

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 12 December 2024 at 2.00pm

Present physically at ASFC:	C Higgins, Vice Chair	M Chatt
	D Bicker	N Kellett
	E D’Souza, Chair	R Inman
	K Points	S Daley, Vice Chair
Present virtually:	C Ridgeon	R Murray (part)
	D Wildridge (part)	
In Attendance:	A McGarel, CFO	
	G Grainger, Chief Information Officer	
	J Clark, Regional Director – Primaries	
	J Robson, Group Sixth Form Principal	
	L Chapman, Regional Director – SEND	
	N Savvas, CEO	
	S Gales, Governance Professional	
Apologies:	S Graham, Chief People Officer (part)	
	J Wakelam	S Healey Pearce
	R Attwell	S Snowdon

Absent:

1.

Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

C Higgins, E D’Souza, M Chatt and S Daley declared their roles as Governors of West Suffolk College. Trustees recognised their standing declarations.

N Savvas declared his role as CEO of West Suffolk College.

No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies for absence were received from J Wakelam, R Attwell, S Healey Pearce and S Snowdon.

The Chair welcomed David Bicker, Martin Chatt and Neil Kellett as newly appointed Trustees, and James Clark and Lawrence Chapman as new members of the Executive. Trustees introduced themselves.

D Wildridge joined the meeting at 2.06pm

2.

Feedback from ‘First Hand’ activities

Trustees received and considered the First-Hand activity feedback of governance members visits across the Group between July and December 2024.

N Kellett as Trustee lead for Safeguarding (specialist SEN and residential) fed back on his first hand visits this term and the activities at the specialist SEN schools.

K Points as Trustee lead for People fed back on her visit this term and commended the progress of the HR in integrating staff post-merger.

The Chair commended the level of engagement and visits to all schools and colleges within the Group, and noted the feedback forms are helpful to triangulate information.

Trustees discussed the variety of feedback and queried how the rationale of the ‘First Hand’ visits are explained to staff. The CEO and Governance Professional explained

Action

how it is explained to staff and how the first visits tend to be familiarisation of our schools and colleges, then later visits tend to be focussed on specific areas.

Trustees suggested adding a paragraph to the First-Hand form to explain the purpose of the visits and that it is not an inspection.

The Chair fed back from attending the student performance at One Sixth Form and commended it to Trustees.

Gov. Prof.

3. **Minutes of the meeting on 11 July 2024**

The minutes of the meeting on 11 July 2024 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

The Governance Professional **noted** that in Summer 2024, the Trust concluded the legal name change and completed all documents relating to the academisation and subsequent transfer of Exning Primary School, and the transfer of Chalk Hill Academy, Duke of Lancaster School, Priory School, Stone Lodge Academy and Sunrise Academy from SENDAT into the Trust.

4. **Matters Arising from the above meetings**

Four of the matter arising from the last meeting was complete, one was closed, one was noted and one is ongoing due to be reported to the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee.

5. **CEO's Briefing**

5.1 **Update on EEG**

Trustees received and considered the CEO's Briefing which provided a termly update on student achievements, student developments, staff news, shows and exhibitions, sustainability, support of our communities, business and partnerships, and Group newsletters.

The CEO informed that this report is a highlight of the weekly Comms meetings and explained that it is currently more weighted with stories from Abbeygate Sixth Form and One Sixth Form and outlined how we are working to gather more stories from Exning Primary School, Chalk Hill Academy, Duke of Lancaster School, Priory School, Stone Lodge Academy and Sunrise Academy.

Trustees commended the report and the strength of Group-wide working.

The CEO informed that following a 4-day Ofsted inspection in November, West Suffolk College achieved Outstanding across all provision types and 'strong' evidence of meeting the skills need, and informed this makes us the only FE College in the east to achieve this and an incredibly strong education Group with three Outstanding post-16 providers.

[S Graham left the meeting at 2.39pm](#)

5.2 **Strategic Update**

Trustees received and considered the update report which included Bridget Phillipson's post-election priorities, key outcomes from the government's latest budget, sector intelligence, an update on the staffing unions and national pay negotiations, an update on key changes affecting Ofsted, the DfE and ESFA, the Local Authority (devolution), and national policy – e.g. Getting Britain Working white paper, Skills England, Child-Centred Government, SEND, Children's Social Care, HE fees and reform, Managing Public Money, Qualification Reforms – and national trends.

The CEO informed of the likely impact of the national pay negotiations and of the changes to Ofsted.

Trustees queried whether the Group is well positioned to support the government's plans for SEND education. The CEO confirmed that we are and informed that our Group is one of the largest providers of specialist SEN provision in the country, as such we are looking to work with national and local policy makers to inform the changes needed to improve

SEND provision. Moreover, we are working with the Local Authorities to discuss placements to ensure students needs are met, reduce students travel-to-learn time and to have more coherent forecasting to inform capacity planning.

S Graham rejoined at 3.00pm

Trustees discussed horizon scanning and the potential opportunities, and how to monitor these. The CEO noted short-term our focus must focus on fully integrating the Group and embedding a common culture. The CEO informed that we are focusing our support on our specialist SEN schools to rapidly improve the quality of education. The Chair informed we will continue discussions at the Strategic Conference to inform our new 2025-28 Strategic Plan.

Trustees asked for a briefing positional paper outlining the short, medium and long-term plans per phase of education, and context of relations and history with policy makers per each phase of education.

CEO

6. **Committee Chair's Summary Reports**

The Chair informed that the Corporation operates a Committee structure whereby the specialist Committees look in detail at KPIs and reports, and report back to the Trust Board for assurance and make recommendations for approval in line with our scheme of delegation.

6.1. **EEGT Primary Educational Excellence Committee Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meeting in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommended the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract. The Committee considered KPIs and updates in relation to student enrolment, progress and experience so far in 2024/25 and student outcomes and destinations in 2023/24. The Committee discussed the use of Pupil Premium and Sports and PE Premium at each school. The Committee also reviewed and recommended policies in agenda item 7.

D Bicker, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and informed that the school is self-assessing as Outstanding across all areas, though has an improvement plan to further enhance the provision.

Trustees queried the feedback following the inaugural Committee meeting. D Bicker fed back that the meeting went well.

Trustees discussed how to coordinate the work of the Educational Excellence Committees to promote best practice sharing. The CEO and Governance Professional to consider.

CEO
Gov. Prof.

6.1.1 **Safeguarding Termly Report**

Trustees received and **noted** the termly report which was scrutinised by the Committee.

D Bicker, as Trustee Lead for Safeguarding (Primaries) fed back on his first hand visits this term.

6.1.2 **2024/25 Pupil Premium Strategy Statement**

Trustees received and **approved** the report.

Trustees discussed the criteria for use of Pupil Premium funding and Bursary funding.

6.2. **EEG SEND Educational Excellence Committee Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommended the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract. The Committee considered KPIs and updates in relation to student enrolment, progress and experience so far in 2024/25 and student outcomes and destinations in 2023/24. The Committee discussed plans for improving quality and student experience across the schools. The Committee discussed the use of Pupil Premium and Sports and PE Premium at each school. The Committee also reviewed and recommended policies in agenda item 7.

N Kellett, as Committee Vice Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee, the feedback from the Academy Councils, and the emerging issues linked to staffing absences, the estate and SEN appeals. N Kellett commended the in-house training provided to Committee and Academy Council members.

Trustees commended the reporting though asked future reports to include appropriate benchmarks and/or year-on-year information for comparison.

RD SEND

Trustees asked for further guidance and/or in-house training on our approach to SEN education.

CEO
RD SEND

Trustees **delegated authority to the SEND Educational Excellence Committee** to review and approve the Pupil Premium and Sport/PE Premium Strategy Statements of each of the specialist SEN schools. The Governance Professional to add to the Terms of Reference.

Gov. Prof.

6.2.1 Safeguarding Termly Report

Trustees received and **noted** the termly report which was scrutinised by the Committee.

Trustees received and **noted** the termly Standard Three reports which was scrutinised by the Committee.

N Kellett, as Trustee Lead for Safeguarding (specialist SEN and residential) provided a verbal update on live data.

6.3. **EEG Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommended the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract. The Committee reviewed and recommended the 2023/24 Self-Assessment Report. The Committee considered KPIs and updates in relation to student enrolment, progress and experience so far in 2024/25. The Committee discussed the intended curriculum for 2025/26 and plans for teacher and staff development linked to our quality assurance and improvement framework. The Committee also reviewed and recommended policies in agenda item 7.

S Daley, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and explained the rationale for the self-assessed grades and quality improvement plans of Abbeygate Sixth Form and One Sixth Form.

Trustees discussed our student outcomes in the context of local and national averages, and previous years outcomes. J Robson summarised how the leadership teams are working across the Group to align provision, share best practice, and achieve greater value added and a higher proportion of higher grades.

Trustees commended the honest self-reflection and focus on continuous improvement, with students at the heart of everything we do.

6.3.1 Safeguarding Termly Report

Trustees received and **noted** the termly report which was scrutinised by the Committee.

S Daley noted that student mental health and SEN needs are increasing and explained this is putting pressure on our wrap-around support teams. Trustees commended the strength of the safeguarding team and support offered to students.

6.3.2 ASFC Self-Assessment Report 2023/24
Trustees received and **approved** the report.

6.3.3 OSFC Self-Assessment Report 2023/24
Trustees received and **approved** the report.

R Murray left the meeting at 2.58pm

6.4. **EEG Resources Committee Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meeting in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommended the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract and received updates on People (including key performance indicators for HR and wellbeing), Compliance (including the termly Health and Safety Report), Virtual Infrastructure (including a Data, Systems and Processes update and IT update) and Physical Infrastructure (including Estates and Property update and a Sustainability update). The Committee also reviewed and recommended policies in agenda item 7.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions of the Committee and noted the joint Committee has been very effective in furtherance of delivering our Group strategy and removed unnecessary duplication.

C Higgins noted the teams are working to integrate post-merger to ensure a consistent approach across the Group.

The CFO advised that additional evidence has been provided to the Internal Auditors in relation to the Procurement audit which may improve the assurance rating.

6.4.1. Health and Safety Termly Report
Trustees received and **noted** the termly report which was scrutinised by the Committee.

C Higgins, as Governance Lead for H&S, feedback from attending the termly H&S Board meeting and commended the rigorous approach taken by staff.

C Higgins informed that there are higher levels of assaults on staff in the specialist SEN schools and so work is being undertaken to understand the causes, to inform appropriate intervention strategies.

6.5. **EEGT Finance Committee Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the risk register extract and proposed mitigations. The Committee considered student enrolment data, the monthly management accounts and financial KPIs to monitor performance so far in 2024/25. The Committee considered and recommended the 2023/24 outturn position, the going concern report, the Group services value for money report and the 2023/24 audited accounts. The Committee approved the lease to West Suffolk Wheelers. The Committee also reviewed and recommended policies in agenda item 7.

M Chatt, as Committee Vice Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and commended the successful year-end outturn with a better-than-budget surplus position, whilst re-investing in people and infrastructure.

M Chatt outlined the forecast 2024/25 year-end position and explained the rationale for the new 'challenge' budget. M Chatt summarised the key variables being monitored by the Committee and the 2024/25 enrolment compared to the budgeted/funded position.

Trustees commended the 2023/24 achievement, especially given the 'challenge' budget.

Trustees discussed the government's plan for a policy change in relation to our National Insurance contributions and likely impact.

Trustees **noted** the lease agreed with West Suffolk Wheelers to utilise space within Priory School.

6.5.1 Going Concern Report

Trustees received and **approved** the going concern report.

6.5.2 Annual Group Services Value for Money Report

Trustees received and **approved** the annual report.

6.5.3 Annual Report and Financial Statements

Trustees received and **approved** the report, subject to the proposed amendment to page 6 to reflect that from 2024/25 the Trust's governance structure included multiple LGBs each with space for 2 parents pursuant to Article 101A. Trustees **authorised the Chair and CEO to sign**.

6.6. **EEGT Audit and Risk Management Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommended the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the findings reports of the internal auditors so far in 2024/25 and reviewed the Executive's audit recommendation tracking report to monitor implementation progress. The Committee received updates regarding GDPR, subject access requests, freedom of information and data breaches to ensure proper process was followed and effective measures put in place to lessen the risk to the organisation. The Committee scrutinised the Risk Register to ensure that pertinent risks were identified, and that appropriate and effective mitigations were in place to minimise risk; and recommends the Risk Register to the Board. The Committee also considered and recommended the Committee's annual report, the external auditor's findings report, the internal auditors annual report and our compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook 'musts'. The Committee also reviewed and recommended policies in agenda item 7.

R Inman, as Chair of the Committee, summarised the discussions by the Committee and commended the Executive on the clean external audit.

Trustees **noted** the report of compliance with the Academy Trust Handbook 'musts'.

6.6.1 Risk Register

Trustees received and **noted** the Risk Register.

R Inman commended the new Group risk register and risk radar and outlined plans to further enhance the detail appropriately perhaps by school/college/ phase of education.

The Chair commended the improvements made to the Risk Register and to replicate the approach of the risk register extract, to share the internal auditor's findings reports with the specialist committees.

6.6.2 Annual report of the Committee

Trustees received, considered and **approved** the plan of works which was reviewed and recommended by the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

6.6.3 Annual report of the Internal Auditors

Trustees received, considered and **noted** the annual report.

6.6.4 External Auditors findings report

Trustees received, considered and **noted** the findings report.

6.7 **EEG Nominations and Governance Overview**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Committee meeting in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommended the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the current Constitution and analysed members EDI, attendance and skillset, to inform succession planning and the training and development plan. The Committee recommend the training and development plan for 2024/25. The Committee reviewed and recommended the updated governance documentation. The Committee recommend the appointment of Governance Leads. The Committee shared the letters from the DfE.

The Governance Professional fed back that activities this term has focussed on integrating and on-boarding the transferring governance members, arranging core training, arranging first-hand governance meetings, and recruiting parent Committee and Academy Council members.

Trustees thanked the Governance Professional for her support and coordination of governance across the Group.

Trustees discussed the skillset analysis.

Trustees commended the strength of applications to student, staff and parent roles, and discussed how the unsuccessful candidates have been supported to get involved in other governance or representative roles.

6.7.1 Membership

Trustees **noted** that Susan Ackerly and Richard Carter declined to serve as Academy Council members, and as such Neil Kellett was appointed to the Academy Council for Priory School and Chalk Hill Academy as chair.

Trustees **noted** that on 9 September 2024, Josie Finch was reappointed as an Academy Council member for a 1-year term of office and as chair of the Academy Council for Stone Lodge and the SEN units.

Trustees **noted** that on 13 September 2024, Richard Attwell stood down from and Roger Inman was appointed to the SEND Educational Excellence Committee.

Trustees **noted** that on 9 October 2024, Jasmine Leeder withdrew from WSC and as such ended her term as a member of the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee.

Trustees **noted** that on 19 November 2024, John Malone stood down from the Nominations and Governance Committee and Resources Committee.

Trustees **noted** that on 25 November 2024, Carrie Broad was elected to the Academy Council for Duke of Lancaster School and Sunrise Academy, and Sophie Cowell was elected to the Academy Council for Stone Lodge and the SEN units, as parent members serving a 4-year term of office.

Trustees **noted** that on 2 December 2024, Marnie Williams was appointed as WSC Staff Governor and serving on the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee.

Trustees **noted** that on 2 December 2024, Bruce Hamill and Desmond Murphy were elected as parent members of the Primary Educational Excellence Committee serving a 4-year term of office.

Trustees **noted** the on 4 December 2024, Richard Murray was reappointed by Members for a 1-year term of office and stood down from the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

Trustees **noted** that on 9 December 2024, Kacper Gwara was elected as WSC Student Governor and serving on the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee.

6.7.2 Appointments and training/development plan

Trustees **appointed** Martin Chatt to the Resources Committee and as Committee Chair for 2024/25.

Trustees **appointed** Alfred Miti to the Academy Council for Priory School and Chalk Hill Academy for a 4-year term of office.

Trustees **appointed** Lynzi Bennett to the Academy Council for Duke of Lancaster School and Sunrise Academy for a 4-year term of office.

Trustees **appointed** Sue Daley as EEG Governance Lead for Careers Education and Guidance.

Trustees **appointed** Julia Wakelam as EEG Governance Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Trustees **appointed** Chris Higgins as EEG Governance Lead for Health and Safety.

Trustees **appointed** Karen Points as EEG Governance Lead for People.

Trustees **appointed** David Bicker as EEG Governance Lead for Safeguarding (primary).

Trustees **appointed** Neil Kellett as EEG Governance Lead for Safeguarding (specialist SEN and residential).

Trustees **appointed** Julia Wakelam as EEG Governance Lead for Safeguarding (post-16).

Trustees **appointed** Sue Snowdon as EEG Governance Lead for SEND.

Trustees **appointed** Roger Inman (as Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee) as EEGT Governance Lead for Whistleblowing.

Trustees **approved** the training and development plan for 2024/25.

6.7.3 Updated Governance Documentation

Trustees **approved** the EEGT Standing Orders for 2024/25.

Trustees **approved** the Governance Lead role descriptions for:

- Careers Education and Guidance
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Health and Safety
- People
- Safeguarding (primaries)
- Safeguarding (specialist SEND and residential)
- Safeguarding (post-16)
- SEND
- Whistleblowing

Trustees **approved** the EEG Scheme of Delegation for 2024/25.

Trustees **approved** the Committee Terms of Reference and Committee Skillsets for:

- Academy Councils
- Audit and Risk Management Committee
- Finance Committee
- Nominations and Governance Committee
- Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee
- Primary Educational Excellence Committee
- Remuneration Committee
- Resources Committee
- SEND Educational Excellence Committee

6.8 **EEG Chair's Advisory Group**

Trustees received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions of the Advisory Group meeting in the Autumn Term.

J Clark summarised the rationale for the proposal and the CEO described their ethos.

Trustees discussed that we need to carefully consider local forecast population and demographic data, to ensure we create appropriate provision to meet local need and remain financially sustainable.

Trustees received and considered the paper provided which informed of the Local Authority maintained primary school which would like to academise and join the Trust, and outlined the rationale to expand into the primary schools sector.

Trustees noted that pursuant to the DfE guidance, to support the school's academisation application, the Trust has to confirm that they are happy for the school to join them, and noted this agreement would be submitted to the Regional Director to confirm our intent.

Trustees **noted** that, notwithstanding the application to the Regional Director, the merger would still be subject to:

- a. Any further necessary due diligence by both parties;
- b. Appropriate consultation carried out with stakeholders;
- c. Completion of the appropriate TUPE process;
- d. Agreement and approval of all necessary legal documentation, including the novation of funding agreements, transfer of property interests and the transfer and novation of all assets and contracts
- e. Agreement and approval of all appropriate governance documentation
- f. Final approval by both Boards

Trustees **agreed** that the Stanton Community Primary School was a strong school to join the Trust and, in furtherance of Eastern Education Group Trust's objects, agreed in principle for Stanton Community Primary School to join the Trust.

7. **Policies**

Trustees received, considered and **approved** these policies:

- EEGT Primary schools Accessibility Policy
- EEGT Primary schools Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- EEGT Primary schools Inclusion Policy
- EEGT Primary schools Special Educational Needs and Disability policy
- EEGT Primary schools Online Safety Policy
- EEGT Primary schools Admissions Policies – 2024/25, 2025/26, 2026/27
- EEGT SEND schools Child Protection and Safeguarding
- EEGT SEND schools Home/School Partnership and Communication
- EEGT SEND schools Student Attendance
- EEGT SEND schools Student Mental Health and Wellbeing
- EEG Admissions policy – Special Admissions Board
- EEG Body Camera policy

- EEG Disability Access policy
- EEG Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- EEG Online Safety and Social Media policy, plus Appendixes
- EEG Bullying and Harassment policy and procedure
- EEG Special Educational Needs and Disability policy
- EEG Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development in college policy
- EEG Student Code of Conduct and Behaviour policy
- EEG Student Course Ambassador and Student Council procedure
- EEG Student Disciplinary and Appeals procedure, plus Appendixes
- EEGT Examinations policy
- EEGT Health and Safety Policy
- EEG Educational Visits Policy
- EEG Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
- EEG Personal Relationships at Work Policy
- EEGT Financial Regulations
- EEG Bursary Policy
- EEGT Treasury Management Policy
- EEG Whistleblowing Policy
- EEG Equality Objectives

which were reviewed and recommended by the Committees.

The CPO explained how policies are reviewed across the Group and progress to harmonise and reduce the volume of policies and clarify which policies apply across the entire Group, phase of education, by school and/or college.

Trustees discussed which policies need to be approved by governance or could be delegated to the Executive to approve. The CPO informed of plans to further review the policy approval framework, to ensure that governance approval is only sought when required.

8. **Any Other Business**

8.1 **Review of the meeting**

The Chair welcomed feedback on the meeting. New Trustees fed back that the Committee Chair's overview reports are helpful and informative. Trustees discussed the KPI dashboard used in 2023/24 and proposed we continue to report on the KPI extract within the Committee Chair overview reports.

8.2 **Task and Finish Group (SENDAT Accounts)**

R Inman, as Chair of the Task and Finish Group, fed back that they concluded scrutiny of SENDAT's 2023/24 accounts. L Chapman, as CEO of SENDAT, confirmed that the accounts have now been submitted to the ESFA. Trustees **agreed** to wind down the Task and Finish Group.

8.3 **Thanks**

The Chair and CEO thanked everyone for their support and wished them a great Christmas break.

The meeting closed at 5.19pm

Gov. Prof.