

## Minutes of a Governing Body meeting of Lord Lawson of Beamish Academy on Wednesday 8 December 2021 at 5.30pm

Governors Present: Alison Logan (Acting Chair), Andrew Fowler (Principal), Katie Barron, Andrew Chanse, Guy Currey, Louise Doran, Cllr Sheila Gallagher, Joel Greenwell, Dr Jane Halpin, Heather McClean, Kevin Thompson

Others Present: James Pedlingham (Observer, Academy Business Manager)

Clerk: Kim Ashford

The meeting started at 5.35pm and was quorate.

It was agreed that Alison Logan will be Acting Chair for the duration of this meeting, as the Chair attended via Teams due to self-isolation.

### 1. Apologies for absence

- Apologies were received from Claire Godfrey and Chris Smith. Consent was given for their absence.

### 2. Declarations of interest in any items on the agenda

- There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Minutes of the last Governing Body meeting held on Wednesday, 15 September 2021

#### 3.1 Approval of the minutes

- Governors received the minutes of the last Governing Body meeting on Wednesday 15 September 2021, as circulated with the agenda by email prior to the meeting. The minutes were **approved** as a correct record.

#### 3.2 Matters arising

- Item 6.6 – Link Governor Roles List:  
Guy Currey stated that he is Link Governor for Careers, linking with Alison Jordan.
- Item 9.3 – Audit and Risk Committee:  
It was noted that Louise Doran and Kevin Thompson have nothing further to report regarding the establishment of an Audit and Risk Committee. This is currently a work in progress. **Action: Louise Doran, Kevin Thompson.**

## 4. Governing Body

### 4.1 Governing Body meeting attendance

- Governors received and noted the Governing Body meeting attendance list, as circulated by email prior to the meeting.

### 4.2 Link Governors – visit reports and updates

- Governors received the Link Governor roles list, as circulated by email prior to the meeting.
- It was noted that there have been no reports as yet. The Acting Chair encouraged Governors to arrange visits with their link SLT members as soon as practicable, and hopefully in the Spring term. **Action: Governors.**

### 4.3 Update on election of two new Parent Governors

- The Principal stated that Sam Wakefield is in the process of arranging an election for 2 Parent Governors. There are 5 strong candidates running for the 2 vacancies, and the closing date is Friday 17 December.

## 5. Principal's Report

### 5.1 Update on School Improvement Plan

- Governors received a verbal update from the Principal.
- The Principal, Alison and Joe Dicocco (Deputy Principal) attended a meeting with Paul Green (DfE), regarding the Opportunity North East Action Plan and the Trust Review. Paul was happy with the Academy's School Improvement Plan (which is modelled on the Opportunity North East Action Plan) and Careers Plan, and also with the updates he received regarding the Academy's recent Ofsted visit.
- It was noted that the Academy has come a long way and made significant improvements since the previous Section 5 Ofsted inspection in June 2019.
- In terms of the Behaviour Improvement Plan, there will be a staff training day on Tuesday 4 January, with student training the following day.
- In order to plan for and track progress, Joe Dicocco has devised a progress plan which is a system for tracking fundamental knowledge and skills, and includes lesson observations and learning walks. This is also linked to the identification of fundamental knowledge and skills on curriculum plans. It has become clear that students are picking up more than had previously been anticipated, particularly in Maths and Science.
- Quality assurance of teaching and learning: work is gathering pace, and will be rolled out to all subjects.
- The DfE has confirmed that there will be Autumn, Spring and Summer assessments as contingency plans. If public examinations are cancelled,

these assessments will form the basis of the grades awarded in 2022.

## 5.2 Ongoing impact of Covid-19

- The Principal stated that attendance has been impacted in line with local and national trends, and is currently between 85% and 89% - around 5% below expected for this time of year. However, the Academy is above the national average which is currently as low as 80%.
- Pupils are expected to isolate while awaiting PCR test results, which is having a big impact on attendance figures.
- Year Leaders and Departmental Leaders are working hard to encourage pupils to attend school wherever possible, as there is a lot of anxiety among some of the pupils about attending school in the current climate.
- In terms of safeguarding, there are significant concerns regarding the wellbeing of pupils; the number of acute cases has reduced, however there is still a large caseload to manage. There are also more Looked-After Children (LAC) than previously, and it is proving difficult to find appropriate foster care for some of the children, many of the foster carers being situated out of the area.

The Principal provided the following response to a question from a Governor:

- *Is Ofsted changing its expectations regarding attendance?* Ofsted is aware of the national picture; however, it may not be taking enough account of the effects of the pandemic. We need to emphasise to inspectors the real impact of Covid across all areas.
- One positive impact is the additional funding that has been forthcoming.
- It was noted that testing will be re-starting in January 2022, and remains voluntary. This will again be a significant logistical task and will result in increased workloads for the team of staff involved in this process. This task is being managed by the Academy Business Manager. It is expected that with Omicron now in the country and greater social mixing over Christmas, there will probably be a higher rate of infection and therefore a need for increased testing in the new year.

## 5.3 Safeguarding

- It was noted that safeguarding concerns have been mentioned in the above section.
- There are also concerns regarding the wellbeing and education of children who are not in school, for example children who are having elective home education. The Academy tries to discourage this as it is not always good for the children, and there is no statutory requirement for the Local Authority to inspect the provision for children who are being home educated.

## **6. Statutory responsibilities**

### **6.1 Information to publish on a school website**

- The Academy Business Manager confirmed that a lot of time and effort had been put into updating the website, both in getting the information correct and in uploading it to the website.
- It was noted that SLT leads have been allocated specific areas of the website to manage and check, and the site is now around 90% compliant.
- It was noted that the Sixth Form has a 'micro-site' within the school website.
- Governors commented that the website is highly responsive across many platforms and works well on mobile phones.

## **7. Approval of Annual Reports and Accounts for the year ended 31 August 2021**

- It was noted that there is no new information, as work is still being done on the annual reports. The accounts are as presented at the Extraordinary Governing Body meeting. Governors approved the accounts, and it was noted that the report will be completed by the Principal, Business Manager and Chair, and will be signed off by them.
- It was noted that there will be 4 Academy Management Committee meetings next year, with the additional meeting in the autumn term to allow sufficient time to deal with accounting and audit matters.

## **8. Approval of Purchase of Interactive Teaching Boards**

- Governors received a paper from the Academy Business Manager, ICT Capital Expenditure 2021/22 for Approval, as circulated with the agenda by email, prior to the meeting.
- As set out in the above paper, the three areas for discussion in terms of approval of capital spend were:
  1. Purchase of 83 Interactive CLEVERTOUCH Teaching Boards (for approval)
  2. Purchase of 150 replacement desktop computers (for approval in principle)
  3. Purchase of academy wide WIFI (for approval in principle)
- All of the above are part of the Academy-wide IT strategy.
- It was noted that items 2 and 3 were not as far ahead as item 1 in terms of financial compliance, and still required due diligence to be done. The main items that require approval are the Interactive CLEVERTOUCH Teaching Boards.
- In response to a query from a Governor, the Academy Business Manager confirmed that the new WIFI will be sufficiently robust to be able to effectively support all the functionality of the Interactive Teaching Boards.
- There was some discussion around the cost of almost £2,300 for each of the Teaching Boards, however the large majority of Governors were in

favour of this purchase. The purchase of the Interactive CLEVERTOUCH Teaching Boards was **approved** by the Governing Body.

- **Approval in principle** was given for the replacement desktop computers and the Academy-wide WIFI.

## 9. Policies

- Governors were asked to approve the following policies:
  - Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
  - Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy
  - SEN Information Report
  - Administration of First Aid Policy
  - Pay Policy
- Governors **approved** the above policies.
- With regards to the Administration of First Aid Policy, it was suggested that the Academy could post a notice at a strategic point outside the school gates alerting people to the fact that the Academy has a defibrillator on site. A Governor stated, however, that if 999 is dialled, the operator will be able to direct the caller to the site of the nearest defibrillator.

## 10. Any other business

### Road traffic accidents occurring outside the Academy

Cllr Gallagher voiced her concern at the 2 recent traffic accidents that had taken place outside the Academy gates, where speed of traffic seemed to be a factor in these accidents. Suggestions from Governors included having a zebra crossing installed; hiring drive-by cameras, and potentially teaming up with Ravensworth to use the same drive-by camera company that they use, as they are in the same locality; installing a 'smiley-face' sign that lights up to let drivers know when they are travelling at the right speed or too fast. Cllr Gallagher agreed to approach the Highways Department to discuss these suggestions, and will feed back to the Academy Business Manager and the Chair. **Action: Cllr Gallagher.**

### Thanks to the Academy staff

On behalf of the Governing Body, Cllr Gallagher offered her thanks to Academy senior management and all Academy staff for their continued hard work and sterling efforts during the current very difficult times. Thanks was also given to the team of staff involved in the Metro Radio initiative.

Staff Governors left the meeting at 6.39pm.