



**Minutes of the Diverse Academies Trust Board Meeting held 24 March 2021.
at 5.00pm via Microsoft Teams.**

Trustee name	Initials	A = absence
Mr M Quigley MBE (Chair)	MQ	
Mr J Rolph	JR	
Mrs M Blore	MB	
Mr I Storey	IS	
Mr P Mabbott	PM	
Mr D Schwarz	DS	
Miss C Burn BEM	CB	A

In attendance: [staff or other invited persons]

Staff name	Initials	Role	A = Absence
Mr D Cotton	DC	Chief Executive officer & Accounting Officer	
Mrs J Harrison Hill	JHH	Company secretary & Clerk to Board of Trustees	

Item No	Item	Action/ by who/when
DAT/ 82/2021 Agenda item 1	Apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received and agreed from C Burn	
Agenda item 2 DAT/ 83/2021	Declaration of interest and any changes to be advised. There were no declarations of interest, either direct or indirect, for any items of business on the agenda. The chair asked if anyone had any declarations to update. Trustees confirmed that the declarations given at the beginning of the academic year were correct.	
Agenda item 3 DAT/84/2021	Minutes of the meeting dated 3 February 2020. The minutes of the meeting, having previously been received were agreed by the chair.	
Agenda item 4 DAT/85/2021	Matters Arising from Trust Board Meeting 3 February 2021: DAT/41/2021 8.3 CONFIDENTIAL: Hucknall 6th Form Centre CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. DAT/76/2021 Audit tender specification documentation Action: Recommendation for auditor appointment to be presented at	

	<p><i>Trust Board meeting on 24 March 2021</i></p> <p>Mr Rolph updated trustees regarding the panel selection exercise, which was carried out, explaining that three bidders were selected to present, all of the submissions were comparable with only slight differences in cost.</p> <p>Two of the presentations were very strong, scoring was carried out by the panel, resulting in Cooper Parry scoring slightly higher than Smith Cooper.</p> <p>Discussion then took place regarding the advantage of remaining with current incumbent, Smith Cooper, to minimise work involved for the finance team in inducting a new audit team into Diverse Academies processes and procedures.</p> <p>Following the discussions trustees questioned the length of time Smith Cooper had currently been in post as external auditors for the Trust, and the concerns regarding future disruption should they continue to remain in post for a longer term.</p> <p>Mr Rolph assured trustees that this discussion had taken place and part of the answer was for a refresher exercise on re-appointment, further explaining that a period of stability following changes in systems and procedures would be more beneficial to the finance team at this point.</p> <p>Trustees were informed that requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook points 2.28 have been adhered to and a competitive tendering policy had been applied, and the procurement rules and thresholds in the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 had been observed.</p> <p>Mr Rolph recommended appointing Smith Cooper for 2 years with an annual review clause, Mr Storey seconded the recommendation. Trustees agreed the approval of the recommendation to appoint Smith Cooper for 2 years with an annual review clause.</p> <p><i>DAT/78/2021 CONFIDENTIAL: NCEAT Update (DAT/16/2021 Confidential item: National Church of England Academy Trust (NCEAT Update)</i></p> <p>CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p>	
<p>Agenda item 5 DAT/86/2021</p>	<p>Retford Post 16 centre agreement</p> <p>CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.</p>	
<p>Agenda item 6 DAT/87/2021</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officers Report</p> <p>Document: <i>CEO Board report March 2021</i> was previously received by the Board.</p> <p>The CEO report provided contained the following updates areas for trustees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduction 2. Vision, ethos and strategic direction 3. Educational performance of the organisation and its pupils 4. Financial performance of the organisation 5. Engagement with stakeholders, parent/carers, staff and students and the wider <p>Mr Cotton informed trustees that the re-opening of schools on the 8 March had gone well with lateral flow testing having a good uptake.</p>	

The board were apprised that there had been some instances of bubbles needing to isolate but that this was being managed and staff are working with Public Health England.

Mr Cotton informed trustees the RSC had contacted the Trust regarding the uptake of lateral flow testing at Yeoman Park Academy, but it was explained that this was due to the special needs of students and parents not giving consent due to the complex needs and physical disabilities of children.

CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes.

Trustees were made aware that the process for awarding grades to students is still awaiting guidance from DfE and exam bodies, the Trust is required to write a Quality Assurance policy, and submitted to the exam boards for sign off, this will then be sampled later when grades are issued.

Following a **question from trustees regarding** the process of awarding grades, Mr Cotton clarified that it will be evidence based ensuring confidence that the process of awarding of grades is fair. Executives are considering the potential risk of litigation once results have been issued and implications.

Mr Cotton informed trustees that work is underway to finalise capturing the five-year strategy of the vision, missions and values and strategic priorities in one easy access document providing the road map for the next five years.

Trustees agreed that this document needs to be completed this year for sign off.

Trustees **noted** the CEO report.

Agenda item 7
DAT/88/2021

Committee Meeting Update from Chairs

7.1 Governance and Partnership Committee update (10/02/2021)

- Mr Quigley, Chair of Governance and Partnership Committee provided the Board with an update of the meeting, highlighting that GDPR training is being sourced for updated training.
- It was raised that a discussion took place regarding Trustees attending Academy Committee meetings to develop relationships and communication between Academy Committees and Trust Board, Mr Quigley asked trustees if available to attend Academy committee meetings to inform the clerk of which dates and academy.

Action: Trustees to contact clerk to inform of any Academy Committee meetings they are available to attend.

- Trustees were informed that reports from the 360degree feedback on Academy Committee Chairs were positive.
- Mr Quigley informed trustees that Mrs Elway, Head of Governance and Mrs Harrison Hill, Clerk to Board had been asked to start the recruitment process to recruit trustees, with the intention of achieving 10 trustees to allow for succession planning.

Trustees

<p>DAT/89/2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr Quigley reminded trustees that full governance review is recommended to be carried out each year, however ICCA carried out an internal audit on the governance process, and if trustees approved, the intention is to use this internal audit as the governance review. Trustees agreed the ICCA audit to be the annual review of governance. <p>7.2 Audit and Risk Committee update (24/02/2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr Storey, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee provided the Board with an update of the meeting, highlighting that Review of the effectiveness and resources of external audit was carried out by the Audit and Risk Committee (A&R) - Review of the Insurance arrangements and support provided was carried out by A&R committee. - Covid 19 management arrangement audit had been undertaken by ICCA and a possible inconsistency had been raised regarding identifying visitors to academies which is being addressed. - CONFIDENTIAL: This item was deemed confidential and was recorded in the confidential minutes. - Internal audit providers are due for appointment, but this has not been progressed until the external audit appointment has been completed. - The most recent Covid report was distributed to trustees dated 12/03/2021. 	
<p>DAT/90/2021</p>	<p>7.4 Standards and Outcomes Committee update (03/03/2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr Schwarz, Chair of Standards and Outcomes (S&O) Committee provided the Board with an update of the meeting, highlighting the varying degree of compliance with lateral flow testing. - Mr Schwarz confirmed that the S&O committee had been discussing the process of centre assessment of grades which had already been discussed during agenda item 6. - Mr Schwarz informed the Board that the committee had approved a covid related appendix to the behaviour policy, and that the policy would be checked to ensure accommodations of any guidance changes ready for return after Easter. - The committee were updated and confident with the attention to ensuring monitoring of mental health issues as a result of the pandemic. 	
<p>DAT/91/2021</p>	<p>7.5 Finance and Resources Committee update (10/03/2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Rolph, Chair of Finance and Resources Committee provided the Board with an update of the meeting, highlighting the committee had approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • three-year proposed investment of £151,700 in Holgate Academy to ensure suitable environment for teaching. • £80,000 funding for Walton Academy using fixed asset reserves from 2020/21, with £20,000 being contributed over four years from 2021/22 onwards to replace the fixed asset funds used. 	

<p>DAT/92/2021</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trustees Approved the change of contract request for an Executive Principal and offer of Death in Service policy at an annual premium of £780. • Trustees agreed that the Pay and Remuneration Policy would be amended to ensure consistency and ensure recruiting and retaining staff. • Trustees approved the recommendations associated with a new cleaning contract with Vertas for a term of 3 years, with the option for plus 2 years, provisionally £1,923,898. • Trustees approved the purchase with Netthreat for £58357.51 for UTM and firewall internet lines. <p>Trustees ratified the approvals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr Rolph also informed trustees that the committee had reviewed the January management accounts, along with the progress of budgets, financial risks associated with covid, and highlighted that the General Annual Grant income for next year is more of an increase than the anticipated 2.3% under the funding formula. • Financial Procedures Manual 2021 policy changes approved. • Draft budgets for 2021/22 are being created and will be brought to the F&R committee in May. <p>Policies approved at committees: G&P: GDPR Subject access request form Governors Allowances policy A&R: Accessibility policy Health and Safety policy Local Appendix to health and safety policy statement Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles statement Covid-19 appendix to Safeguarding and Child Protection S&O: Covid 19 appendix to Behaviour policy Trustees noted the policies approved at the committee meetings.</p>	
<p>Agenda item 8 DAT/93/2021</p>	<p>Statutory Updates, Changes to legal documents and Companies House filing. There were no items to report.</p>	
<p>Agenda item 9 DAT/94/2021</p>	<p>Annual Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Publication of Declarations on website ○ Publication of High Salaries’ on website ○ Publication of Annual accounts on website ○ Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking statement on website ○ Determine Admission Arrangements QEA (retrospective approval) <p>Governors on the QEA Academy Committee had been advised at their meeting on 10 February 2021 that following the consultation process that ran from 17 December 2020 to 28 January 2021 there had been no responses from any party to the insertion of a faith criteria in the over-subscription criteria of the 2022/23 admission policy for the academy and therefore approval had been sought from</p>	

	<p>Trustees to include this in the policy. Due to timescales email approval was sought and received from all Trustees.</p> <p>Trustees approved the minute to record retrospectively the approval given by email from trustees to determine Queen Elizabeth's Academy Admission Arrangements on 28th February 2021.</p>	
<p>Agenda item 10</p> <p>DAT/95/2021</p> <p>DAT/96/2021</p> <p>DAT/97/2021</p> <p>DAT/97/2021</p> <p>DAT/98/2021</p>	<p>Trustee items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - C Burns resignation (Trustees and SEND link trustee) Mr Quigley informed the committee that Miss Burns has resigned as trustee from 25 July 2021. Trustees commented on the huge contribution Miss Burns has made to Diverse Academies Trust to not only the Board and Standards and Outcomes Committee as a Trustee but also in her time as a Governor. - Letter from Carol Grey, Interim RSC dated 19 February 2021 re NCEAT dispute - Letter 24 February Browne Jacobson to NCEAT Solicitors Anthony Collins - Letter 1st March Letter to DAT from N Turner - Letter 2nd March M Quigley to N Turner <p>The above topic of correspondence has been discussed in agenda item 4 Matters Arising: DAT/78/2021 CONFIDENTIAL: NCEAT Update.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - January Management Accounts received by Board On the 24/02/2021 trustees received the January management accounts, and this has also been discussed in the F&R update from Mr J Rolph under agenda item 7.5. <p>Trustees had no further questions on the management accounts. Mr Rolph added that another forecast has been carried out to the end of year containing covid recovery risks.</p> <p>Trustees were informed that the <u>Equal Pay Disclosure report</u> has been approved by F&R. The <u>Gender Pay Gap report</u> has also been approved by F&R committee.</p> <p>Mr Mabbott asked if the lease for Queen Elizabeth's Academy had been signed and was informed that a meeting has been set up with the Queen Elizabeth's Endowed Trust to discuss the lease and other options regarding the land.</p>	
<p>Agenda Item 12</p>	<p>Determination of confidentiality of business Equality Act consideration Nolan Principles</p> <p>Trustees considered whether anything discussed during the meeting should be deemed as confidential. It was resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An Item discussed within agenda item 4 DAT/85/2021 (DAT/41/2021 8.3) should remain confidential to attendees and Board Trustees. - An Item discussed within agenda item 4 DAT/85/2021 (DAT/78/2021 8.3) should remain confidential to attendees and Board Trustees. - Agenda item 5 DAT/86/2021 should remain confidential to attendees and Board Trustees. 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An Item discussed within agenda item 6 DAT/87/2021 should remain confidential to attendees and Board Trustees. - An Item discussed within agenda item 7 DAT/89/2021 should remain confidential to attendees and Board Trustees. - There had been no Equality Act implications - Attendees were content that all decisions made adhere to the seven Nolan principles. - Consider if any items need to be reported to Charities commission. 	
Agenda item 13		Date and time of next meeting: 9 June 2021 via Microsoft Teams, 5.00pm	
Agenda item 14		The meeting closed at 6.26pm Signed.....(chair) Date.....	