

BEST Trustees' Meeting

16th March 2021, 10:00-12:00

Virtually via Google Meet

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

Chair of Trustees: Ilona Bond

Vice-Chair of Trustees: Paul Walker

Guests (CBC): Sarah Ferguson (SF), Sue Harrison (SH) and Jess Mortimer (JM)

Clerk: Yvonne Humphries

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: None

BEST & CBC All-through School Discussion

CBC advised that since the last their attendance at the last BEST Trustees' meeting they have continued to review the 0-18 All-through school options, noting BEST do not support a split site school.

CBC shared a PowerPoint Presentation that they had prepared for the BEST Trustees. Trustee responses:

- The PPT inaccurately represented the history of the programme to date
- The PPT illustrates an option for a 'split site' and 'capital receipt', both of which have not been consulted on. It was felt that illustrating the options within the PPT forces an opinion on something that has not been offered.

CBC confirmed that the PPT was a confidential discussion document for this meeting only.

Summary of CBC Presentation:

- The All-through school model based on a BB103 mandate creates numerous practical challenges e.g. insufficient hall space, no changing room facilities, no indoor facilities for play or sports and a lengthy lunchtime schedule
- Land costs are subject to negotiation and will differ depending on which plot and the quality of land
- BEST's specifications – to provide equivalence with current RBA facilities - include an increase in hall size, football pitches, science, music and art classrooms
- 15 years remain on the SWA site PFI. CBC recommend letting the PFI run its course and suggested minimal changes to the SWA secondary element and creating linked Primary provision on land beyond that contained within the PFI contract. This land would need to be purchased
- The cost difference between the BB103 and BEST Specification equates to a cost difference of approximately £4.7 million
- CBC are in the process of obtaining a valuation on the Robert Bloomfield Academy site
- The final plans will go to the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 27th April.

Summary of discussion:

- BEST thanked CBC for presenting costings but remain mindful that CBC are yet to offer any costings or timelines in relation to transition and land acquisition/disposal. A Gant Chart would be useful
- Trustees' feel that the costs involved represent good value for money given that a large majority of the Shefford/Stotfold cluster are BEST Pupils

- BEST are not asking for an improvement in facilities – it is difficult to accept something that will leave BEST learners and the community worse off
- CBC did not disclose the resource envelope for the Shefford/Stotfold cluster – “each school is looked at based on need and then submitted for sign-off”
- Simon Cotton is leading the sixth form strategy. Work is being completed and costings will need to be considered as part of the resource envelope
- BEST Trustees’ are concerned about the transitional costs – CBC advised that they would be running a CPD programme for leaders at all levels to support with the change. However, CPD costs are only a small aspect of the associated HR costs. This is a CBC programme for change and Trustees believe that growth funding must be allocated accordingly

Next Steps:

- CBC to share and agree proposed plans with AL and CS prior to making them available within the public domain (CBC agreed the plans would not include a split site for the all-through school)
- CBC to complete plans to submit to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee by start of April
- BEST to provide CBC with their comments/reflections following this meeting.

CBC Officers left the meeting.

Approval of Minutes: Trustees’ minutes (26.01.2021) approved and signed electronically.

Performance Committee Update

CM as Chair of the Performance Committee provided an overview from the last meeting on 22 February 2021.

The BEST Academy Principals and the Nurseries Executive Lead each presented to the Performance Committee Members (PCM). Items for discussion included:

- Points of Celebration
- A review of Remote Learning and how the quality and effectiveness of this learning is being checked
- Any challenges the schools are facing

To support the PCM in their review of each of the schools and nurseries, the following documents were distributed in advance of the meeting: SIP/SEFs, External SIA Reports, BEST Statements of Provision and SOAPs.

The PCM were impressed by the Executive Leads – they engaged well and provided a clear oversight of their approach to managing the schools/nurseries during these challenging times. There was evidence of trust-wide sharing of best practices and an appreciation to the support offered by the BEST Central team. Trustees are in awe of how the schools and pupils have been managed - no significant learning gaps identified. Furthermore, the parental/carers surveys provided positive feedback.

Trustees discussed the different approaches taken by schools in regards to live/recorded and independent learning.

Finance Committee Update

IB thanked DM for agreeing to Chair the Finance and Audit Committee following DS’ resignation.

ETA pupil applications for September 2021 were discussed and added to the risk register.

Following a rigorous Audit Tendering Process – Bishop Fleming have been appointed.

Campton Academy joined BEST with a deficit budget – recovery plan agreed.

Following CFO recommendation and committee discussion, a decision was made not to pool GAG funding.

Nurseries have budgeted an in-year deficit of £97,000 – problem compounded by restricted income owing to COVID lockdown.

CS is seeking legal advice and in is conversation with CBC in regards to Stevenage Leisure and the financial losses being imposed upon BEST. CS will feedback to trustees' following his meeting with the Operations Director later this week.

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.

Policies for Approval

Equality Policy

Decision: Equality Policy approved for distribution and use across BEST subject to Union Consultation/approval

Grievance Policy

Decision: Grievance Policy approved for distribution and use across BEST subject to Union Consultation/approval

Health and Safety Policy

Decision: Health and Safety Policy approved for distribution and use across BEST subject to Union Consultation/approval. **Action:** Page 5 requires an amendment from 'eight' to 'seven' trustees

Matters arising

GDPR: Zero Reportable incidents since trustees' last update.

GDPR 2020 Review: Breach x 1, Near misses x 21, Subject Access Requests x 111 (related to summer exams)

Trends: Main issues identified as email errors and human input errors.

Safeguarding: Zero Reportable incidents at trust level since trustees' last update.

External safeguarding audits currently taking place trust-wide.

Health & Safety: Zero Reportable incidents at trust level since trustees' last update.

AOB

The Central Executive Team have formed a committee of the Board to oversee the BEST Subsidiaries i.e. nurseries and the charity. The Committee will support the nurseries with their integration into BEST by aligning where possible the policy framework, school improvement support and CPD opportunities.

Following the resignation of the Early Years' Lead, three members of nursery management have been appointed, on fixed term contracts to manage each of the three BEST nurseries and will be line managed by AW. Trustees' support Executive decisions in regards to finish/start dates of nursery management.

AL commended the schools for their successful implementation of remote learning as evidenced by parental/carer feedback.

AL provided trustees with an overview of the of the Mindfulness training across BEST. Forty-five BEST colleagues are accessing this.

Next meeting: Tuesday 11 May 2021 @ 10:00am



Approved and electronically signed 11/05/2021