



COPPICE PRIMARY PARTNERSHIP

PUBLIC MINUTES FOR THE 2022/2023 MEETING OF THE TRUST BOARD HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29TH MARCH

Trust Board present at the meeting held on 24th May 2023 approved these minutes as a true and accurate record, and signed on Governor Hub electronically

PRESENT

Carole Hardy (Chair)	John Edgar (Vice Chair)
Neil McDonald (Trustee)	Peggy Murphy (Trustee)
Andrew Maitland (Trustee)	Mark Chatley (CEO (Chief Executive Officer) and Trustee)

IN ATTENDANCE

Andy Lacey	Annamaria Potgieter
Carina Cuddington	Stacey Marsh (Governance Secretary)

PART A – PUBLIC MINUTES

Yellow highlighted text demonstrates challenge / questions to the Trust representatives

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 All parties were welcomed to the meeting;

1.2 Apologies were received and accepted from Isabelle Linney-Drouet

1.3 The meeting was nevertheless quorate throughout.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 All parties were given the opportunity to declare any additional declarations of interest against the agenda to which none were declared.

3. TRUST BOARD MEMBERSHIP

3.1 A proposal was put forward to reappoint Carina Cuddington as a Trustee with effect from the 2nd April; Members have already approved the proposal and Trustees unanimously supported this decision.

Action point 2; AL to complete CC appointment as Trustee with effect 2nd April 2023.

3.2 Currently the Trust Board is made up of 8 Trustees, which is not ideal in terms of decision making. CH, JE and MC have been in discussion to recruit an additional Trustee, and this is being explored through Inspiring Governance. This will support the succession planning for the Trust Board also.

Trustees questioned if there is a particular area that the new Trustee should have expertise in; The Trust Board already has individuals from a Finance, Health and Safety, Business and Governance, HR and School Professional backgrounds so ideally, they would be able to offer a different expertise; a building and estates professional would add a different area of expertise.

3.2.1 In previous discussions, Trustees have considered moving to 11 Trustees, and it was suggested for Trustees to explore this during this recruitment period, and it was agreed that this will need further consideration.

4. MINUTES AND ACTIONS

4.1 *Minutes*; Trustees present approved both the public and confidential minutes presented as a true and accurate record of the meeting that took place on the 7th February 2023.

4.2 *Actions*; Trustees discussed the action points that remain outstanding from the previous meeting on the 7th February.

4.2.1 *Action point 1*; CH has been in communication with a potential new Member and is in the process of arranging a meeting. *Carry forward*

4.2.2 *Action point 2*; Trustees were advised that the KCC safety valve has now been approved and plans outline how much money will be saved over the next 5 years. Within the report, there is reference made to a few projects within the plan that all focus on saving money, and this is expected to impact mainstream schools. There is also talk of EHCP's being reduced and currently there is a backlog that the LA (Local Authority) are addressing.

4.2.3 *Action point 6*; MC confirmed that the Health Needs for Children Who Cannot Attend School Policy has been checked and it the policy presented is in-line with the Key and has been approved by Forbes Solicitors so no further changes are required.

5. TRUST MATTERS

5.1 *IEB (Interim Executive Board) / Direction*; Having looked at data from St Katherine's School and where the school currently is, the IEB felt that it is appropriate for the IEB to continue until at least the summer term. During the IEB meeting this term this was discussed at length, and all members of the Board have agreed to continue supporting. CH has been acting as temporary Chair, and going forward CC has agreed to take over as Chair, and this will be effective from the 2nd April.

5.2 *Central Update*; This year the Trust has recruited additional support for the central team particularly within the HR remit; this is working well so far and has allowed the HR Officer to support with strategic matters. This is key to supporting the future of HR for the trust and the HR Officer is in the process of studying the CIPD level 5 qualification which is due to finish in January 2024. Following the completion of the course, the Trust will look to give notice to HR Connect with the aim that the HR Officer will take on more substantial HR responsibilities.

The Trust has had recent dealings with Brown Jacobson solicitors, and the Trust is planning to look at their support packages once they have moved away from HR Connect.

Trustees discussed the option to give notice sooner given how efficient Brown Jacobson are and they are not risk adverse which HR Connect have previously been.

Trustees fully supported the proposal for MC to discuss HR options with Brown Jacobson with the view to moving away from HR Connect in the near future.

Action point 3; MC to make changes to the structure chart so that the job roles are in a larger font.

5.2.1 Trustees discussed the additional support that MC feels would be appropriate for a Deputy Trust Leader role, however further considerations need to be explored, and Trustees were in full support of this in the future.

Trustees challenged the current Government's strategic direction for Trusts and Academies; Trustees were advised that currently the previously mentioned Trusts of 10 schools / 7500 children has since been removed and is no longer a high priority, however there are ongoing discussions with local entities around the Coppice Trust model.

5.3 *Coxheath Primary School Ofsted*; The recent Ofsted inspection report for Coxheath Primary School has now been published and shared with all staff across the Trust. An extended feedback session has taken place and has given the Senior Leadership Team the opportunity to reflected on other areas that were not included within the published report.

The key highlight from the report is around Behaviour and the school are very proud of this.

Considering the recent negative press that Ofsted has received, Mr Mazza considered how this was best presented to parents, and the report has been well received by parents and with a focus around celebrating the achievements of the school.

Trustees requested for their congratulations to be passed on to Coxheath Primary School.

6. LOCAL GOVERNING BODY UPDATES

6.1 *Loose Primary School*; At the term 4 LGB meeting, conversations took place around recruitment, specifically, a recent HLTA (High Level Teaching Assistant) vacancy where they did not appoint due to the individual not being able to supply their GCSE certificates. The new Headteacher, Mr Trevor North, felt that this needs some further guidance around exceptional circumstances given the current recruitment challenges, the LGB felt that in some instances the guidance was not clear and additional barriers were potentially being put in the way and stopping the schools from recruiting skilled individuals.

Action point 4; MC to investigate requirements around qualification certificates, particularly those who are working in the professional roles already.

6.1.1 Before and after school clubs were discussed at length, and Governors raised the question if the pricing is fixed across the trust. In addition to this, Governors also explored the possibility for the school to re-introduce voluntary contributions from parents to support the school. Trustees suggested that this would need careful consideration, particularly around the current cost of living crisis and the workload that this would entail to manage. Trustees also suggested that this would need to be a trust-wide decision rather than something that is in place in an individual school, and this may not suit all demographics.

6.1.2 Safer recruitment was discussed with reference to the requirement for Governors to have Safer Recruitment training. Trustees felt that this would not be necessary as there will be a school representative on a panel with the relevant Safer Recruitment qualifications.

6.1.3 Prior to the LGB meeting at both Loose Primary School and Coxheath Primary School, JE and MC presented an “approach to monitoring” presentation which was highly purposeful and well-received by Governors. The next steps are to produce a monitoring proforma for Governors to use and to bring consistency to the reports that Governors are producing following their visits.

Action point 5; MC to send approach to monitoring presentation to Trustees.

7. STRATEGIC DIRECTION

7.1 *Trust Leader Report*; **Trustees questioned how the Benenden Healthcare service has been received across the Trust**; This has been offered to all staff across the Trust and there has been a good level of take-up so far. Those that have not taken the service up have commented that they have access to the same healthcare through alternative channels already.

Action point 6; MC to provide specific figures for those accessing Benenden Healthcare at the next Trust Board meeting.

7.2 *Trademark Behaviours*; MC shared the work that he has undertaken following his recent appraisal whereby Trustees suggested for him to look at how the core Trust values can be more tangible. He has now written a set of 5 trademark behaviours for each value with a single page document for each; these can then be used more proactively within the schools.

Trustees collectively shared that whilst the detail is excellent, they would be concerned that the detail is too specific for schools and suggested that each value has a summary of behaviours that can be observed across the schools, and for SLT to hold people to account on.

Trustees suggested that this would be a purposeful piece of work to complete with the emerging Leadership team across the schools to look at how they see it operating and is a good opportunity to get them involved.

8. FINANCE

8.1 Looking at the Management accounts for August 2023, there has been a £172,000 increase because of capital projects, and the overall balance is circa £1.2m. For Loose Primary School and Coxheath Primary School there are in-year deficits because of the significant capital project spending.

8.1.1 Future budget forecasts have been challenging, and the information presented to Trustees is a “worst case scenario”. The finance team will continue looking at the budgets going forward, and as new updated figures are made available to them.

8.1.2 As discussed previously, £50,000 worth of Reserves have been invested into a high interest account. Barclays rejected the application to open a high interest account to invest £750,000 into as the Trust does not hold their main bank account with them. The finance team are now looking at a high interest account with NatWest as an alternative.

8.1.3 Following the previous meeting, Trustees have approved the proposal to move from SIMS to Arbor via email and the Arbor contract has now been signed with transition due to start in May 2023.

Arbor will support the existing use of My Concern and Confide.

8.1.4 The Gender Pay Gap report was presented to Trustees prior to the meeting, and this was unanimously approved for publication in-line with the statutory guidance.

8.1.5 In relation to Teacher Pay awards, a provisional figure has been calculated as 3%, however updated guidance is recommending for schools to increase this to 4.3% for Leadership scales plus a one-off payment of £1,000 for this year; 0.5% of this increase and the one-off payment will be funded by the DfE

Trustees challenged the impact that the one off £2,000 salary increase for Support staff will have; Normal practice is to uplift Kent Range 3 to the National Minimum Wage, however because of recruitment and retention crisis that the Trust continue to face, they have decided to bring forward pay rises to 1st April for all support staff. This will ensure that the Trust are competitive with academies; this will come at an additional expense to the Trust, however it is considered, as necessary.

8.1.6 The Trust will be moving to GDPRiS for the management of GDPR across the trust. The proposal was in-line with MC to sign off and the report has been presented to the Finance and Audit Committee. Moving to this new service provider will save approximately £4000.

9. EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

9.1 The committee is continuing to develop with those invited to attend having purposeful conversations and challenge.

9.1.1 SEND was discussed at length with particular focus around the how granular the data is; they are continuing to work with the LGB to explore further and to ensure that the right questions are being asked.

9.1.2 The Trust has now purchased a new Science curriculum and plans are being made around how this will be implemented across the schools.

9.1.3 Branwen Taylor undertook a review of individual school timetables which has highlighted differences across schools. She is working with the schools individually to streamline their timetables and ensure there is consistency from day to day. The Trust do not think it is appropriate to propose set times for each subject as the schools are all different. For example, Loose Primary School will have less time allocated to swimming because they have the pool on site, however Coxheath Primary School will take longer as they need to travel to a pool.

A key area of consideration is being given to the start of the school day and “soft starts” that were introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic are being evaluated if they need to continue. There has been an opportunity for schools to reflect on best practices and how other schools are starting the school day. Changes have already been implemented at Coxheath Primary School to improve the start of the day, and there are plans being made at St Katherine’s School to support the work around Maths that is a priority.

9.1.4 Trust training feedback was discussed, and suggestions were made on how to monitor effectiveness of training at the end of the sessions.

9.1.5 Discussions were made around the membership of the committee, and the process of how policies are approved, and to ensure that Governors are an essential link between the schools and the Trust which needs further consideration going forward.

Action point 7; Trustees to consider how to link LGB members to the Trust board for upskilling and succession planning.

10. SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS

10.1 Confide is now in place across all schools within the Trust to support low level concerns, and this has links with My Concern.

10.2 An external safeguarding review has been commissioned as good practice; these are now complete for Loose Primary School with some useful feedback for the school to consider.

10.3 MC has successfully re-completed Designated Safeguarding Lead training.

11. CHAIRS ACTIONS AND CORRESPONDANCE

11.1 CH confirmed that she has made no actions or correspondence since the term 3 Trust Board meeting.

12. GOVERNOR MATTERS

12.1 Trustees agreed to appoint Bev Evenden as an Associate Governor at Coxheath Primary School.

13. TRUSTEE TRAINING

13.1 Cyber security training for Trustees is a requirement of RPA insurance under GDPRs and this is linked to cyber-attacks. AL has communicated the training link to Trustees to complete.

MC and ILD have completed

Action point 8; All Trustees to complete Cyber Security e-learning before next Board meeting.

Action point 9; – AL to add PM and CC onto distribution list.

14. POLICIES AND IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

14.1 Trustees considered the policies presented by the Education and Curriculum Committee and agreed to approve all listed.

- Allegations against staff
- Attendance
- Complaints
- Safeguarding
- EYFS

14.2 *Risk Register*; AL confirmed that he has made the requested amendments following the previous Trust Board meeting.

14.3 *Health needs for children who cannot attend school policy*; Trustees agreed to approve the policy presented.

14.4 *Articles of Association*; Trustees discussed the attendance outlined within the Articles and challenged the section that states that attendance once every 6 months is acceptable.

14.4.1 In relation to attendance by video and telephone, Trustees concluded that in-person attendance is the preferred option, however accepted that there may be times where Trustees are only able to attend virtually, and this will need to be requested to the Trust Board Chair / Vice Chair for approval.

14.4.2 Trustees discussed increasing the size of the Trust Board from 9 Trustees to 11 and highlighted that moving to 11 would add further strength to the Trust Board, and committees, however by increasing to 11, this would be a potential detriment should the Trust grow. Trustees were also concerned that the tone of the meetings will change should the Board grow to 11.

In addition to the size of the Trust Board, Trustees also reflected on the strength of the Local Governing Bodies and how to future proof them for the future.

Trustees questioned how long it will take for the amendments to be approved by the ESFA, and suggested that it would be worthwhile changing to 11 with this update, however, to keep 2 positions as vacant to maintain the good working practices within the Trust Board and to allow for room for growth.

Action point 10; AL to liaise with the ESFA around amendments to the Articles of Association and to report back at the term 5 Trust Board.

15. CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

15.1 Confidential items including actions to be recorded within a separate set of confidential minutes.

16. MEETING CLOSE

16.1 All parties were thanked for their attendance and contribution at the meeting;

The meeting concluded.

ITEM	ACTION	OWNER	UPDATE
<i>Actions outstanding from 7th February 2023</i>			

1	CH to arrange meeting with new Member and report to Trust Board in term 5.	CH	
<i>Matters arising from term 4 meeting</i>			
2.	AL to complete CC appointment as Trustee with effect 2 nd April 2023.	AL	
3.	MC to make changes to the structure chart so that the job roles are in a larger font.	MC	
4.	MC to investigate requirements around qualification certificates, particularly those who are working in the professional roles already.	MC	
5.	MC to send approach to monitoring presentation to Trustees.	MC	
6.	MC to provide specific figures for those accessing Benenden Healthcare at the next Trust Board meeting.	MC	
7.	Trustees to consider how to link LGB members to the Trust board for upskilling and succession planning.	All Trustees	
8.	All Trustees to complete Cyber Security e-learning before next Board meeting.	All Trustees	MC complete ILD complete
9.	AL to add PM and CC onto distribution list.	AL	
10.	AL to liaise with the ESFA around amendments to the Articles of Association and to report back at the term 5 Trust Board.	AL	