

ABRIDGED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHITE ROSE ACADEMIES TRUST (WRAT) BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD VIRTUALLY ON WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2021, COMMENCING AT 5.30PM

Present: Colin Booth, Lydia Devenny (excluding Minute 21/22.08a), Caroline Gruen (from Minute 21/22.03a), Annie McMaster, Margaret Parkes, Helena Phillips (Chair), David Strachen, Andrew Whitaker, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Craig Williams

In attendance: Kate Burton, Alder Tree Principal (up to 20/21.03a inclusive), Sam Corbett, Clerk to the Board, Stuart Jolley, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) (excluding Minute 21/22.08a), and Christian Wilcocks, Executive Principal (EP) (excluding Minute 21/22.08a).

21/22.01 Apologies & Welcome

a. Apologies for absence & welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Kate Pearlman-Shaw (Vice-Chair) and Sam Bradley (Trust Business Director).

b. Declarations of Interest with regard to any Agenda items

Andrew Whitaker and Lydia Devenny declared an interest in the confidential paper under Minute 21/22.08a in respect of the WRAT CEO & Luminate Deputy CEO proposed new JD, new responsibilities and appraisal targets.

Regarding the same paper, Colin Booth, Group CEO, advised he would leave the meeting at the point a decision was being made.

c. Annual declarations – progress update

The Clerk thanked the Board for completing their annual declarations relating to KCSiE, Prevent and business and pecuniary interests.

21/22.02 Board minutes and matters arising

a. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 8 July 2021

The Minutes of the previous meeting were considered and agreed as a true and accurate record.

Resolved – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July were agreed as a correct record.

b. Matters Arising

i. Summary of matters arising from previous meetings

The summary of matters arising to date was considered. The Board noted the updates against each item. One matter remained unresolved (20/21.43e) and would remain on the log until completed.

ii. Any other matters arising

The CFO provided a progress update in respect of the expansion works at Leeds West Academy, confirming that the timeline for completion was summer 2022.

21/22.03 Strategy and Implementation

a. Alder Tree Primary Update

Kate Burton delivered a presentation which focussed on the following matters:

- the academy's vision and values
- the academy's strategic objectives which focussed on improvements in leadership and management, quality of education, behaviour and attitudes and personal development.

Questions were raised in respect of focusing on the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) offer and engagement with parents, which Kate responded to.

The Board thanked Kate for her drive and passion which was already having an impact at Alder Tree and for her insightful presentation, recognising the challenges ahead which would need careful monitoring moving forward.

Kate Burton left the meeting at this juncture.

b. Luminate Group Strategy 2021-23

The Board received and considered the updated Group Strategy.

The Chair introduced the Group Strategy, recognising that the Board had not yet had the opportunity to discuss the Group's Shared Services offer. Subject to further discussions about Shared Services, the Chair asked if the Board endorsed the Group's Strategy.

Discussion took place in respect of matters which needed further development, i.e the WRAT's growth plans and shared services model, the finer details of which would require specific board approval once drafted.

It was noted that feedback had previously been provided and changes were already underway.

The Board endorsed the Group Strategy, subject to specific matters around shared services being brought back to the Board for approval.

Resolved - the Board endorsed the Group Strategy subject to specific matters as detailed above being brought back for WRAT Board approval

c. Luminate Group Memorandum of Understanding & Scheme of Delegation 2021/22 (draft)

The Board received and considered the draft Luminate Group Memorandum of Understanding and Scheme of Delegation for 2021/22.

The Chair welcomed the paper and its clarity around where responsibility for decisions lay between the Group and the Trust. Questions were raised by Board members specifically around risk ownership, the performance of pupils not being restricted to academic performance and the implications of the shared services model being executed.

It was agreed that the Clerk and Annie McMaster would provide suggested additions to the Group's Director of Governance.

Action- feedback to be provided to the Group's Director of Governance

Resolved - the Luminate Group Memorandum of Understanding & Scheme of Delegation 2021/22 was endorsed by the Board subject to the suggested changes being incorporated

d. WRAT Governance Update

i. Timeline for key milestones

The Board noted the timeline for key milestones, which had been initially shared at the Board's Away Day.

ii. Board Action Plan

Further to the Board reviewing the NGA's consultant's report regarding governance in July, the Clerk introduced the first draft of the Board's Action Plan. The Chair summarised key points.

Feedback was provided in respect of the communication section, with suggestions made to include further detail around visits to the school.

Action - the Clerk would update the communication section of the plan

Further feedback was welcomed and board members were encouraged to send additional comments following the meeting. A further update would be included in the Governance Link Governor Update (delivered by the Board's Vice-Chair) scheduled for the next meeting.

Action - all Board members to provide feedback regarding the Trust Board Action Plan following the meeting with an update being provided by the Vice-Chair at the next meeting

e. Policies/Governance Documents

i. Early Career Teacher (ECT) Induction Policy

The Board reviewed and approved the Early Career Teacher (ECT) Induction Policy.

Resolved - the Board approved the Early Career Teacher (ECT) Induction Policy.

ii. LAB Constitution and Standing Orders

Further to a review, the Board considered minor proposed changes to the LAB Constitution and Standing Orders.

Resolved - the Board approved the LAB Constitution and Standing Orders

iii. Trust Behaviour Policy templates

The Board reviewed the proposed Behaviour Policy templates.

Discussion took place in respect of approaches to behaviour management within Specialist Inclusion Provisions. It was acknowledged that providers were chosen whose values closely aligned with those of the WRAT.

Minor referencing and terminology errors were highlighted. The Executive Principal made a note and agreed to amend.

Action - the EP would revise the templates in light of the feedback provided

Resolved - the Behaviour Policy templates were approved subject to the suggested changes being incorporated

iv. Group Risk Management Policy

The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance Committee reported that the Group Risk Management Policy had been recommended for approval by the Committee after a thorough review.

A Board member requested that a change be made to a diagram so that it better reflected the WRAT Board's responsibilities around risk.

Action - the Chair would liaise with the policy author in respect of the change required

Resolved - the Group Risk Management Policy was adopted subject to the change suggested being incorporated

v. Group Remuneration Policy for Senior Staff

The Board received and discussed the Group Remuneration Policy for Senior Staff which would, if adopted, replace the WRAT Senior Postholder Pay Policy.

In response to a question regarding the rationale for including Principals in the policy, the Group CEO explained that it was so there would be a consistency of approach to reviewing pay of similar roles across the Group.

Further clarification was sought as to adherence with the Academy Trust Handbook given the Board were responsible for pay decisions of WRAT employees. The Group CEO confirmed that remuneration decisions remained a decision of the WRAT Board, with recommendations being presented to the Group's Remuneration Committee.

Resolved - the Group Remuneration Policy for Senior Staff was adopted

vi. Group Health and Safety Statement of Intent and Policy

The Board received and discussed the Group's Health and Safety Statement of Intent and Policy.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the group policy aligned with local procedures already in place.

Resolved - the Group Health and Safety Statement of Intent and Policy was adopted

21/22.04 Executive, operational and communication updates

a. Executive Principal's Report

The Board received, discussed and noted the EP's Report.

Following a question, it was noted that data relating to the performance of students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) would be a welcome addition in future reports

Action - the EP to include data relating to the performance of EAL pupils in future reports

Detailed discussion took place in respect of the differences between progress 8 and attainment 8 data following a query around the sharing of best practice. The EP

requested that Board members exercised caution around progress data but assured board members that working groups had already been established which involved the sharing of best practice, where appropriate,

In response to concerns raised regarding data relating to key pupil groups, it was agreed that a detailed report would be sent to a future meeting.

Action - detailed analysis of key pupil groups to be provided at a future Board meeting

In addition, a request was made to present data regarding onward destinations, one year after leaving a WRAT academy.

Action - long term onward destination data to be provided at a future Board meeting

The EP highlighted the Strategic and Operational Development Plan targets, summarising the content of this section of the paper. The EP explained that the targets were fairly consistent across the Group, for benchmarking purposes. He explained that further objectives could be agreed which would complement these targets; and would be included in each academy's development plans.

Further to detailed discussion regarding a trust-wide focus on personal development, it was agreed that this would be picked up through the next iteration of the Trust's Strategic Plan.

Action - the CEO to reflect on the feedback provided in relation to a trust-wide focus on personal development

Resolved - the Board approved the Group's Strategic and Operational Development Plan targets

b. Academy Improvement Partner (AIP) Reports

The Chair introduced the reports produced by the Academy Improvement Partner (AIP).

It was noted that the information presented in the paper from the AIP aligned with the key messages contained within the report produced by the EP. A Board member highlighted again that vulnerable/key groups needed to be an area of focus.

The Chair reminded the Board that the AIP had increased his number of contracted days to the Trust (following Board approval), which meant he had the capacity to review any areas which the Board felt would benefit from having external opinion.

The EP responded to a question regarding having a progress update and analysis of impact documented, which related to all the recommendations being made by the AIP, indicating that he would include this in future EP Reports.

Action - the EP to include a section relating to the AIP recommendations in future EP Reports

The Board also requested that the EP provide summary feedback to the AIP following discussion at each Board meeting.

Action - the EP to provide summary feedback to the AIP following each Board meeting

21/22.05 Trust Board & Committees Governance Related Matters

a. Matters referred by LABs

It was noted that no matters had been referred to the Board by Local Accountability Boards (LABs) on this occasion.

b. Governor applications for approval

The Board ratified the appointment of the following LAB members following a brief summary of each candidate being given:

- Jill Wood - Leeds City Academy
- Paul Butler - Leeds East
- Joe Moore - Alder Tree

Resolved - the Board ratified the appointment of LAB members detailed above

It was noted that recruitment across all levels of governance was an urgent priority. The CEO indicated that the Trust was currently doing a large promotional campaign.

21/22.06 Audit, Risk and Finance Matters

a. Audit, Risk and Finance (ARF) Meeting Minutes

The Board received and noted the Audit, Risk and Finance Meeting Minutes from 12 October 21.

b. Financial Performance Report (reviewed by Committee)

The Board received and considered the August 21 Management Accounts.

The CFO referred to key factors contributing to the latest financial position, elaborating on the content of the paper.

c. Academy Trust Handbook changes

The Board reviewed the paper summarising the changes to the Academy Trust Handbook for 2021. The CFO explained that the handbook has been renamed to reflect the fact that the handbook covered more than just financial related matters.

The CFO provided clarification in respect of a point detailed within the report following questions from a Board member regarding employees serving as Trustees. He confirmed that the term 'employees' related to those employed by the Trust and did not include Group employees.

d. WRAT Financial Regulations (recommended for approval by ARF Committee)

Further to detailed consideration of the Financial Regulations by the ARF Committee, the CFO introduced them to the Board, referring to highlights from his covering paper.

The CFO indicated that he would update the document to include Alder Tree in the structure chart.

In response to a question relating to individuals having the capacity and integrity to adequately discharge the responsibilities given to the Accounting Officer and CFO, a response was provided by leaders, assuring the Board that there was sufficient capacity within the senior leadership team to ensure responsibilities were met. It was emphasised that tasks could be delegated to others where appropriate. It was noted that the ESFA was still reviewing the dual role of the CFO.

Resolved - the Board approved the updated Financial Regulations

e. Review of Trust Strategic Risk Register

Further to detailed consideration of the register by the ARF Committee, the Board noted the Trust's Strategic Risk Register.

A Board member requested a heat-map be included in future reports.

Action - the CFO to consider including a heatmap in future Risk Registers

21/22.07 Any other business

a. CEO's update & communications sent to the Board between meetings

The Board noted the paper detailing decisions made between meetings.

The CEO provided a verbal update in respect of ongoing communication to secure adequate funding for the proposed conversion of the UTC in Leeds.

Board members indicated they would welcome an additional informal meeting focused on the UTC, given the significant delays in progressing the matter, prior to a formal conversion request being sent to the Board. It was suggested that this meeting be held in the UTC building.

Action - the Clerk would organise an additional informal meeting focussed on the UTC

b. Any other business

There was no other business on this occasion.

c. Date and time of next meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be held on 9 December at 5.30pm.

21/22.08 Confidential

a. WRAT CEO & Luminate Deputy CEO proposed new JD, new responsibilities and appraisal targets

The Board received and considered a paper relating to the WRAT CEO & Luminate Deputy CEO's proposed new job description, new responsibilities and appraisal targets.

b. Board membership

The Clerk reported that Paul Morrissey had tendered his resignation which was effective immediately, during the period between the last Board meeting and this, due to personal reasons. The Board requested that a letter be sent from the Chair expressing the Board's gratitude for his commitment to the role on both the Board and LAB.

Action - the Chair would write to Paul Morrissey regarding his resignation

Lydia Devenny informed the Board that due to securing new employment, she would be resigning from the Board at the end of the calendar year. The Board thanked and also congratulated Lydia.

The Chair reported that she would be stepping down from the role of Chair at the end of the calendar year, though would remain serving as a Trustee. The Board thanked Helena for her contribution to date. Expressions of interest were welcomed by way of email to the Clerk to the Board.