

**Present:** Anthony Abrahams (AA) (Chair), Paul Clarkson (PC), Lesley Glover (LG), Pat Jones (Accounting Officer) (PJ), Mark Kiteley (MK), Jasmin Masih (JM), Ian Pryce CBE (IP), Kay Rodger (KR),

**In attendance:** Rachel Nicol (Company Secretary),

No.	Item
BCAT/32/21	<p><b>Apologies</b> Apologies for absence were received from Gill Scobie and Christine O'Reilly</p>
BCAT/33/21	<p><b>Declaration of interest</b> Ian Pryce, Kay Rodger, Pat Jones and Rachel Nicol are employed by Bedford College. Rebecca Shaw is an employee of BCPS Limited</p> <p>Mark Kiteley is a non-executive director and Chair at BCS Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of Bedford College.</p> <p>No further declarations were made.</p>
BCAT/34/21	<p><b>Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda</b></p> <p>The directors confirmed their consent to short notice of the meeting.</p>
BCAT/35/21	<p><b>Chair's update and proposal to deal with budget issues</b></p> <p>The Chair updated the Board on the informal meeting he attended on 29 April with members of the WA LAB.</p> <p>The Trust Accountant had attended and provided a comprehensive presentation to members of the LAB on the budget setting process and funding allocation.</p> <p>Perceptions of the LAB were reported to centre around insufficient funds being allocated by the Trust and lack of understanding of their role as being part of the Trust and a committee of the Board.</p> <p>To try and resolve the current concerns the Chair had proposed that an independent financial expert with schools experience be appointed to report to the Board on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management of the allocation of funds to schools, but WA in particular, within the overall resources available.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Appropriateness of budget setting, prioritisation and scrutiny at WA and how this can be managed within the financial control frameworks set to deliver a high quality education experience.</li> </ul> <p>The LAB had confirmed to the Chair that they had not been receiving budget statements from the Principal to enable them to provide more support on the management of funds. It had already been agreed that the LAB terms of reference require review to ensure their skills are fully utilised, they are in a better position to support the overall work of the Trust and schools and that their membership is sufficiently independent.</p> <p><b>The Board agreed to the proposal to appoint an independent expert.</b></p> <p><b><i>Quotes will be sought and the Board updated in due course.</i></b></p>
BCAT/36/21	<p><b>WA Sixth form</b></p> <p>The LAB had provided feedback and views to the Chair on the decision taken in March to delay the opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> form.</p> <p>The Board was informed that the ESFA had been updated on the decision and that they advised the Trust to maintain conversations with the Local Authority over the need for school places in Wixams.</p> <p>The only option presented to the Board by the Principal in respect of an opening in September 2022 was to require additional buildings. The Board had considered that the risks of not being able to deliver such a project on time was too high a risk and could result in pupils having to find alternative places on short notice.</p> <p>The LAB had provided an alternative proposal, that space could be reconfigured and a Sixth form opened in September 2022 within the existing buildings, with longer term plans to expand on the site.</p> <p>The Board was therefore asked to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Whether to stand by the original decision and delay opening</li> <li>- Whether, as suggested by the LAB to open a 6<sup>th</sup> form in 2022 within the existing buildings</li> <li>- Whether there is any potential to review the prospect for raising funds in the short term to provide additional space</li> </ul> <p>The Board discussed:</p> <p>-The lack of information currently on planned entry criteria for the 6<sup>th</sup> form as this had not been included in the proposal. It was recognised that this will have an impact on affordability and the desired educational character and modelling will need to be carried out once proposals are made and agreed.</p>

-The working group's focus on breadth and depth of curriculum from an ideal curriculum stance and how this will be impacted by pupil numbers,

The Board reflected on the discussions at the development day in January and progress to be made in developing the Trust's strategy with the support of a part time CEO when appointed. The need to build a greater infrastructure at Trust level was recognised.

The Board reflected on the previous decision, made on the basis of proposals presented and with the focus on quality of experience for the current year 10 pupils as well as the risks around disruption to them. Whilst content that the decision was a rational one in the context at the time the Board regretted the upset caused for pupils and parents.

The Board was disappointed that the decision had been communicated outside the agreed protocols and recognised the reputational impact.

It was clear from some parent comments that there are a significant number who understand the issues and considerations. The misinformation evidenced on social media and in correspondence received will be managed through communication in response to individual requests and by publication of minutes, subject to independent advice on confidential content.

The Board reflected on the discussions with the LAB and their suggestion that with a further review of accommodation utilisation a 6<sup>th</sup> form provision can be offered in 2022. It was recognised that detailed proposals and modelling will be required to ensure the provision is sustainable and provides a high quality educational experience. The Board acknowledged that risks remain and that these will need to be considered further by the Principal and assurance provided to the Board in due course.

The Board reviewed the email from the ESFA indicating that dialogue needs to continue with the Local Authority, who have responsibility for funding for basic need.

Noting also the suggestion from the Local Advisory Body that the existing space should be used to accommodate a 6<sup>th</sup> form **the Board resolved to instruct the Principal to develop a plan for opening of the 6<sup>th</sup> form for September 2022 on that basis**

It was further agreed that:

- The Chair to inform the Principal of WA
- The decision will be conveyed to the Marketing team to arrange for communication with year 10 parents and pupils to be informed first
- PJ as the Accounting Officer will notify the Local Authority and arrange a meeting as appropriate
- Support will be engaged to review and finalise the lease arrangements as required.

	<i>Post meeting clarification 23.07.21: The LAB chair (not present at the meeting) has advised the Trust Interim CEO that a planned further review of accommodation use across the Academy will be helpful, particularly to ensure groups of learners who have been using space designated for the sixth form are appropriately accommodated. This will be taken forward with the CEO and the Principal.</i>
<b>BCAT/37/21</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b>  The minutes of the previous meeting, not yet being available, will be presented at the June board meeting.