

**HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL**  
**MINUTES OF AN ONLINE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY**  
**HELD AT 6.00PM ON TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2020**

**Present:**

Mr. K. Balfe	Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Ms. J Briggs	Dr. K. Middleton
Mr. K. Down	Mr. S. Mills
Mr. G. Edwards	Mr. C. Minton
Mrs. C. Emmings	Mrs. K. Rowe
Mr. C. Hall (Chairman)	Mr. T. Scott
Mrs. N. Job	Mr. M. Seaman Hill
Mrs. M. King	Mr. M. Winter
Mr. S. Lucas	

**In attendance:**

Mr. T. Hankin	(Clerk)
Mr. J. Crowther	(Deputy Head)
Miss T. Brewster (Items 1-5)	(Head Girl)

**1. Welcome & apologies for absence**

Mr. Hall welcomed everyone to the online meeting of the Governing Body. There were no apologies. Mr. Fitzakerly was absent. Mr. Hall welcomed Miss Brewster, Head Girl.

**2. Notification of items to be raised under Any Other Business**

None

**3. Declarations of interest**

Governors were reminded of the need to declare any pecuniary or other interest in the items for discussion. There were none.

**4. Minutes of previous meeting**

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record and confirmed by the Chair.

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

**5. Head Girls' report**

Miss Brewster provided Governors with an insight into some of the activities that have taken place this term. She referred to the focus by staff on trying to provide some normality amongst all the changes and restrictions imposed due to Covid-19. Sixth Form students have been working with younger year groups and providing quizzes for form time, and also creating letters with Year 8 students to send to residents in care homes. The Food Drive at the end of November was a great success, with many more donations than usual, helping to show the considerable charitable spirit of the school. Year 7 have held a virtual pumpkin carving competition with 165 entries. There are weekly Headstrong activities in Tutor Time and Years 8, 9, & 11 have had careers events.

Miss Brewster was asked about Year 13 students and University applications. She replied that some students are finding it difficult to choose Universities as they have not been able to visit in person. There are also concerns about what might happen next summer regarding exams. For some, it is very stressful.

Miss Brewster was thanked for her report.

## **6. Headteachers' report**

Governors reviewed the report.

A question was asked about the recent Standards Visit. Mr. Crowther advised that it had been a very useful and positive meeting and Mr. Daymond was very impressed with what he had seen and heard. He agreed that the quality of provision in the current circumstances is exceptional. The draft report has just been received and will be reviewed and discussed by the Senior Leadership Group to identify areas for action or focus.

The number of students moving from Year 11 into Year 12 in September was higher than usual and Governors asked if this has raised any issues. Mrs. Manning replied that there have been no particular problems and all have settled in well.

Governors noted that attendance rates this term are still high which is very positive, despite media reports that secondary attendance has fallen due to Covid. It was felt that many parents are grateful for the quality of provision at the school and there is no pressure on students not to attend.

Governors were pleased to note the high level of CPD that continues to take place. Mr. Crowther replied that there is a lot of quality professional development available and staff are finding it easier to access this online, rather than travelling to courses and conferences.

Mrs. Manning was asked how Year 11 students are feeling about their exams. She replied that the general feeling from departments is that the students are coping well and that the recent mini-mocks have helped students to focus. It has set them up for the next set of mocks in March. Although focus is on Year 11 & 13 students for next year, students just starting courses in Year 10 and 12 must not be forgotten as they have also had disruption in their preparation and learning as a result of Covid-19.

## **7. Committee reports**

### **7.1 Admissions Committee**

Dr. Middleton reported on the meeting held on 3 November. Details of admission numbers, in-year movement and Year 11 & 13 destinations were discussed. Excellent feedback has been received for the virtual online open events for Year 7 and Year 12.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

### **7.2 Curriculum & Performance Committee**

Mr. Lucas gave a report from the meeting held on 3 November. The main part was a presentation on the summer examinations process and it was clear that the school had a very robust process in place and students were supported well. Self-evaluation in

school this term if based around ensuring a focus on teaching. A virtual online parents evening has been trialed and feedback from Year 11 parents has been very positive. The meeting also had an initial discussion regarding the diversity of the school community and Black Lives Matter and will continue this at future meetings.

The committee reviewed updated versions of the Anti-Bullying Policy, Behaviour for Learning Policy and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy and recommended these for approval. The policies were **APPROVED** by the Governors.

The committee also reviewed and approved the Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy, the Children Looked After Policy and the Homework Policy and this was **NOTED**.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

### **7.3 Finance & Resources Committee**

Mr. Edwards reported on the meeting held on 10 November. The auditors were in attendance and presented the draft financial statement for the year. The outcome of the audit was very good and the auditors praised the finance team and school for the financial management and controls that are in place. The school is in a sound financial position. The report from the auditors is unqualified. Mr. Edwards proposed approval.

Governors **APPROVED** the Financial Statement to 31 August 2020

The Audit Findings Management Letter found no regularity issues and only one small, low risk, control matter. This report was **NOTED**.

The committee also discussed a proposal to construct the additional science laboratory above the existing single laboratory in the courtyard next to the science Block. They agreed that this should proceed and a contract awarded to T J Evers Ltd. for the work.

Governors ratified the decision to award the contract to T.J. Evers Ltd.

The committee reviewed an updated version of the Data Protection Policy and recommended this for approval. The policy was **APPROVED** by the Governors.

The committee also reviewed and approved the Data Security Policy, Minibus Safety and Use Policy, and the Schedule of Financial Delegation and this was **NOTED**.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

### **7.4 Audit and Risk Committee**

Mr. Down reported on the first meeting of the newly separated Audit & Risk Committee. As well as noting the report from the auditors, the committee reviewed the Internal Scrutiny reports from the summer term. No issues were reported. The committee also reviewed a draft Risk Assessment covering financial and non financial matters which will be used to determine the programme of Internal Scrutiny work for this year and also discussed the most appropriate way for the Scrutiny to take place. One option is to invite a Chief Finance Officer of another Academy Trust to undertake this work and the CFO of Hitchin Boys' School has confirmed that she is willing to do this.

Governors **AGREED** to invite Mrs. D. Ivory-Webb, CFO at Hitchin Boys' School, to act as the Internal Scrutineer.

The auditors have completed their three year appointment and a tender process will be carried out for a new three year appointment.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

## **7.5 Personnel Committee**

Mrs. Job gave a report from the meeting held on 13th October. All newly appointed staff have settled in well. A new position was agreed to provide administrative support for Pupil Premium, Catch-Up Premium and Attendance. The meeting heard that all teaching staff performance appraisals have been completed and all pay progressions were approved. Objectives for this year are focused on the core priority of teaching and keeping things going during the pandemic. The importance of staff wellbeing and providing support for staff was discussed.

The committee approved the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions Policy and this was **NOTED**.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

Ms. Briggs left the meeting at this point.

## **7.6 Strategic Planning Committee**

Mr. Hall reported on a meeting of this new committee which comprises the chairs of the various other committees with a remit to look at strategic and longer term matters.

It had received an update on the Multi Academy Trust application submitted at the start of the year with The Knights Templar School. Some further information was requested by the Headteacher Board in May. Both schools agree that dealing with Covid and all the changes required is the priority at present and the MAT proposal is therefore on hold. It will be looked at again when time allows.

The meeting also discussed the governance changes required to comply with the Academies Financial Handbook and the plan and timescale for dealing with this.

Future agenda items will include staffing for expansion into Key Stage 4 & 5 and the IT strategy for the school.

The minutes of the meeting were noted.

## **8. Multi Academy Trust update**

Mrs. Manning advised that there is nothing further to add since the update provided at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting.

## **9. Governance structure and changes**

Mr. Hall referred to the paper which set out the changes required, the reason for this and the actions that will need to be taken. The deadline for these as detailed in the Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) is 1 March 2021.

Mr. Hankin reminded Governors that the main changes required are to reduce the number of Academy Trust Members to 5, with a majority independent of Trustees, and to ensure the employees are no longer members. To allow this to happen, the Articles of Association of the Trust need changing to the latest model provided by the Department of Education. The DfE also indicate in the AFH that their strong preference is that employees should also not be Trustees. The Strategic Planning Committee had discussed this last point and agreed that Staff Trustees (Governors) are an important part of the Governing Body and their contribution is very valuable. Employees can still be appointed as Trustees by the Members, subject to a maximum number, and it is proposed that the Members commit to a statement

of intent recognizing the valued contribution of staff and committing to always consider any staff being put forward for consideration as a Trustee. Governors agreed that it is essential to retain staff as Trustees and that this approach will allow this to continue.

It was noted that, in order to comply with the AFH, there is no option other than to make these Governance changes. Stone King are providing guidance on the changes required and the process to be followed.

Mr. Hall proposed the following resolution:

*Having considered the revised Articles of Association presented to the meeting, and noting that these Articles are in final draft, trustees consider that it is in the best interests of the Academy Trust to adopt the revised Articles of Association as the new Articles of Association of the company subject to first obtaining DfE approval of the same, and in furtherance of this the trustees resolve*

- 1. that a special written resolution be circulated to the Members of the Academy Trust to approve the adoption of the revised Articles of Association as the new Articles of Association of the Academy Trust;*
- 2. subject to the Members passing the special resolutions noted above, to:*
  - a. make the necessary filings at Companies House to reflect the changes to the Articles; and*
  - b. publish the new Articles on the Trust's website.*

Sixteen Governors voted in favour with one abstention. The resolution was **PASSED**.

## **10. Link Governors**

No Link Governor visits have taken place this term. Mrs. King reported that she had attended a virtual Pupil Premium training session which was interesting and informative. It had provided her with some questions that Governors should consider in preparation of an Ofsted Inspection. Mr. Crowther informed Governors that Ofsted preparation information will be collated and shared with Governors this year and that this PP information can be added.

## **11. Any Other Business**

None.

Governors again expressed their admiration for all that staff have had to deal with this term and for the way in which they have continued to focus on supporting students and each other whilst continuing to deliver high quality teaching and learning. They hoped that all staff would be able to have a restful and peaceful Christmas break.

## **12. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 16 March 2021