

Education South West

AGM Meeting Minutes

Thursday 27 January, 2022 – 6.30pm

Microsoft TEAMS

| |
|--|
| Attendees: John Pike (JP), Lyndsay Chell (LC), Leon Winston (LW), Sharon Marshall (SM), Peter Di Giuseppe (PDG), Matthew Shanks (MS), Jeremy Fothergill (JF), David Potter (DP), Barrie Taylor (BT), Graham Austin, (GA), Annelie Fearon (AF), Lindsay Yelland (LY), Kellie Knott (KK) |
| In attendance: Stuart White (SW), Tracy Hannon (TH) |
| Apologies: Jenny Sutton (JS), Nick Grodhunce (NG) |
| Notes: Pippa Truman Davies (PTD) |

Meeting commenced 6.32pm.

LW – Welcomed all to the ESW AGM and asked all participants to introduce themselves.

1. Election of Chair

LW – confirmed that the Members had appointed as the Chair for this meeting

2. Annual Report and Accounts

LW – invited feedback on the Annual Report and Accounts.

JP – asked why is the energy per pupil increased by 20% and the gas consumption increased so sharply?

SW – other than the energy market the main impact has been COVID. We have had to have the heating on in schools on full blast with the doors open for ventilation.

JP – asked about the net income and the UTC assets that have been included in the income? Is that the book value of the building rather than the market value (and the market value is a fraction of that)?

SW – directed all to the last page of the accounts where the breakdown of the £8.9m into the component assets that were transferred from the UTC is detailed. The buildings and land are £9.2m and they are being held in the books at cost as per common accounting practice. The building is depreciated and the land is held at cost and is not depreciated. The UTC was transferred to us but the building itself was only built about 6 years ago so the value was essentially the cost of that building.

JP – noted that if you had to dispose of it you would not get that value.


SW – the market value may not be a fraction of that. But if a school is going to close the assets will transfer back to the Secretary of State. The market value to us is therefore irrelevant.

PDG – pointed out that we are guided by the accounting convention where assets are always held at cost less depreciation and the book entry of the transfer from the DfE to us would have been on that basis.

SW – the accounting rules require us to show all the assets at depreciated costs.

JP – turned to page 23. If you deduct the £8.9 million transferred from the UTC from the disclosed net income of £7.1 million you get a deficit for the year of £1.7 million. Should this not be commented on?

SW – when you look at the statutory company accounts there are opaque to some degree. Have we lost £1.7m? not in a revenue sense as the accounts are recording depreciation on assets in the P&L statement which is also recording losses on pension schemes and so on. In reality, to a charitable trust funded by the government it is almost a moot point. If you look at page 25, which shows we have total



funds of £62m but in reality the vast majority of that is £79m is the value of all the buildings and land the Trust own, offset by a £21m deficit to the local gov pension scheme which is underwritten by the Government. The Accounts are a technical document and the actual funds that are relevant to this Trust on the balance sheet is the sum of the 'General Funds' and 'Unrestricted Funds' (£2.6m + £1.5m). SM – asked a question regarding the Ambition report which was a real endorsement of the Trust, the Leadership and the Board of Trustees. It talks about alignment with Governors and staff really understanding the Trust especially the area of finances and how they feed up to the Board of Trustees. Is there a wider communication strategy that will simplify and remove any obstacles for Governors feeling more aligned to the Trust and able to articulate that during an inspection.

MS – firstly we have set up the Chairs' Forum chaired by one of the LGB Chairs and 2 Trustees are invited to that. One of the things that came out of that was a very brief financial summary for each school in a simplified format. At our latest inspection the Trust came out very strongly (Rydon) through conversations with Governance. You are only as good as the information that you are being given by the HT and this has been improved over the past 2 years and is clearer and more Trust focused now.

SM – the Ambition report was excellent and there is a clear sense of moving forward during this difficult time.

LM – asked all Members if they accept the Annual Report and Accounts

JP – proposed that the Annual Report and Accounts

SM – seconded the proposal

DECISION: All Members voted in favour of accepting the Annual Report and Accounts.

3. Changes to the Trustees

LW – noted for the record the changes in the Trustees over the past year.

4. Re-appointment of Auditor

LW – is the service provided as you would expect?

PDG – as far as the Finance Committee are concerned they are as good as any other auditor and know us very well.

JF – Francis Clarke are well known and audit a number of academy trusts.

LW – how many years have they been involved with the Trust?

PDG – they were auditors to ASW pre-merger so they have been auditors to ESW from its formation in 2017.

LW – so well experienced and understand us well.

LM – asked all Members if they accept the re-appointment of the Auditor

JP – proposed the re-appointment of the Auditor

SM – seconded the proposal

DECISION: All Members voted for the re-appointment of the Auditor.


LW – closed the formal AGM meeting at 6.56pm

LW – requested an update from MS about the current situation in the schools regarding Covid

MS – we did not have onsite tests as we wanted to get children onsite quickly. We had 82 (Covid related) absences on the 1st January (67 students and 15 staff). This rose to 129 students and 16 staff a couple of weeks later and then peaked at 223 students and 38 staff on the 26 January. Today we have 117 students and 35 staff off. Our biggest area of concern around Covid is Dartmouth where we have 14 staff off in Dartmouth where we only have 16 teachers so today and tomorrow we are not open to nursery, Year 1, 2, 3, 7 and 8. This has been supported by DLA.

SM – asked what are the two biggest risks or challenges for the Board over the next 2 years?

MS – there will be a white paper coming out soon that will talk about schools being part of a family. The message from the DfE and RSC is that when they say 'family of schools' they mean Academy Trusts. Baroness Baron spoke yesterday about Academy Trusts being the holders of four things: Education,



Finance, Initiatives and Community based. They were looking at other things Academy Trusts might do, for example, there is an issue with Educational Psychologists and SEND within education so will Academy Trusts take that on. One of the biggest risks for you as a Board is that we miss out on those opportunities by not being best set to take other schools on. The Diocese want family of schools in the South West and there are only 12 viable MAT's in the area which is not enough. If these MAT's can not show the opportunity and ability to grow then they will bring in more external Trusts. We see this as an opportunity as well as a risk.

SW/TH and MS are on our knees and more so are our HT's - because of our capacity to do things. We are onboarding KEVICC, we are supporting two primary schools in Exeter and also supporting 6 schools in North Devon. If we pull out we are in danger of being seen as not a forward-thinking Trust and might have to merge with another Trust. Our principles and our values are lived better than at other Trusts. We have a good set up in terms of staff and we have grown some good leaders that can step up in the future. If we were to sacrifice what we have developed and built by going and merging with another Trust then MS would not want to be party to that and we would also lose many staff. The only way forward is to grow – to grow in influence, growing in support, grow the research school and being part of the teaching school growth. But we cannot do that with the capacity we have at the moment. It is an opportunity to grow but it is a risk is that it will cost to do this. We have to speculate and gamble or decide that we are not going to do that and we shrink.

LW – in terms of the DfE, do you have contact with them directly?

MW – we are in contact with them in several ways: -

- 1 – Our relationship with the RSC had been developed.
- 2 – MS elected onto a DfE reference group.
- 3 – Via the Confederation of Schools Trust. We are very close to the organiser and she see Ministers daily.
- 4 – We have good contacts with Melissa Caslake, the new Devon Chief Officer for Children's Services. She was previously in Westminster.
- 5 – TH sits on the Education Director Group at the Queens Street Group - SW sits on HR and Finance groups in QSG
- 6 – We also get information from ASCL.

MW – has encouraged leaders to sit on other boards and spread out in a supportive way and in a way that we can also learn. It takes up a lot of time and effort.

SM – noted that staff at all levels do care and they do see the Trust as outward facing and forward thinking.

LW – it is informative to see the bigger picture and how you are networking and gathering information - rather than listening to others you are on the inside.

MS – we are not very good at self-publicising and we need to do it in a way that keeps us on track with our principals and it is the next thing we need to look at.

LC – commented on the far-reaching advertising as her daughter saw it near Liverpool.

LW – commented on the curriculum presentation that TH did – it was an excellent presentation and it was very valued.

TH – it has been a huge focus over the past 18 months – evolution not revolution. We are beginning to see the positives now. It was a big change for all schools and it was discussed at LGB's as well. We have had two positive Ofsted as a result of that curriculum and next we need to look at assessment.


LW – is that through a training programme?

TH – we need to agree first what is the best way forward so we are not just sharing data for data's sake and that it is accurate. Over the next 12 months Trustees will see a big difference in the way we are sharing that information.

JP – very happy with this curriculum policy compared to previously.

LW – we are totally behind you and are very proud of ESW and are delighted to be part of ESW with the youngsters center stage.

MS – thanked the Members.



Meeting closed at 7.14pm.