

**MINUTES OF THE RECONVENED MEETING OF THE WHITE ROSE ACADEMIES TRUST
(WRAT) BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD VIRTUALLY ON WEDNESDAY 16 MARCH 2022,
COMMENCING AT 6.00PM**

Present: Annie McMaster, Kate Pearlman-Shaw (Interim Chair), Helen Phillips, David Strachan (from Minute 21/22.36) and Craig Williams.

In attendance: Sam Bradley, Trust Business Director (TBD) (from Minute 21/22.35) Stuart Jolley, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Sharon West (Interim Clerk) and Christian Wilcocks, Executive Principal (EP).

21/22.31 Apologies and Welcome

a. Apologies for absence and welcome

The Interim Chair welcomed everyone to the reconvened meeting to conclude the outstanding business from 3 March 2022.

Apologies for absence were received from Caroline Gruen, Margaret Parkes and Andrew Whitaker.

b. Declarations of Interest

The Interim Chair declared an interest as she was currently providing training support for some staff groups within the Luminate Education Group.

TRUST BOARD, GROUP & COMMITTEES GOVERNANCE RELATED MATTERS

21/22.32 Matters Referred by Local Accountability Boards (Labs)

The Chair of Alder Tree Primary Academy Trust (APTA) provided an update on the use of the Academy as a polling station for the forthcoming local elections. The Chair of Leeds West Academy had written to the City Council in her role as a local Councillor and had been informed that the Academy had missed the deadline for the May elections. Alternative options would be considered for the future. Consideration would be given to the possibility of keeping the Academy open, access arrangements and safeguarding.

Action: Contact to be made with Leeds City Council.

21/22.33 Governor Applications for Approval

There were currently no applications for LAB vacancies. The Interim Chair reported that she would be speaking to Academy Ambassadors the following day with regard to an expression of interest in joining the Trust Board. However, the current vacancies were all for sponsor appointed. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) was keen to see new appointments, so she would seek its advice.

The Board discussed whether it might be possible to keep the process moving by appointing subject to sponsor approval as it was in desperate need of new members. The Interim Chair agreed to explore this with the sponsor.

Action: The Interim Chair to contact the Chair of Luminate Education Group regarding appointments to Board vacancies.

21/22.34 Trust and Academy Website Audits

The Board sought clarification on this item. The CFO was aware that a project was underway to review website content in terms of compliance. The Board agreed that this matter could be addressed by a report circulated to Directors via email outside of the meeting to provide them with assurance on compliance.

Directors asked that consideration also be given to website accessibility.

Action: Report on the audit of Trust and Academy websites to be circulated to Members.

AUDIT, RISK AND FINANCE MATTERS

21/22.35 Financial Performance Report

The CFO presented the Financial Performance Report. He drew Directors' attention to variances and assured them that the projected position could be delivered across the Trust and its Academies.

The Board sought further information on how the additional costs would be met. The CFO explained that while there was no specific budget provision, the Trust had the capacity in the short term to address the additional costs. Directors stressed the importance of being alerted to uncertainty and proposed that it could be beneficial to undertake some sensitivity analysis.

The Board noted that the Executive Team was working hard to ensure the forecast position for the Trust was maintained.

21/22.36 Gender Pay Gap Report

The CFO presented the report, explaining that it was an annual report which was required to be submitted and published on the Trust's website.

The Board scrutinised the detail of the report. Directors discussed why, in relation to the mean, where female staff were paid more than their male equivalents this was shown as negative figure.

Directors queried the significant difference on spot salaries and asked whether this meant that female staff were on lower pay. The CFO explained that there was a relatively low number of staff on sport salaries and not a huge variation between male and female staff. The difference reflected the higher number of male senior leaders. Directors accepted that this also raised some questions.

The Board was pleased to see that the Trust was going in the right direction but emphasised that there was still room for improvement.

Resolved: To note this analysis of the Trust gender pay gap and the comparison to the gender pay gap data available for other multi academies; and that the gender pay gap information for 2021-22 would be submitted to the Government online reporting portal and the information published on the Trust's website over the coming weeks.

21/22.37 Health & Safety Audits

The CFO presented the report on the Health & Safety audits.

The Board acknowledged that ATPA was working hard to address the action points that had been identified. They supported the proposed move to Leeds City Council to undertake external reviews.

The Board concluded that overall the Trust was in a good position and was following a healthy direction of travel.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21/22.38 CEO's Update and Communications sent to the Board between Meetings

The Board noted that the CEO had circulated a communication about the recruitment to the Executive Principal post.

21/22.39 Any other business

a **Alternative Provision Panel**

The Trust was informed that the Alternative Provision Panel was due to meet again soon and further volunteers were sought to serve on the Panel. The EP said that the Panel could be flexible about meeting arrangements. The Board was conscious that all Directors were struggling with capacity and avoiding conflicts of interest. They discussed whether LAB Members might be able to get involved with some of this work. This idea was well received although the Board recognised that LAB Members also had capacity issues

Mr Strachan volunteered to serve on the Alternative Provision Panel.

The Board reiterated that new members were required to strengthen and broaden its range of skills, experience and expertise. The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee had stepped into the role on a temporary basis but felt exposed as he did not have the relevant expertise. The Interim Chair agreed to discuss the possibility of co-opting additional members with the Clerk to the Board.

Action: Interim Chair to discuss the possibility of co-opting additional members with the Clerk to the Board.

The Chair of ATPA asked if ATPA had cases to present to the Panel. The EP confirmed that there were two cases from ATPA to be reviewed.

b **Audit, Risk and Finance Committee**

The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee asked if it would be possible to invite Chris Blythe to remain on the Committee as a co-optee. The CFO said that he was fairly certain that Mr Blythe was happy to continue and expected to be invited to the next meeting. He recalled that the continuation of the co-option had been discussed and would review the Minutes to refresh his memory.

Resolved: To approve the co-option of Chris Blythe to the Audit Risk and Finance Committee for a term of one year.

c **Executive Principal**

The Board recorded its thanks to the Executive Principal for his contribution to the work of the Trust and wished him well in his new post.

The meeting concluded at 6.50pm.