paul Ashdown**

Seconded: **Penny Wagg**

***Ninestiles IT project (server infrastructure)***

It was pointed out to directors that this was brought to them for information and approval but was within Chris Q's delegated limits.

The quote from ICT4 was approved and it was confirmed that the company had successfully supported the implementation of Office365.

Proposed: **Penny Wagg**

Seconded: **Ateef Azam**

***Other trust projects (brought for information)***

- Pegasus: outside play equipment 23k
- Erdington: removal of asbestos 10k +
- Ninestiles: purchase of laser cutter 14k

***5 Year lease for Tiggywinkles***

Steve explained that currently the nursery rent space from Pegasus and is concluding the last year of a lease agreed with Birmingham City Council prior to conversion. Directors agreed that the potential lease represents good value for the space being made available.

It was agreed that there should be an opt-out clause in the lease to cover the eventuality of pupil numbers increasing at Pegasus and the space being needed. **Terry asked how many of the nursery children join Pegasus** and Cath said only around 50%. Many families who use the nursery live out of area. It was considered that should the nursery provision not be available, parents may choose to use Chivenor School as an alternative. Directors were informed that Paul Charlton (Business Manager, Pegasus) and Martyn have joined the Tiggywinkles board and will keep Ninestiles' directors informed of any decisions made which could impact Pegasus.

The provision of a new lease was agreed as follows:

Proposed: **Penny Wagg**

Seconded: **Ateef Azam**

**8. Policies**

***Medical Needs Policy (renewal)***

***Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (to include recent updates)***

***SEND Policy (new policy for approval)***

***Sickness Absence Policy (renewal)***

***Medical Needs Policy***

The policy was agreed as follows:

Proposed: **Vrigu Dey**

Seconded: **Penny Wagg**

***Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (amended July 2015)***

**Karamat asked what amendments had been made to the previous** policy and Kevin explained that it detailed areas of risk of which schools should be aware, eg FGM, Prevent etc. Martyn and Bob emphasised the need for directors to read the document and sign to that effect. Directors were asked to send an email to Hilary to confirm that they have read the policy.

The policy was approved as follows:

Proposed: **Ian Carnell**

Seconded: **Penny Wagg**

### **SEND policy**

Martyn explained that the policy has been compiled by the network of trust SENCOs. **Bob commended their work and Ian commented it was very comprehensive.** It was noted that the wording around the role of the Academy council needs to be amended to read Board of Directors. Paul asked if the financial impact of implementing the policy had been identified, ie a SENCO demanding more money. Martyn suggested that the policy may result in cost saving because of the centralised aspect of some of the provision. Paul asked if the Equalities framework policy was being adhered to and suggested that each policy brought to Directors should be assessed against the framework to check impact and compliance.

The policy was agreed as follows:

Proposed: **Penny Wagg**  
Seconded: **Paul Ashdown**

### **9. Academy Council minutes- feedback to directors**

Chris Q referred directors to the summary circulated as part of the papers sent to support the meeting. Discussion noted the following:

Training for school information sheet: Hilary Barber in process of arranging  
Website: all websites are currently being updated by Chris Silverton  
Mezzanine: see discussion summary under agenda item 7  
Joint Student Council event: The request was noted and an event will be planned.

### **10. Minutes of 02 June and 23 June 2015**

The minutes of the previous meetings were accepted a true and accurate record.

Proposed: **Bob Fear**  
Seconded: **Nadeen Proverbs**

### **11. Matters Arising**

Please see actions table below.

### **12. Any other business**

- **Karamat raised a question about the Letting Policy relating to the Prime Minister's visit in July.** Chris Q pointed out that the request to host the visit of David Cameron was considered an honour for the school but in agreeing, the school did not imply acceptance of any particular political view. Hilary agreed to send a copy of the Lettings Policy to Karamat.
- The use of the Pelican procurement process for catering and food supplies was brought to directors and noted. The tender for the trust schools has been drawn up by Pelican, meeting all current regulations and offers discounts based on volume of sales.

<b>ACTIONS RESULTING FROM MEETING</b>			
	<b>What?</b>	<b>By whom?</b>	<b>Completed?</b>
2015/10/13/01	Send a letter of thanks to Peter Bennett and flowers to his wife	<b>Chris Q/Hilary</b>	
2015/10/13/02	Post Register of Directors' Interests on to website. Directors to check their entries are correct.	<b>Hilary/All directors</b>	
2015/10/13/03	Paul to send copy of the SSFC Risk Register to Hilary and Steve to re-visit	<b>Paul/Hilary/Steve</b>	
2015/10/13/04	Set up working party to look at funding models	<b>Chris Q</b>	
2015/10/13/05	Arrange/include directors in training on social media	<b>Martyn</b>	

2015/10/13/06	Bring details of the total proposed cost of the mezzanine project at Yarnfield to the December meeting	<b>Adrian/Steve</b>	
2015/10/13/07	Safeguarding and Child Protection policy: please send email to Hilary to confirm you have read the document	<b>All directors</b>	
2015/10/13/08	SEND policy – amend “Role of Academy Councils” to “Role of Directors”	<b>Martyn</b>	
2015/10/13/09	Investigate the Equalities Framework	<b>Chris Q/Hilary</b>	
2015/10/13/10	Arrange training for compilation of School Information Sheet	<b>Hilary</b>	
2015/10/13/11	Plan joint Student Council Event	<b>Chris Q/Martyn</b>	
2015/10/13/12	Send copy of Lettings policy to Karamat	<b>Hilary</b>	