

**ABRIDGED MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHITE ROSE ACADEMIES TRUST (WRAT)
BOARD OF DIRECTORS HELD VIRTUALLY ON THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2021,
COMMENCING AT 5.30PM**

Present: Colin Booth, Lydia Devenny (Minutes 20/21.24a to 20/21.26a inclusive), Caroline Gruen, Erica Hiorns (from Minute 20/21.23a), Annie McMaster, Paul Morrissey, Kate Pearlman-Shaw (Vice-Chair), Helena Phillips (Chair), David Strachen (from 20/21.24a inclusive), Andrew Whitaker, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Craig Williams

In attendance: Sam Corbett, Clerk to the Board, Yvonne Hare, Head of Communications & Projects (for Minutes 20/201.a-20/21.23a inclusive), Stuart Jolley, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) (excluding Minute 20/21.29) and Christian Wilcocks, Executive Principal (EP) (excluding Minute 20/21.29)

20/21.21 Apologies & Welcome

a. Apologies for absence & welcome

Margaret Parkes gave her apologies for the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reflected on the journey over the past twelve months since becoming Chair, thanking management for their impressive efforts in supporting all pupils throughout the pandemic.

She subsequently introduced Annie McMaster, as a newly appointed Director and Yvonne Hare, who was delivering the presentation around the Trust's new website and governance portal.

b. Declarations of Interest with regard to any Agenda items

Caroline Gruen declared her interest in the matter due to be discussed regarding Leeds West's expansion plans (Minute 20/21.25e), given her role on the council's planning panel, in addition to serving as local councillor for the affected area.

No other declarations were declared other than those disclosed on an ongoing basis.

20/21.22 Board minutes and matters arising

a. Minutes of the Board meeting held on 10 December 2020

The Minutes of the previous meeting were considered and agreed as a true and accurate record.

Resolved – that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December were agreed as a correct record.

b. Matters Arising

i. Summary of matters arising from previous meetings

The summary of matters arising to date was considered. The Board noted the updates against each item.

With regard to Minute 19.2016f, the Clerk highlighted that the equality and diversity report had been deferred to the April meeting.

The CFO provided a brief update in relation to Minute 20/21.14 regarding the strategy session scheduled for 8 March.

The Chair provided an update regarding progress made with commissioning an external review to determine fair pay levels based on job descriptions and a review of executive pay (Minute 20/21.20), indicating that it would be a group-wide exercise, details of which would be shared at a future meeting. This matter would remain on the log until resolved.

ii. Any other matters arising

There were no other matters discussed.

20/21.23

Strategy and Implementation

a. Luminate and White Rose Vision and Strategy Update

The Chair provided a brief introduction, followed by a brief summary of the report received in advance of the meeting.

Further to questions being raised regarding the apprenticeship programme, the CEO reported that adverts were for both internal and external candidates, using inclusive recruitment methods that reached the heart of school communities, encouraging talent from a diverse range of individuals.

Board members acknowledged the success of the Luminate World Café Event which had been a good opportunity for colleagues to network across the Group. Further to a question being raised regarding the impact that the feedback had on the Group Strategy, the Group CEO explained that feedback was still being collated and would be shared in due course, through that early indications suggested there would be no substantial changes.

The CEO emphasised the importance of supporting and protecting families, working with key agencies, to bring about sustained transformation in each academy as well as local communities. The Board acknowledged the significance of family and community support, with suggestions being made for maximising the impact of particular strategies.

The Group CEO shared some of the benefits of group collaboration, with particular reference being made to reviewing data that

highlighted significant numbers of young people in care leaving education after their first year in college.

The Board noted that under the leadership of the Chair of the Board, an externally commissioned package of support had been commissioned through the NGA with the intention of developing industry leading governance which would ultimately ensure that the 2025 Vision could be delivered.

This matter would be further explored during the strategy session on 8 March.

b. Governance Working Group Update

The Vice-Chair and Clerk to the Board provided a verbal summary of recent actions including:

- a LAB Chair joining the Governance Working Group, the meeting of which would be taking place in the weeks following the Strategy Session
- general changes around systems and processes, including the format of meeting Agendas
- explorative work regarding governance arrangements which aligned with growth plans
- explorative work regarding how to strengthen and provide clarity around the relationship between Luminare and the WRAT, including drafting of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)
- ongoing work around Schemes of Delegation
- ongoing work around Training and Development

The Board were supportive of a number of individuals drafting an MOU.

Resolved – the Board agreed to the Vice-Chair leading on a draft MOU being developed

Action – the Vice-Chair to lead on developing a draft MOU with the Governance Working Group

c. New Trust Website/Portal Changes

Yvonne Hare delivered a presentation which explained the rationale behind the new website and portal, examples of branding and estimated timescales to complete the project. She referenced supporting the Trust's strategic aims and engagement with stakeholders.

Board members welcomed the changes. Comments were made regarding the importance of substance over marketing, with significant emphasis needed on good quality teaching and learning.

The Board noted that the new Luminate website would also be introduced in the summer.

d. UTC Update

The Board considered, in detail, the report relating to the University Technical College (UTC), Leeds.

The CEO explained that a number of discussion forums had taken place with colleagues from the UTC, the most recent of which had led to an invitation to the next UTC Board meeting being given to the CEO, Chair and Executive Principal.

The CEO and CFO responded to questions.

The CFO acknowledged that the plan was ambitious but necessary. He explained that targets were underpinned by the support that could be provided to leaders as well as a robust marketing campaign, both of which had been successful in previous conversions.

A further update would be provided at the next Board meeting, which the CFO anticipated would require a decision from the Board.

Action - a further update to be provided at the next meeting

e. Ongoing communication with ESFA regarding related party transactions

The Board noted a paper detailing ongoing discussions around related party transactions with Luminate, further to which the CFO provided a brief overview.

20/21.24

Trust Board and Committees governance related matters

a. Matters referred by LABs

It was noted that no matters had been referred to the Board by Local Accountability Boards on this occasion.

b. Trust Website Audit

The paper relating to the audit of the Trust's website was received and noted. The Board noted their appreciation for the update, which provided a clear summary of matters requiring immediate attention as well as those being recommended for the future. The Chair reported that all outstanding matters were being prioritised by the Trust's communications and marketing team.

c. Policies/statements for approval/information

The Board received and considered the paper relating to Trust-wide policies. The Board were asked to approve the following revised policies:

- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Careers, Education, Information & Guidance Policy;

- Data Protection Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy.

In addition, the Board were asked to extend the review period of the Capability Policy to September 2021 given the process underway in relation to a number of other HR policies, as detailed in the report.

A Board member requested that future policies requiring approval were sent with all changes clearly marked rather than providing a summary cover sheet. It was agreed that this would be an enhancement to the existing process therefore the suggestion would be implemented.

A question was raised in respect of approving bodies and review periods. The Clerk reminded the Board that a review of this process had been carried out in the last academic year to reduce the number of policies being reviewed by the Board, though agreed to further review.

Action – the Clerk, CFO and Executive Principal would further review the process around policy management

Resolved – the four policies listed above were approved and an extension granted to the review period on the Capability Policy

d. Gender Pay Gap Report

The CFO provided a brief summary with regard to the report relating to the gender pay gap analysis. He indicated that further positive actions would be taken in order to further enhance what had been done over the last twelve months.

20/21.25 Audit, Risk and Finance Matters

a. Audit, Risk and Finance Extraordinary Meeting Minutes

The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Finance (ARF) Committee gave a brief summary of the meeting which focussed exclusively on the cyber-attack, indicating that robust discussions were held in order to satisfy the Committee that work undertaken had significantly reduced the risk of a similar attack in the future having the same impact on the Group.

b. Group Report on Cyber Attack

The Board received the Group's Report that was discussed in detail at the Group Board as well as WRAT's Audit, Risk and Finance Extraordinary Committee meeting, as detailed above. Board members that served on the Committee emphasised that a healthy level challenge had taken place in respect of reviewing the information presented.

The Board thanked the Committee for their diligence around this matter.

c. Risk Register

The latest Risk Register was received and considered.

A question was raised in respect of attendance. The Executive Principal advised that all academies were peer reviewing practices around attendance and identifying the best strategies for mitigating future risks. The Board requested that this be reflected in the risk register.

Action – the Executive Principal to update the Risk Register

d. Financial Performance Report as at 31 December 2020

The Board received and noted the Financial Performance Report as at 31 December 2020 which was summarised by the CFO.

A question was raised in respect of the year to date variance analysis, which was responded to by the CFO. He emphasised that the forecast had been based upon the expectation that academies remained open following the Xmas break and therefore would be adjusted accordingly in future reports. He emphasised that no material differences were expected.

e. LWA expansion

The Board received and noted the Leeds West Academy Expansion Plans. The CFO provided a brief overview of the report.

The CFO indicated that Board approval for a contractor would be required in due course.

A Board member suggested that the tender process consider company values and desire for young people's learning, which was acknowledged by the CFO.

In response to a question regarding the risk around securing planning approval, it was reported that due consideration had been given environmental sustainability and aesthetically pleasing building design as part of the planning process which were key factors in gaining approval.

A question was raised with regard to the appointment of project management consultants, which was responded to by the CFO. He

assured the Board that the chosen firm had been highly recommended.

20/21.26

Executive, Operational and Communication Updates

a. Executive Principal's Report

The Board received, discussed and noted the EP's Report, which included a presentation around nurturing talent.

A number of questions were raised regarding preparing students for the future, which were responded to by the Executive Principal. It was agreed that further in-depth discussion was required, therefore the Clerk agreed to arrange a separate session focussing exclusively on this matter.

Action – the Clerk to arrange a session focussing on Nurturing Talent

The Executive Principal advised that endorsement of re-opening plans would be required before the end of the week therefore told the Board to expect an email which required a written resolution.

A Board member requested an update in relation to the process for GCSEs this year. The EP agreed to circulate with the re-opening plans.

Action – the EP would circulate re-opening plans and an update regarding GCSEs before the end of the week

The Board noted that a query had been raised with regard to students in Alternative Provision, outside of the meeting, which was being responded to by the EP.

b. CEO's Update and communications between meetings

The CEO thanked the Board for the resolutions agreed between meetings.

Erica Hiorns reminded the Board of the email circulated between meetings in relation to the continuation of Pete Wheelan as the Trust's Academy Improvement Partner (AIP). The Board were asked to consider priorities for Term 3. It was agreed that LAB Chairs, in consultation with Principals, were better placed to agree the priorities.

Action – EH to liaise with LAB Chairs who would determine Term 3 priorities for the AIP

20/21.27

a. Any other business

No other business was discussed

b. Workplan

The Board received and noted the workplan.

20.21.28

Meeting Arrangements

It was confirmed that the next meeting would take place virtually on Thursday 19 April 2021.

Stuart Jolley and Christian Wilcocks left the meeting at this juncture