

BEST Trustees' Meeting

6 December 2022, 9:30am – 11:00am

BEST House Conference Room



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

Apologies: Tony Sanderson (TS)

Meeting Chair: Ilona Bond

Governance Professional: Yvonne Humphryes

Notification of any perceived conflicts of interest: None

Approval of previous minutes:

- Trustees' meeting minutes 27 September 2022 – minutes approved and signed electronically

Matters Arising

GDPR: No ICO reportable incidents since the last trustees meeting

Safeguarding: No trustee reportable safeguarding incidents since the last trustees' meeting

Health & Safety: No Riddor reports since the last trustees' meeting

Finance and Audit Committee Meeting Update

Pre-read: Finance and Audit Committee meeting minutes 15 November 2022 distributed prior to the meeting
The end of year accounts reviewed – the meeting was attended by the auditors (BF):

- No cause for concern – clean audit reports on all three entities
- No material errors or risks noted within the 'Key audit risks' section of the report across all three entities
- Nurseries revenue has improved; they are now considered a Going Concern, addressed by a positive net worth
- BEST House ran at a profit but overall the Charity had a small net loss
- BEST have an in year surplus of £1.3 million and a net worth of £107 million, of which £10 million is pension assumptions
- 11 points of the previous year have been addressed FAC expressed disappointment with the lack of commentary/commerciality provided by BF in regards to an explanation around valuations
- Trustees were also disappointed with the lateness of finalised accounts. The final accounts had been requested by 30 November but received less than 24 hours before this meeting.

Action: NB to feedback comments to BF.

Next year BF will have fulfilled their three contractual audits. **Decision:** Four weeks to be scheduled between the FAC meeting and December Trustees meeting in 2023 is allow sufficient time (at least one week prior to final account sign-off) for BF to submit finalised accounts.

Approval of BEST Financial Accounts

Pre-read: BEST End of Year Accounts 2021-22 distributed prior to the meeting

Decision: Trustees unanimously agreed to formally sign-off the September 2021 – August 2022 Accounts.

Monthly Cash Flow 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.

Performance Committee Update

Pre-read: 'Draft' Performance Committee meeting minutes 17 November 2022 distributed prior to the meeting
Principals individually attended the meeting to present the points of celebration, performance outcomes and challenges facing their schools. The presentations were supported by various papers including: SOAPs, SEFs, SIPs, External SIA reports, Statements of Provision and the Director of Educations report.

CM as Chair of the committee provided a summary of the day, expressing gratitude and appreciation to the hard work undertaken by Principals and their schools. Concerns were expressed, with regard to LVA and GMA. A lack of clarity, coherence and purpose of structures, systems and protocols is evident at LVA. This needs to be urgently addressed. **Action:** DR/AW to produce a Leadership Capacity Support Plan, to be submitted to AL by 09.01. GMA is struggling with contextual challenges, in particular the changing nature of intake, staff absences and financial concerns. **Action:** TC/AW to produce to a fully-costed Recovery Plan to be submitted to AL by 09.01.

AW provided trustees with a brief summary from a recent BEST school Ofsted Inspection.

Risk Register

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

1.1.1: PBA build not formally taken over by BEST and a couple of minor issues outstanding.

Action: risk to remain but to be lowered from 2x3=6 → 1x3=3.

1.1.2: Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the inclusion of risk relating to Harper Vs Brazel at 3x3=9.

1.1.3: Decision: Risk relating to Coronavirus to remain 'as is' and reviewed in the Spring.

1.1.7: Action: Risk relating to climate change to reduce from 3x3=9 → 2x3=6

2.1.7: Decision: Trustees unanimously approved additional sentences re: introduction of dual authentication and commissioning of internal scrutiny for assurance of systems.

Policies for Approval

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

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the '*Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff*' Policy for BEST-wide use

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the 'BEST Safeguarding Policy Template' for BEST-wide use

Decision: Trustees unanimously approved the revised 'Complaints Policy (Trust level only)' for immediate use.

AL advised trustees that following a unanimous request from Principals, LL has produced a Complaints Policy template for schools for which appreciation has been received from Principals.

The Appraisal Policy is being revisited to address the criteria for 'exceptional circumstances' in which you would pay a Principal up to 25% above their scale; Horizon HR are supporting with this. The revised Policy will be in place for the next set of appraisal meetings.

Consultation on Change of Age Range for Lawnside Academy

Pre-read: LSA Consultation Responses List document distributed prior to the meeting

'4-week statutory consultation was held between 1 November 2022 to 29 November 2022 in accordance with DfE 'Making a significant change to an open academy – Departmental guidance for all types of academy trust' January 2022.

Statutory consultees included parents of children who attended the school, parents in the area and schools in the area. Additional consultees included CBC Director of Children's Services and CBC Admissions Manager. The local community were informed through publication of consultation events via the BEST website, school website and all social media platforms. The LA were also provided with details of the consultation in advance.

Open consultations were held at the school on Monday 21 November 2022 and Wednesday 23 November 2022 – one morning and one after school session to maximise opportunity to attend.

Three questions were raised via email – see respondent's list provided for the meeting. All respondents have been contacted to answer any questions. Questions raised at the open meetings are not included within the document, CS provided a verbal update within the meeting, documented below.

A local resident approached CBC and the school during the consultation period to raise their concern about the impact on the local area including traffic congestion. CBC and the school contacted the resident to invite them to BEST's open meeting and offer the opportunity to discuss the proposals with either the Principal or COO/CS.

Two consultations led by CS with the LSA Principal have taken place. Two people attended the first meeting with practical queries to understand their child's school journey. Nine people attended the second consultation, of which eight were supportive; the ninth has practical objections in regards to building works/access owing to their residency location. The statutory consultation has now been completed and will sent by CBC as part of a package to DfE.

CS shared development plans with trustees. The initial plans were denied by BEST as they would have encroached the playground. However, revised plans for a six classroom one storey block, a larger MUGA, a larger playground and the possibility of a new reception area is pleasing. Plans will go to CBC Executive on 7 February for sign-off. LSA will convert to a Primary in September 2024, by which time, development works should be complete.

2Tier Update

Pre-read: 2Tier Progress Tracker document distributed prior to the meeting.

- PBA, ETA and SWA all have surplus provision for transition – no feasibility studies required
- LVA have transitioned to primary – the PAN is being reviewed again. Trustees discussed their concerns.
- GMA meeting challenging in regards to how the school would cope on its current site with no date for the new build yet established
- CMA funding has been approved – new build ready Sept 2024 as lower, transition to primary Sept 2025
- LSA plans agreed for submission to CBC executive for approval in February 2023
- GHA showing no concerns
- RBA and GMA still have a lot of work to be done
- ETA sixth form is on track for completion and opening in September 2023
- CBC project lead leaving creates instability and maybe even delays with a possible programme reset, should the person who takes over deem necessary.

Buildings are phase one, there is still much work to be done on pupil flow/revenue – no answers yet.

Growth Strategy

Pre-read: BEST Growth Strategy document distributed prior to the meeting

BEST have been approached by two schools who are interested in joining us. Whilst BEST can afford not to grow and much time is currently spent on 2Tier, there would be benefits to growth, such as better standardisation, in which teams can be built to drive improved performance outcomes. Furthermore, the white paper recommending 7500 pupils as the ideal MAT size, BEST currently has 5500 pupils.

Question: Does the Central team have capacity to expand further?

Answer: Yes, the SI team continues to grow year on year; the finance team has grown also.

With due diligence it would take at least 12 months for BEST to onboard a new school.

Decision: Trustees concluded that caution should be exercised not to chase revenue. However, the benefits of a strong school joining the trust could be advantageous for BEST and trustees are happy for Central Executive to explore conversations with interested schools further and feedback.

Next Meeting: 10:00am on Tuesday 24 January 2023 at BEST House

J. Bond

Approved and electronically signed 24/01/23