

Trustee Meeting Minutes

South Downs Education Trust

Wednesday 7 December 2022, 1600-1800
Worthing High School

Trustees:	Richard Cohen (Chair)	Andy Sparsis
	Terry Parkin	Jon Gilbert
	Ian Hughes (Vice Chair)	Reverend Helena Buqué
	Mandy Baker	
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</u> <u>Parent Governor vacancy:</u> There had been one expression of interest but the parent had since decided they would be unable to commit enough time. C&P would continue to advertise. <u>Succession planning</u> The Chair of C&P LGB had indicated her wish to step down as Chair in a year's time. Potential successors had been identified and the item would be kept on the C&P LGB agenda in order to keep it under review.	JCH / Clerk Clerk
3.	Apologies for Absence Apologies for absence had been received from TPA 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 19 October 2022:</u> approved as an accurate record and signed accordingly. The FACC and SPPC minutes were for information only and would go to their respective committee meetings for approval.	Clerk

<p>7.</p>	<p>Link Trustee reports</p> <p><u>Clapham & Patching</u>: JGI's report had been distributed with the agenda.</p> <p><u>Worthing High School (WHS)</u>: the new 'deep dive' approach to link governor reports had been discussed. There were comments around the amount of work it would involve but it was generally well-received. Efforts had been made to group people with their subject leaders. The Governors would like IHU to attend the March 2023 GB meeting to provide feedback as they should have completed their first reports by then.</p> <p>The Chair referred to TPA's letter to West Sussex about the IFD scheme. At this point PPU advised that he had received a disappointing reply from the West Sussex Chief Executive. However, he wanted to minute his appreciation of the Trustees' support because the ultimate endpoint was a student very sadly succeeding in taking their own life, and West Sussex needed to be made aware when the system was not working.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>CEO's Strategic Report to Trustees</p> <p>PPU advised that the Education Secretary had that morning announced that the White Paper had been shelved and Parliament was unlikely to return to it before the next General Election. He continued that the Trust would continue to pursue growth and that conversations would likely be less pressured as a result of the postponement of the Bill.</p> <p><u>Local authority schools</u></p> <p>The Trust was in early conversations with The Vale, who were exploring their options. The Chair and SJO were looking at The Vale's due diligence questions. Their new Headteacher was from an academy background and understood there was no natural progression from The Vale into a secondary school.</p> <p>The Trust had learned from its experience with Chichester Free School. The element that had worked against us was our knowledge and experience of primary schools, whereas Warden Park that we were pitching against had more primary schools.</p> <p>The preference appeared to be for Trusts that were small enough and flexible enough to meet the demands of other schools wanting join, rather than becoming just one among many.</p> <p>PPU advised of initial conversations with some diocesan colleagues; they liked the SDET usp and C&P having joined the Trust was a good selling point, but it was clear that the diocesan viewpoint was that if your school wanted to academise there were certain diocesan options available and there had to be a very good reason not choose one of those.</p> <p>It was suggested that if the diocese had issues about SDET's stewardship of C&P then they should be identified. However it did not seem to be the case because SDET appeared to be proceeding in line with the ethos. Part of our diocesan provision was already within SDET and therefore if another school wanted to join SDET that should be acceptable to the diocese. It was acknowledged that the diocese had to protect diocesan interests.</p> <p>There followed discussion about the Diocese of Chichester Academies Roadshow held at the end of November and the fact that SDET was not invited to participate. The response had been that it was not appropriate at this point. However, PPU was given to understand that if a similar event were to be held SDET would have a presence. He believed that Trevor Cristin (Diocesan Director of Education) could see that SDET was in a better position than some others to help and support colleagues, having the necessary capacity and experience as borne out by the tenacity displayed in the process of bringing C&P into the Trust.</p> <p>JGI advised that the diocese had four trusts and had expressed to the diocese that he did not understand why SDET could not be expanded through the diocese.</p>	

PPU explained that the Trust was now embarking on next steps with Cowplain (Waterlooville) and Cox Green (Maidenhead) secondary schools: both were behaviour hub schools. In common with the Vale Primary School, they were stand-alone academies, but Cox Green had a special school and a primary school backing onto the secondary school. PPU and SJO would set up meetings with Cox Green once they had spoken to their special and primary heads. None of the three schools wanted to be the lead and so PPU was suggesting a hub and spoke model. He did not view the stalling of the White Paper as a reason to stop efforts to expand the Trust.

IHU commented on the distances involved with Cowplain and Cox Green and questioned the logistics of managing effectively and ensuring the schools were improving rather than declining. PPU acknowledged this and, notwithstanding the benefits of Zoom and Teams, replied that the first step was to establish whether these academies wanted to engage. He elaborated on the school improvement team which was effectively a mobile SLT. Discussion continued with speculation about overnight hotel stays and long journeys by road or rail.

MBA asked whether it was a school's decision to become part of a trust. The response was that it was the school's decision unless they were the subject of a forced academy order. Once a school received two RI outcomes from Ofsted they lost their decision-making power and it became the decision of the Regional Schools Director.

When asked whether the two schools had actually said they wished to join a trust, PPU explained that at the moment they were exploring it. There were other schools closer to them but it depended on their offer.

IHU pointed out that Cowplain was part of the Havant Federation of Schools and asked if the Trust would intend to take all of them. PPU responded that Cowplain was the school to take first and then others might follow.

First Preferences for WHS

The numbers were quite positive for WHS and interesting in terms of other numbers across the locality: Trustees were referred to the table on page 14 of the CEO's Report.

Responding to a question about expansion PPU said that, based on indications that the local authority would be taking 930 primary places out of the Worthing locality because of the drop-in birth rate, he would not recommend expansion at this time. The withdrawal of places in primary schools would have a ripple effect on secondaries.

It was important to be mindful of the decisions made about moving the allocation of staff time from next September, and to acknowledge that student numbers needed to be approaching 20 in order to make a course viable. Running subjects at a loss would lead to redundancies and so it was important to make good decisions now.

JGI suggested increasing the PAN from 210 to 247. PPU explained that if, in that situation, there was a shortfall, the school could become vulnerable to accepting challenging students unable to find a place elsewhere in the locality.

RCO suggested there was the capacity to take extra students because of the bulge year that completed and moved on this year. PPU responded that if the local authority were looking to accommodate fifty places, they would allocate say ten apiece to schools in the locality rather than creating two extra classes in one school. This would benefit the school and help to keep their numbers up. and was why WHS numbers would not fall below 210.

Discussion continued around the implications of having another bulge year, and addressing the gender imbalance. PPU reiterated the vulnerability risk of gaps in student numbers.

Glynn Owen update

Negotiations with West Sussex were ongoing. A lease period of at least twenty-five years was being sought so that when SDET started investing in the building, the ESFA would be comfortable with any potential return that they might want to see for an investment.

SJO explained that the Secretary of State would have to give the Trust permission to take on the lease of the Glynn Owen; the Trust would have to prove that it could afford to make necessary adjustments to the building and that it would gain benefit from its use.

ASP suggested it would be useful to contact Caroline Baxter at WSCC: he would forward her details to SJO.

Compendium

PPU gave the background and current position regarding the WSCC Compendium. IHU did not like the idea in principle; academy trusts were independent of the local authority and it was not the role of the local authority to bring trusts together. There was uneasiness about putting so much information about SDET into the public domain but it was clarified that SDET had not submitted any information that was not already on the website.

PPU wanted trustees to be aware that the local authority was still pursuing the idea of offering a MAT alternative and that it was contrary to the White Paper in its original form.

Trust Open Day 1 March 2023

It was confirmed that this would go ahead, with further details to follow.

[Post meeting note: the date has since changed to 27 April 2023.]

Year 11 mocks

Early indications showed that the results of the first set of mocks carried out were already better than the previous set and this was a reflection of the work carried out by staff. It appeared there would now be some concessions applied to maths and the oral element of languages.

Staffing

PPU advised of staff changes including some long-standing colleagues. At IHU's suggestion, the Chair agreed to write a thank you note to Martin Smith, AHT, who would be leaving at the end of term.

There had been a marked increase in staff absence due in part to significant coughs and colds. PPU referred to the WSCC communications sent out with regard to Strep a and Covid. The school was coping well and was managing to cover lessons. PPU remarked on the resilience of the staff and that some had returned to work when they were still not recovered, noting how supportive peer colleagues had been to do that.

Increase in timings of the school day

The White Paper spoke of a 32.5 hour week; WHS currently had a 32-hour week. Increasing the allocation by five minutes a day would make the school compliant. PPU explained that the model to achieve this was to add the five minutes to period 5 at the end of the school day, benefitting those subjects in period 5, with effect from September 2023.

Trustees agreed to support the proposal to move the school finish time from 1505 to 1510, thus enabling the consultation with stakeholders to begin.

The school would continue to have eight INSET days. There would be a change in that there would be two INSET days at the beginning of the academic year. The wellbeing INSET day was particularly valued by staff. Parents were notified of INSET days before the start of the academic year. PPU acknowledged Trustees' support in this matter.

High Prior Attaining (HPA) update

In response to a query from IHU it was established that HPA students took HPQ and level 2 qualifications in addition to the stats GCSE. Triple science students could take German.

CPD Evaluation

Referring to the CPD evaluation report IHU asked what were the 'strengths' identified in lesson observation cycle. It was explained that it was grading system similar to that used by Ofsted

	<p><u>Pupil premium strategy</u> With regard to pupil premium IHU asked if the school had pupils who were considered to be disadvantaged but were not identified in pupil premium stats: how broad was the provision under the pupil premium strategy? He was alluding to pupil premium policies being applied to the whole school on the basis that pupil premium students would receive some of the benefit. It was suggested that anything that was targeted towards pupil premium would benefit most pupils in the school.</p> <p>ASP asked about what was done to aid pupils' transition from Worthing High. The response was that a lot of work was put in to that such as a large careers fair, trips to other colleges and universities. ASP commented that he had lots of business contacts if that would be helpful. PPU responded that anything of that nature would be really useful and he might wish to speak to MFI.</p> <p>In response to his question about the two SLT secondments, PPU advised that they were not receiving any temporary additional points and there was no extra pay involved. The process was really successful in developing middle leaders into senior leaders. There was a clear and measurable target in the whole school project that they undertook.</p> <p><u>SSC update</u> PPU advised that WSCC had secured the information they required and would look at it in terms of the feasibility study. The Trust had been told it was in the cycle. SJO explained that the SSC was tied into the development of Student Services. That was now on hold, but WSCC would still give us the money originally intended for Student Services.</p>	ASP
<p>9.</p>	<p>Trustees and Governors training day / skills audit</p> <p>The Clerk would circulate the skills audit template. The results would form the basis of a training day for Trustees and Governors, date to be confirmed.</p> <p>There was discussion as to timing, format and topics to cover; school data, and lessons learned from taking on C&P were suggested.</p>	Clerk
<p>10.</p>	<p>Operations Director's Report</p> <p><u>SDET Risk Register</u> SJO advised there had been no change to the risk register. There had been no further clarification about the possibility of strikes, no funding had been received for the SEN unit: all the risks remained. The landscape was still volatile. Further details about school funding were expected this month.</p> <p>Work on costing the curriculum model had started together with the three-year budget plan which SJO deemed to be the biggest financial risk right now.</p> <p>IHU asked if the register should still show the residual risk that financial payments might be reported to ESFA by auditors, if the risk had gone from red to green. SJO explained that if there was a deficit, ESFA would report it, but she believed that the reporting that was in place, and the tracking, minimised the risk and therefore it was now green.</p> <p><u>SDET Annual Report & Accounts, Management Letter 2021-2022</u> These had been approved and signed at the Members' meeting two days earlier. The auditors had noted the fewest findings on the accounts in all the time they had been doing them.</p> <p>SJO commented that FHA had done sterling work on the accounts and finances this year.</p> <p><u>Financial Monitoring Report (FMR) for SDET</u> The FMR consolidated both C&P and WHS into the overall SDET.</p>	SJO

	<p>SDET was forecasting £227k deficit this year, the majority of which was related to staffing: £33,700 of this came from underspend in the previous year. That took the overall in year deficit down to £193k (£184k WHS, £9,348 C&P). The in year project was to reduce those deficits further wherever possible.</p> <p>SDET reserves carried forward would be £452,492.</p> <p><u>Key changes in the FMR:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking school visit income and expenditure • Includes Behaviour Hub (income to be ring fenced within the reserves) • Additional income for SEND is tracked against staffing expenditure • Capital income that was being coded into revenue as part of the budget had been taken out • The FMR would show the revenue contribution to capital works and the loan repayment from C&P. <p><u>Key points in Expenditure</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staffing • Unfunded pay award • Additional SEND staff associated with income • Midday supervisors and invigilators recoded as they were in in the curriculum area of the budget • Apprenticeship levy included • In Premises the contribution to capital was removed because it skewed the spend on premises. • Energy costs had been increased by £35k because the energy cap would be removed. • Exam costs increased by 12%. • The educational visits expenditure associated with income was in the FMR • Considerable recoding in admin supplies. <p>WHS had received an additional capital grant of £42k for energy efficient projects, or for use within the premises. C&P had received £10k. This would be used to fund the energy elements that were already budgeted for.</p> <p>SJO would circulate the presentation slides after the meeting.</p> <p>ASP asked if SJO had been able to revisit the spending cap for every department since taking up the post of OD. SJO replied that she would not revisit the departments in year because they would have been told their budgets at the beginning of the year. The budgets would be revisited for the next year's accounts and allotted based on contact time, staff numbers and resources. In terms of percentage of spend, the amount was miniscule compared to staffing.</p> <p>ASP asked how energy costs were being monitored. SJO replied that costs were constantly tracked against the budget via the energy portal. The heating had only been turned on last week, and the school was being very proactive with regard to energy saving measures. The energy survey was very positive.</p> <p>ASP raised the issue of brokerage fees and suggested that the school checked the level of fees being charged. On advice from ASP, SJO would check the current energy tariffs SDET was committed to.</p>	<p>SJO / Clerk</p> <p>SJO</p>
11.	<p>Policies for Approval</p> <p>The Chair commented that the new format made the policies much easier to read.</p> <p><u>Pay Policy for SDET</u> - awaiting release of WSCC Pay Policy.</p> <p><u>Finance Policy</u> - in progress.</p>	

	<p><u>Safeguarding Policy</u> (approved at WHS GB 30 November 2022) SJO had revised the model Policy to make it grammatically correct and consistent. She acknowledged that it contained a lot of information but stressed that it could not be cut down. A table of contents made the document much easier to navigate.</p> <p>Trustees noted that the Policy had been approved by Governors at their November meeting.</p> <p><u>Health & Safety Policy</u> - SJO advised that there would shortly be a complete health and safety audit of all the sites, processes, and risk assessments, and that the findings would feed into the Policy. As with a recent fire risk assessment, and in the interests of robust due diligence, the audit would be carried out by an external body.</p> <p><u>Child on Child Policy</u> (approved at WHS GB 30 November 2022) IHU commented that the policy did not address the issue of trans children. The response was that this was covered in a separate policy and that the school had a good process for managing that transition. IHU asked if the policy was on the website and that parents were aware of it.</p> <p>The Clerk would share policies covering trans children and related issues.</p>	Clerk
12.	<p>Chair's actions</p> <p>The Chair had no actions to report.</p>	
13.	<p>Matters / Actions arising from previous minutes</p> <p>The Chair and Clerk would go through the list.</p>	Chair / Clerk
14.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p><u>Admissions Policy 2024/25.</u></p> <p>The Chair explained that the Admissions Policy did not have to be approved until the summer but was presented now for Trustees to review it and make any suggestions for amendment.</p> <p>PPU's recommendation to Trustees was that the admissions criteria should stay the same; the PAN should also remain at 210 because it was robust and financially viable. The idea was to improve the policy for the next cohort.</p> <p>The Chair raised the subject of catchment areas and the issues for children living between two schools. He suggested that schools could work together to redraw catchment areas. PPU comment that it would be a considerable piece of work, and what might be beneficial to one school could be detrimental to another.</p> <p><i>[Note: At the last Trustee meeting it was agreed that the next Admissions Policy should be presented to Trustees at the December 2022 meeting, rather than waiting for a whole year, in the interests of influencing it. Furthermore the 25/26 policy should go to Trustees at the 21 June 2023 meeting, for consultation from October 2023.]</i></p>	
15.	<p>Dates and Times of Trustee Meetings for Academic Year 2022/23</p> <p>8 February 2023 21 June 2023</p> <p>Closing the meeting at 1807, the Chair wished everyone a merry Christmas. PPU thanked the Trustees for their help and support in what had been a busy term.</p>	