

## **BEST Trustees' Meeting**

21 June 2022, 10:00am – 12:00pm

Virtual via Google Meet

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

**Chair of Trustees:** Ilona Bond

**Vice Chair:** Paul Walker

**Governance Professional:** Yvonne Humphryes

**Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest:** None

### **Approval of previous minutes:**

- Trustees' meeting minutes 10 May 2022 – minutes approved and signed electronically
- Trustees' Extraordinary meeting minutes 27 May 2022 – minutes approved and signed electronically

### **Election of new Chair and Vice Chair of Trustees**

Election process completed. No new nominations. YH received five (out of seven) nominations in favour of keeping the Chair and Vice Chair 'as is' – all trustees unanimously agreed; IB and PW accepted.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously elected IB as Chair and PW as Vice Chair of the BEST Board of Trustees for 2022/23.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously approved no changes to the Chairs of the Standing Committees of the Board:

Finance = DM. Performance = CM. Capital & Estates = TS. Subsidiaries = AL. 2Tier Lead = JT.

### **Matters Arising**

**GDPR:** No reportable incidents since the last trustees update.

**Safeguarding:** No reportable incidents since the last trustees update.

The BEST Compliance Officer is currently reviewing the most suitable training for trustees/governors to undertake following the mandatory changes made to the September 2022 KCSIE. Details will follow in due course.

**Health & Safety:** No reportable incidents since the last trustees update. H&S audits will take place next term.

### **Safeguarding Audits**

**Pre-read:** Individual School Safeguarding audits and 'summary of outcomes' document distributed prior to the meeting. See documents for more details.

BEST triangulate safeguarding by ensuring statutory measures are in place, listening to and trusting Principals and commissioning external audits to test the impact and effectiveness of safeguarding across the trust.

The BEST Compliance Officer produced a summary of outcomes. Trustees reviewed and discussed the document and were pleased with the improvement seen year upon year with all settings scoring above 90% (all but two were over 95% and three settings achieved a perfect 100%).

Trustees commended the BEST Compliance Officer on their diligence and hard work.

### **Monthly Cashflow and Management Accounts**

The cashflow and management accounts for BEST are received on a monthly basis by the Finance and Audit Committee members i.e. DM, AL, IB, PW and JT on behalf of the board of trustees, all of whom confirmed they are happy with the accounts and are satisfied the Trust is financially sound and confirmed the accounts are in line with forecasting.

### **Finance and Audit Committee Update**

**Pre-read:** Finance and Audit Committee minutes distributed prior to the meeting – view minutes for more detail.

- The three year consolidated budget for BEST was approved for submission to ESFA
- BEST House and Nursery budget approved
- NB declared a conflict – NB has Joined the Bedfordshire Pension Fund Board of Directors and must not partake in discussion or give advice in this regard going forward
- Following the Bedford Pension Fund consultation to pool all their funds the result was that pooling seems to be the preferred way forward. MATs such as BEST who responded that they didn't want their fund being pooled until rates come down will be contacted re: way forward – Await an update

- PBA Energy costs discussed by trustees at length in view of learnings and mitigation. Awaiting a response from CBC before we consider any further action.

### **Performance Committee Update**

**Pre-read:** 'Draft' Performance Committee minutes distributed prior to the meeting – view minutes for more detail

- Key meeting reviewing each schools' data against the last set of national data (2019)
- Data used to ascertain SI intervention required – interventions discussed
- First set of nationally tested performance data since 2019 will be available next term
- Director of Education Report produced for the first time and offered valuable insight from a SI viewpoint. Performance Committee members commended AW on the quality of the report – very helpful.

### **Chairs' Forum Update**

**Pre-read:** Chairs' Forum 'Draft' Minutes distributed prior to the meeting – see minutes for more detail

- The meeting is an invitation to Chairs, attendance is optional – 50% attendance
- Data reviewed and BEST agreed to share the 'live' Data Dashboard with LGB Chairs going forward
- Discussion took place on better alignment with feeder schools – BEST to ask CBC if they will oversee a cluster approach.

### **BEST Governance Handbook (BGHB) Update**

**Pre-read:** BGHB 2022/23 distributed for review prior to the meeting; available from September on the BEST website. The 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the BGHB has been through the consultation process and updated to reflect the changes rooted within the Governance Handbook, Academy Trust Handbook and Ofsted School Inspection Handbook. The updated document has been shared with Members, Trustees, Executive Team members and Chairs of Governors for comment. The final BGHB 2022/23 document was presented to trustees for approval.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously approved the BGHB 2022/23 for trust-wide use with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September. Trustees commended the "Gold Standard" document and thanked everyone involved in the process.

### **White Paper**

**Pre-read:** White Paper summary document distributed prior to the meeting – see document for more detail.

Trustees discussed the document and what the white paper may mean for BEST:

1. Growth – Minimum MAT = 10 schools/7500 pupils
2. Working collaboratively with a clear moral purpose whilst working collaboratively for the benefit of all pupils

**Action:** CS (supported by AL) to produce a set of parameters in regards to growth e.g. distance from BEST House.

### **Stakeholder views**

**Pre-read:** Annual stakeholder survey results for BEST Central Services, BEST Finance and BEST School Improvements distributed prior to the meeting – see documents for more details.

Trustees discussed the surveys and commended the quality of service provided by the whole of the central team and noted the quote 'a life line'. Trustees also expressed gratitude for the level of support they receive from the central team. However, trustees were concerned by the feedback in relation to BEST's external HR Payroll provider.

**Request:** The Executive Team have discussed and agreed that they'd like to change the BEST payroll provider to the second place bidder in the tender process. They placed second as they were £18,000 more expensive than the current provider. However, the current provider is not delivering a satisfactory level of service.

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously approved changing payroll providers to the second placed bidder in the tender process and the associated costs involved.

### **Risk Register**

**Pre-read:** Risk Register distributed for review prior to the meeting – see document for more detail

1.1.3: Owing to the recent increase in Covid cases trustees unanimously agreed to keep the risk level as is.

1.1.4: Added 'Reviewing Financial Model' of the nurseries – Review is in progress.

1.1.5: May need to look at increasing the risk owing to complexities around the Pendleton Contract – CS will feedback in due course through the relevant standing committee of the Board.

4.1.2: Uncertain what the changes will be in regards to SWA PFI – working with CBC to ensure contractual accuracy

4.1.4: Internal/External scrutiny has been added

Trustee request to add 'Rising costs of energy' as a financial risk. **Action:** NB to add 'Rising costs of energy' as a risk.

## **Policies for Approval**

**Pre-read:** The proposed policies as listed below were distributed prior to the meeting – see policies for more details.

**Decision:** The following policies were unanimously approved by trustees for distribution and use across BEST subject to union consultation/approval:

- Staff Code of Conduct Policy
- Leave of Absence Policy
- Pay Policy

**Decision:** The following policies were unanimously approved by trustees for trust-wide distribution and use:

- Freedom of Information Policy (Compliance Officer confirmed ICO flowchart dated 2012 is correct)
- Complaints Policy

**Decision:** Trustees unanimously approved extending the review period for the 'Flexible Working Policy' by twelve months owing to legislation changes due during this time.

**Information:** Admission arrangements for September 2024 will remain unchanged – further updates will be shared as and when received.

## **2Tier Update**

A secondary transition working group led by CBC will run from 5<sup>th</sup> July until the end of September – following which CBC hope to have an agreed cluster plan.

The Biggleswade cluster is likely to transition 2024 – the LSA feasibility study has begun.

All schools within the Shefford/Stotfold cluster will have feasibility studies – the RBA feasibility study will be the most critical for BEST. The feasibility studies are made up of two parts, the first part is viability which is unlikely to be an issue as we currently host around 1,000 pupils.

Trustees discussed options available if BEST are unhappy with the plans - withdrawal (albeit reluctantly) is still an option.

With the exception of CMA and GMA, who are classed as new builds, no schools will receive new nursery provision.

## **AOB**

IB on behalf of the Board of Trustees will write a letter of thanks to the RBA Principal, Sam Farmer, who will be leaving BEST at the end of this academic year.

Trustees were thanked for all their hard work this academic year.

IB shared a reflection. Long walk to freedom – Nelson Mandela:

*"I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter; I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come."*

**Next Meeting:** 10:00am on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 @ BEST House

*J. Bowd*

Minutes approved 27 September 2022

