

Dove House School Board of Trustees
Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 8th December 2020

Present:	Category:
Juliet Annesley-Gamester (JAG)	Parent Trustee
Kevin Barwick (KB)	Community Trustee
Sian Butler (SB)	Community Trustee
Dave Dupont (DD) Items 1-11	Acting Headteacher
Andrea Francis (AF)	Community Trustee
Lisa Goodall (LG) (Chair)	Parent Trustee
Ollie Killinger (OK)	Community Trustee
Emma Layzell (EL)	Co-opted Trustee
Debbie McLatch (DM)	Community Trustee
Kate Need (KN)	Co-opted Trustee
Ryan Williams (RW)	Staff Trustee
Apologies:	
Neil Plant (NP)	Co-opted Trustee
In Attendance:	
Jenny Burns (JB) Items 1-5	Finance & Resources Director
Jayne Humphrey (JH)	Governance Lead
Roger Melody (RM) Items 1-5	Interim CFO

1. Welcome & Apologies.

The Chair welcomed trustees to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Neil Plant.

The meeting was quorate. It was noted that agenda item papers had been provided in advance of the meeting.

2. Pecuniary Interests

The acting Headteacher advised that he would have a conflict of interest in item 11, relating to a confidential staffing matter. No other interests were declared in the agenda items.

Trustees confirmed that they did not have any new declarations to make.

3. Approval of Minutes

Trustees agreed that the minutes of the meeting of the 13th of October 2020, 22nd October 2020 and 17th November 2020 were true and accurate records and these will be signed by the Chair.

4. Matters Arising

No	Action	Update
10/12/19 Action 7 Item 7	Growing Basingstoke: Karen Ollive to ascertain whether the volunteer DHSAs link club members have been through the induction process and signed the code of conduct from the volunteer policy. Email response agreed. The trustees had been provided with a full update from the HR Officer which outlined that the process was not in place at all. The trustees asked that the matter stays on the Action Tracker until the school can confirm that the volunteer policy and process is in place and completed. 15/9/20: The HR Officer advised that it is not yet complete but is working on it. Action to be carried forward. 13/10/20: Item still in progress	8/12/20 The Acting Headteacher (DD) advised that the policy is in place and the process has been embedded. He confirmed that volunteers have completed and signed the appropriate paperwork. NFA
15/9/20 Action 2 Item 6	Agreement of Committees and Link Roles: The Chair and Governance Lead will explore options in conjunction with the Acting Headteacher and report back to the Board. 13/10/20: The Chair advised that she, the acting Headteacher and Governance Lead had a brief discussion and will aim to bring a proposal to the next meeting. Item carried forward to 8/12/20 meeting	Agenda item 8/12/20. NFA
15/9/20 Action 10 Item 19	Consideration of the Appraisals Option for the Privett Centre: The Finance & Resources Director will obtain advice from a property expert which includes the disposal mechanisms for the Privett Centre. Quotes for the action will be sourced and delivered to the Finance, Resources & Audit committee. 13/10/20: Action with RM to progress. Item carried forward to the 8/12/20 meeting.	See update response below
13/10/20 Action 1 Item 6	SIP: The Acting Headteacher will review and simplify the SIP before bringing it back for discussion and	Agenda item 8/12/20. NFA

	approval at the next Board meeting. Item carried forward to 8/12/20 meeting	
13/10/20 Action 2 Item 9c	Skills Audit: All trustees to check their training records and undertake the appropriate courses.	Completed. NFA

Interim CFO Report regarding Action 10 (Item 19 15/9/20) Consideration of the Appraisals Option for the Privett Centre.

The Interim CFO had provided a brief report regarding the progress that he had made for this action. He advised the Board that since writing his report he had been made aware that the exterior of the Privett building requires urgent repairs to avoid further deterioration of the property, in the winter period.

He advised that the school has obtained a quote from a Chartered Surveyor of £2000 for a survey of the building which would include investigation of a crack that has appeared in a wall (possibly indicating subsidence) and to provide a professional opinion as to what emergency works and repairs are required. He advised the Board that they would need to consider the cost of the survey and any remedial works which he indicated could be approximately £6k.

Q: When you spoke to the agents regarding the potential disposal of the property did they give an indication as to how limiting the covenant was going to be and any possible valuation with and without it?

A: No, they didn't. I had correspondence with 3 agents, but there was a lack of interest on their part once they were aware there was a covenant. My own view as a layman would be that without the covenant it could be worth £500k, bearing in mind its size and location.

Trustees discussed:

- Whether the report provided covered the action requested on the 15th of September minutes.
- The confusion between their expectation and what had been delivered. Trustees then clarified that they had already made the decision that the Privett Centre should not remain operational.
- Their expectation that the school would "obtain advice from a property expert which included the possible disposal mechanisms for the Privett Centre". In lay terms this would be "we've made a strategic decision to dispose of the Privett Centre – please tell us our options for how to go about doing this".
- That their choice of surveyor was crucial in providing the guidance and strategy required.

The Board asked the Finance & Resources Director to continue with the process and to contact Debbie McLatch if she required any assistance in understanding the brief in detail.

The Interim CFO advised trustees that whilst exploring the academy's purchase of the Privett Centre he had not been able to ascertain whether the school had obtained ESFA approval to acquire the property. He noted that this may be problematic if a sale goes ahead.

A trustee raised whether the repairs should go ahead in the meanwhile. There was a discussion encompassing:

- The nature of the issues identified and potential repairs.
- That Corrigenda Ltd who provides the school's property service level agreement have viewed the building and recommended that a surveyor provides a formal report.
- Whether it is good value for money to pay for a survey pending a disposal strategy which is likely to include the costs to repair the building.
- Whether the building poses a H&S risk in the view of Corrigenda.
- Whether the DHSA Site Manager believes the building is a H&S risk and whether he is able to provide an opinion.
- The normal approach the school takes to ascertain whether repairs are required and can be completed in-house or via an external contractor.
- Whether any emergency repairs could be carried out by the DHSA Site Manager, if necessary.
- The risk that the property falls further into disrepair over the winter, whilst the Board await the disposal strategy.

The Chair noted that the discussion had moved away from the strategic decision of the disposal of the Privett Centre to one relating to the day-to-day operations of the school. It was agreed that the matter would be left with the school to resolve with the Interim CFO reverting to Corrigenda in the first instance.

5. Approval of Annual Report & Accounts

KB provided a brief introduction of the process of production of the annual report and accounts. He noted that all trustees had been provided with the opportunity to attend a Finance, Resources & Audit committee meeting attended by the Academy's accountants Wise & Co to ask questions.

KB continued to advise that the FRA committee had reviewed the annual report and accounts and were able to recommend them for approval. He outlined the process for completion of the process.

The Chair noted that there were no control issues or recommendations reported in the management letter from Wise & Co to the trustees, following the audit. This indicates that the accountants are satisfied with the way in which the school is managing its finances.

The Chair asked the Board of Trustees to vote to approve the annual report and accounts. **The annual report and accounts were unanimously approved.**

Jenny Burns and Roger Melody left the meeting.

6. Headteacher's Report

Trustees thanked the Acting Headteacher for the production of his report noting that it was very clear and informative.

A trustee noted how positive it was that attendance has remained so strong, with there being hardly any difference even with Covid.

The Acting Headteacher invited questions:

Q: Your report indicates that some staff reported a negative experience with the performance management training. Please could you expand as to how many staff this was and how this has been addressed to ensure that staff are comfortable with the process?

A: It was raised as a concern at the staff forum because a particular comment and presentation graphic was not well received and had caused unrest.

RW said that some colleagues had been upset by the use of a "bell curve distribution" graphic and had expressed the view that the school had been graded outstanding four times in a row because the staff are outstanding. He advised trustees that it was a powerful comment, which may have been misjudged but other than that the training was professional and consistent with performance management training he had received before in education.

JAG advised the Board that she had attended 30 minutes of the training session and in her view, what she saw was professional and succinct. She noted that during a school visit she had received feedback from some staff that they had been appreciative of the training. She said it was a shame that one comment had overshadowed all of the good work undertaken in professionalising the performance management process as there was much to celebrate.

The Acting Headteacher assured the trustees that staff had been positive regarding the first session of training for reviewers and the Governance Lead reported that she had also received positive feedback.

A brief discussion took place as to whether trustees should address the staff regarding the training, but it was noted that the matter was operational and should be managed proportionately by the Senior Leadership Team.

Q: I was concerned from the stress audit that staff have raised concerns such as unhygienic toilets, unclean rooms and an untidy site. The Pay & Performance committee have been assured that difficult conversations are now undertaken where necessary, so are these issues being addressed through the performance management process using our capability policy if necessary?

A: We have had issues with cleaning and are currently running a procurement process for our cleaning service. There are many factors to consider including staff sickness and job descriptions, but the situation is being actively managed. Most recently we have had cleaners with long term sickness and some who had to self-isolate. At one point we had just two cleaners covering the whole site. Staff cleaned for a period instead.

Q: Bearing in mind the extra cleaning and hygiene precautions because of Covid, what impact has the lack of cleaning had on staff in the school?

A: It did have a big impact as staff volunteered to clean C block for two weeks whilst the cleaning team self-isolated. We have a daily cleaner in post who covers the Covid cleaning around the school and that has helped. Staff still have to clean tables and chairs in their rooms between pods and that does put pressure on them.

It was noted that Post 16 students have been clearing and tidying the school site and Privett Centre site as part of their work experience, whilst they are restricted because of Covid. Trustees noted their thanks, and asked the Governance Lead to send a note of thanks to Post 16 and also to the staff who had cleaned C block recently.

ACTION 1: The Governance Lead will send thank you emails as directed.

Q: How will the stress audit be monitored and evaluated to make changes and how will the stress audit fit in with the agreed staff well-being questionnaire, which had wide ranging questions that will allow us to monitor trends?

A: The Acting Headteacher advised that this was a separate survey sent out to ascertain what things were causing stress to staff now in the Covid pandemic. He advised that some issues that had been flagged had already been addressed.

A discussion took place incorporating:

- Examples of the questions that had been used in the staff well-being questionnaire.
- That the questions need to be worded to obtain quantitative data that can be measured, analysed and may show trends.
- That the free form box which allows for qualitative comments remains.
- That the agreed staff questionnaire took 3 minutes to complete on average.
- The frequency of the delivery of the survey needing to be tailored to workload.
- The usefulness of surveys and how the Board uses the data.

The Acting Headteacher agreed that the school will send the staff well-being survey in the spring term, noting that this was a responsibility of the new Finance & Resources Director.

This decision and action was superseded by further discussion and actions during the confidential section of the Board meeting and will be monitored as part of the confidential actions.

Q: With regard to our Pupil Premium Grant, how do we understand if we're achieving the impact we're seeking from our chosen initiatives?

A: (DD) We can look at the gap between our students who are classed as Pupil Premium and those that aren't and there is barely any difference between them. Most schools have a very wide gap between the cohorts and Ofsted look at this. (JH) The school website displays a Pupil premium strategy statement which includes evidence of impact, which you can look at. (JAG) Literacy progress is measured to show that the intervention has been successful.

It was noted from the Headteacher Report that the SCITT Programme Director had issued an open invitation to trustees to meet the trainees at a central training session. The Governance Lead confirmed that the SCITT Programme Director has an agenda slot at the February Board meeting.

7. School Improvement Plan Discussion & Approval

The Chair thanked the Acting Headteacher for the revised School Improvement Plan (SIP) acknowledging the time and effort that had been spent in amending it to a clear document that could be used for monitoring. The Acting Headteacher thanked Ryan Williams and Jayne Humphrey for their assistance in completing the task.

A trustee noted that some of the monitoring dates needed to be amended and the Acting Headteacher advised that he was waiting for approval of the design and content of the plan and will then amend accordingly. The Acting Headteacher was asked to include the previously discussed staff well-being questionnaire to the SIP.

JAG expressed concern that the SIP section 3.A1 describes that "All staff to have had their objectives set by 30.11.20 and have confirmed their job description to be accurate". She asked if this has been achieved as it had been raised at the recent Pay & Personnel committee meeting that not all staff had agreed their job descriptions, and some staff were awaiting their objective setting meeting.

The Acting Headteacher confirmed that objectives have been set for all staff except for 4, 2 of which are absent through illness and 2 who are new starters. He advised

that there a number of job descriptions that are contentious which are currently being reviewed.

Q: Do the owners of actions know that they are “the owners”?

A: Most of them do, because the owners tend to be the SLT, however once the SIP is approved I will share it with staff and ensure that “the owners” are aware of the contents and monitoring dates.

Q: If some staff aren’t aware, have the priorities been fed into the performance management objective setting process for the school?

A: They have been included within objectives as the priorities haven’t fundamentally changed since the first draft which was shared with you. They have been streamlined with slightly amended wording.

Q: Having noted the Post 16 priority 1.B5 and the loss of work placements due to Covid restrictions, should the Board be concerned about whether there will be a drop in student numbers selecting Post 16 next year?

A: I don’t believe so as many of our Year 11 students have identified Post 16 as their chosen placement and have stated that on their EHCP. In terms of what we can offer, if necessary Post 16 will reduce the hours offered to the statutory requirement of 16 hours and will provide an adapted curriculum. Hampshire LA have approved some funding for current Year 13s to remain again but we haven’t yet finalised all of the details.

KN noted that in her experience there are creative ways to provide the employability skills and work experience that is required for the students. KN advised the Board that she has a visit scheduled for January in her link role capacity and will provide a report in due course.

A trustee asked if the risk is captured within the school’s risk register and a brief discussion took place. A consensus emerged that there wasn’t a risk of a fall in places taken up, but more around the offering.

A discussion took place regarding whether the SIP should be approved or not by the Board of Trustees and different opinions were shared. The Governance Lead provided guidance, sharing information from The Key for School Governors:

“Although there's no formal requirement for the governing board to approve the SIP, the Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed that this should be a key part of the Board’s strategic function.”

The Chair asked trustees to vote to approve the SIP, with the amendments that have been discussed. **The SIP was approved unanimously.**

ACTION 3: The Acting Headteacher will amend the monitoring dates and rag rating for those sections of the plan that require it and will include the staff well-being questionnaire.

8. Performance Management Process Report

The Chair of the Performance & Pay committee gave a brief overview of the Performance Management report highlighting:

- That improvements have been made.
- That the external moderator had provided assurance.
- That a trustee visit will be included in the trustee visit schedule, for monitoring purposes.

The Acting Headteacher noted that the school were now using the new process, that reviewers recognised that objective setting had not previously been SMART and that further training is being provided in the New Year. He advised that he was confident that improvements will continue.

No questions were asked.

9. Governance

a) Chair's Notes

The Chair advised trustees that since the last meeting, her actions have been:

- Meeting with the Acting Headteacher fortnightly to keep up to date with developments in school, focussing on Covid.
- Focussing on organisation of the school's interim support for next term.
- Attendance at a Better Governor Webinar, with notes to follow.

The Chair advised the Board that they will not be able to hold the planned Mince Pie & Mulled Wine event as intended and asked for suggestions in how the end of term could be marked.

After discussion it was agreed that trustees would make a financial contribution if they were able to, so that the Chair could purchase a small gift for each member of staff and that AF would make a label with a seasonal thank you message.

b) Committee Structure

The Chair presented a proposal regarding the possibility of introducing a curriculum committee, which had been considered by the Chair, Acting Headteacher and Governance Lead. She advised the trustees that the

recommendations was that curriculum items be included within the trustee visit schedule for 2020-21.

A discussion was held regarding the merits of each suggested option. KB expressed his view that the suggested option aligned to his recent induction training from Hampshire Governor Services where they recommended focussed, purposeful visits that are pre-planned.

A consensus evolved that the recommendation was accepted by the Board.

c) Headteacher Recruitment Update/Interim Support

The Chair advised that regrettably it has taken longer than anticipated to complete the legal formalities of the employment contract for the Interim Headteacher and secondment contract for the Interim Head of School. The Chair reported that as soon as this is complete an announcement will be made to the trustees, members, staff and parents/carers.

d) Finance, Resources & Audit Committee

The minutes of the previous meeting were noted. KB advised that:

- Management accounts are being produced monthly, with a target date of the 20th.
- The September and October management accounts show expenditure tracking against the budget.
- The current information currently lacks an out-turn projection and KB will discuss this with JB.
- That RM and JB will be meeting between Christmas and New Year to ensure there is a smooth transition.

No questions were asked.

e) Personnel & Pay Committee

The minutes of the previous meeting were noted. No questions were asked.

f) Trustee Visits

The Chair noted that it was agreed that the Governance Lead would produce a schedule of trustee visits using the School Improvement Plan to inform it.

A H&S visit report had been submitted by RW, link trustee. RW further reported that:

- He has undertaken a site visit since the tabled report.
- That statistics show more defects and near miss reporting is happening, indicating that staff awareness is increasing.

RW was thanked by colleagues for his informative report which had provided assurance to the Board.

g) Trustee Training

The Governance Lead had supplied the updated training log. She asked that trustees book themselves on to the core courses that had been discussed and agreed at the last meeting.

The Chair encouraged trustees to take the opportunity to undertake courses whilst they are being held online to save travelling time. The Governance Lead reminded trustees that they have access to the NGA Learning Link and there are a large number of very useful courses which can be undertaken.

10. Policy Reviews

a) Safeguarding Policy

The Governance Lead advised trustees that the Safeguarding policy had been provided by the Hampshire Safeguarding Board and has been contextualised for risks that are more likely for DHSAs students. She further advised that a section has been included regarding transportation of students.

Q: Are there ever any occasions where staff transport students for trips?

A: No, it is for emergency use only.

The policy was approved unanimously.

b) First Aid Policy

The Governance Lead advised that the policy had been reviewed by herself, the Welfare Officer, the H&S Coordinator and the Acting Headteacher. She advised that the policy had worked well in the last 12 months, that there hadn't been any issues and therefore only job titles had been amended.

The policy was approved unanimously.

c) Staff Pay Policy

The Governance Lead advised that this was a Hampshire model policy with no changes made. The policy had been reviewed by the Personnel & Pay committee and was being recommended for approval.

The policy was approved unanimously.

d) Data Protection Policy

The Governance Lead advised that this was a model policy from the school's DPO advisory service Judicium Education which had been personalised to fit practices at DHSAs.

The policy was approved unanimously.

Dave Dupont left the meeting at 7.14 pm.

11. Confidential Staffing Item

This was recorded under a separate confidential minute.

12. Any Other Business

The meeting closed at 8.04 pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....

**Summary of Actions from:
Meeting of Tuesday 8th December 2020**

No	Action	Who?
15/9/20 Action 10 Item 19	Consideration of the Appraisals Option for the Privett Centre: Updated narrative within the minutes from the meeting. Action now sits with JB to progress further. Item carried forward to the 02/02/21 meeting.	JB
8/12/20 Action 1 Item 6	HT Report: The Governance Lead will send thank you emails as directed to Post 16 and staff that cleaned during the absence of cleaners.	JH
8/12/20 Action 3 Item 7	SIP: The Acting Headteacher will amend the monitoring dates and rag rating for those sections of the plan that require it and will include the staff well-being questionnaire.	DD