

BEST Trustees' Meeting

15th May 2020, 9:30-11:30

Virtual meeting via Google Meet



Attendees

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

Minute taker: Yvonne Humphryes (YH)

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: DS declared that he is the Chair of Overview and Children Services Scrutiny Committee for Central Bedfordshire Council.

Previous Minutes

BEST to determine the position regarding LVA. The LVA LGB have raised concerns regarding the pressures on the Principal managing two separate schools that are working to different timelines. **Ongoing.**

YH as Clerk to investigate recruiting a new Member. Trustees to send any recommendations to YH. **Temporarily on hold owing to COVID-19. IB would like to aim towards appointing a new Member for the start of the 2020-21 academic year.**

CS to start the process for appointing a new RBA Chair of Governors. **Carried forward.**

As per the last trustees' meeting the Support Staff Appraisal Policy, Leave of Absence Policy and Draft Trade Union Recognition Agreement were amended and re-circulated to trustees for approval.

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the revised Policies and Agreement.

Approval of Trustees minutes: Previous Trustee meeting (24.1.2020) and Trustees' Extra-ordinary meeting minutes 26.2.2020, 6.3.2020 and 30.4.2020 all approved and to be signed electronically.

Monthly cash flow and management accounts: The monthly cash flow and management accounts for BEST are received on a monthly basis by IB, PW, DS, DM 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.

Update on BEST COVID Position

Schools have been open to vulnerable pupils and Key workers children – Pupils attending is just below 2%.

The BEST Executive team meet virtually two to three times per week to ensure a measured and consistent approach across all the schools within the trust. Following central government's announcement to re-open schools to Reception, Year one and Year six with effect from 1st June 2020, all the schools with the support of the BEST Operations and School Improvement team are completing risk assessments and producing plans. The safety of staff, pupils and parent/carers is BEST's number one priority along with their well-being. Government guidance changes on a daily basis, BEST wish to align to the guidance. Concern has been raised locally around transition years within a three-tier system – BEST will consider deviating from Central Government guidance if the local authority, supported by the RSC recommend a different plan owing to its context.

Decision: Trustees unanimously agreed that BEST is to align school openings with government guidance.

AL advised trustees that CS, AW, NB are collating information relating to risk assessments, pupil numbers and finances – the information will be presented to trustees next Wednesday for a decision.

Decision: Trustees unanimously agreed that BEST schools are not to take any additional year groups or children outside of government guidance.

AL will be producing and circulating a letter to the parent/carer communities across the trust once all the government guidance has stabilised and surveys and risk assessments have been collated.

Two Tier Update

AL met with representatives from the Local Authority (LA) earlier in the week. AL has reviewed the draft consultation document- the document raised concern:

- Henlow Academy age range would suggest a Sixth Form
- SWA and RBA were not presented as an 'All-through' school but instead a Secondary and two primary schools
- No mention of the five commitments that the LA had made to BEST around feeder schools etc.
- PFI at SWA needs addressing

Trustees are keen to see the revised consultation documentation to determine whether BEST join the LA consultation or conduct their own. CM advised that the HTB do not have the autonomy to approve a sixth form; a sixth forms need to be approved by a Minister.

BEST Governor Handbook (BGHB) Consultation Feedback

AL thanked trustees for their feedback, comments and the questions raised during the BGHB consultation. The questions and answers have been approved and will be shared at the Chairs' Forum on 5th June 2020.

AL shared with the trustees a revised LGB model document. The document reflects the need for LGBs to operate as committees of the BEST Board and represent the BEST vision, values and operating principles. LGB members' key responsibilities will be: community engagement, monitoring pupil outcomes and ensuring financial best value.

The LGB model document also looks to implement more standardisation to raise standards. The LGBs will have no more than eight members with one committee meeting once per half term, together with standardised agendas, minutes and protocols to help facilitate best practice. This will be trialled next year in readiness for greater alignment as BEST schools move towards a two-tier system.

DM questioned whether the proposed model aligns with Governor Marks view on best practice. AL advised that the model has been presented following feedback from Ofsted Inspectors and in accordance with best practice as identified throughout the Governance Handbook, Ofsted Framework and Academies Financial Handbook.

Action: AL to present the proposed model at the Chairs' Forum on 5th June 2020 and obtain feedback.

BEST Constitution

Trustees reviewed an externally commissioned report from Mazars. The report provides constitutional options for the three entities of BEST – Bedfordshire Schools Trust, BEST Nurseries and BEST Charities.

Bedfordshire Schools Trust are responsible/liable for the two subsidiaries; AL is therefore keen to have greater clarity around how the three entities work together, [REDACTED]

Trustees unanimously agreed in principle to the creation of a common board, whilst maintaining the three separate legal entities and asked AL to seek further clarity around whether one board would be a conflict of interest. **Action:** AL to seek further guidance and information to become one board.

B.E.S.T & Nurseries Update

Trustees reviewed a report prepared by DS as Chair of the subsidiaries board. The board discussed the effect that COVID-19 has had on the nurseries' finances and the subsequent decision for staff to be furloughed in an endeavour to protect jobs in the medium term. Trustees questioned the rationale behind the nursery MD furloughing herself.

Trustees reviewed the Nurseries 'Provision Maps' – AL discussed the support offered from all areas of the central team, albeit sometimes the offer of support is declined. A common structure with a common meeting schedule will ensure greater consistency across the trust.

Action: The nursery provision map has a typo – replace any references to school with nursery.

Provision Maps

Trustees reviewed the Provision Maps for each of the schools and commended their clarity. CM asked whether the schools engage. The provision maps get updated half-termly to show the support that each of the schools have received – the provision maps are reviewed and signed by the school Principals and Chair of Governors on a termly basis, both are supportive of the document.

Matters Arising

Safeguarding: No new incidents

CS advised that a sub-group from the Executive team looked at safeguarding across the trust. Led by the Principals within the group, a decision was made to have one 'BEST' overarching policy – CS advised that LL as Compliance Officer has made it clear to all the DSL's that the policy must be personalised to meet the context of their school or nursery e.g. setting and age range.

A schedule of meetings are in place for the DSLs – all appear well engaged and welcome the support mechanism.

GDPR: 2 reportable incidents currently being reviewed.

B-Ted Update

To address everything identified within the condition survey and additional requests received from the schools would cost £1,000,000; this is under review. BEST will receive £555,000 SCA funds this year. CBC have agreed to fund the costs of works getting LVA two-tier ready.

Options relating to PBA are being considered as potential 'social distancing' may create problems for housing pupils at ETA on temporary basis. Wilmott Dixon have advised that the PBA permanent site is progressing well with water installation and tarmacking work commencing the first week in July; LA are reviewing if the new PBA site could be an option for September 2020.

SWA have requested funds to support with IT. The cost proposed initially were high, however, SWA have produced a new plan and have submitted a more modest request that BEST is looking to support.

SCA submitted a request for funds to support with growth – BEST have agreed to commission a site utilisation study to support decision-making.

The Scheme of Capital Delegation is being reviewed.

AOB

YH shared proposed Trustee meeting dates for 2020-21 with trustees – Trustees unanimously approved the dates. **Action:** YH to update Appendix 3 (BEST Meeting Schedule) within the BGHB 2020-21.

Next meeting: Friday 26 June 2020 @ 9:30am

J. Bond

Minutes approved and signed 26/06/2020