

# **BISHOP OTTER ACADEMY TRUST**

## **Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 3.00pm**

*(Held via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions)*

Present: Jenny Barnard-Langston (JBL) – Chair  
Christine Bartley (CB)  
Matt Davis (MD)  
David Etherton (DE)  
Lesley Hurst (LH)  
Martin Lloyd-Williams (MLW)  
Stephen Paynter (SP)

Apologies: Nil

*(Members' comments / queries are denoted by ➤ followed by the query/comment written in italics)*

### **Welcome to all**

### **Declarations of interest**

No new interests declared

### **Apologies for absence:**

Nil.

### **Minutes of last meeting**

Members reviewed the minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 and approved that they were a true reflection of the meeting

- **Minutes approved.**

**Clerk**

### **Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)**

There were no matters arising.

### **St Andrew's request to join BOAT (Decision required)**

JD-L shared and summarised SP Stage 1 due diligence report regarding St Andrews:

There is no reason for BOAT not to move this process forward to the next stage of review. It is recommended to fully understand STAP financial and operational capabilities that a continual dialogue is established and any questions arising out of each review is answered independently of BOAT. SP reviewed the financials and costs of staffing and future commitments. STRAP need to undertake a review of all current and future agreements, contracts, and commitments. There is currently money in the Government Fund however it is unclear if there is planned spending for this.

Further analysis is required on staffing costs to understand the current and future commitment.

The following is a list of further information required prior to the final decision being made so BOAT can fully understand future arrangements.

- Review all staff contracts, benefits, and holiday entitlements,
- Pension, is there a deficit on non-teaching staff pension, if so, how much and will the deficit transfer,
- Employee disputes – A list of employee disputes, claims and future costs to the school.

### *Financial Plan – Stage 1 due diligence*

The summary information provided suggest that in 2022 STAP will run a deficit budget and reduce revenue balance. Further analysis is required to establish the reason; however, this might be revenue reserve management.

### *Chart of Accounts – cost center report (Actual v Budget)*

A review was undertaken of the Chart of Accounts. There were no significant concerns, however, there will be a need to understand the financial controls prior to transfer. BOAT should request that this document is supplied monthly moving forward.

### *Premises Development Plan*

There are several concerns with buildings which SP raised. Several projects with high priority are yet to received funding. Fire doors is a priority.

Overall SP suggests moving to the next stage with 2 recommendations:

- Chart of Accounts – BOAT should request that this document is supplied monthly moving forward.
- An independent risk assessment carried out on STAP to ensure the BOAT fully understand the risk criteria of the school.
- Ensure that any potential building plans which come with a financial burden are transparent before entering the agreement with BOAT.

DE confirmed that an independent 5-year fire risk assessment was carried out the week commencing 9<sup>th</sup> November which didn't identify the fires doors as a risk and has now been downgraded. Nothing of concern was identify during the assessment. A premises report from West Sussex has also been circulated to Trustees. It is a concern that BOAT would be liable for other schools' financial burden with regards to future premises or building works.

DE has also been in contact with Heather Broadbent regarding potential funding. Aided Schools for local authorities will not provide any money however an application can be made to the DofE after conversion.

- *With regards to SP recommendations, are there any that may create a financial cost to BOAT?* The roofs are expected to last another 30 years, the boilers are expected to last another 25 years. Key area are the canopies around the side which need maintenance however these are not essential and can be removed to reduce costs. There are no items that couldn't be covered within the year's budget.

Trustees were reminded of the current SCA Project, where 10% will need to be saved before conversation which is included in the diligence plan.

### *Annex 1 Pupil Numbers Forecast*

The current Year 6 has a low cohort. When they leave in July the numbers will grow as the new intake (reception class) will have higher numbers.

- *Can West Sussex provide projected pupil numbers?* This can be investigated. It cannot be assumed that reception numbers will be at 30 per class for 2022.

## **• Investigate predicted numbers for 2022 intake**

**DE**

### *Financial Planning*

Revenue balance brought forward for the current academic year 2021-22 is £74,414.

It should be noted that the in-year balance for 2019-20 was £-18.6k (deficit) but this was to reduce revenue reserves from £80k to £61.4k. Reasons for the deficit is in a partial year there was a large carry forward which was partially spent.

DE explained reasons and proposed remediation for any actual or forecast revenue deficit.

- *In year deficit because of the reduction of reserves, what was this money spent on? Was it general spent across all cost center or was it used for specific areas? Capital expenditure in terms of building projects, IT equipment and fluctuation of staffing and insurance income covering staff who have been off sick.*

Trustees should be mindful that the DofE will spend considerable time investigating the schools' finances. They would raise any concerns about schools joining the trust with any deficits.

- *Why is spend on teaching staff as a percentage of total expenditure so low at 54.4%? Other schools' percentages are very high as its likely they have too many teaching assistants. The school has trained up high level teaching assistant which has helped reduce the cost of supply. This has been benchmarked against the DofE information that is publicly available.*

3.38pm SP joined the committee meeting.

JB-L thanked SP for his report and confirmed the information he provided has been transferred to the DofE template. She advised SP that LH has spoken with the Diocese regarding building concerns and is now confident there is no huge risks moving across considering 10% of the payment from the governors on the existing project will be invoiced prior to conversion. This would be a condition of the conversion that the invoice is paid before conversion.

SP explained that it is important to know all the liabilities. Non-teaching pensions are in deficit in West Sussex, and this is expected to transfer across and will need to be filled in the future.

JB-L suggested to the members that St Andrews now proceeds to join BOAT, taking onboard all the caveats SP highlighted. It is a concern that St Andrews can spend money in the meantime however this would be questioned by BOAT and St Andrews would have to justify the spend.

Committee members agreed to progress with DE submitting the report to the DofE.

• **DE to submit report to DofE**

**Clerk**

### **Learning Partnership update:**

DE has met with CEO and CFO of Bishop Luffa Learning Partnership (an established Single Academy Trust which has just taken on a primary school in Chichester to become a Multi Academy Trust) who have agreed to support and guide BOAT with finances for an initial period. DE has reviewed the academies financial handbook and verified who is responsible for what. The next stage is to work out costs for what has been agreed and this will be put forward to the Trustees for consideration.

It was agreed SP will be involved the arrangements.

- *There was significant upfront costs with set up which declined when costs would become monthly? The most challenging item for becoming a Multi Academy Trust is the finances and it would be beneficial for the Trust to have support and guidance from an already adapted MAT with the same ethos.*

LH left the meeting at 3.45pm

### **Recruitment**

The Governors at St Andrews School have met and shortlisted the current Acting Head as future Head for St Andrews. The panel, DE and LH will meet next week to discuss the appointment.

The Governors at StNM will also have to restructure with a Head Teacher and 2 Deputy Heads being appointed. This will not take effect until Trustees have made decision regarding leadership positions within the Trust. Other positions within the school which will need appointing are an executive head/accounting officer and a finance officer. Appointment can be subject to schools' conversion. A meeting will be held in the New Year without DE being present.

DE circulated pay scales (DE current scale, Acting Head of StNM and St Andrews pay scales) to J-BL and LH with permission, secondly information from Confederation of School Trusts around executive pay and benchmarking and CEP job description.

### **Date of next BOAT meetings**

The next meeting will be held on:

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 12.30pm.

Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> February at 12.30pm.

A separate meeting will be held without DE present on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> January at 12.30pm.

### **Closing Prayer**

The meeting close in prayer and wise words.

### **Any other business**

There were no other items of business, and the Chair closed the meeting at 4.00pm.



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Jenny Barnard-Langston  
Chair of Trustees