

**HADRIAN LEARNING TRUST
MINUTES FOR MEETING OF BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Date of Meeting	Thursday 11 July 2024 at 6pm, Hydro Conference Room 1
Present	Veryan Johnston (VJ, Chair), Sarah Kemp (SK, Vice Chair), Graeme Atkins (GA, Executive Headteacher), Iain Veitch (IV), James Heath (JH), Kate MacLachlan (KM), Barbara Hignett (BH), Carey Stuart (CS)
Also in attendance	Peter Wood (PW, Member), Neil Seaton (NS HoS QE), Liam Watters (LW, HoS HMS), Anna Vellinga (AV, clerk)
Apologies	Florrie Darling (FD)

PART I (CLASSIFIED NON-CONFIDENTIAL)

1.	<p>Apologies:</p> <p>Apologies were received from FD.</p> <p>Welcome to CS who joined the Trust Board as a trustee this meeting. VJ thanked CS for accepting a position on the F&A Committee.</p> <p>VJ also welcomed PW who was invited to attend this meeting as an observer in his capacity as a member of the trust. VJ congratulated PW on being awarded the exceptional Order of Mercy Award for 29 years of voluntary work. PW introduced himself briefly to the meeting.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of pecuniary, business or personal interests</p> <p>There were no changes to the declarations.</p> <p>CS noted she is a friend of the trustee being nominated for a place on the board and will therefore not participate in the decision for agenda item 5.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of previous meeting Part 1: approval and matters arising</p> <p>The minutes of the following meeting were agreed as a true record.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hadrian Learning Trust Board – 23 May 2024 – Part 1 <p>Matters arising</p> <p>GA confirmed that he had gone back to IV to clarify the reasons for the spikes in teaching staff costs in autumn 2023. These related to both the autumn national pay uplift and backdated pay progression for individuals.</p> <p>Further actions have been dealt with or are on the agenda. A record of future actions is held.</p>	
4.	<p>Discussion / Consideration</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. Review of internal alternative provision (AP)</p> <p>Trustees confirmed receipt of the paper that had been circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>NS recapped that a year ago it was decided to run an internal AP on site with a view to improving provision for an increasing number of students who struggled in mainstream. NS's paper covered staffing and the curriculum, behaviour policy, an overview of the initial cohort</p>	

	<p>and the new cohort, data on attendance and behaviour, details on finances, a consideration of what had been going well and intended next steps.</p> <p>KM shared that, when visiting the internal AP, she had been impressed with the quality of staffing. KM asked if the provision was sustainable on the basis of the budget in appendix 1 of the paper. GA noted the additional costs of the provision compared with the students being educated in the mainstream and in relation to the additional income generated. He advised that the costs compare favourably with external provision which requires significant expenditure on transport. A way of increasing income is to backfill with additional students in mainstream provision but this will depend on demand for places. Ultimately a continuation of the internal provision at current cost to budget will depend on decisions taken in the round with other pulls on expenditure. GA advised that the need for such provision was there and not likely to diminish in the near future, which is a driver behind the consideration of an alternative, potentially more suitable venue.</p> <p>SK asked about capacity in the current internal AP to take in Y9 (newY10). GA explained that it was possible to coordinate timetables to extend the provision to cohorts in new years 10 and 11. However, there had not been sufficient capacity for those in Y9 unable to cope with the mainstream, hence the additional expenditure on external provision for individuals during the year until they were able to access the internal provision at rollover.</p> <p>BH asked if we are aware how finances compare to other high schools. GA advised of discussions at NAHSH (Northumberland’s Association of High and Secondary Headteachers) and with individual schools that suggested similar challenges, particularly pronounced at high schools which have most of their students in the more costly year groups. Funding for SEND is particularly stretched, with the situation set to get worse as the local authority attempts to balance the high needs budget which is in significant deficit.</p> <p>VJ asked NS to pass on trustees’ thanks to all who contributed to the set-up and running of the internal AP. She stated that it is clear there is evidence of positive impact on those accessing it. VJ noted that trustees would continue to monitor the quality of provision and impact on the budget.</p> <p>GA noted the online meeting with trustees to discuss ways in which the trust’s alternative provision might be taken forward, scheduled for Wednesday 17 July at 3.30pm.</p>	NS
<p>5.</p>	<p>Trustee Recruitment</p> <p>Details of the candidate with SEND experience recommended by the interviewing panel had been circulated to trustees prior to the meeting. Trustees approved the appointment of the candidate with effect from the date of the next trust board meeting on 10 October. VJ advised that the candidate would assume the role of SEND trustee on appointment and thanked KM for fulfilling this role on an interim basis.</p> <p>VJ advised that, following soundings taken, KM has indicated that she is willing to stand as Chair from October. This will be a matter for the Trust Board to decide at its meeting on 10 October. VJ indicated she is willing to stand as Vice Chair from that date.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Management accounts</p> <p>The April and May management accounts were circulated with the meeting papers. The respective management accounts were reviewed and approved in the F&A Committee meeting held on 5 July 2024. Minutes of this meeting will follow.</p> <p>JR advised that the May accounts show a continuation of the expected year-end deficit with</p>	

	<p>£55K more expenditure than budgeted due to the cost of external provision and transport beyond what had been anticipated at QE and greater than expected expenditure on agency staff.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Budget</p> <p>JR noted that the budget paper, which had been circulated prior to the meeting, had been reviewed by the F&A Committee. Noteworthy is that the intended reduction in reserves to the target level will happen sooner than had previously been the case due to unforeseen cost pressures and lower HM Treasury forecast growth rates affecting the Trusts' general annual grant. As a result, JR is working with GA, NS and LW on target figures for expenditure in future years, which will be discussed in due course with trustees at the F&A Committee and then the wider board. JR advised of an amendment to the reserves policy to reflect a realistic assessment of risk and contingency that had been agreed at the recent F&A Committee meeting.</p> <p>BH referred to appendix 3 and the percentages of workforce on senior leadership. GA explained the intentional investment in capacity to reflect the growing demands on schools, particularly since the pandemic, for example in SEND leadership capacity. GA also advised of some natural movement in senior leadership at QE which will not be replaced and will lead to savings.</p> <p>CS asked if the -4.4% on the reserves/balances as a percentage of the total income takes into account a pay rise. JR confirmed that this is included.</p> <p>SK queried the efficiency savings that had been expected as a result of co-location but did not appear to have transpired. GA advised that, although some economies of scale had been realised, the overall anticipated gain had been overestimated. GA noted the significant increase in demands on schools since the pandemic and the conscious decision to increase expenditure to reduce reserves in line with policy levels.</p> <p>CS asked if the revised budget presumes that the internal AP remains at the current level going forward. JR confirmed that the budget for the internal AP remained the same, with the budget for external AP set at the level it was before the internal AP.</p> <p>IV asked if there was a need to re-visit marketing and recruitment efforts to maximise demand for places. NS confirmed this was being considered.</p> <p>IV asked about the projected retention of students into the sixth form. NS advised that initial intentions looked encouraging but that the final figure was beholden to individual outcomes and decisions in the summer.</p> <p>Trustees thanked JR for the helpful paper.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Strategic plan</p> <p>VJ informed trustees that the circulated strategic plan deriving from the strategy meetings held during the 2023-24 school year should be regarded as a live document which will be refined and developed as appropriate. She advised trustees that it is a high-level document which then guides more detailed planning such as the individual school development plans and the HR strategy. GA advised that a fourth strategic priority may be added in time relating to net zero; senior leaders are in the process of collecting thoughts on the issue.</p> <p>The intention is to publish the strategic plan priorities.</p> <p>There were no questions or comments from trustees.</p>	<p>GA/AV</p>

9.	<p>Risk register</p> <p>The risk register has been updated throughout the year in the various committees. Risk ID 9 was last reviewed in June 2023 and is in the process of being audited prior to full consideration by the F&A Committee in October.</p>	
10.	<p>School updates</p> <p><u>QEHS</u></p> <p>In addition to the circulated school update paper, NS informed trustees that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the visit to QEHS of SJMS Y7 had been postponed to September; - QEHS has been awarded the School Mental Health silver award through the Carnegie Centre of Excellence. The Trust Board asked NS to extend their thanks and congratulations to the team; - overseas trips have been a success and student feedback was very positive. NS is keen for such trips to continue in the next academic year. <p>SK asked if the intention was for participating students to promote trips to other students. NS confirmed it was.</p> <p>SK enquired about the plans for a trip to Kenya which NS responded to, indicating the intention to take 20 students.</p> <p>IV noted reports on the high quality of teaching provision for sixth form students and asked if this also applied to lower year groups. NS confirmed that it did, as evidenced by quality of education reviews across the year groups, and through external review.</p> <p>On behalf of the Trust Board, VJ congratulated NS for the very positive Ofsted report and asked him to pass on trustees' thanks to the wider staff.</p> <p><u>HMS</u></p> <p>LW referred to his previously circulated report. VJ commented that trustees visiting HMS reported that it was evident pupils have a great sense of belonging.</p> <p>KM commented that the HMS Monitoring Committee reflect on the school's work on improving attendance at each meeting and praised the efforts of the relevant staff. KM also noted the school's support of pupils struggling to regulate in the mainstream environment. LW explained the intention to incorporate 'zones of regulation' as part of the repertoire of approaches to support young people to better regulate.</p>	<p>NS</p> <p>NS</p>
11.	<p>Trust update</p> <p>Trustees confirmed receipt of the trust update paper prior to the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GA provided additional information regarding the situation at St Joseph's Middle School. Confirmation has been received that no changes to existing arrangements will be made by September 2024, therefore it is anticipated that the 16 who reportedly had indicated interest in remaining at St Joseph's will start at QE in September. It remained to be seen whether the overarching education trust would submit an application for change to the headteacher board and, if it did, what the decision would be. - GA advised that the Hexham Partnership of schools is looking into a partnership position on mobile phones, along the lines of discouraging access for young people prior to high school. The plan would be to draft a consultation document, seek approval from individual boards 	

	<p>then seek responses from the parent bodies before finalising any position. Trustees confirmed that they are supportive of this approach.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GA informed trustees that the staff survey, distributed with papers for the meeting, was discussed in the HR&PM meeting and would be sent to staff shortly. He noted that NS and LW will go through specific findings with their respective senior teams. 	
12.	<p>Committee meeting minutes</p> <p>a. HR&PM Committee – 28 June 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SK asked for one amendment in the circulated HR&PM meeting minutes, in minute 5, ECT reports, bullet point 4, sub bullet point 1: amend ‘it was generally helpful that most ECTs have had previous experience’ to ‘it was generally helpful that most ECTs have had previous experience in education’. SK noted that the Early Career Teachers had been very positive about their experiences. - GA noted a review of the trust’s use of agency staff had identified scope for more cost-effective cover supervision, with two posts to be recruited to. In addition, the rarely cover policy had been re-drafted and would be shared with school union representatives and the wider staff before the end of term for comment, along with proposed amendments to appraisal targets following representations made earlier in the year. <p>b. Finance & Audit Committee – 5 July 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The minutes of the F&A committee meeting held on 5 July were not yet available for this meeting. JH clarified that much of the content had been on budget-setting, as considered earlier in this meeting. 	AV
13.	<p>Trustee Visits</p> <p>a. Safeguarding visits to alternative providers</p> <p>GA and FD visited the external alternative provisions used by the Trust and reported a rewarding and worthwhile experience. It was clear that the relationship with schools and the providers is strong and that the provisions have a positive impact on the students. However, the cost per student for these provisions is unsustainably high. Given this and the fact that Hexham Youth Initiative will no longer be providing alternative provision locally, leaders and trustees are exploring ways forward with the trust’s own alternative provision.</p> <p>b. HMS visit</p> <p>FD, KM and VJ reported positive feedback from their visit to HMS. Further visits will be scheduled at both schools for the year ahead.</p>	
14.	<p>Stakeholder engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FD and GA visited the external AP providers - FD, KM and VJ visited HMS - Trustees visited the Art Exhibition at QE - Trustees visited the Art Exhibition in the Queens Hall - The HMS Summer fair had a very good turnout from the local community - Trustees attended the HMS music evening - HR&PM Trustees enjoyed lunch with ECTs - GA met with the Hydro neighbourhood group and other nearby residents - On Monday 2 September trustees are invited to the INSET day lunch 	

15.	<p>Urgent business with agreement of Chair</p> <p>There was no further business.</p>	
	<p>VJ asked to note a formal thanks to staff and students for their efforts and considerable achievements, adding how impressed she has been seeing so many very talented young people in action over last academic year.</p> <p>VJ and GA took the opportunity to thank outgoing trustees SK and BH for their outstanding service to the Trust Board (and previously the Governing Body) and the individual schools over so many years, wishing them both well for the future.</p>	

Close and confirm date of next meeting: The meeting closed at 8.00pm. The date of the next meeting is 10 October at 6.00pm.

_____ **Chair**

_____ **Date**