

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BoD) OF THE RURAL CHURCH SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST (RCSAT) HELD AT WARMINGHAM VILLAGE HALL**

 **ON 8th MARCH 2022**

(Commenced 4pm)

**Directors in Attendance:**

P Bostock (PB) Chair of Board of Directors

N Badger (NB) Executive Headteacher

S Loughlin (SL)

**Also in Attendance:**

B Brockbank (BB) Chair St Oswald’s LGC,

M Gate (MG) Chair Warmingham LGC

J Jones (JJ) Trust Business Manager

H Cummings (Clerk)

**PART ONE**

1. **APOLOGIES AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB) ITEMS**

Apologies were received and accepted from Andrew Denton.

The following items of additional business were agreed:

* GDPR
* RCSAT website
* Good Estates Management Tool
* Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA)
* Pay Scales (Part two)
1. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The following conflict of interest was declared in relation to the business to be discussed at the meeting:

* S Loughlin is related to the School Improvement Partner/ External Adviser

General declarations of interest were recorded in full on GovernorHub and the clerk confirmed that all Directors’ declarations had been updated since September 2021.

**ACTION: JJ to check that declarations on the Trust website were up to date.**

1. **MEMBERSHIP**

**Directors**

Directors noted, with regret, the resignation of Anne James on 5th January 2022.

The Chair briefed Directors on the discussion at the recent Members’ AGM, around the need for additional Directors. It was agreed that it was important to get a balance of business/finance skills with knowledge of the Education sector and decided to go out to the local community to seek suitable candidates.

There were no terms of office due to expire before the next Directors’ meeting.

**Local Governors**

Directors **approved** the move of Rebecca Alexander from the Warmingham LGC to St Oswald’s LGC. Her term of office remained unchanged.

Directors **approved** the move of Piers Bostock from St Oswald’s LGC to Warmingham LGC. It was again noted that this was a temporary appointment until autumn 22.

Directors confirmed the appointments of Cormac Henry and Alex Camm, agreed by email on 11th February, to the Warmingham LGC.

Directors reviewed the completed skills audit forms available on GH, and **approved** the following appointments to the LGCs:

Co-Opted governors

* Bunbury – Graham Melia
* St Oswald’s – Sue Simcock

Their terms of office would be from 8/3/22 to 7/3/26.

Directors noted that the appointment of Graham Melia was to replace Rev Tim Hayward, who was also a Member, and would now step down from the LGC.

The appointment of Sue Simcock was to replace Andrew Denton who would now step down from St Oswald’s LGC as originally planned.

**ACTION: Clerk to update membership records and GovernorHub.**

Directors confirmed that The RCSAT Business Manager would update GIAS and arrange for all the necessary checks to be completed.

**ACTION: School to set up email addresses and initiate checks**

It was noted that checks had not been completed for Cormac Henry and Lesley Davies as the necessary paperwork was still outstanding.

**ACTION: Clerk to contact CH and LD.**

1. **PART ONE MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The part one minutes of the previous meeting on 29th November 2021 were **agreed** as a true record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising

* The **Code of Practice** had been uploaded, and governors asked to confirm their acceptance, but a number were still outstanding.

**ACTION: Clerk to follow-up with governors outstanding.**

* The constitution of the **EHTs Performance Management Panel** for 21/22 was agreed as follows:
* Sheila Loughlin
* Lesley Davies
* Malcolm Gate
* Brenda Brockbank
* The letter regarding delays in processing **EHCP applications** had been put on hold, as things had improved recently.
* **Data triangulation meetings** with Principals and LGC Chairs had taken place, but it had been agreed that the SIP would not attend but would instead look at the impact of measures put in place as a result of the meetings. The first of these SIP visits was scheduled at Warmingham on 15th March.
* The HR Leave and Time Off procedure had been reviewed by SL and SW and sent to HR for checking. They had approved the policy but advised that it should be submitted to the unions for approval before being implemented.

All other actions on the action log had been completed.

1. **CHAIR’S POWER TO ACT**

The Chair had contacted Tim Mansion, Chair of the board at Smallwood Academy, who had previously expressed an interest in joining RCSAT. A Board meeting at Smallwood was scheduled for 21st March, after which he would update PB.

The Chair had also contacted the Master of Haberdashers to see whether they would consider taking a sponsorship role in the Trust. Directors agreed that if such a proposal were to be made, it would need to be given careful consideration.

1. **PART ONE REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND REPORTS FROM GOVERNORS WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Directors had reviewed the minutes from each of the LGC meetings, and the Chairs highlighted the following areas:

**St Oswald’s**

BB summarised the main points of the meeting and noted that a number of governors had since attended a Health & Safety walk-around. It had been suggested that the dividing wall in the mobile classroom be removed to reduce the pressure in Early Years, and the school was awaiting a quote from the owners of the mobile.

There had been a discussion around the secondment of the school cook, and Directors heard that she was now back in school.

With regard to the plans for a new classroom, BB noted that the bat survey had been completed, but 2 further surveys would be required in May and September. The plans had been re-submitted showing the obscured windows, but there were still objections from neighbours and no date had been given for a decision on the planning application. The outcome of the CIF (Condition Improvement Fund) bid was expected sometime between March and May.

**Warmingham**

The committee had welcomed new members and MG had emphasised the need for governors to familiarise themselves with the school’s development priorities and curriculum. In particular, the rationale for the curriculum. Governors had been directed to the school website where the information was available and were encouraged to attend upcoming training on Effective School visits.

NB offered to arrange training for local governors on the curriculum, and it was agreed that this would be useful for governors at all three schools.

**Bunbury**

In the absence of the LGC Chair, NB reported that the meeting had received presentations on RE and Ethos & Spirituality, relating to a key priority in the school’s SDP. Governors had scrutinized data and requested additional data in future to provide context and allow them to identify the impact of the pandemic. The meeting had also discussed the urgent need for the staff car park, and Section 106 funding from local housing developments. NB informed Directors that she had subsequently contacted Cheshire East and the local MP, having been told by Cheshire West that no funds had been allocated to the school.

**Question**: How much money are we talking about?

Response: We know that one developer alone paid £400K to Cheshire West, and as the development falls within Bunbury’s catchment area, a portion of that should come to the school.

**Directors agreed for Bunbury to work with Lancaster Maloney to prepare a planning application for a staff car park at Bunbury.**

**Safeguarding and SEND**

SL reported that she had met with the Trust Pastoral Manager to review Safeguarding and had signed the Single Central Records for all schools. Risk assessments for residential trips and staff awaiting DBS checks had also been approved.

Directors noted that responsibility for SEND at Director level would need to be re-allocated.

1. **FINANCIAL COMPLIANCE**

Directors confirmed the following:

1. The 2020/21 audited financial statements were published on the school website on 15th December 2021
2. The auditor’s management letter was submitted on 15th December 2021.
3. The 2020/21 accounts return was submitted on 21st January 2022
4. The Admissions arrangements and Appeals timetable for 2022 had been published on the school website by 28th February and a copy had been sent to the LA.

**Approvals:**

1. **Directors approved** the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist (SRMSAC) for submission by the deadline of 15th March.

**To review:**

1. Monthly Management Accounts had been reviewed on GovernorHub, up to and including January 2022. The meeting discussed appropriate financial reporting under the new governance structure and agreed that the detail of individual school budgets should be presented to the LGCs for monitoring. However, Directors would retain oversight of the MMAs for the three schools and the Trust, and approval of all financial matters remained with the Board of Directors.
2. Directors reviewed the budget forecast on GovernorHub, noting that the forecast for all three schools had improved significantly with the announcement of additional funding for 2022/23. In particular, both Warmingham and St Oswald’s would benefit from Sparsity funding. Supplemental funding that had been promised to cover the increase in costs had not been included. It was hoped to get details of this in the next few weeks, but Directors acknowledged that it was likely to be used in covering increased energy costs.
3. Directors heard that the Covid-19 Catch Up Premium, Recovery Premium and School-led Tutoring funds would be reported on in full as part of the Pupil Premium reporting.
4. **PART ONE EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER’S REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING**

The EHT’s report had been circulated on GH in advance of the meeting and NB added the following:

* The admissions process for each school had been completed and numbers for the Reception intake for September 22 were looking very good.
* The pupil numbers given in the report included 7 new pupils admitted to Bunbury following the closure of The White House Independent school in Whitchurch.
* Good feedback had been received following visits from CDBE, and NB had been invited to speak to the boards of 3 schools with a potential interest in joining RCSAT.
* NB had been working with B Padgett on ‘Local Matters’; part of a research project with Manchester University looking at the curriculum in relation to disadvantaged children. Bunbury’s experience was felt to be important as a school in an affluent area with a small number of disadvantaged children.
* Work was continuing to achieve the ‘Trauma Informed Schools’ award.
* IDSR training was planned for all 3 Principals to develop their skills in looking at reasons behind data and pre-empting questions that might arise.
* £1,200 had been received from the DfE to pay for a member of the SLT to complete mental health training.

Directors commented on the diagram on Page 8 of the report which was felt to be highly effective in representing the issues arising from the pandemic.

1. **SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2021/22**

Directors had reviewed progress through the RAG-rated school development plans which had been discussed at the LGC meetings earlier in the term.

1. **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PARTNER/EXTERNAL ADVISER**

The next visit of the School Improvement Partner was scheduled for 15th March.

1. **DIRECTOR’S REPORT AUTUMN 2021**

The Director’s Report had been circulated on GovernorHub earlier in the term and items raised as appropriate.

1. **GOVERNOR TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT**

The training needs of new local governors had been addressed by the Chairs of the LGCs, and details of how to access NGA training would be sent out.

Directors agreed that it would be helpful to have a training day where all local governors and Directors could work together looking at areas such as SEND, safeguarding and the curriculum.

**ACTION: NB to look for an appropriate date.**

1. **STRATEGIC GOVERNANCE**

It was agreed that HC should continue to clerk the LGC meetings for at least the next term. Clerking requirements for the next academic year would be reviewed in the summer term.

1. **SCHOOL POLICIES**

The following policies had been reviewed on GovernorHub and were **approved** by Directors:

* RCSAT-PR-003-03 Dignity and Respect
* RCSAT-PR-011-03 Low Level Concerns
* RCSAT-P-012-02 Allegations against Staff
* RCSAT-P-018-07 Sickness Management
* RCSAT-P-008 Data Protection
* RCSAT-P-003-02 Exclusions
* RCSAT-P-020 Equality Policy

RCSAT-PR-018-06 HR Leave & Time Off Procedure was approved by Directors subject to agreement from the Unions.

1. **PLANNED RESIDENTIAL VISITS**

There were no new residential visits requiring Director approval.

1. **MEETINGS**

The date of the next Board of Directors’ meeting was confirmed as 28th June 2022 at 4pm.

**ACTION: Clerk to update meeting schedule with new date.**

1. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**GDPR**

JJ reported one Subject Access Request and one Freedom of information request since September 2021. Refresher training for staff was scheduled for 21st March 2022, and JJ would email all governors about the training required.

**ACTION: JJ to email governors re GDPR training.**

**RCSAT website**

Directors discussed the best way to present governor information in light of the new governance structure. It was agreed that each school’s website should show the details for their LGC, with a link to the RCSAT website which would have details of Directors and Members.

**Good Estates Management**

JJ noted that the GEM Manual contained a lot of useful information and provided a good framework to bring information together. It was agreed that JJ would prepare a template for each school which could be discussed at the LGC meetings in the summer term.

**ACTION: Clerk to add GEM to LGC agendas for summer term.**

**Risk Protection Agreement (RPA)**

Directors heard that the RPA would provide cover for cyber attacks from September 2022. However, this was contingent on staff and governors completing the required online training, which would take approximately half an hour.

**ACTION: JJ to send link for training to SL.**

Part two minutes were recorded at this meeting.