

BEST Trustees' Meeting
25 January 2022, 10:00-12:30
Virtual Meeting via Google Meet

Attendees: Ilona Bond (IB), Paul Walker (PW), Alan Lee (AL), Tony Sanderson (TS), Claire Mycock (CM), David Morgan (DM), Jerry Tonge (JT), Craig Smith (CS), Alison Wilshaw (AW) and Nafia Baust (NB)

Chair of Trustees: Ilona Bond

Vice-Chair of Trustees: Paul Walker

Clerk: Yvonne Humphryes

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: None

Approval of Previous minutes:

- Trustees' Meeting Minutes 7 December 2021 – Actions Complete – Minutes Approved and signed electronically
- BEST AGM Minutes 7 December 2021 - Approved and signed electronically

Subsidiaries Executive Committee Update

Pre-read: Subsidiaries Executive Committee Minutes (11/01/22) distributed prior to the meeting

Pre-read: Executive Lead Nursery Report distributed prior to the meeting. Read both documents for more detail.

Nurseries:

- The quality of provision across the BEST nurseries is better than it's even been
- Two external reviews from the Early Years National Lead, Felicity Dewsbury; report produced to highlight strengths and areas for development, much of which has been addressed
- Nursery finances are improving: Forecasts show a year-end surplus of £9.7K (Sept-Dec'21 = £17K Surplus)
- Nursery staffing structures and pay scales are currently being reviewed

BEST House:

- A full review of the financial relationship between BEST House and Shefford Nursery is being conducted
- The strategic plans for the nurseries and how this may or may not impact BEST House is tied up with 2Tier.

Clarity sought regarding the Level 2 and 3 recommendation made to support staff morale/recruitment/retention. AW advised of the opportunities to recruit Level 2 and 3 Childcare study students, offering them day release for college. Work experience opportunities may also be offered at Shefford nurseries to support with lunch/reading.

Recommendation: The Subsidiaries Executive Committee made up of the CEO, COO, CFO and Director of Education to remain in situ until December 2024 to allow clear strategies to be put in place.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the recommendation with reviews taking place during this time.

Capital & Estates Committee Update

Pre-read: Capital & Estates Committee Minutes (11/01/22) distributed prior to the meeting

Pre-read: 'Confidential' Draft Growth Strategy Document distributed prior to the meeting. Read documents for more detail.

TS provided an overview, drawing trustees attentions to two key areas: Pendleton Centre and BEST's Growth Strategy.

Pendleton Centre

The agreement between BEST, Stevenage Leisure (SL) and CBC stipulates that BEST underwrite any losses, whilst splitting any profits between BEST and SL. The agreement ends Spring 2023. ETA have expressed an interest in managing the Leisure Centre – this will complement courses they'd be looking to run at their sixth form. CS has been tasked with ascertaining the schools' preferences and considering the legalities involved; this report will be reviewed at the next Capital & Estates Committee in April. Committee recommendations will be brought to the full board of trustees for comment in May.

BEST Growth Strategy

The Capital and Estates Committee discussed the document at length. CS and the Operations Manager, AA, were commended for the quality of their reporting to the Capital & Estates Committee.

Trustees commended the document, whilst expressing a preference to stabilise the trust through the potential challenges of 2Tier and the natural growth that this may bring through nursery and sixth form provision. Any schools wishing to join BEST during this time would need to be strategically beneficial to the trust. Honest and open conversations need to take place with any new school looking to join the trust that may be affected by 2Tier.

BEST Action Plan

[Pre-read](#): BEST Action Plan 2021-22 - January Review - Summary Document distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more detail.

In the absence of any Ofsted reviews so far, much has been done to address the 12 big ticket items, in spite of the workloads created by 2Tier. AL is confident that most objectives will be achieved by the end of the academic year.

- Growth Strategy now in place
- BEST have become more outward facing, as a valued civic partner in the CBC community
- Continually strive to ensure our provision tomorrow is better than today and hold ourselves to account
- On-going review of external partners/provision e.g. HR and ICT
- Budgets closely monitored.

Monthly Cash Flow and Management Accounts

The cash flow and management accounts for BEST are received on a monthly basis by IB, PW, DM, JT and AL on behalf of the Board of Trustees, all of whom confirmed that they are happy with the accounts and are satisfied that the Trust is financially sound.

Matters Arising

[Pre-read](#): H&S Overview document distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more details.

- **GDPR**: No reportable incidents since the last trustees update
- **Safeguarding**: No significant reportable incidents since the last trustees update
- **Health & Safety**: No reportable ‘Riddor’ incidents.

4600 training courses have been completed by colleagues using ‘Smartlog’ during the past three years – only four colleagues have courses outstanding. BEST central are supporting schools where necessary to help ensure colleagues have the opportunity to complete all required training.

Annual Equality and Diversity Report

[Pre-read](#): COO’s Equality and Diversity Report distributed prior to the meeting.

Whilst the report is not compulsory, CS wished to provide trustees with an overview of the Equality and Diversity work being completed from an education view point and as an inclusive employer. See report for more details.

Policies for Approval

[Pre-read](#): All proposed policies distributed to trustees for review prior to the meeting.

The following policies were unanimously approved by trustees for distribution and use across BEST subject to Union Consultation/Approval:

- Family Related Leave Policy
- Redundancy Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Teacher Appraisal Policy

Notification: IB and AL approved a minor amendment to the Staff Code of Conduct Policy via email on 9/12/21.

Notification: In the absence of any firm plans from CBC to implement 2Tier changes by September 2023, the BEST Admission Arrangements for 2023 remains unchanged. An evidence trail of communications between BEST and CBC regarding admissions for 2023 are logged.

Risk Register

Pre-read: Updated Risk Register distributed to trustees for review prior to the meeting.

A review of the Risk Register has been undertaken. NB originally designed the format – it was developed further by DM a couple of years ago. BEST continue to support the format but as MATs evolve (the Academies ‘Financial’ Handbook has become the Academies Handbook) it was felt necessary to include some aspects of educational provision i.e. Ofsted Inspections and the potential impact the transition to 2Tier may have on our schools. Trustees discussed how best to include the proposed additions within the risk register.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the inclusion of aspects of educational provision within the Risk Register

Decision: The scope of risk now extends beyond the Finance and Audit Committee and as such, will now be reviewed by the full Board of Trustees on a termly basis (December, March and June).

Action: AL to amend the Risk Register to incorporate the trustees’ recommendations in regards to Ofsted/2Tier.

CM left the meeting.

Skills Audit/Training

Pre-read: BEST LGBs collated Skills Audits – see document for more details.

BEST LGB Members were asked to complete the NGA Skills Audit at the start of last term – YH has collated the results onto one document, the findings of which were shared and discussed with trustees. It was felt that the questions are generic and the answers are not representative of the governance training and support in place i.e.:

- Trust-wide membership for Governors: GovernorHub, The Key, NGA and CBC governance training
- BEST Annual Governance Conference
- BEST Annual Governance Induction Training
- Trustee and Central Executive attendance at LGB meetings

Action: Monitor and evaluate the use and effectiveness of resources currently being offered

Decision: BEST will create a bespoke audit related to context – this should provide more meaningful data to ensure BEST provide the correct training and support where it is needed.

YH as Clerk to trustees concluded that no areas of development have been identified for trustees.

Action: Trustees to let YH know if there are any areas of development/training that they’d like her to look into.

2Tier Update

Trustees discussed September 2022 applications – whilst SCA numbers are lower than anticipated, the overall numbers are promising. ETA have worked hard to encourage pupils to join their school – the results of which are pleasing. **Action:** On behalf of the Board of Trustees IB will write to ETA to praise their efforts to increase the number of pupil applications.

Following the presentation of CBC’s Schools for the Future ‘Principles and Policies’, trustees discussed in length what this may mean for BEST schools. Trustees concluded that whilst the Principles are eminently reasonable when applied at the start of the programme, to support the principles “mid-flight” and certainly without any data on pupil numbers may close RBA. Trustees feel retrospective accommodation in the criteria should be made for those schools negatively impacted i.e. RBA. A point that needs highlighting to CBC Executive prior to their next meeting on 8 February 2022.

Action: Trustees to send a letter to CBC Executive (shared with Principals first) to advise that whilst they wish to work with CBC to deliver the programme, BEST cannot sign up to Principles that will negatively affect their schools.

CS will continue to work with CBC Officers to progress the programme.

Conflict: CS, AW & NB left the meeting

BEST Senior Leaders Appraisals – CONFIDENTIAL Item

Pre-read: BEST Senior Leaders Appraisals 2020/21 summary document distributed to trustees prior to the meeting.

Senior leaders’ appraisals are conducted largely by the Trustees’ Chair, CEO and LGB Chair, with support from the trustees’ Vice Chair and external adviser where appropriate. When considering pay awards, performance, budget and LGB recommendations are considered. All Principals are doing well – they are mature in post and therefore expensive, with three Principals exceeding their pay scales and being awarded a head teacher allowance.

Trustees are satisfied that due process has been followed but asked that caution is exercised to avoid expectation of pay awards in excess of pay scales.

Action: YH to provide trustees with details of Senior Leaders pay awards over the past five years.

Conflict: AL left the meeting

[REDACTED]

Conflict: YH/Clerk left the meeting whilst trustees discussed succession planning.

Next meeting: 15 March 2022 @ 10:00am – BEST House Conference Room (Subject to Covid Risk Assessment)

J. Bowd Approved and electronically signed 15/03/2022