

## **GFM Education**

### **Board Meeting Minutes**

Held at: Rowner Junior School  
On: 26<sup>th</sup> February 2019; at 16:30

#### **Board members present:**

Cris Beswick (CB) Member  
Jenny Bonsor (JB) Member/Trustee  
Adrian Cojocar (AC) Member/Trustee  
Max Corkill (MC) Trustee  
Chris Donovan (CD) Trustee  
Paul Lane (PL) Chair/Trustee  
Jean Morgan (JM) Trustee  
Kirsty Robertson (KR) Trustee  
Ian Potter (IP) Trustee/Executive

#### **Others present:**

Chris Willis (CW) Assistant Head  
Georgina Mulhall (GM) Executive  
Marie Smith (MLS) Executive HR Director  
Louise Thompson (LT) Clerk  
Stuart Parker-Tyreman (ST) Executive  
Susan Hamilton (SH) Executive Finance Director  
Professor Pamela Angelle, University of Tennessee  
Margaret Richie, Student (UoT)  
Nate Koerber, Student (UoT)

#### **Apologies:**

Nigel Duncan (ND) Member  
Ruth Williams (RW) Member

### **1. Welcome, apologies, announcements & declarations of interest**

- 1.1. The Chairman welcomed AC and RW as new Board Members. For clarity, AC is now both a Member and a Trustee.
- 1.2. Apologies had been received in advance from ND and RW.
- 1.3. There were no new declarations of interest.

### **2. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

- 2.1. The Chairman introduced the minutes of the meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> October and asked if there were any objections to additional notes from ND being incorporated. No objections were received.
- 2.2. The minutes were approved as a correct record with this inclusion (CB proposed, CD seconded). Revised minutes will be circulated.

### **3. Minutes of the AGM held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

- 3.1. Members present were asked to approve the minutes of the AGM. The Chairman asked CB to confirm that he received a copy of the Auditor's Report and Accounts as he was not present. CB agreed to send email confirmation of endorsement for record purposes.
- 3.2. The minutes were approved as a correct record and are available should Trustees wish to see them.

#### **4. Meeting with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)**

- 4.1. IP briefed the Board on the meeting held with the Chairman and the RSC. The main focus was for the RSC as regulator to review GFM performance. One observation had been that the school data had shown that the number of exclusions in GFM schools was high, particularly in the Secondary phase. IP explained that they had fed back that as the data was simply based on raw numbers, this was not representative of the school size (e.g. it did not show exclusions as a percentage of pupils of the total school roll).
- 4.2. A conversation had taken place around the fact that exclusion should not be used to apply leverage, particularly when there are other factors at play such as a lack of other support for schools. It was noted that the RSC understood the point and took on board the lack of provision in the system. JM commented that all of Hampshire has a high exclusion rate not just the GFM.
- 4.3. A discussion was held around IP being a catalyst to bringing Tom Bennett (Behaviour Guru) in to support Gosport Schools to promote partnerships. GFM is the biggest employer in Gosport and connects with families and there is a degree of leverage for making a difference to our town.
- 4.4. The RSC also stated that the GFM needs to increase the number of Members. This has already been dealt with and the GFM now has the advised number in place (five).
- 4.5. The need for having in place an appropriate risk register was also raised by the RSC. The Chairman has confirmed that this was in hand. SH confirmed that one is drafted and will be presented to the Finance & Audit Sub-committee to ratify.
- 4.6. IP outlined that there had been a follow up phone call from the RSC regarding a letter received from a local Councillor referring to the number of GFM exclusions. IP has had a meeting with the Head of Inclusion and is happy to have a meeting with the Councillor concerned.
- 4.7. St Vincent College has written a letter of complaint to the RSC about the GFM and our alleged lack of support for St Vincent Sixth Form as a destination of choice. PL and IP are to have a meeting with the St Vincent Chief Executive and Chair to discuss.

#### **5. Central Services Developments**

- 5.1. SH presented and referred to Finance Report distributed to Board in advance of the meeting. This will be discussed in detail at the Audit & Finance Sub Committee meetings and then summarised and brought to the Board.
- 5.2. To note that the budget has been spread out evenly over the year therefore is not phased. This means that variances may simply be timing differences. Pupil premium is also out of sync as money is received across the tax year as opposed to the GFM academic year.
- 5.3. The Budgeting system is currently done on excel (e.g. manual). This makes it more difficult to undertake any detailed forecasting. Systems are being looked into to determine whether there are more effective solutions and to free up time.
- 5.4. Finances show GFM in a strong position and is under close monitoring. Monthly accounts are now being produced and also being sent to the Chairman. On the current position, staff costs are running under budget due to recruitment gaps / delay. The number of teachers leaving is a secondary phase challenge. This is expected to change over the next 3 to 4 months as recruitment

increases for the new academic year and the gap is expected to close. It was also noted that additional grant funding was received to cover the increase in teachers' pay.

- 5.5. Forthcoming changes to note include the teachers' pension scheme. Consultation is now closed and we are awaiting to hear the outcome. Employers contributions are increasing from 16% to 24% and it is unclear whether this is completely funded or funded in part. It is likely that the first year will be supported however it will then be up to the Trust to cover a portion of additional costs going forward.
- 5.6. It was noted that the Trust no longer has access to CIF funding due to the size of the multi-academy trust. We will get an amount allocated from the School Condition Allocations pot (SCA), expected to be around £700,000 using online calculators (based on similar calculations for core grants). It has been agreed to take a group approach to prioritise capital spend out of budget based on need and impact.
- 5.7. MC commended SH on the short period of time taken to produce a set of accounts at the Board Meeting and asked if the Board are providing sufficient resource to SH/Finance. SH acknowledged that this discussion has already taken place and is comfortable with the current support structure with the understanding that the Audit & Finance Sub-Committee will also add value (first full meeting to be held on 13/03/19). The main area of support required will be for any systems evaluations and improvements that will support management reporting and capacity building including a review of the finance system as we are not using it to its full potential. Time is first needed to get our 'house in order' therefore will be an exercise in 3 to 6 months-time.
- 5.8. MLS confirmed that discussions around a new payroll / HR system are still ongoing. In addition, budgeting systems will need to link into any payroll / HR solution to prevent duplication. MLS outlined the work that is needed to maintain current HR (manual) spreadsheets with the sheer amount of information that needs to be collated. From presentations, options have been narrowed down to two potential solutions. The costs are very substantial and many alternative solutions could not manage the needs of the GFM payroll. Meeting to be held with SH to discuss as one provider offers a budgeting tool and we would be looking to harmonise the system. MLS is also liaising with a school in Hook who have taken on a new payroll / HR package and confirmed that she will be visiting them as part of due diligence.
- 5.9. HR have recently expanded their office with Debbie Adams moving from HR to the payroll team and a verbal offer made for a replacement HR Assistant position. Jackie Jarvis in the HR team will also be working at Bay House School twice a week which has been well received so far. Hoping to offer on a rotational basis to all the GFM school's going forward.
- 5.10. Having issues with self-employed contractors not putting in forms that they are registered with HMRC. Have carried out a detailed check of around 800 suppliers and blocked payments until it has been identified whether they are classified as employed or self-employed. With those self-employed, contracts are needed to be put in place if not already in hand.
- 5.11. A discussion was held around systems selection and CD suggested it was better to have independent systems and 'cross pollinate' rather than one system to do all as this can often create problems. Caution was noted with this activity going forward. PL agreed and suggested that from his experience it was best to run pilots and new systems in parallel with current ones until confidence is gained. In addition, thought should be given to go live in stages / modules. AC noted that there is a need to find the balance between centralising and standardising. IP noted that AC is working with MLS regarding the HR function. IP is grateful to MC for his input.

## 6. Capital Projects / Trading Activity

- 6.1. SH confirmed that the GFM are pulling all schools out of the Hampshire Property Services SLA for property maintenance as of end of March (Bay House being the only one not in the current agreement). As an example of cost, Brune Park currently is charged around £135,000 plus VAT per annum for this SLA. The SLA covers all the active maintenance, callouts, servicing of certain items across estate and planned capital works on pre-agreed basis. For those converted academies, buildings have not been well maintained by Hampshire with some equipment being serviced out of recommended cycles. The work will be covered by an expanded maintenance team with certain skilled / technical requirements being put out to tender. Interviews are being held over the next couple of weeks to recruit staff with a good response to the adverts. This is partially down to making the salary more in line with competition. Also hoping to use economies of scale through five schools with any contractual requirements. A similar view is also being taken with the development of a central contract register for all key supplies.
- 6.2. IP commented on Item 1.4 of the Finance report. As we anticipate receiving a capital grant of around £700,000 in the next financial year, there is an option of borrowing against the reserves knowing that the income is coming in. Would like this to be an operational decision but wanted to discuss and clarify whether the Board is happy with this approach. MC raised questions as to what the money will be spent on and whether we have clarification that we can move money to do this. In addition, is there 100% certainty the grant will be received? IP explained that grant money is always at risk due to the uncertainties surrounding government budgets but SH confirmed that the GFM had received notification that they are entitled to the grant and the calculation will be based on the same methodology as the previous year. In addition, there is a small amount of excess in the capital reserve of £30,000.
- 6.3. A discussion was held around the capital spend. PL asked what exposure this created in monetary terms. SH clarified that discussions had taken place around spending in the region of £500,000 based on expected receipts. A £200,000 programme of work for secondary schools had already been drawn up and was being planned for delivery alongside smaller spends within the other schools in order to take advantage of term holidays. This was based on additional capital funding received in January as part of the additional grant pot put aside by the government in the December announcements for school improvement. CD asked that we present what this means in terms of % of restricted funds which SH will confirm. IP confirmed that the activity planned was for property and maintenance repair works as a large portion of the plant needs addressing.
- 6.4. The Board discussed whether this level of decision making around reserve spend was operational or strategic. CB disagreed that it was operational but confirmed that he does not object to the commitment. SH proposed that we communicate any proposed capital activity spend that is above a certain level for Board approval so that reserves are monitored effectively and risk is minimised. This was agreed by all parties as the best approach.

**Action: SH/IP to agree level of delegated authority to be given to the Finance & Audit Sub-Committee.**

## 7. Policies for Ratification

- 7.1. **Equalities & Diversity Policy.** MLS explained that changes were in line with the Equality Act 2010. It was presented as a more condensed document and that she had tried to capture the organisation's commitment to Equality & Diversity. It was also noted that it references Carers in all policies as key stakeholders. CB asked why there was no mention of paternity to which MLS responded that it was based on the statutory minimum. It was agreed after a discussion to add this for completeness.

**Action: MLS to add 'paternity' to the policy.**

- 7.2. JB asked about contents on Page 4. Said that it appeared to be a hard statement regarding disciplinary action to be taken against both staff and pupils who discriminate. Suggested that reference to pupils is removed and the sentence re-worded to state that the Head Teacher will determine what course of action to take, which may include taking disciplinary action. MLS confirmed that we have a duty of care to instigate a process which includes carrying out an investigation. Disciplinary process includes informal outcomes such as management advice. Agreed that the reference to pupils should be removed and will reword the sentence so that the Head Teacher will determine what course of action to take, which may include taking disciplinary action. In addition, IP confirmed that the Head Teacher is responsible for considering what discipline to take against staff and pupils. JB commented on the wording and suggested that 'he / she' should be amended to 'they' as it is more inclusive.

**Action: MLS to change wording from 'he / she' to 'they'.**

- 7.3. The Board endorsed the policy with the agreed changes incorporated.
- 7.4. MLS gave an update to the Staff Salaries - Management Policy which is not yet finished. Jackie Jarvis (JJ), IP and MLS held a meeting to improve appraisal cycle for this year in conjunction with Performance Management. An appeals procedure is being included and a PM Policy is also being developed as an Appendix.
- 7.5. The Board endorsed the policy in its current form with amended copy to be circulated when completed.

## **8. Special Phase**

- 8.1. ST summarised discussions held with the Enterprise Academy (EA) as the current model is not sustainable. A new formula has been devised which will improve financial sustainability with the 'worth' of each category of student being calculated based on resources needed to have the intended impact. This incorporates a working model for years 9,10,11 although a need has been identified for years 5,6 and 7. Priority would be given to GFM schools but would extend to other local schools to provide places outside of the GFM. Crofton School is to run a pilot with the GFM in 2019/20. The challenge has been in unpicking funding as previously the EA sat within the Bay House structure. KR asked whether it will bring down the number of exclusions. ST confirmed that the variables are within our control and feels confident through focussing on young people with social / mental health needs. This is a different focus from LWS as these young people are emotionally vulnerable rather than aggressive.
- 8.2. JM queried the projections on numbers as there is limited space on site which was confirmed by ST as 36. The plans include drawing to the EA certain students from LWS to release space for further higher value placements. Would start with the new year 9 cohort, 8 from GFM, 2 from local schools i.e. Crofton and 2 from LWS. Over 3-year period this will increase the funding stream. PL enquired into the level of funding approval for 'passporting' students. ST confirmed that it travelled with the student.

8.3. IP stated that initially it will not bring down the exclusion numbers but that we will learn from the model so we can replicate it. It will reintroduce EA as originally envisaged. If we get it right, can offer something for the Primary phase. KR asked whether this was all from the GFM pot. SH confirmed this was correct as it is about allocation of funding with the EA being under 'contract' with the GFM for provision. MC asked whether this was something that could be done on a larger scale to generate more money and SH stated that if we had the space we would as this would extend external placements. The costs of running the EA is currently greater than the money received for the students in place. ST confirmed that LWS students attract a higher rate of funding with a £10,000 top up. Moving students into the EA would release space to backfill at LWS and increase income. IP pointed out that the EA is not a legal entity.

## 9. Local Governing Committees

9.1. PL asked if there were any questions regarding the topic and none were raised. GM asked if the Board would like to receive primary LGC minutes and it was confirmed.

**Action: GM to distribute via email Primary LGC minutes.**

## 10. Secondary Phase Curriculum Reform

10.1. CW presented 'The Big Idea' and outlined that the local buy in to support this idea has been extremely positive. Proposed change is to raise aspirations for all GFM students. To provide an attractive working condition for teachers within GFM Secondary schools i.e. - flexi hours, part time working, etc. Look at reshaping school work with buy in from the community.

10.2. A hybrid version of models 1 & 2 was proposed focussing on years 3-8. This incorporated for example, proposed AI teaching over multimedia platforms for the whole year group in the hall. GFM would become a community provision with everyone having an obligation to shape children's future. CW to distribute paper copy of feasibility study implementation strategy.

10.3. The aim is to launch in Sept 2020 following a full feasibility. This will involve implications for HR regarding structure and policies. MC observed that they can see better life experiences and savings. Being a Trust, we have flexibility to offer and the GFM can be a driving force. More interlinked about what children need long term.

10.4. PL stated that September 2020 is very close. CW agreed and stated that these were initial timings but feels genuinely impassioned. PL stated that it was better to aim for later date otherwise it could impact credibility. JB asked what the public awareness was of the Study as businesses have been involved in discussion alongside some staff members. CW stated that it was not public but acknowledged that it was happening at management levels. JB asked that we need to help people understand that it is a process, not a plan. IP confirmed that how we manage this will be discussed at an operational level and will be fed back to Board.

## 11. Feedback from STEM Centre opening

11.1. GM confirmed that the official opening will be on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> March. 74 have confirmed attendance, not including media coverage. The Secretary of State for Education will be opening and this will be a hands on event and has been received extremely positively. Funding is through external sponsorship and we are seeing an increase in interest in STEM activities.

11.2. PL noted that the Board appreciates the hard work required to pull this together in such a successful manner.

## 12. Update on Due Diligence

12.1. IP referred to the previous Board Meeting minutes, item 7. Since then, a letter to all parents and communications to all staff confirming the new structure has been released. IP remains Accounting Officer / Chief Executive during his sabbatical. Has put into place JM as Chair of the Secondary Phase and PL as line manager of the Executive in his absence.

## 13. Governance

13.1. PL would like to be more aware of Governance requirements, including RSC, Companies House, Ofsted and LA, etc. Requested someone with an interest / experience to volunteer. PL's personal suggestion would be RW due to her background in the NHS / governance. Will discuss with RW.

13.2. PL questioned whether RW would need to take ownership of things including the Risk Register. MC questioned whether this was business or financial. SH stated that it would normally be at Strategic level and for the Audit & Finance Sub-Committee meeting to lead on. PL noted that as MC sits in this committee then it would be covered with perhaps RW owning it at full Board. AC has been confirmed as backup if numbers of attendees cannot be met.

**Action: PL to discuss with RW.**

## 14. Correspondence

14.1. PL in correspondence with The Lighthouse Trust has arranged a meeting with the Lighthouse Trust Chair, CEO, IP and PL for 04/03/19. Outcomes will be fed back to the Board.

## 15. Meeting Feedback

15.1. JM believes we have started to grapple with important issues.

15.2. SH stated it is more focused and strategic since her appointment.

15.3. CB said that timing was good and clawed back when possible.

15.4. IP confirmed that it demonstrated a maturing organisation and Board.

## 16. Next Meetings

16.1. Meeting in June to be changed to June 13<sup>th</sup> 2019 due to D Day. All confirmed.

16.2. Next Board meeting to be held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2019.