

DULWICH HAMLET EDUCATIONAL TRUST (DHET)

Meeting of the BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Date: Thursday, 8 March 2018

Time: 18.30

Location: Belham Primary School, 165 Bellenden Road, SE15 4DG

MINUTES

Present:	Crispin Tuckley	Chair	Chair
	Sonia Case	Executive Head Teacher	EHT
	Rafael Marks	Trustee	RM
	Christopher Parsons	Trustee	CP
	Karen Robinson	Trustee	KR
	Rebecca Tee	Trustee	RT
Clerk:	Kathleen Formosa		Clerk

1. Welcome & Apologies

1.1 The Chair opened the business of the meeting at 18:49, welcoming the members of the Board and others in attendance.

1.1.1 It was **noted** that the meeting had started late, following a tour of the new premises.

1.2 Apologies were **received** and **accepted** from:

Simon Latham SL

Patricia Leahy PL

1.3 It was **noted** that a quorum was present, and the meeting proceeded to business accordingly.

1.4 It was **agreed** that as Tom Legge of Premier was unable to attend the meeting, item 3 on the agenda (DHET Strategy & Growth) would be moved to follow item 7 (Executive Head Teacher's Report). The report from Premier (**Annex A**) would be **taken as read**.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 There were no interests declared from the Trustees in relation to business on the agenda.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

3.1 The minutes of the DHET meeting of 7 December 2017 (**Annexes B** and **B1**) were **confirmed** subject to the following changes:

- To amend the wording of item 6.3, replacing "local authority" with ESFA; and
- To remove the record under item 9 to a confidential annex.

ACTION: Clerk to amend the minutes accordingly.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting

4.1 Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting (**Annex C**) were **noted**.

4.1.1 The following matters were **discussed**:

- Regarding item 14.1.1, EHT reported that an appraisal policy for administrative staff would be brought forward for approval following the completion of the new business plan; and

- Regarding item 15.1, it was reported that a new model safeguarding procedure had been placed on the website, including the new DBS procedure.

4.1.2 It was **confirmed** that all other matters arising from the previous meeting had been actioned or were on the agenda for this meeting.

5. Chair's Report

5.1 The Chair reported that the merger with the Charter did not proceed. He has met with a representative from the Charter for a debrief where DHET's concerns were shared, including the consensus of the trustees that there was an overall cultural lack of fit, and that this would have been an ongoing issue.

ACTION: Chair to circulate a copy of feedback provided to Charter to Trustees

5.2 The trustees expressed thanks to EHT for the successful opening of the new Belham Primary School building.

6. Executive Head Teacher's Report

6.1 The Executive Head Teacher's Report (**Annex D**) was **taken as read**.

6.2 EHT reported that it is still not known when the Belham Ofsted visit will occur, although one is due. She reported that both schools are prepared for an Ofsted visit at any time.

6.3 Challenges regarding finances highlighted in EHT's written report were **discussed**. It was **noted** that both schools within the Trust have a small carry forward.

6.3.1 It was **noted** that while the financial position of the schools is currently stable, finances could get very challenging over the next 3-5 years. It was **discussed** that as the schools and their demographics change, the Trust should look carefully at structural reforms to achieve cost savings.

6.3.1 EHT reported that staffing costs were relatively (compared with previous years) high, but felt to be manageable, particularly as more expensive teaching staff who are retiring or otherwise leaving the school were replaced with NQTs.

6.4 *This portion of the minutes has been removed to Confidential Annex A.*

6.5 The performance of pupil premium (PPG) children at DHJS was **discussed**. EHT stated that the performance of PPG children at DHJS is lower than the school would like. She stated, however, that this is a small group, and the particular qualities of this group (e.g., refusal of one child to take the SATs) has impacted the data.

6.5.1 It was reported that a local authority programme has been introduced to assist with closing the PPG performance gap. The programme includes very targeted interventions to assist underperforming pupils.

6.6 EHT was asked about the development of her role as the heads of school grow in experience and confidence.

6.6.1 EHT stated that she has not begun to formally revise the EHT job description. It was suggested that she should begin to do so, and this was **agreed**. It was **noted** that EHT's report to the Appraisal sub-committee as part of her yearly appraisal would provide a good starting point for mapping future development of the EHT role.

ACTION: EHT to begin to formalise a description of her role in writing.

6.6.2 Executive models in use at other small and growing MATs were briefly **discussed**.

7. DHET Strategy & Growth

7.1 EHT's memo "Should the MAT grow?" circulated some weeks ago was tabled and **discussed**.

- 7.1.1 In order to achieve growth, it was **debated** whether the MAT needs a brokerage like Premier to introduce DHET to potentially interested schools who it believes would be a good match, or whether time is needed to take stock. Various views were offered around the table.
- 7.1.2 A consensus view was expressed that moving too quickly to achieve growth may give parents and other stakeholders the wrong impression that the DHET board is only interested in growth.
- 7.1.3 It was **noted** that DHET's schools are not in desperate need of support or expertise from other schools as there is an excellent, supportive team already in house.
- 7.1.4 It was **confirmed** that DHET was approached by other schools on both occasions when it has considered combining with another school or MAT. It was suggested that some thought should be given to which type of school (or if a particular school) would benefit from DHET's strengths and expertise.
- 7.1.5 The Chair reported that SL had written to share his view that DHET should remain open to possibilities that may present themselves. The Chair reported that SL has also stated that the financial implications associated with growth should be closely scrutinized.
- 7.1.6 Financial issues associated with growth were briefly **discussed**. It was **noted** that MATs growing beyond a certain size require a highly paid central team to run centralized back-office functions, and these typically require significant top-slicing from school budgets, which can have a direct adverse effect on a school.
- 7.1.5 It was **agreed** that DHET's position, should it be approached again, would be to engage in discussions, but for the moment it will not actively pursue opportunities to grow.
- 7.2 Localism was **discussed** as a key value of DHET, and it was **agreed** that the MAT should remain local. However, it was **acknowledged** that DHET schools know how to deliver education to a high standard, and there is no reason that it should be limited to two schools.
- 7.2.1 It was **discussed** that reaching out to Regional School Commissioner may be of value for DHET to learn where there may be pockets of need, or where there are other opportunities to add value.
- 7.2.2 It was stated that if localism and community are key values, this does not preclude a broader regional or national strategy if the approach is to develop clusters of schools in key areas.
- 7.3 It was **agreed** that a period of embedding and reflection is needed. It was suggested that a consolidation year should be taken for DHET to consider a series of strategic improvements to existing Trust operations, and to determine clearly its aspirations and ambitions.
- 7.3.1 It was also **agreed** that a strategy would be developed to articulate DHET's mission, vision and values, and a potential path forward. The following **ACTIONS** were agreed, to be led by the **Chair and EHT**:
- **Documents already written on matters of mission, vision and values will be shared with all trustees, reviewed and reflected upon;**
 - **A half-day strategy session will be arranged for discussion and forward planning; and**
 - **Support will be sought from the NGA, if the shared view is that such support would be helpful to develop discussions into clear plans.**
- 7.4 EHT asked what the DHET's position would be if there were another MAT found that DHET wanted to join?
- 7.4.1 It was **discussed** and **agreed** that this would be considered, particularly if the financial climate were to change, and it would not be ruled out should the right partner approach.

7.5 It was **agreed** that retention of a consultant to support DHET growth is not needed at this time.

8. Trust Finance & Audit

8.1 The budget monitoring reports for DHJS and BPS (**Annexes E, E1 and E2**) were **reviewed**. It was **noted** that these have been discussed in detail at the respective LGBs. It was **confirmed** that both schools are in a good financial position relative to other schools and the prevailing financial climate.

8.1.1 It was **acknowledged** that what appears to be a surplus in the BPS budget will be used to fund the increased running and administrative costs associated with the new site. It is expected that the appearance of a large surplus will diminish over the year.

8.1.2 It was **noted** that there is opportunity for small amounts of income to be generated through community use of the new BPS building.

8.2 The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 21 February 2018 (**Annex F**) were **noted**. CP reported in his capacity as Chair of the Audit Committee.

8.2.1 CP reported that the auditors' recommendations in the end of year report were considered, and assurances sought from the executive that all points were to be addressed.

8.2.2 CP stated that progress on the management response to the audit recommendations would be considered at the next Audit Committee meeting, with assurances sought from the internal auditors.

8.2.3 CP reported that Barry Walder has begun to provide more support to the Trust's finance staff and is now sending an associate to work closely with finance staff on a weekly basis. As a result, finance staff are beginning to get on top of financial management within the schools, and duties and responsibilities on the finance team are becoming clearer.

8.2.4 It was **discussed** that a clear benefit of greater clarity and skill among the finance team is to undertake more analysis of budget data in house. Staff should be developed so that they are able to produce reports for the LGBs and DHET trustees.

8.2.5 CP reported that it had been drawn to the trustees' attention that there had been two financial issues of concern arising from the roofing contract at DHJS. The Audit Committee has determined that the issue was one of incompetence/lack of attention between the contractor and Project Manager rather than collusion. CP reported that a written explanation has been requested from contractor and consultant regarding the large errors in their estimates and valuations.

8.2.6 CP reported that the Audit Committee had asked EHT to report on the implications for GDPR. EHT's report to the Audit Committee assured that she is on top of the issue and the Audit Committee's view was that the schools are on track with compliance.

9. Trust Governance Issues

9.1 A business support proposal and covering email from BMH/Brian Jones (**Annexes G and G1**) were **noted**.

9.1.1 It was **noted** that Brian Jones undertook the due diligence for DHET on the now terminated merger process. It was **agreed** that there is no need to pursue the work he has proposed either through BMH or any other consultant, as the work can be done internally.

ACTION: EHT to communicate the trustees' decision to BMH.

9.2 KR presented the board evaluation report. The report was circulated at the table.

9.2.1 KR reported that she and the Chair have had a one-hour session with a representative from the NGA to review the report and distill the key issues arising. These were found to be:

- developing a strategy document about vision, values and future plans;
 - increasing the understanding of LGBs around schemes of delegation and understanding their roles (at DHJS this is noted as a need for change management);
 - considering information flows between schools as the MAT grows; and
 - succession planning.
- 9.2.2 It was **noted** that these points echo what has been discussed previously among the trustees.
- 9.2.3 It was **agreed** that there will be a discussion at the next meeting of the trustees to develop an action plan.
ACTION: Clerk to include development of an action plan on the agenda for the next meeting.
- 9.3 The Chair reported that there would be at least one trustee standing down in the near term. The schedule of trustee terms of service (**Annex I**) was **noted**.
- 9.3.1 The Chair suggested that the anticipated vacancy on the board of trustees would open the opportunity for the trustees to discuss succession planning and also to consider the whether the size of the trustee board.
- 9.3.2 The trustees were asked to consider the size of the board, and any proposals about the succession of trustees in relation to the board evaluation report and recent skills audit.
ACTION: Clerk to include on next Board Agenda; Chair to coordinate views
- 9.4 The letter from Lord Agnew (**Annex J**) was **taken as read**.
- 9.5 The Chair reported that clerking arrangements for the board of trustees, audit committee and LGBs would be consolidated following the expiry of the contract with Southwark.
- 10. Dulwich Hamlet Junior School**
- 10.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Local Governing Body of the Dulwich Hamlet Junior School on 13 December 2017 (**Annex K**) were **taken as read**.
- 10.2 The Chair stated that there may be an issue with the use of “the Hamlet” in the school’s published document, as the owner of the local football club has trademarked the name.
- 10.2.1 CP stated that it will be important to understand whether trademarking is at the stage where registration has been applied for, or whether it has been approved. If it is still in application, it is possible for DHET to object.
- 10.2.2 It was **agreed** that legal advice should be sought, and an objection lodged if the option is available.
ACTION: Chair to seek trademarking legal advice and guidance for filing an objection.
- 11. Belham Primary School**
- 11.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Local Governing Body of the Belham Primary School on 16 January 2018 (**Annex L**) were **taken as read**.
- 12. Policies**
- 12.1 Policies developed in preparation for the implementation of GDPR (**Annexes M – Q**) were **reviewed**. It was **noted** these are model policies that have been adapted for the schools.

12.1.1 The trustees **confirmed** their support for the policies. It was **discussed** and **agreed** that these should be redrafted as trust-wide policies to be implemented across the schools.

ACTION: EHT to redraft policies as trust-wide policies.

12.1.2 EHT confirmed that the schools are now registered with the ICO and that the designation of DPOs and staff training are currently in progress.

13. Safeguarding

13.1 There were no safeguarding matters to report.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 The trustees requested that acronyms and abbreviations are avoided in Board papers where possible and/or a glossary of terms and acronyms would be a useful aid in reading papers. EHT was asked to request this.

ACTION: EHT to request a glossary of terms and acronyms and circulate to the trustees.

14.2 It was mentioned that staff may wish to be informed of an increase of muggings in the area, and to be aware of their bags, phones, etc.

14.3 A summary report from EHT's performance review was circulated. Trustees were asked to send any comments to RT.

14.4 RM stated his view that efforts should be made to reduce the use of plastic in the schools, and this was **agreed**.

14.4.1 EHT reported that children in both schools have been involved in discussions about recycling and reducing waste and the use of plastic and other non-recyclables.

The business of the meeting concluded at 20:55.

Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Trustees will be **Thursday, 28 June 2018** at 18:30 at DHJS.

KF/kf:03/17/2018