

Trustee Meeting Minutes

South Downs Education Trust

Wednesday 19 October 2022, 1600-1800
Worthing High School

Trustees:	Richard Cohen (Chair) Terry Parkin Ian Hughes (Vice Chair) Mandy Baker	Andy Sparsis Jon Gilbert Reverend Helena Buque
Clerk to Trustees:	Tracy Reed	
Guests:	Pan Panayiotou (WHS Exec Headteacher/SDET CEO) Sarah Jones (Operations Director) Fran Harman (CFO)	

1.	Welcome The Clerk welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2.	Resignations/Vacancies/Appointments/Terms of Office for Trustees and LGBs <u>Clapham & Patching (C&P) LGB Governor vacancies</u> The Staff Governor vacancy created by DWO's departure had been filled by JJO, having been advertised to staff. This created a vacancy for a Parent Governor; JCH would advertise. <u>Appointment of Chair of Trustee Board</u> In the absence of any other nominations, and the willingness of the nominee to serve, RCO was appointed Chair. <u>Appointment of Vice Chair of Trustee Board</u> In the absence of any other nominations, and, according to the Chair, the willingness of the nominee to serve, IHU was appointed Vice Chair.	
3.	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence had been received from IHU, JGI, ASP and FHA(CFO).	
4.	Notice and Quorum Due notice was served and the meeting was declared quorate.	
5.	Declaration of any additional Pecuniary Interests No pecuniary interests declared.	
6.	Minutes of Previous Trustee Meeting <u>Minutes of the Trustee meeting held on 22 June 2022.</u> SJO pointed out that she was not Operations Director until August and the title should not have been attributed to her at that time. With this amendment the minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record and signed as approved.	Clerk

7.	Matters/Actions Arising from Previous Minutes The Chair advised that henceforward this item would be moved to the end of the meeting. Due to time constraints the Chair and the Clerk would deal with the actions outside of the meeting.	Chair / Clerk
8.	Link Trustee reports <u>Safeguarding</u> TPA commented on an issue that arose during the annual Trustees and Governors safeguarding training re serious concerns about the WSCC safeguarding referral process. Worthing High School (WHS) Governors felt that school staff were placed at a significant level of risk because of the poor quality of the response by West Sussex statutory funders. There was a feeling that there were a number of children who WSCC had deemed not to have met the intervention threshold who then went on to have significant issues. There was a belief that those issues would not have escalated had the threshold been met at an earlier intervention point. It was suggested that WSCC was spending money and resources unnecessarily by having such a high threshold. ASI had been asked to draft a letter to WSCC (Paul Wagstaff, Lucy Butler, and the Cabinet Minister) saying that the current state of the safeguarding referral process was of significant concern to the WHS governing body. The letter would come from SSC as Chair of WHS GB; TPA would put his name to it as the safeguarding Trustee. If the response was not felt to be adequate, any subsequent letter should be copied to Ofsted. The Clerk would remind ASI about the letter. <u>Health & Safety</u> MBA agreed to take on the Health & Safety link trusteeship.	ASI / Clerk
9.	CEO's Strategic Report to Trustees <u>Pay award</u> PPU said the pay award was overdue but being unfunded meant it had put significant pressures on schools across the country. It was for the Trustees to agree; the recommendation would also go forward to the Staffing, Pay, and Performance Committee (SPPC). Acknowledging that it was not ideal to be drawing on the reserves, the Trustee view was that the national requirement should be met. Trustees agreed to the staff recommendation to comply with the unfunded 5% staff pay award, mindful of the fact that the budget had allowed for 3% and the reserves would be used to fulfil the additional 2%. A piece of work for the future would be to look to the financial viability longer term. The support staff pay award had yet to be confirmed but Trustees agreed to the £1,925 add-on to the pay scale. PPU thanked the Trustees for their support. Referring to the difficulty in recruiting LSAs TPA suggested the Trust might wish to consider LSA pay scales. PPU advised that a recruitment and retention allowance had been included in the latest LSA vacancy adverts. He added that looking at pay scales would be a much larger piece of work and could present problems with the rest of the school.	

There followed discussions around the methods of becoming an LSA and incentives such as funded training, CPD offers, moving towards becoming an HLTA and eventually a teacher. One of the main issues was the lack of people actually looking to become an LSA.

TPA put forward two issues for discussion at a future Trustee meeting:

Possible strike action and the Trust's response.

Whether to set a deficit budget

Student Services

PPU announced that regrettably the student services remodelling programme would have to be paused. It had been agreed to use the reserves but the tender bids coming in were around £400k, with building costs increasing daily. The reserves were needed to cover some of the Trust's financial commitments. The programme could not legitimately proceed in the current economic crisis and there would be a considerable disconnect in going ahead with it whilst not being able to afford to heat the school.

Trustees gave permission to suspend the community entrance building programme, with the potential to review at a later date as appropriate.

SDET video / Branding

PPU felt that whilst the exercise had been worthwhile, the results were slightly disappointing and fell short of expectations.

The SDET video was done and the website was being finished off.

Head of School update

There was much good data but computer studies and enterprise & marketing were slightly disappointing. There was an anomaly in that when the vocational results were transferred to what students would have achieved had they taken the GCSE they would have performed better. This needed to be revisited to consider whether students were on the correct course. In all the other subjects students performed at their target levels with the majority exceeding them.

WHS was oversubscribed again: it had been a conscious decision to always be above the PAN to allow for natural wastage and to ensure four census points because the funding was based on this. The larger numbers in Year 11 were the result of being asked to take on extra students some five years ago; numbers would return to normal as those students moved on.

The Chair asked if there was any advantage in having a bulge Year 7 again and when would there be a decision. There followed discussion during which a bulge analysis was suggested. SJO explained that there were two elements, the budgeting element, and the curriculum and the staffing model. The budgeting element was now totally populated making it possible to run scenarios with different models which could feed into the curriculum planning and associated staff cost.

PPU said a bulge year would only be possible if it was supported by WSCC and they were already talking about primary schools reducing their PANs meaning the drastic drop in numbers would be felt by WHS sooner rather than later.

Summer 2022 results

The results were really positive particularly against the backdrop of full terminal exams for the students having had two years of disruption. This was a huge testament to the hard work and achievement of all the staff who worked incredibly hard. There were strong results in Maths and English, as well as option subjects where this had not been seen before.

The school's high performing girls were outperforming Davison's girls. High prior attaining boys remained a challenge.

Disadvantaged pupils (DP) in English outperformed non-DP in English. This was unheard of and all credit should go to the support from ASI and his team, and the disadvantaged co-ordination team.

The gaps with boys, DP students, and gender were priorities for 2022/2023.

SEND provision would be a main focus of Ofsted inspections. The school had the highest number of EHCPs in the locality, and SEND students were achieving good outcomes.

TPA stressed the importance of demonstrating to the community that girls did better at WHS because of the wider range of social and educational opportunities. It appeared that the future of the school was tied up in how to reduce the ratio of boys to girls. The current ratio was 60:40.

Open Day feedback

The Saturday model continued to be a success. PPU thanked those Trustees that attended. TPA said it was one of the best Open Days he had been to. He was very impressed with the staff and also the students who were very keen and enthused about their school. TPA felt it was important to put on record that the Trustees were happy with the Saturday Open Day arrangement.

SSC / Glynn Owen Centre (GOC) development

WSSC had referred to the SSC at WHS as a priority but the school had received no extra funding despite having redesignated and taken extra students into the SSC. WSSC now advised that the additional £675k funding was no longer available. PPU stressed the need to redevelop the SSC because currently the needs of those children with autism and social communication issues were not being met. WHS was doing its very best with the limited resources available.

WSSC had committed to a meeting on 21 October 2022 to consider the GOC. The proposal to move the SSC to the GOC had been dropped because SSCs have to be an integrated part of the school. The proposal now was to move the SSC downstairs in the main school building and create an accessible inclusion facility.

WSSC now suggested a long-term lease for the GOC for 100-125 years, to include the tennis courts, basketball courts, etc. WSSC would want proportional usage (Scouts, young carer groups); PPU said this would not be an issue. WHS was potentially in a position to buy the freehold but WSSC would not entertain this.

PPU pointed out that there would always be a covenant on the GOC and it would always have to offer an educational community use. The all-weather surface would continue to belong to WHS. WSSC had proposed that the school should fund the roofing repairs on the GOC as part of the lease agreement.

PPU spoke of the disconnect between the WSSC Estates and Education departments, illustrated by the fact that in a recent meeting WSSC proposed redesignating the SSC, expanding the numbers, and carrying out a feasibility study, only to be reminded that this had been done two years ago.

PPU sought Trustees' permission to robustly pursue the issue of purchasing the freehold at the meeting on 21 October 2022. However, it was acknowledged that this could be a stretch for the school financially. If it was possible to secure a long lease with a sensible proportionate agreement with a peppercorn rent, to include the tennis courts and the back basketball courts as one lease agreement, then that would be a favourable outcome in some respects.

TPA voiced his preference for an external view on this commenting that at the previous meeting he had suggested talking to Gareth Long at the Learning crowd, who had offered WHS free support on the matter. He felt that after the meeting on 21 October the school should decide on what external expert advice staff would need to make sure that matters were conducted in a safe manner to ensure the continuation of SDET.

It was acknowledged that all the stakeholders would be at the 21 October meeting and was therefore a good opportunity to address the issues of both the SSC and the GOC, but that these conversations should be kept separate. It was recognised that it was in WSSC's interest

	<p>to link the two issues together. It was agreed that it was not in the interest of WHS to allow that to happen.</p> <p>TPA would reshare the Learning Crowd details with PPU.</p> <p><u>Growth plans</u> The new staffing model with PPU as CEO and ACO as Head of School was working well.</p> <p>PINK MINUTES Chichester Free School (CFS) was looking to join a trust and were considering either SDET or Warden Park; there had been a second round of discussions between CFS and SDET.</p> <p>WSSC had a compendium of trusts across West Sussex: local CEOs were challenging their actions in seeking to draw in trusts from outside West Sussex on the basis that there was already sufficient expertise in the locality and it was already a very crowded marketplace. No adequate response had been forthcoming.</p> <p>PPU was not comfortable with WSSC's plans for a 'freshers' fair' type event with trusts gathering in one venue and effectively pitching to CEOs, Governors, etc. The compendium was very much about trying to distil what your trust was about: Trustees would have sight of SDET's contribution before it went to WSSC.</p> <p>PPU reported that the new HT at the Vale was looking to join a trust and had already submitted questions.</p> <p>PINK MINUTES END</p> <p><u>Behaviour Hub</u> Work continued to grow; two of the partner schools were standalone academies and tactful conversations were being had about future working.</p> <p>There would be another Behaviour Hub open day on 4 November 2022 with attendees from seven schools.</p>	TPA
10.	<p>Operations Director's Report</p> <p>SJO had reforecasted the budget based on the pay scales and the pay awards. She had also ensured that the coding in the budget software matched the finance software making it possible to import the information from the forecast into the finance software and vice versa. It was now possible to show actual spend against the budget and produce accurate monthly forecasts.</p> <p>At this point it was noted that the 2022-23 budget was formally approved in May. [Minutes of 11 May 2022, item 8, refer.]</p> <p>Pre-audit figures: SDET had £652k in reserves at the beginning of the 2021/2022 year. WHS would finish with £81.5k surplus, C&P would have £54k deficit largely due to the capital works they had to do. Reserves were about £679k at the end of the year.</p> <p>C&P would have to repay the £10k WHS loan, thereby largely extinguishing their own reserves. The worst case scenario for 2022/2023 was WHS £266k deficit, C&P £40k deficit. The figures were driven by the staff pay award, the support staff pay award, and energy costs. Reserves at the end of the 2022/2023 year would be down to £372k</p> <p>Trustees were asked to decide whether they wished to aim for a reserves target of £400k or one month's operating costs of £635k. The principle agreed was to aim for one month's operating costs.</p> <p>SJO was hopeful that the WHS deficit would be under £100k. This was informed by the fact that the school was already looking to make some savings and initial indications showed that the energy cap would reduce expenditure by £77.5k.</p>	

	<p>It could be possible for C&P to break even. SJO explained that because funding for C&P's EHCP pupils was lagged the LEA should fund the first £6k of any EHCP but because this was based on the previous year's census, the LEA was only funding £2k for each C&P child. ASI was writing to WSCC with regard to the additional £4k.</p> <p>The new accruals-based finance system allowed salary reconciliations to be calculated in the budgeting software and consequently the end of year staffing forecasts were much improved. With regard to cash, the idea of merging bank accounts was being looked into.</p> <p>PPU thanked SJO and FHA for the considerable amount of work that had been undertaken in making the accounts clearer and more transparent.</p> <p><u>Staff absence</u> The Chair queried the figure for staff absence due to Covid / illness. SJO would check.</p> <p>In considering the figures PPU suggested it could be an opportune moment to look at a model whereby staff would be given a financial incentive to stay within a certain number of illness days within the academic year, with a one-off payment should they achieve it. There had been a marked improvement in attendance in a school that had tried the model.</p> <p>Opposition was voiced in the discussions that followed, and the difficulties involved were acknowledged. TPA advocated using the existing systems to manage problem absences properly. Trustees needed to be certain that existing policies were being applied properly before looking to add another policy or procedure on top. SJO would run the figures again after October so that the statistics could be revisited.</p> <p>SJO advised that she was looking at an HR system which could manage and cost staff absence as part of a holistic approach to staffing.</p> <p>Pay policy was discussed and it was advised that the WHS pay policy was based on the WSCC model and there was currently no reason to deviate from it.</p> <p><u>Lettings</u> Lettings were doing well. In 2021/2022 they reached pre-pandemic levels and were currently ahead of where they were this time last year.</p> <p>Trustees were asked to take account of increased energy costs re the proposed revised winter lettings rates. There followed much discussion, principally around the need for two levels of cost. It was agreed that SJO would revisit this with a remit to simplify the pricing structure mindful that we might price ourselves out of the lettings market. SJO would circulate the list by email for approval.</p>	<p>ASI</p> <p>SJO</p> <p>SJO</p> <p>SJO</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>SJO explained that she had altered the figures in the mitigated risk column because they had been calculated using a different scoring system from the rest of the Register making it impossible to compare like for like.</p> <p>Two risks had been added: 1) risk of strike, and 2) changing political landscape of academisation given the current political instability.</p> <p>There followed discussion about the risk of strike: TPA commented that the decision to strike could be made before the next meeting. He was keen for Trustees to give the school some parameters under which they might work. Trustees should give PPU clear authority as CEO to act in the way that he believed was in the best interests of the safety and well-being of the children. PPU advised that the school had contingency plans should the need arise. SJO would revisit the risk register with regard to the possibility of strike action.</p>	<p>SJO</p>

	SJO invited Trustees to examine the Register and forward any comments so that she could update and recirculate it. The Register would be revisited at the next meeting to check that there was still agreement that the risk mitigations were reduced.	Trustees / SJO
12.	Policies for Approval <u>Health & Safety Policy</u> SJO had reformatted the Policy and added a table of contents; she suggested this could be done for other lengthy policies. Trustees approved the Policy in principle <u>Admissions Policy</u> For information.	
13.	Chair's actions The Chair reported on the meeting with Chichester Free School and an exploratory meeting with another local school with which WHS was unlikely to collaborate. PPU advised that Hawthorns were going to have an Academy order raised. This was being directed by the DfE who would wipe their debt and then approach certain providers to take the school on. There followed discussion regarding SDET's previous dealings with Hawthorns.	
14.	Any Other Business <u>Harpur Trust v. Brazel</u> SJO advised that the ruling had gone to the Court of Appeal and basically gave casual workers the right to holiday pay. Past invigilators could have a claim and therefore SJO had ring-fenced some of the reserves and would be adjusting payment rates in anticipation. <u>Academies Trust Handbook</u> SJO asked Trustees to read the Academies Trust Handbook: it would be circulated with a Google form to say that they have read and understood it. This was raised in the internal audit as needing to happen.	Trustees
15.	Dates and Times of Trustee Meetings for Academic Year 2022/23 7 December 2022 8 February 2023 21 June 2023 HBU gave her apologies for February in advance as she would be on sabbatical during the spring term.	

Meeting closed at 1830.

Richard Cohen, Chair..... Date:.....