

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 13 November 2024 at 2.30pm

Present physically: A Duffety, WSC Governor – **WSC Vice Chair**
N Kellett, EEGT Trustee

Present virtually: C Higgins, EEGT Trustee and WSC Governor – **Chair**
E D'Souza, EEGT Trustee and WSC Governor
K Chapman, WSC Governor
R Hetherington, WSC Governor
R Murray, EEGT Trustee (part)

In attendance: A McGarel, Chief Finance Officer
A Swift, Group Director Estates
C Willcocks, Group Director IT
J Clark – Regional Director – Primaries (part)
J Robson, Group Sixth Form Principal – OSFC
L Carroll, Group Head of Project Accounting, Risk and Transformation
L Chapman – Regional Director – SEND and Outdoor Learning (part)
N Hart, Group Head of Sustainability
N Savvas, Chief Executive Officer
S Cockburn, Group Head of Process Change and Transformation
S Gales, Governance Professional
S Hart, Group Head of Health and Safety
S Henty, HR Manager Wellbeing & Development

Apologies: D Wildridge, EEGT Trustee – **EEGT Vice Chair**
G Grainger, Chief Information Officer
K Points, EEGT Trustee
S Hope, Group Director of Compliance

Absent: J Malone, Committee member

Action

1. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair

The Governance Professional informed that the Trust Board and Corporation appointed C Higgins as Chair and, A Duffety and D Wildridge as Vice Chair for 2024/25, at their meetings in July 2024.

C Higgins explained that due to deteriorating health he is unable to continue to serve as Chair and so has asked A Duffety to chair today's meeting. The Governance Professional explained that the Nominations and Governance Committee will consider the Committee Chair and Vice Chair roles longer term.

Nom & Gov
Committee

2. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

Members recognised the standing declarations. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies for absence were received from D Wildridge and K Points. The absence of J Malone was noted.

The Chair welcomed Neil Kellett to the Committee, and members introduced themselves.

3. Terms of Reference, Committee Skillset and Agenda Planner

Members received and considered the draft Terms of Reference, Committee Skillset and Agenda Planner provided.

Members discussed the Terms of Reference and asked for 'People Strategy' to be added to the 'Policies/Reports to scrutinise and recommend to the independent boards of EEGT and WSC' section.

Gov. Prof.

Members discussed the Committee Skillset and asked for training to be provided to help members understanding the funding of the College and Trust and its regulatory framework. The Governance Professional to arrange.

Gov. Prof.

Members **approved** the Terms of Reference, Committee Skillset and Agenda Planner, and **agreed to recommend** to the Trust Board and Corporation, subject to the addition above.

J Clark joined the meeting at 2.40pm

4. **Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2024**

Members reviewed and **agreed** the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2024 as an accurate record.

5. **Matters arising from the meeting on 12 June 2024**

All matters arising from previous meetings were complete.

6. **Risk Register Extract**

Members received and considered the paper provided. The CFO advised that a new Group-wide Risk Register has been developed and will be presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committees next week in readiness for the Trust Board and Corporation meetings in December. The CFO advised after which the Committee risk register extracts will be updated.

Members commended the Group-wide approach though queried if there will be sufficient detail to identify where the risk is highest. The CEO advised we are considering how best to present this e.g. by school/college, phase of education, etc. and how to link it to our KPIs to ensure we are appropriately resourcing the Group's schools and colleges and provide appropriate risk information to governance which is strategic.

L Chapman joined the meeting at 2.53pm

Members suggested we could use visual tools e.g. heat maps or risk radars, to explain the sub-risk rating variances. The CFO to bring proposal to next meeting.

CFO

K Chapman, as Chair of WSC's Audit and Risk Management Committee, commended the significant work undertaken to strengthen the Risk Register and to triangulate assurance evidence.

Members discussed the length of time between Committee meetings and how best to feedback in a timely way on the new Risk Register. The Governance Professional advised that the Risk Register will be presented to the Trust Board and Corporation meetings in December for discussion and comment.

Members received and **noted** the four Internal Audit reports for:

- **Human Resources (systems implementation)**

The internal audit took place in March 2024 and received the grade of **strong assurance** with one low risk recommendation.

- **Procurement**

The internal audit took place in June 2024 and received the grade of **reasonable assurance** with two medium and four low risk recommendations.

- **Project Management**

The internal audit took place in May 2024 and received the grade of **strong assurance** with no recommendations

- Health and Safety

The internal audit took place in March 2024 and received the grade of **significant assurance** with one medium risk and four low risk recommendations.

7. Sustainability

Members received and considered the papers provided, and N Hart summarised the key points.

Members queried if the report covers all the schools and colleges within the Group. N Hart noted it covers ASFC, OSFC and WSC; and advised future reports will include Exning and our specialist SEN schools.

N Hart

Members commended the robust report and queried whether the long-term financial ramifications of sustainability initiatives are fully considered to evaluate to cost/benefit. The CFO to work with N Hart and consider how to report into Finance Committee.

CFO
N Hart

Members queried whether our students agree with the seven selected UN Sustainability Development Goals we chose to focus on and report against. N Hart advised that we are currently collecting student voice and will report on this in the future.

N Hart

Members queried whether, given the changing political environment, the UN Sustainability Development Goals are likely to change. N Hart confirmed there may be minor textual changes however they are likely to remain materially consistent.

Members queried whether it is realistic to achieve net-zero by 2035. N Hart advised we are awaiting a detailed report and will then be able to assess viability and future strategy.

Members noted as part of sustainability we need to consider the wider transport strategy for students and staff attending our schools and colleges. N Hart to add.

N Hart

Members queried how we educate students about sustainability and embed it into the curriculum. N Hart advised how it is embedded within the curriculum and outlined the additional add-on and standalone courses available.

Members congratulated N Hart on the progress and in achieving awards in recognition of the positive impact she has led.

INFRASTRUCTURE

PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

8. Estates and Property

Members received and considered the paper provided.

The CFO informed that we have commissioned Fusion to update our Group-wide Property and Infrastructure Strategy to include all our school and college sites and consider our resourcing requirements in the short, medium and long-term. The CFO summarised some of the strategic property and capacity considerations.

Members queried when the Group-wide Property and Infrastructure Strategy will be presented to the Committee. The CEO informed that the strategy will be produced in more consultative way with members of the Senior Executive Team, school leaders and resources team. The CFO to update to the Committee via email on the likely timeline and next steps.

Members discussed the need to balance the longer-term strategic ambitions with the shorter-term operational requirements, and ensuring sufficient resources to maintain and sustain our estates.

A Swift summarised the key points of the paper.

Members discussed plans to address the roofing issues at OSFC and queried how familiar the estates team are with the needs of Exning Primary School and the specialist SEN schools, as new joiners of the Group. J Clark and L Chapman confirmed they have met with A Swift and the team to discuss the needs of the estate.

Members commended the strength of response to the OSFC fire and queried if there had been meeting of Group-wide colleagues to discuss the lessons learnt to support continuous improvements. The CPO confirmed there has been and we have established an Incident Response team.

Members queried whether A Swift and the team have capacity to support the bigger Group. A Swift summarised how staff are being integrated and are working together to effectively manage the workload and are creating location centric hubs.

A Swift noted we are also trialling bringing services in-house at certain schools and/or colleges to improve the standard of service. Members queried if this is a Group-wide change of approach. The CFO confirmed it is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Members noted it would be helpful for future reports to reflect on student feedback on our estate, to triangulate the impact of our investments to improve the learning environment.

A Swift

R Murray left the meeting at 4pm

COMPLIANCE

9. Health and Safety

i. Termly report (summer term)

Members received and considered the papers provided, and S Hart summarised the key points.

Members discussed the levels of health and safety training completion. The CPO informed that we are changing the system we use for H&S training to improve reporting and explained that our current system calculates mandatory training completion as a % of all staff irrespective of whether they have approved extenuating circumstances (e.g. those on maternity leave or long-term sick).

C Higgins, as Governance Lead for Health and Safety, informed that he attended the H&S Board earlier this week and commended the team's reporting, scrutiny and oversight. C Higgins informed that while the number of accidents has increased it is evidence that staff are appropriately disclosing and reporting. C Higgins commended the leadership of CPO of H&S and noted this helps embed a culture of H&S within our People strategy.

Members commended the reports consideration of EDI and accessibility arrangements.

Members noted the Group has recently expanded to include six new pre-16 schools and queried whether there is a consistent approach to H&S across all our schools and colleges or whether the culture is still developing. S Hart informed that all the schools and colleges are appropriately proactive and responsive in their approach to H&S and gave examples of his engagements with a variety of staff within the schools.

VIRTUAL INFRASTRUCTURE

10. Data, Systems and Processes

Members received and considered the paper provided and S Cockburn summarised the key points.

Members commended the robust reporting and the 'benefits/ROI table'. Members asked for an annual update of the benefits/ROI table.

CIO

Members noted plans to implement a new Payroll system and sought assurance that there were sufficient safeguards in place to minimise the risk delays to staff receiving their pay. S Cockburn and the CFO outlined how the transition is being planned and the controls put in place to mitigate the risk.

Members commended the journey to improve data-reporting to create reliable, accessible databases which enable data-informed decision making, though queried whether there will continue to be person-centric considerations. The CEO explained that we need reliable data to inform decisions, however we will continue to be informed by our staff as subject specialists.

11. IT

Members received and considered the paper provided and C Willcocks summarised the key points.

Members noted student and staff demand for bandwidth is increasing and queried whether we have sufficient internet capacity. C Willcocks explained how we evaluate demand and predict future usage, and confirmed we have sufficient capacity.

PEOPLE

12. HR

People update

- i. **Termly KPI and EDI report (summer term)**
- ii. **Termly Wellbeing report (summer term)**

Members received and considered the paper provided, and the CPO and S Henty summarised the key points.

Members commended the reporting and impact of the people initiatives.

Members noted the License to Lead programme was originally created for ASFC, OSFC and WSC staff, and queried whether it will need to be revised to be appropriate for our bigger Group. The CPO explained the course content was devised to cover the core principles of leadership and management which are transferrable, though confirmed there will be minor tweaks to reflect the language used in our schools and colleges and to evolve the content on feedback.

Members queried staff feedback from the primary and specialist SEN schools, of their transition into the Group. J Clark fed back that staff at Exning Primary School have spoken very positively about the transition and the support offered by the Group. L Chapman fed back that staff at the specialist SEN schools had similar positive feedback, though explained there is more work to do to support school leaders to transition into the new Group ways of working.

Members asked the senior leaders of the primary and specialist SEN schools if the information presented above from the support staff senior leaders accurately reflected the support and approach/actions taken, and whether they felt their schools were appropriately supported. J Clark and L Chapman confirmed they were.

13. Policies

- i. **Health and Safety Policies (EEGT and WSC)**
- ii. **Educational Visits Policy**
- iii. **Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure**
- iv. **Personal Relationships at Work Policy**

Members received and **approved** the policies provided and **agreed to recommend** them to the Trust Board and Corporation for approval.

L Chapman and S Henty left the meeting at 4.59pm

14. Any Other Business

- i. **Lease to West Suffolk Wheelers at Priory School**

The CFO informed that since 2010 (while Priory School was still a Local Authority maintained school) the West Suffolk Wheelers have held a lease to use a portacabin on its school grounds. SENDAT continued this lease and sought ESFA approval for the lease as it was significantly below market rate - at a peppercorn rate in recognition of the reciprocal benefits of the relationship. The ESFA have now granted approval for this rate and the lease has been drafted. The lease has been reviewed by the CFO's team, Priory School's team and West Suffolk Wheelers – who signed the lease at their AGM on 11/11/2024. The CFO informed that pursuant to our Financial Regulation, leases require approval by both the Resources Committee and the Trust's Finance Committee, irrespective of the financial impact of the lease. As such, the ask of the Committee is to delegate authority to the Committee Chair (C Higgins) as a Trustee and member of the Trust's Finance Committee, to review, approve and sign the lease if the Trust's Finance Committee also approve the lease. Members **delegated authority to the Committee Chair** to review, approve and sign the lease as described above.

The meeting closed at 5.00pm