



GIRLS' LEARNING TRUST

MINUTES OF MEETING

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| Meeting Type | Trust Board |
| Date: | 21 April 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, Director of Finance and Operations) and Andrew Horrod (AH, Clerk) |

* denotes member absent from meeting

| Item | Item Description and Minute | Action |
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| 1 | Apologies for absence and declarations of interest | |
| | There were no apologies for absence. SG said HL would be joining the meeting at 8pm. There were no declarations of interest. | |
| 2 | Minutes of the previous meeting | |
| | The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020, for signing by the Chair. | |
| 3 | Matters arising from the minutes | |
| | A matters arising sheet had been circulated and the Board noted that all three listed items had been closed. Arising from the 8 December minutes, HA asked whether a new version of the GLT Governance Handbook was available. JS said that further amendments were needed to the Handbook and once these had been made, copies would be circulated. Referring to minute 5.3 HA asked about the replacement teaching day, to make up for the INSET day held on 18 December. JS said the replacement day had not yet been determined but she would follow up on the matter. | JS |
| 4 | CEO's report | |
| 4.1 | JS had circulated a comprehensive report on issues that had affected GLT schools during the Spring Term. She highlighted key points and answered questions, as summarised below. | |

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| 4.2 | <p><u>Covid-19 and student numbers</u></p> <p>JS said lateral flow tests had been carried out very efficiently across all three schools. Students and staff had been issued with home testing kits for the Easter Holiday. With the return to school this week they continued to wear face coverings indoors, as per Government advice. The numbers of students on roll were set out in her report and she wished to highlight the large number of Sixth Formers at WHSG. The Trust needs to focus on facilities for them and it was working towards provision of a larger canteen and study area. Replying to PT, JS said this major capital project involved a new building at WHSG, estimated cost £3million. It was a top priority project for the Trust and the working group involving NP, RE and others will be reconvening soon.</p> | |
| 4.3 | <p><u>Academic Performance</u></p> <p>A full update was provided in JS's report, including a statement from the DfE on the use of data following its announcement that this Summer's GCSE and A Level exam programme was cancelled. NP asked how assessment of performance will be carried out. JS said this involved teacher assessment of Year 11 and Year 13 students, with quality assurance using results from 2017-2019. If a teacher wants to award a grade out of kilter with these results then further analysis would be needed. The Headteachers are keeping to the key performance indicator (KPI) targets for 2021, which had been set on the basis of 2019 performance. Replying to a question from NP on assurance over standards of teaching, JS said this will effectively come from the Summer assessments – so exams are still taking place and the results will be reported to the July round of Board and LGB meetings. The usual data drops have not taken place this year. MM added that he could not say how KS3 students at CHSG are doing at the moment. NP suggested that the Trust therefore needs to 're-set' on this issue in September and he asked that the Board receive an update on the quality of teaching at its September meeting.</p> | JS |
| 4.4 | <p>MG followed up with questions about use of data by Ofsted and how the Trust will ensure a consistent approach to teacher assessment of students across all three schools. JS said that Ofsted is not using data from 2020 and 2021 to assess school performance, it is not robust enough. On the second issue, Headteachers have a 54 page guidance document from the Joint Council for Qualifications on the awarding of grades this Summer - the link was included in her report – and the Executive Team are meeting every week. NHSG and WHSG are running 'substitute exams' and at CHSG there is more course work assessment, along with the BTEC exams. The averages of results 2017-2019 provide the benchmark.</p> | |
| 4.5 | <p>JS answered a question from AC regarding the Centre Policy being written by each Headteacher, outlining measures related to the assessment of students. Heads need to stick to what they publish. JS said she was working for Ofqual as a checker and that Ofqual had published today draft guidance for appeals against gradings. This complex looking process may have a significant impact on schools, with Heads working through much of the Summer, so the Trust needs to prepare properly for this eventuality. She would circulate the Heads' Centre Policies to Board members.</p> | JS |
| | <p><u>Admissions and Attendance</u></p> | |

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| 4.6 | <p>MG asked about the Freedom of Information requests relating to selective school admissions, mentioned on page 6 of the report. JS said that Nonsuch was the Trust controller for the selective entrance tests (SET) and she would be meeting with Nicola Deer, Admissions Officer, tomorrow. Like other trusts the GLT is inundated with FOI requests, to which it should respond within 20 days. Consideration could be given to increasing the amount of data and other information on the GLT websites in an attempt to ease the administrative burden. The Board briefly discussed the number of girls taking the SET this year (the lowest for five years), the pass rate and the academic level of Year 6 students. The last year had been very different due to the impact of Covid-19 and the Trust had run the SET later than usual.</p> | |
| 4.7 | <p>There was some further discussion of Sixth Form numbers at NHSG and WHSG, prompted by the figures in the CEO's report. JS suggested that the schools were in a very healthy position and "victims of their own success" with attracting external applicants. The Board agreed that the student attendance rate across the Trust was very good although the snapshot for the week commencing 22 March highlighted significant absenteeism due to Covid at CHSG. The report noted that in the last 10 days of term, CHSG had experienced a number of positive tests that had required Year 10 and Year 11 students to self-isolate. Many of the students were back in school by Monday 29 March.</p> | |
| 4.8 | <p>There was also a general point about the ethnic profile of the Trust's schools, that some students visit relatives abroad during the holidays. India for example was now in the Government Red Zone for travel; whilst most visiting students may not be stuck there, they would have to follow the rules for quarantine/self-isolation on return to the UK. There were two WHSG students in India who had experienced cancellation of flights back and the school was sending them work via email.</p> | |
| | <p><u>Safeguarding and student welfare</u></p> | |
| 4.9 | <p>Statistics and commentary were provided in the report. Replying to AC, JS said the central safeguarding registers were not all fully transferred to the new online system. There was work to be done in this area, one of the first areas of checking for the new Audit and Risk Committee. MG noted that she and Andrea Cooke checked regularly on safeguarding at Nonsuch.</p> | |
| | <p><u>Staffing</u></p> | |
| 4.10 | <p>The Board noted the remainder of the CEO's report concerning staffing issues, complaints and health and safety. JS provided an update to the health and safety table on page 9 in that there had been an incident at CHSG before Christmas and one at WHSG last term, when a teacher had used a piece of redundant equipment.</p> | |
| 5 | Feedback from Admissions Committee | |
| | <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January had been circulated. NP said he had nothing to add.</p> | |
| 6 | Feedback from Finance Committee | |
| 6.1 | <p>The minutes of the December and February meetings had been circulated. Key points highlighted by NP were:</p> | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trust had been given a clean bill of health with its accounts for 2019/20 by auditors Baxter & Co. This year GAG income is up by c.£1million due partly to the increase in the number of students. A surplus of £947k at year-end is forecast. • Kreston Reeve have been appointed to carry out internal audit functions. • An extra meeting of Finance Committee had been held on 10 December to approve the submission of CIF bids. The outcome of bids is likely to be known in May. • SG, JS, HL, Hamish Lungany and himself comprised the steering group that had been taking Covid-related decisions between Finance Committee meetings. Information on financial support given to the Trust's schools was included in the papers for this meeting; just to highlight one example, the steering group had approved £160k for IT equipment for CHSG. • Finance Committee members were impressed with the quality of finance reporting. | |
| 6.2 | <p>HL had circulated a briefing paper on strategic financial key performance indicators (KPIs) for the Trust. The Executive Team was starting the formal preparation of the GLT Budget 2021/22 and updating the Medium Term Plan (MTP). The paper summarised the Trust's approach to setting budgets, as scrutinised and agreed by the above-mentioned steering group on 1 April 2021. Four strategic financial measures had been established for use in budgeting and as KPIs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing as a % of GAG and Other Government Income • GLT Shared Services as a % of GAG and Other Government Income • Surplus as a % of GAG and Other Government Income • Reserves - maintaining the £1million minimum requirement throughout, excluding any ring-fenced reserves | |
| 6.3 | <p>A sample 'top sheet' including the KPIs formed an appendix to the briefing paper. This aimed to provide an easy-to-read snapshot of the Trust's financial performance for all trustees. It was noted that this summary was for trustees, Executive Team and Finance Committee only. In addition, Hamish Lungany's monthly reporting pack (as sent to members of Trust Board, Finance Committee and Executive Team) would continue to contain the latest full year forecast and detailed commentary on variances by school, supplementing the cash flow and balance sheet. If the KPIs were agreed by the Board, the 'top sheet' would be circulated with the monthly pack.</p> | |
| 6.4 | <p>HL took the Board through the briefing paper, referring to the rationale behind the strategic financial measures and assumptions in the MTP. She answered questions on GLT Shared Services and the separate financial dashboard that went to Finance Committee.</p> | |
| 6.5 | <p>Resolved: (i) To approve the strategic financial KPIs for implementation in the Budget 2021/22 and updated 3 Year Forecast; (ii) To approve the proposed 'top sheet' for implementation in the monthly management reporting to Trust Board, Finance Committee and Executive Team.</p> <p><i>HL joined the meeting during this item, at 8.00pm</i></p> | |
| 7 | Feedback from HR Committee | |

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| | <p>PT reported that on 10 March the Committee had received updates on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deputy Head (Pastoral) appointment at Nonsuch. • Checks being made on DBS records at all three schools, including those for contractors. • Covid-19; the GLT risk assessment documentation and the lateral flow tests. Due to the need to implement testing quickly, those who had volunteered to help at NHSG and WHSG had not undergone DBS checks. List 99 checks had been carried out instead, with chaperoning by school staff. • Staff wellbeing. • London Living Wage, Committee members agreeing that once the national pay award for this year has been settled, they will revisit the issue to ensure that all GLT staff are paid the LLW as a minimum. | |
| 8 | Feedback from the LGBs | |
| 8.1 | <p><u>Carshalton</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January had been circulated. MM reported that CHSG had shortlisted four people for the Appointed Governor vacancy. He would be asking the Board to ratify the appointment of the successful candidate later in the meeting.</p> | |
| 8.2 | <p><u>Nonsuch</u></p> <p>The minutes of the 8 February meeting had been circulated. MG highlighted that staff had been managing a lot of student anxiety issues following the return to school from the Covid lockdown. JS relayed information regarding the school's race advocacy group and critical incident plan. The Executive Team, Chairs of LGBs, SG and PT would be attending a crisis communications workshop on 17 May. Assistant Headteacher Philip Sides would be retiring in the Summer.</p> | |
| 8.3 | <p><u>Wallington</u></p> <p>The minutes of the 25 January meeting had been circulated. HA highlighted that the LGB has two vacancies: one Parent Governor, one Appointed Governor. It was likely that the school will try to fill the vacancies in September.</p> | |
| 9 | Trust Governance: Remuneration Committee, Audit & Risk Committee, ratification of appointments | |
| 9.1 | <p>The Board approved the proposed terms of reference and membership of the new Remuneration Committee. Arising from a point by NP about the confidentiality of the Committee's minutes, JS said she would pick this up in her report to the next Governance Committee meeting regarding the distribution of Board/committee papers.</p> | |
| 9.2 | <p>HL had circulated a paper on the establishment of a new Audit and Risk Committee, which had also been considered at Trust Governance Committee. HL took Board members through a revised version of the paper, highlighting the Committee's proposed terms of reference and its relationship with the Finance Committee. New internal auditors Kreston Reeve would report to the Audit and Risk Committee, external auditors Baxter & Co would continue to report to Finance Committee. The Audit</p> | |

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| 9.3 | <p>and Risk Committee would meet three times per year, with JS and herself in attendance. It would help with a review of the Risk Register.</p> <p>Resolved: (i) To approve the establishment of a Remuneration Committee, its terms of reference and membership: AC, SG (Chair), NP and PT; (ii) To approve the establishment of an Audit and Risk Committee, its terms of reference and membership: AC, RE (Chair), MG and PT; (iii) To ratify the appointment of CHSG Appointed Governor Claire Rodding with a four year term of office.</p> | |
| 10 | Shared Services update | |
| 10.1 | <p>HL summarised for the Board the key areas featuring in the GLT Shared Services Development Plan 2021. One area was HR, Natasha Geoffrey had been working on a HR management tool which had come into operation on 1 April. Other areas included sustainability, catering, IT and health and safety. Aspens the caterers were on a three year contract with the GLT. Replying to a question from JS about the recent fire inspection at WHSG, HL said that five main points had been highlighted in the inspection report; these were fairly small items which the school can deal with easily.</p> | |
| 10.2 | <p>Other points to highlight were that with Kreston Reeve now in place, the Trust would progress its Risk Strategy. Next year's draft budget will be submitted to Trust Board in July. Katie Edwards will help to prepare a dashboard for Support Services KPIs. MM asked HL about the operational / day-to-day split in her workload and whether she needed support with the latter. HL said she was in effect a chief operating officer some of the time. She had a good Finance team, based at Nonsuch. She would submit a report on support for the IT function with the new budget. Trustees were aware that a Head of Estates had not been appointed and as an interim measure she had given two of her Premises Managers a TLR payment. She would discuss what further support may be needed with JS.</p> | |
| 10.3 | <p>SG thanked HL for the update. HL's short written summary of issues dealt with by the Covid steering group was also noted by the Board.</p> | |
| 11 | Risk Register | |
| | <p>The latest version of the Risk Register had been circulated. No changes to the Board and Covid-19 sections of the Register were needed. There were a couple of items within the LGB entries where the colour coding did not match the scoring and JS said she would ask Nicky Owen to check the colour coding in the Register.</p> | JS |
| 12 | Any other business and date of next meeting | |
| 12.1 | <p>AC reported that he had stepped down as a trustee of the Nonsuch Charitable Trust and his suggestion that MG cover the role was agreed.</p> | |
| 12.2 | <p>JS said that it had been difficult for the Trust to deal with strategic issues during the Covid-19 pandemic. With the schools now in a recovery phase, she had suggested to SG and PT the holding of a Saturday morning session where trustees could discuss face-to-face the way forward for the Trust. MG said she could not make the proposed date so JS said she would circulate alternative dates along with her paper that had been submitted to Trust Governance Committee.</p> | JS |

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| 12.3 | JS said that a planning application for a Greenshaw Free School had recently been submitted to the local authority. This led to a brief discussion of local authority predictions of how many secondary school places will be needed in Sutton over the next decade and the corresponding position in Merton. JS said she would be attending a meeting about the issue next week and there will be further discussion at Trust Admissions Committee. | |
| 12.4 | SG thanked everyone for their contributions. The next Board meeting was scheduled for Monday 12 July at 7pm. | |

The meeting ended at 9.08pm

Signed:

Dated:

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