

**Hope Learning Trust Board of Trustees**  
 Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020 at 6.00pm  
 Via Zoom

**Present:** Tony Myers (Chair of Trustees) David Judson  
 Philippa Gowland Ian Thomson  
 John Kesterton Andrew Simpkin  
 Olivia Seymour Julie McGonigle  
 Karen Osborne Dee Cooley

**In Attendance:** Brian Crosby (CEO, Hope Learning Trust)  
 Wendy Munro (COO, Hope Learning Trust)  
 Allyson Buckton (Headteacher, Forest of Galtres Anglican Methodist Primary School) [to 7.20pm]  
 Helen Dowds (Executive Principal, Scarborough) [to 7.20pm]  
 Jess Swarbrick (Governance Advisor & Clerk)

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b><u>Welcome &amp; Opening Prayer</u></b>            The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, which opened with a prayer led by Ian Thomson.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b><u>Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest</u></b>            There were no apologies from Trustees. It was noted that Simon Bryan-Smith, Finance Director, was currently unwell, and Trustees expressed their best wishes for his recovery.</p> <p>In relation to discussions regarding City of York Council (CYC), Philippa Gowland declared an interest as a CYC employee. In relation to discussions regarding the Diocese of York, Olivia Seymour declared an interest as an employee.</p>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b><u>Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, Action Plan and Matters Arising</u></b>            Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record. It was noted that minutes would be signed by the Chair at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the action plan. It was agreed that any actions which were not able to be addressed at the current time would be noted at the end of the minutes and carried forward.</p> <p>Trustees formally noted that since the previous meeting, a written resolution had been approved on Chair's Action, allowing the delegation of urgent decision making powers to the Chair where necessary during the current situation.</p> <p>It was also noted that Trustees had approved an appendix to the Safeguarding Policy relating to changes in circumstances relating to COVID-19. This approval had been made via email.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<p><b><u>CEO Update</u></b>            A report from the CEO outlining the current situation and plans and preparations for re-opening schools had been circulated with the agenda. It was noted that the schools had remained open to vulnerable children and children of keyworkers since 20<sup>th</sup> March, and the phrase "re-opening" referred to the wider opening up of provision in line with government guidelines.</p> <p>It was recognised that the responsibility for a decision on re-opening lay with the Board of Trustees, taking advice and recommendation from the CEO. Details on planning, risk assessment,</p>	

	<p>timetabling and mechanisms for social distancing would be provided to inform and support the Board in making a decision.</p> <p>The Chair advised that Trustees needed to get to a point where they could agree that all relevant parameters were satisfied. Following this, he proposed that appropriate delegation regarding the date on which individual schools could introduce this wider provision be given to the CEO, LGC Chair and Principal, based on completion and scrutiny of individual risk assessments. It was agreed that all school risk assessments would also be made available for Trustee scrutiny. If any further concerns or questions arose from these documents, it was recognised that an additional Board meeting may be needed to discuss and agree what action should be taken.</p>	
	<p><b>4.1 Current Situation</b></p> <p>An update on the current situation in schools had been provided within the CEO's Report. The CEO advised that all schools in the Trust had stayed open for keyworker children and children from vulnerable groups, with the exception of Baldersby St James where there had been no demand for places. He noted that uptake had varied considerably according to individual schools, with Barlby High having around 15-20 students per day consistently, and Manor only 2-5. It was noted that schools had also remained open throughout the Easter break and bank holiday, and were intending to remain open during half term.</p> <p>The CEO reported that colleagues in school were already dealing with restrictions being considered for the wider re-opening, including social distancing, hygiene and managing drop-offs and pick-ups. He advised that colleagues throughout the whole Trust had managed the situation well, and the staff response had been fantastic.</p> <p>However, the CEO reported that he was also seeing a high level of stress and fatigue, particularly amongst school leaders, who were working consistently even when not in school, to address issues and concerns from parents, pupils and staff, as well as planning for the expected increase in provision after half term.</p> <p>The CEO reported that the COO had also played a significant role in working with school caterers to provide food for vulnerable families before the government voucher scheme had been set up. He also noted the difficulties which had been experienced by school leaders and parents in accessing this scheme when it was up and running.</p> <p><b>Trustees asked what support was being provided for senior managers given the high levels of stress they were under.</b> The CEO advised that he would like to ask for Trustee approval to commission professional support and counselling sessions on stress management, for both senior leaders and other staff in the Trust.</p> <p><b>APPROVED: Trustees unanimously agreed expenditure to provide professional counselling for staff.</b></p> <p>The COO advised that the Trust also bought into an employee assistance programme, which was available to all staff, and included counselling support. She added that the HR team provided frequent updates to school leaders, with details and support, for cascading to all staff.</p>	
	<p><b>4.2 Re-opening Strategy</b></p> <p>The CEO advised that the government had indicated they would like to set a date of 1<sup>st</sup> June at the earliest for the potential re-opening of schools to specific year groups. For primary schools in the Trust this would be Early Years, Year 1 and Year 6, and for secondary this would be Year 10. The CEO advised that subject to the government's expected update on 28<sup>th</sup> May, the plan would be to have a limited phased return for primary schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June, and provision for Year 10 students from 8<sup>th</sup> June.</p>	

The CEO reported that he was working along with other school leaders and the LA in York through the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) to determine a consistent city-wide approach. He advised that YSAB had been meeting three times per week, as well as additionally with unions to enable centralised negotiations. It was noted that YSAB related to York schools only.

It was noted that any decision was dependent on the government's announcement on 28<sup>th</sup> May. Trustees recognised that this was a rapidly changing situation, and things could change dramatically between now and then.

The CEO reported that a survey had been sent to all parents to ascertain what the uptake would be for the specified year groups. He advised that responses varied significantly in different schools and had been used to inform planning according to the individual context and site restrictions in each setting. The CEO advised that vulnerable and keyworker children would continue be the priority group. After this, the school would take in children from specified year groups starting with Nursery and Reception, until it was deemed that no further children could be accommodated safely. The CEO advised that in some cases, this could mean that Year 6 pupils would not be returning.

The CEO advised that for the specified year groups, it would not be a full-time return to school, but initially for two days per week, with staggered starts and departures. He added that it had also been made clear to parents that for children in Early Years, it would be impossible to maintain a two metre distance.

In response to a question from Trustees, the CEO clarified that if plans went ahead to open primary schools from 1<sup>st</sup> June, that day would actually be a staff training day, with pupils being admitted from Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Trustees were reassured that this time would be provided for staff to understand how the new measures would work in school before the children came back.

In terms of staff, the CEO advised that many colleagues were keen to get back to working with the children again, though there were also many who were understandably nervous. Trustees noted the letter from YSAB to all staff assuring the work which was being done around ensuring the safety of all. The CEO advised that any staff classed as extremely clinically vulnerable would still not be expected to come into school. However, it was noted that there would also be individuals not on this this list who would still have high levels of anxiety, which needed to be addressed. The CEO advised that YSAB and the Trust were working with unions on how best to provide support.

***Trustees were encouraged by the level of wellbeing support for staff, but asked what plans were in place to support children returning to a very different learning environment after a long period at home.*** The CEO advised that school leaders, particularly in primary, were keen to ensure that children did not come back into an environment that would be frightening in any way. There would be no masks worn by teachers or pupils (unless dealing with children in close proximity, or if they were sick in any way). The CEO reported that the strategy would be to have low group sizes, with the same staff working with the same group of children at all times.

Allyson Buckton advised that Forest of Galtres had been following guidance from North Yorkshire (NYCC) rather than YSAB, which planned for opening on 1<sup>st</sup> June, and therefore staff induction had taken place today. She reported that staff were positive about how the situation would work, and how to ensure that children felt comfortable in this new environment. Allyson also reported that staff had been maintaining contact with parents and children throughout this period through Google Classroom, and had been able to discuss with children how the new arrangements would look and work.

**Trustees asked what would happen in the event that there were too many children to be able to maintain safe distances within the government guidelines.** The CEO advised that priority would be given to the younger year groups, and Year 6 would not return if a school was deemed to be full. He emphasised that the guidance stated that schools should only re-open if safe working practices could be guaranteed, and this would depend on individual schools and their size and layout.

**Trustees asked whether there would be a mechanism for them to have sight of all completed risk assessments for schools ahead of a final decision on re-opening.** The CEO advised that a pro-forma had been sent to all school leaders setting out points for consideration ahead of re-opening, and all had been completed and submitted back to him. In addition, both YSAB (CYC) and NYCC had provided a template risk assessment for schools to complete, for review before a final decision was made. It was noted that copies of all these documents had been circulated with the agenda, along with completed versions of the risk assessments for George Pindar and Graham Schools.

The CEO advised that he had requested all school leaders return their completed assessments as soon as possible. He advised that he would then meet with individual Headteachers and LGC Chairs to review each risk assessment and make a decision on whether it addressed all concerns to be able to agree to move forward with re-opening. This would happen at least five days before the proposed re-opening date. The CEO further advised that all completed risk assessments would be made available for Trustees to review. It was noted that the Trust's Operations Manager should also be involved in these discussions, with oversight from the COO.

The CEO proposed that if Trustees agreed this approach, approving the parameters within which each decision would need to be made based on the detail in the risk assessment, then he would sign off each individual risk assessment as Accounting Officer following agreement from the Headteacher and LGC Chair.

Trustees were asked if they were happy with this proposal to delegate the physical sign off of the risk assessments to the CEO, following detailed review with the Headteacher and LGC Chair of each school.

**APPROVED: A majority of Trustees approved in principle the re-opening of its schools, recognising that they were satisfied that the parameters within the risk assessment templates were fit for purpose. It was further noted that all completed risk assessments would be made available to Trustees. Finally, Trustees recognised that any decision on re-opening would also be subject to any local guidance issued following the government's update scheduled for 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020.**

**It was further agreed that if any areas of significant risk were identified, these would be flagged up and brought back to Trustees for further review.**

The CEO confirmed that there were some areas which had already been identified as an issue, and which colleagues were working to address. He advised Trustees that if issues could not be addressed to the point which a school could operate safely, the proposed opening date would be delayed. In addition, it was noted that changes may be required to proposed opening dates dependent on new government guidance which could be issued.

Trustees expressed their assurance on hearing from both the CEO and Allyson that the majority of staff were prepared and ready for schools to re-open. However, there was a recognition that discussions around having children and teaching staff in a room together were being held virtually, by a Board who could not physically meet in person. It was noted that it was important

not to feel the need to rush into re-opening schools until there could be assurance that all potential risks had been identified and addressed to ensure the safety of children and staff. Trustees emphasised the need to be aware of any emerging research in this fast moving environment, which may have implications on the actions being taken in relation to children, staff and school communities, and to be ready to act on these if necessary.

In light of this, it was recognised that approvals given by Trustees at this meeting were conditional on any future government guidance which may be issued. Trustees were mindful that the responsibility for making a final decision on re-opening schools lay with the Board.

In response to a question about the NEU five tests, the COO advised that the Trust were working to ensure that JNCC and government guidance was being followed throughout this process. She stated that individual unions had raised different issues, but the Trust would be adhering to the government standard position. The COO also reported that she had met with union representatives to discuss the situation over the last couple of days. In terms of ensuring key standards were met, the COO advised that spot checks would be made on schools following the return of students.

In response to a question regarding insurance, the COO confirmed that as the Trust was following the expectations set out by the DfE, the insurance through RPA would cover any issues which arose.

With reference to arrangements for secondary schools, the CEO reported that Year 10 only would be returning at this point, with minimal contact of three hours per week and students attending on a rota system. As stated above, the CEO noted that the intention at this point was to start this back on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June for all secondaries apart from Barlby High, who had indicated they would like to start from Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

In response to a question from Trustees, the CEO confirmed that Year 10 students would receive some face to face time to support ongoing distance learning. He advised that the emphasis would be on discussion of topics, work being set, any issues or difficulties being experienced and then the setting of the next piece of work. The CEO advised that there was an interest amongst secondary colleagues to start some Zoom lessons, with perhaps twenty minutes per week for all teachers to have contact with students. It was recognised, however, that this would bring other difficulties in terms of safeguarding and online access which would need to be considered.

Trustees recognised the difference in circumstances of each of the Trust's schools, and the potential barriers which they would be facing. It was noted that as agreed above, the framework and parameters would be the same across the Trust, but within this Headteachers would need to look at the needs and circumstances of their schools. It was re-iterated again that if there was any concern that things could not be put in place or addressed to ensure a safe re-opening then this must be delayed.

***As the legally responsible body, it was noted that Trustees needed to be informed of any changes to proposed re-opening because of specific risks.***

The Governance Advisor stated that the decision on re-opening remained a Board decision, subject to their being satisfied that all risk assessments were in place. It was suggested that an emergency additional meeting may need to be convened following the government's announcement on 28<sup>th</sup> May, should circumstances and guidance change significantly.

Trustees asked whether there was anything further the Board could do to support the CEO and Central Team during this time. The CEO advised that the Chair had provided a lot of support to him, in discussing and raising questions throughout this situation. In addition, he was also

	<p>continuing to consult with other local school leaders and the LA, who were all going through the same experience.</p>	
	<p><b>4.3 Update on Primary Strategy</b></p> <p>Trustees noted the update included in the CEO Report. The CEO advised that due to the current situation, the planned primary restructure would not be going forward at this point. However an advert had been published for the role of Head of School at Skelton Primary, and interviews were being held this week. It was noted that Olivia Seymour was representing both Trustees and the Diocese on the interview panel, along with the LGC Vice-Chair and Shan Brough-Jones, Primary School Improvement Advisor and Ash Atherton, Executive Principal.</p> <p>The CEO also reported that Steff Brown who had been Acting Head of School at Baldersby St James had agreed to continue leading the school for the next academic year. He advised that Steff had attended an interview for this role with Olivia and himself.</p> <p><b>Trustees requested an update on governance at Baldersby St James.</b> The CEO reported that he had approached the National Governors' Association (NGA) about finding a chair, and was waiting to hear back on this. In terms of approving risk assessments for planned re-opening, it was agreed that this would require a greater level of Trustee involvement, given the current weakness of governance at the school.</p>	
5.	<p><b><u>Safeguarding, Wellbeing &amp; Welfare</u></b></p> <p>It was noted that the updated safeguarding policy was not yet ready for approval, but would be brought to Trustees as soon as possible.</p> <p>The CEO reported that a further appendix to address issues around online face to face learning was also being developed and would need to be in place before this provision was rolled out.</p>	
6.	<p><b><u>Resources &amp; Budget Update</u></b></p> <p>The Chair reported that the most up to date management reports would be available this week and circulated to Trustees. He advised that on balance, the full year forecast was looking more favourable than initially expected. However, it was recognised that at this point there was no confirmation of where additional government funding may or may not be provided, which may affect the final outturn.</p>	
7.	<p><b><u>Local Governing Committees</u></b></p> <p><b>7.1 Meetings &amp; Expectations</b></p> <p>It was noted that LGC meetings had been suspended from 20<sup>th</sup> March, though Headteachers had been in regular contact with their LGC Chairs, and had also held an informal keeping in touch meeting to update governors on the current situation in schools.</p> <p>The CEO reported that from half term, LGCs would meet as previously scheduled but with a reduced agenda covering only business critical and safeguarding issues. It was noted that all LGCs would be expected to review and recommend their 2020/21 start budgets for approval.</p> <p>A question was raised regarding the Board of Trustee sub-committees, with Standards and Distinctiveness both currently suspended. The Chair advised that any key issues which would have usually been discussed at sub-committee level should be brought to the Full Board for consideration.</p> <p>It was noted that wellbeing was a key area which Trustees should ensure was at the forefront of discussions.</p>	
		BC

	<p><b><i>ACTION: The CEO agreed to arrange an update on wellbeing, support and counselling for the next meeting.</i></b></p>	
	<p><b><i>7.2 Approval of LGC Appointments</i></b>  Information on proposed governor appointments had been previously distributed.</p> <p><b><i>Vale of York Academy</i></b> - Jenny Smailes (new appointment)  <b><i>Vale of York Academy</i></b> - Helen Todd (new appointment)</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Trustees approved the above proposals unanimously.</b></p>	
8.	<p><b><i>Any Other Urgent Business</i></b></p> <p><b><i>8.1 Assistant Principal, Student Welfare – Barlby High School</i></b>  John Kesterton reported that he had been involved in the interview panel for the post of Assistant Principal, Student Welfare at Barlby High, along with the Principal and Katherine Humpleby, Secondary School Improvement Lead. John provided a brief outline of the process, and reported that after a successful interview, the panel had been unanimous in recommending the appointment of Zoe Hughes.</p> <p><b><i>APPROVED: Trustees approved the proposed appointment unanimously.</i></b></p> <p><i>[Helen Dowds and Allyson Buckton left the meeting at 7.20pm]</i></p>	
9.	<p><b><i>Confidential Items</i></b></p> <p><b><i>9.1 Confidential minutes from the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020</i></b>  Previously distributed. The minutes were agreed to be a true and accurate record. It was noted that minutes would be signed by the Chair at the earliest opportunity.</p> <p>All actions had been completed.</p>	
	<p><b><i>9.2 Update on Project East</i></b>  Minutes of the Joint Oversight Committee meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May had been circulated with the agenda. Noted. The Chair provided a further update from the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> May. Will circulate when finalised.</p> <p><i>The following discussion has been recorded as a separate, confidential minute.</i></p>	
10.	<p><b><i>Dates and Times of Future Meetings</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020 at 6.00pm (additional meeting)</li> <li>* Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020 at 6.00pm</li> </ul> <p>In addition, the following meetings will still take place during the second half of the summer term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Members' Meeting Wednesday 10th June 2020, 5pm</li> <li>* LGC Chairs' Meeting Monday 22nd June 2020, 6pm</li> <li>* Resources Committee Monday 29th June 2020, 6pm</li> <li>* Resources Committee Monday 6th July 2020, 6pm</li> </ul> <p>It was noted that the meetings scheduled for the Standards Committee and Hope Distinctiveness &amp; Personal Development Committee had been cancelled. Any urgent business from these committees would be addressed at the Full Board meetings.</p>	

The meeting closed at 7.40pm

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Tony Myers \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020 \_\_\_\_\_  
Tony Myers (Chair of the Trust Board)

**Action Points from the Hope Learning Trust Board meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>AGENDA ITEM</i>	<i>WHO</i>	<i>WHEN</i>
1.	<i>Update report on wellbeing, support and counselling</i>	<i>7.1</i>	<i>Brian Crosby</i>	<i>19/06/2020</i>

**Action Points from previous meetings to carry forward**

	<i>ACTION</i>	<i>MEETING REF</i>	<i>WHO</i>
1.	<i>Standards, Resources and Trust Board Chairs should discuss ways of developing governor understanding of the assurance model and move this forward</i>	<i>11/03/2020</i>	<i>Karen Osborne, Ian Thomson, Tony Myers</i>
2.	<i>Include development of staff wellbeing policy on next HDPD agenda</i>	<i>11/03/2020</i>	<i>Jess Swarbrick</i>

**Items for the next agenda:**

- \* Updated Safeguarding Policy
- \* Update on training for LGCs on assurance model, roles and responsibilities

**Items for future agendas:**

- \* Self-Review template for LGCs
- \* Trust Board Self-Review (July 2020)