



Synergy Multi Academy Trust
Directors Meeting
Wednesday 30th April 2025
at 6pm
RHSC Sixth Form Centre

Directors Present	Natasha Hutcheson (NH) Chair	Deborah Boldero	Susi Waters (SW)
	Robin Hanley (RH)	Tracey Hughes (TH)	James Macadam (JM) Arrived at 6.15pm
	Constance Tyce (CT)		
Members Present	Andrew Savage (AS)		
Present	Richard Lord (RL)	Alastair Ogle (AO)	Mark Thorogood (MT)
	Robin Gainher (RG)	Ian Richardson (IR)	James Claxton (JC)
Clerk	Debra Fraser (DF)		
Directors Absent			

Actions

Item No.	Action	By Whom	By When
2.	AO to respond to Andy Tovell confirming all 3 SRB options pending 1) CFO sign off on the SRB financial models and mitigation of any scenarios in which financial burdens may arise including in relation to decommissioning the buildings in the future 2) Ensuring the Reepham site is lined in with current planning relation to the sports hall.	AO	May 25
	MA to review the planning data and the SRB to ensure that it does not interfere with the Sports Hall.	MA	May 2025
8.	Meeting with FMG to obtain a quote for analysing the need for sports facilities.	TH	May 25
	Budget approval process to be discussed and followed up by end of May. (Chair)	JM	May 2025
	Board members to provide feedback on financial turnaround tracker for inclusion as a standing item in future board meetings by end of May. (all Board)	Trust Board	May 2025
9.	Articles of association to be updated.	JM/DF	Sept 25
	Terms of reference for committees to be reviewed in light of new board reporting model.	CT/RH/JM/TH/DF	Sept 25
	LGB governance – AO to lead on working group and standardisation of reporting template, schedule of delegation review.	AO	Sept 25
	Board materials – Chair and relevant trustee leads to develop new standing board pack for July meeting and ensure link up with LGB reporting and sub-committees etc. (Chair)	JM	Jul 25
	Strategy – AO to lead executive team review and finalisation by May 19. Approval by email. Summary to be included on the website.	AO	May 25

11.	Action: MG to complete risk assessments of all schools by Oct 30th. 5-year strategic estates plan to be delivered by year end.	MG	Oct 25
12.	Bullying & Harassment Policy – Trustees to provide feedback to JC by 5th May. Conflict of Interests Policy – Trustees to provide feedback to JC by 5th May and policy will be reviewed at the Audit & Risk Committee.	Trustees	5th May
12.3	JC to finalise and agree Policy Review Schedule and email to Trust Board or Pay & Remuneration Committee.	JC	Jul 25

Minutes

Key: Green text = challenge; Blue text = response to challenge; Red text = decision

Item No.	
1.	<p>APOLOGIES Apologies were received from Michelle Allbones.</p>
2.	<p>ALTERNATIVE PROVISION PRESENTATION</p> <p>2.1 Andy Tovell (Norfolk County Council) presented to the Trustees and the following points were discussed: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Provision encompasses Specialist Resource Bases. • SRBs are included in the Tier 2 offer. Currently looking at 20 provisions across Norfolk, 10 for early intervention and 10 extensive intervention providing year-long placements. • NCC are currently working with 8 MATs across Norfolk. • Provisions will have staggered opening over several years. • Individual SRBs will also have staggered opening starting with the pupils from the school where the SRB is sited when the site is ready, and recruitment is fully in place. • 500 pupils per year will be supported across Norfolk. • Capital and re-occurring revenue funding is available for SRBs. • Early impact in the SRB in King's Lynn has been positive. • The level of staffing will be funded by Norfolk County Council. • There is a proposed SRB at Sheringham High School. The SEMH base at Stalham High School is utilising the current premises and Reepham High School will be a new build. All three bases will be funded by capital funds. • SRBs are a constituent part of the school, and the school leads on recruitment with NCC support. • Trustees and DfE need to agree to hosting the three provisions. • NCC pay all travel costs for pupils moving between the provisions. <p>2.2 The Trustees discussed the proposal for SRBs and the following points were considered: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional Estates workload and hidden costs involved need to be taken into consideration. • The Reepham High School provision plan does not include the proposed Sports Hall. The proposed SRB provision and Sports Hall need to be given further consideration. • Due diligence needs to be undertaken, particularly regarding the staffing. • Additional management capacity will be required, and current staff could fulfil this. • The Sheringham High School launch may coincide with potential job losses, but the SRB may alleviate this situation. • Heads of School have been positive about the proposed bases. • How the wider community will think about external pupils accessing SRB provision needs to be taken into account. This has been an issue at Stalham High School and needs to be clearly communicated to parents to avoid further issues.

	<p>The Trustees approved the provisions at Stalham High School and Sheringham High School. The Reepham High School provision approved is subject to Michelle Allbones reviewing the figures and the SRB to ensure that it does not interfere with the Sports Hall.</p> <p>Action: Articles of association to be updated to latest version (Clerk/Chair) Action: Terms of reference for committees to be reviewed in light of new board reporting (Clerk/Chairs) Action: LGB governance – AO to lead on working group and standardisation of reporting template, schedule of delegation review. Action: Board materials – Chair and relevant trustee leads to develop new standing board pack for July meeting and ensure link up with LGB reporting and sub-committees etc. (Chair) Action: Strategy – AO to lead executive team review and finalisation by May 19. Approval by email. Summary to be included on the website. Action: MA to review the figures and the SRB to ensure that it does not interfere with the Sports Hall.</p>
3.	<p>TO RECEIVE ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS WHICH THE CHAIR DEEMS TO BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY</p> <p>None.</p>
4.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTERESTS AND RELATED PARTIES INTERESTS RELEVANT TO THE AGENDA</p> <p>Andrew Savage declared that he is an acquaintance of Simon Medler at Lovell Homes.</p>
5.	<p>ELECTION OF CHAIR</p> <p>NH has been chair for three years and due to personal circumstances wishes to step down from the role. The Trust have a good interim management team and strong Central Services Team in place. NH thanked the Trustees for contributing to the additional meetings. JM was proposed as chair by CT and seconded by DB. The Trustees agreed the appointment. The Trustees, CEO and Deputy CEO thanked Dr Hutcheson for her hard work on behalf of the Trust.</p>
6.	<p>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>The Trustees reviewed the minutes of the meeting of 26th February 2025 and JM signed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.</p>
7.	<p>FINANCIAL RECOVERY MONITORING & REVIEW</p> <p>7.1 AO explained the following points: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current Year to March – All schools are between £7,000 – £250,000 better than the agreed budgets. The Trust Board thanked the schools for their hard work. • Staffing costs have reduced by £7k. • £30m is the amount to be spent on staffing for 2024/25. This is still 87% of income and needs to be reduced for 2025/26. • Recovery Plan – Staffing has been reduced and currently all targets in the Recovery Plan are being met. • The cash advance will not be required from the DfE until June 2025. • The DfE have requested an update on 2nd June and this will be reviewed by the Trustees prior to the 2nd June. • Monthly meetings with the DfE have taken place and no concerns have been identified. • Additional risks have been identified with teaching staff and non-teaching staff proposed salary increases. 3.2% for teaching and non-teaching staff has been built into the budget for 2025/26. • At end of year there is likely to be a £2m deficit budget. • Budget discussions have taken place with primary school headteachers. • The Trustees thanked the headteachers for their contributions in reducing expenditure. • There will be a standing item on future agendas for the Recovery Plan tracking.

	<p>7.2 The Trustees reviewed and agreed the P7 Management Accounts. Action: AO to respond to AT confirming all 3 options pending 1) CFO sign off on the financial model and any scenarios in which financial burdens may arise including in relation to decommissioning the buildings in the future 2) Ensuring the Reepham site is lined in with current planning relation to the sports hall.</p>
8.	<p>SUB COMMITTEE REPORTS Please see attached minutes.</p> <p>8.1 Finance The deficit has been reduced by £0.2m.</p> <p>8.2 Education Curriculum & Standards Please see attached minutes.</p> <p>8.3 Audit & Risk The Risk Register was discussed, and the finance risk has increased. The Risk Register will be condensed. There were concerns around compliance training and the training provider is being reviewed. A Compliance Audit document has been prepared.</p> <p>8.4 Chairs of Governors Feedback The roles of Local Governing Bodies, the format of future Chairs' meetings and information flow were discussed.</p> <p>8.5 Pay & Remuneration Additional meetings have taken place regarding the former CEO not returning to work and later resigning. Complaints were discussed. An independent investigator was appointed, and his report was fair and balanced. The complainants have been advised of the outcome. Recommendations were included in the report which will be reviewed. The Pay & Remuneration committee remit may be extended to include HR.</p> <p>8.6 RHSC Sports Hall Update Quotes for the phase 1 build have been obtained and £100,000 will cover the build. Everything is currently on hold pending Broadland District Council discussions with Lovell Homes regarding the contribution to Synergy MAT as an additional £1.5m is needed to complete the project. FMG consultancy could be instructed to analyse what is needed in the area and a projected financial performance of a sports facility. The cost would be between £5,000 and £7,500. TH/Fraser Hall, the CEO, Reepham High School Chair of Governors Joe Easton and Mark Thorogood could meet with FMG to obtain a full quote.</p> <p>The Trustees agreed the meeting with FMG. Action: Meeting with FMG to obtain a quote for analysing the need for sports facilities. Action: Budget approval process to be discussed and followed up by end of May. (Chair) Action: Board members to provide feedback on financial turnaround tracker for inclusion as a standing item in future board meetings by end of May. (all Board)</p>
9.	<p>STRATEGIC PRIORITIES including External Review of Governance The External Review of Governance has been completed. The following recommendations were made: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Review of the Articles of Association (2) Review the reporting received by the Trustees (3) Clarify LGB reporting framework. (4) Financial oversight and the board being more disciplined around strategy. Strategic Priorities are being prepared and this should be approved by end of May 2025. (5) The Trust Board need to be outward looking and new metrics introduced. (6) A Communication Plan is needed to re-enforce the re-set. <p>Action: Articles of association to be updated. Action: Terms of reference for committees to be reviewed in light of new board reporting Action: LGB governance – AO to lead on working group and standardisation of reporting template, schedule of delegation review. Action: Board materials – Chair and relevant trustee leads to develop new standing board pack for July meeting and ensure link up with LGB reporting and sub-committees etc.</p>

	Action: Strategy – AO to lead executive team review and finalisation by May 19. Approval by email. Summary to be included on the website.
10.	<p>SCHOOLS UPDATE Please see attached reports. 10.1 Primary RL reported on the following points: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headteachers are positive about the forthcoming SATs. • Writing moderation with Pathways is currently taking place. • There are minor concerns around EYFS although all schools are Good. <p>10.2 Secondary AO reported on the following points: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reepham High School are due an Ofsted Inspection. The school is improving. The Trust intend to request a deferral to take into consideration staff wellbeing if Ofsted contact the Trust next Tuesday. • If the inspection goes ahead communication of the result needs to be considered.
11.	<p>ESTATES MT reported on the following points: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance – Trackers have been rolled out to all high schools and they will be in place at primary schools by June 2025. • The estates team are currently preparing a 5-year strategic plan for all schools and will be place by December 2025. • All Risk Assessments will be in place by Autumn 2025 • Audits will take place by October 2025. <p>Action: MG to complete risk assessments of all schools by Oct 30. 5-year strategic estates plan to be delivered by year end.</p>
12.	<p>POLICIES 12.1 Pay Policy – The Trustees approved the policy. Early Career Teachers – Deferred to next meeting. Bullying & Harassment – Trustees to provide feedback to JC by 5th May. Discretionary Leave of Absence – Deferred to next meeting. Employment of Ex-Offenders - Deferred to next meeting. Conflict of Interests – Trustees to provide feedback to JC by 5th May and policy will be reviewed at the Audit & Risk Committee. 12.2 Confidentiality was a recommendation of the Paul Beard Report. This will be covered in the Trust Handbook. 12.3 JC to finalise and agree Policy Review Schedule and email to Trust Board or Pay & Remuneration Committee. Action: Bullying & Harassment – Trustees to provide feedback to JC by 5th May. Action: Conflict of Interests – Trustees to provide feedback to JC by 5th May and policy will be reviewed at the Audit & Risk Committee. Action: JC to finalise and agree Policy Review Schedule and email to Trust Board or Pay & Remuneration Committee.</p>
13.	<p>ACTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REPORT FROM PAUL BEARD This will be emailed to Trustees.</p>
14.	<p>CORRESPONDENCE None.</p>
15.	<p>ITEMS TO DISSEMINATE TO LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES None.</p>
16.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS None.</p>
	The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

