



## MINUTES

### OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF BRIDGWATER COLLEGE TRUST HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2016 AT 6.00 PM AT BRIDGWATER COLLEGE

**Present:** Mike Robbins (Chair), Heather Strawbridge, Paul Holtam (Chair Hamp LGB), Carole Chevalley (Chair BCA LGB), Ann Dyer (Chair Brymore LGB), Denys Rayner (Chair Audit), Sid Gibson (Chair WSC LGB), David Hannay, Mark Swallow (Parent Governor WSC), Moya Hill (Parent Governor BCA), Marc Bevan (Parent Governor Hamp), Peter Elliott (CEO etc.)

**In attendance:** Luke Talmage (Head Teacher Hamp Academy), Mark Thomas (Head Teacher Brymore Academy), Zoe Stucki (Head Teacher West Somerset College), Gill Warren (Director of Business and Finance), Gail Griffith (Company Secretary)

The Chair welcomed new Trustees to the meeting: Moya Hill, Marc Bevan, Mark Swallow—all Parent Governor Trustees. Additionally Zoe Stucki had joined West Somerset College from 1 September this year.

#### 1. Procedural matters

##### 1.1 Apologies for absence

Simon Brewer and Wendy Dick had given their apologies owing to work commitments.

##### 1.2 List of members of the Board and Audit Committee

This was noted.

##### 1.3 Code of Practice for Trustees

##### 1.4 Register of Business Interests

The Company Secretary handed out the forms and explained their purpose. She asked that they be completed and returned to her as soon as possible.

**Action: all Trustees**

##### 1.5 Terms of reference of the BCT Board

Heather Strawbridge proposed Mike Robbins as Chair, **with which the meeting agreed**. Further consideration would be given to the post of Vice-Chair for the next meeting.

**Action: MR**

##### 1.6 Travel and Expenses Policy for Trustees

This was noted for information.

##### 1.7 Update from the Academy Financial Handbook 2016

The Company Secretary introduced the paper and explained its purpose was to check that the Trust complied with the new Academy Financial Handbook 2016. The following actions, where work was needed, were agreed:

- Skills and competencies of the Board and LGBs: to be further considered with the CEO for next year

**Action: PE/GG**

- Revision of the Scheme of Delegation: a draft would be prepared for the December Board

**Action: PE/GG/GW**

- Audit Committee to commission a review of governance as part of risk-based audit in 2017

**Action: DR/GW**

- The Chair to review composition of the Board in terms of skills, effectiveness, leadership and impact, for March Board.

**Action: MR**

- It was confirmed that Peter Elliott would hold the posts of CEO, Executive Leader, Accounting Officer and Trustee.

- Combined Register of Governance and Pecuniary Interests to be done by Company Secretary, and posted on BCT and academy websites (*additional work on senior staff to be included on register*).

**Action: GG**

- The Company Secretary will update Edubase with information on Trustees, etc.

**Action: GG**

- Variances between budget and actual income and expenditure to be included in BCT financial regulations and new procedures to be implemented by Business Managers.

**Action: GW**

- New risk management obligations: following completion of Risk Audit in July 2016, the Audit Committee will review the recommendations.

**Action: DR/GW**

- Tenders for a provider of independent reviews of financial controls and risks in the academies be considered by the Audit Committee.

**Action: DR/GW**

- Consideration to increasing the number of Members from three to five, e.g. at the AGM of the Company (December 2016)

**Action: MR**

- Consideration of creating a separate Finance committee (e.g. Finance and Investment Committee) in addition to an Audit Committee (e.g. Audit and Assurance Committee) when the number of schools in the Trust increases.

**Action: PE/MR****1.8 Review of Policies:****1.8.1 BCT Policy list****1.8.2 Terms of Reference of LGBs, SSQs and FP&GPs****1.8.3 Register of Business and Pecuniary Interests**

The Company Secretary asked that the Board renew the two policies for another two years. **This was agreed by the meeting.**

**2. Minutes and matters arising from the Trustee's meeting held on 29 June 2016**  
**The Minutes were approved and signed as accurate by the Chair.**

The Chair reported on his correspondence with the Department of Education on the issue of the relationship between the Board, CEO, Head Teachers and LGBs in a complex Multi-Academy Trust. The Board was legally responsible for all aspects of the Trust, but it could chose if and how to delegate responsibilities to the other levels in the organisation. Currently BCT had chosen a large degree of delegation, save where "earned autonomy" was required for a period. Once two more schools joined the Trust, the membership of the Board would

need to be re-considered, perhaps in “clusters” with representatives of several academies. The CEO was currently discussing with Heads and LGBs the direction and strategy of the Trust, and would be in a position to make proposals after Christmas.

One Trustee Chair of a LGB was anxious that the relationships between the parties be sorted out as quickly as possible, since he needed to understand the remit of his role. It was therefore agreed (see above) that a draft of a new Scheme of Delegation would be taken to the December Board.

The Chair agreed to circulate his communications with the Department to the Trustees.

**Action: MR**

### **3. Headline results from summer 2016 exams**

- 3.1 Summary**
- 3.2 Bridgwater College Academy**
- 3.3 Brymore Academy**
- 3.4 Hamp Academy**
- 3.5 West Somerset College**

The CEO reviewed the Summary report on KS4 GCSE results and added comments on KS2 and KS5 (A level results). Despite the changes to the assessment methods, and subject to further appeals and remarkings of exam papers, the results throughout the Trust were exceptionally strong. WSC had received its best results since 2011; BCA KS2 results were strong, as were Hamp KS2 results (except for attainment in reading where there was a slight drop). There were plans for BCA and Hamp to work together to address KS2 reading.

The Trustees congratulated all the schools on these outstanding results, especially in challenging and uncertain times. There had been real achievements throughout the Trust.

The CEO and Head Teachers cautioned the Board that with the new format for GCSEs in English and Maths next year, there was no certainty that the results would be repeated. The low-ability intake in most schools made the task harder, but nevertheless the good work would be continued.

### **4. Academy Development Plans: key targets for 2016/2017**

#### **4.1 Bridgwater College Academy**

The Executive Head Teacher reviewed the Plan for BCA. The focus will continue on attainment and progress. Particular areas of attention were:

- Improving the quality of the transition to BCA for pupils from feeder schools
- Evaluating support staff
- Considering what other activities BCA can provide, e.g. leadership/mentor training, residential experiences, foreign travel
- Improving spelling, punctuation and grammar with young teachers
- Instigating a community service award.

The Chair asked what parental feedback the school had received. The Executive Head Teacher said that the survey carried out prior to the OFSTED inspection had been very positive. He expected to carry out further surveys and governors were invited to Parent Evenings. The Chair of BCA LGB explained the work the governors had been carrying out, by attending Parent Evenings in the Secondary Phase and talking to parents and pupils. She had then reported to the Senior Leadership Team, who had responded positively to suggestions, and acted on the concerns raised. She intended to do the same this year with the Primary Phase Parent Evenings. The Executive Head Teacher would also report these activities in the Newsletter.

The Brymore Head Teacher said that he used social media a great deal to communicate with parents.

#### 4.2 **Brymore Academy**

The Head agreed that raising achievement would remain the focus of the school's Plan, together with particular areas of concentration:

- Reviewing the accuracy of predictions
- Introducing more literacy across the curriculum, especially lower down the school, so that pupils will be able to cope with the changes to the GCSEs
- Assessing whether marking is effective
- Continuing the work following on from the Boarding Ofsted
- Continuing to maintain a positive atmosphere in the school despite the pressures
- Continuing to attract more applicants to the school
- Continuing to try to attract more able students
- Consideration to move to a five-day week (instead of six days).

One Trustee asked what the catchment for the school was. No catchment was set for the school. About 75% of the outboarders were within two hours of their home. The Chair asked how the school dealt with over-subscription. The Head explained that the only interviewing he carried out was for "suitability for boarding", which was not based on any academic assessment. The local authority dealt with over-subscription according to their criteria, which was often based on straight-line distance, which could prove frustrating.

#### 4.3 **Hamp Academy**

The Head Teacher had provided a more streamlined Plan at only 12 pages. He outlined particular areas for attention:

- Raising standards for literacy, reading and writing, and SPAG
- Working on reading to meet the target of 66% reaching national levels
- Improving parental engagement with family learning days
- Increasing outstanding teaching from 43-50%
- Introducing more creativity into the curriculum
- Improving the resilience of pupils in tests
- Expanding extra activities, e.g. fencing classes
- Expanding the school in 2017 with two new classes, and three new classrooms (an increase to 315 children with 90 in each year group)
- Considering introducing parenting classes.

Trustees asked why reading was a specific issue. The Head Teacher said that children do not read at home, and their phonic skills were poor. Some parents could not read. The Trustees asked what help could be provided to parents, perhaps at another location like Bridgwater College. The CEO commented that Hamp had a very short period of time to improve literacy, especially if this was not tackled at prior schools.

#### 4.4 **West Somerset College**

The Head Teacher reviewed the good work which had been carried out last year (before she joined the College) and said that a lot of the work to be done was consolidation, especially in English, Maths and additional and core sciences. She outlined some particular areas:

- Improving the quality of leadership of middle leaders through:
  - Making heads of department more effective
  - Developing prediction accuracy
  - Outreach training with other heads of departments in other schools
  - Analysing what worked for the exams
- Improving teaching and learning using support from BCA staff
- Improving cross-curriculum literacy
- Reducing exclusions and improving behaviour and safety
- Improving attendance.

The Chair asked what the attendance rate was at West Somerset College. It was currently at 87.1% but the Head Teacher wished to see this at 96%. Geography and dependence on buses was an issue, for instance if pupils missed the bus on Exmoor.

The Chair asked why behaviour was poor. The Head Teacher said that a cohort of boys last year caused difficulties, and a number of assaults. The Behaviour Policy is robust, but she would be identifying students who are struggling.

The Trustees asked what the current perception of the College was, both internally and externally. The Head Teacher reported that she had had positive feedback on the two Inset days, and she thought there was "hope and determination" to succeed. She was improving the accountability and monitoring, as well as target-setting from appraisals. As for the local community there was some positive feedback, but the issue of uniform compliance may be a challenge. The CEO reported that in a recent walk-through the College, he had found the atmosphere calm and purposeful. He understood the staff appreciated the clarity of the Head Teacher's leadership.

One Trustee raised a number of points on all the Plans. She would like to see the Plans in similar format so they could be easily read. She thought that the Board should approve the Plans. She would like to see a covering sheet to each of the Head Teacher's reports to the Board, assessing whether the academy was meeting the Plan, or whether there was a serious deviation. She would also like to see a six-monthly review of progress against the Plans.

The CEO said that he was intending to standardize the Key Performance Issues. The Plans were looked at in detail in SSQ meetings, but he would summarise progress for Board meetings. The Chair of BCA LGB said she reviewed the Plan termly and in detail, with senior staff, and reported back to the LGB

It was agreed that:

- Plans would be standardised for the next academic year
- The CEO would add a cover note to the Head Teacher's report to the Board on progress against the Plan
- A formal review of the Plans would be made at Board level in March
- **The current Plans were approved by the Board.**

**Action: PE**

## **5. Financial update**

The Director of Business and Finance reported that the budget return for 2016/2017 for the Trust had been made to the Education Funding Authority at the end of July. The Trust had decided to stay with Zurich for insurance, being the best value for money for the Trust. Corporation tax returns had been made for the Trust and for the old West Somerset College company. She was currently compiling the year-end returns for the Trust. As far as the trading subsidiaries were concerned, Brymore had made a profit of some £29k (lettings and catering) and BCA a profit of £17.4k (sports facilities).

The CEO reported that Exmoor National Park had made West Somerset College a grant of £20k to continue the operation of the Farm until next February. With a new owner of the land, it is hoped that a plan to use the land might be developed.

## **6. Dates of meetings for 2016/2017**

These were noted.

## **7. Next meeting: 7 December 2016 at 6pm at Bridgwater College**

*The meeting ended at 7.30pm*