



Northern Arch

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Board of Directors' Meeting

Wednesday 18th December 2024 at 5.00 pm
at Longfield Academy, Longfield Road, Darlington, DL3 0HT

MINUTES

Directors present:	Iain Clyde (Chair), Emma Chawner, Tim Fisher (CEO), Michael Garmston, Tarryn Lloyd Payne and Mavis Lord.
In attendance:	Lisa Marron: Chief Operating Officer, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Glen Hart: Chief Financial Officer, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Nikki Wade: Strategic Development Officer, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Sam Kochaniec: Schools HR Manager, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Laura Hawksby: Trust Governance and Policy Officer, Northern Arch Learning Partnership Robert Bell: Member, Northern Arch Learning Partnership

Item	Description of discussion	Action by
1.	<p>Welcome, Introductions and Confirmation Quorum Present</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Directors and those present to the meeting of the Board of Directors of Northern Arch Learning Partnership.</p> <p>The Governance & Policy Officer confirmed that a quorum was present.</p>	
2.	<p>Apologies for absence and their acceptance</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Directors: Zoe Beach, Geoff Liddle and Professor Graham Wynn.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the apologies for absence be noted and accepted from Directors Zoe Beach, Geoff Liddle and Professor Graham Wynn.</p>	
3.	<p>Notification of items of urgent other business</p> <p>There were two items of urgent other business (Minute 25 below refers):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Federation of Mowden Schools Joining the Trust• Teaching Staff/Support Staff Pay Agreement Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College	

4. Declaration of personal and pecuniary interests:

Directors and those present were reminded that they should declare any personal or pecuniary interest in any matters arising from the agenda of the current meeting.

The Chief Executive Officer, The Chief Operating Officer, The Chief Financial Officer and Strategic Development Officer declared an interest in relation to Item 23 on the agenda. They left the meeting and took no part in consideration of the item.

The Governance & Policy Officer declared an interest in relation to Item 24 on the agenda. She left the meeting and took no part in consideration of the item.

5. Approval of Minutes / Matters Arising

- a) Consideration was given to the draft Minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting held on the 3rd October 2024, a copy of which is retained on file. All actions contained within the Minutes had been completed. There were no matters arising.
- b) The Pay & Review Committee Minutes of the 14th October 2024 were tabled at the meeting and collected back in as they had been redacted in accordance with Article 125a.)

Matters arising:

- 1) Further to Minute 7 and 11 it was noted that on the 15th November 2024 approval had been sought via email to the members of the Pay & Review Committee providing their approval to:
 - The School Support Staff and Trust Central staff NJC pay award 2024/25 applied with back pay to April 2024. The offer was from the 1st of April 2024, of an increase of £1290 (pro rata for part time employees) to be paid as a consolidated, permanent addition on all NJC pay points 2 to 43 inclusive. For pay points above the maximum of the pay spine but below deputy chief officer, an increase of 2.5% has been agreed. In addition, an increase of 2.5% on allowances.
 - The School Teacher's Pay Award 2024/25 applied with back pay to September 2024. An uplift of 5.50% to all pay points and allowances for teachers, leaders and staff on hybrid contracts.
 - The Head Teacher's pay award applied with effect from the 1st September 2024.

The above had been duly approved by Directors of the Pay & Review Committee.

	<p>The Chief Operating Officer (COO) reported upon the Northern Arch Learning Partnership audit findings report for the period ending 31st August 2024. She advised that it was a clean unmodified audit. It was noted that the Trust was looking to consolidate the fixed asset register and a credit card procedure had been implemented.</p> <p>b) Annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31st August 2024</p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) reported upon the Northern Arch Learning Partnership annual report and financial statements for the year ending 31st August 2024. He advised that the Trust remained a going concern with no fraud or breaches of regulations. QE Sixth Form College held the largest reserves, with a current focus on the schools to build up reserves to ensure every school was operating well within its own right.</p> <p>Following scrutiny by the Finance & Resources Committee, at their meeting held on the 11th December 2024, they had recommended to the Board to approve the audit findings, annual report and financial statements for Northern Arch Learning Partnership for the period ended 31st August 2024.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the audit findings, annual report and financial statements for Northern Arch Learning Partnership – Period ended 31st August 2024 be received, noted and approved.</p> <p>8. Longfield Trading, Report of the Directors' and financial statements for the year ended 31 August 2024</p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) advised that Longfield Trading Directors had approved the report of the Directors and financial statements for the year ended 31st August 2024 for Longfield Trading Limited at their earlier meeting held on the 18th December 2024.</p> <p>Directors noted that a new business strategy was currently being developed for the consideration of Longfield Trading Directors. The Northern Arch Learning Partnership Board of Directors questioned whether further investment was planned in relation to Longfield Trading? The Chief Executive Officer advised that that was correct and was part of the Longfield Trading review.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report of the Longfield Trading Directors and financial statements for the period ended 31st August 2024 be received, noted and approved.</p> <p>9. Internal Audit Areas for Focus</p> <p>Further to Minute 12 (Finance & Resources Committee 11th December 2024) the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) advised that following suggestions by the Finance & Resources Committee the following internal audit areas be focused upon:</p>	<p>COO/CFO</p> <p>COO/CFO</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement • IT and Cyber Security • VAT • Website Compliance • Data Protection/Information Management • Amber areas arising from External Audit <p>The Chief Financial Officer advised that a tender for Internal Auditors services would be going out later in the Academic Year.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the internal audit areas for focus be approved.</p> <p>PARTC: Business Items for Discussion</p> <p>10. Chair’s Report</p> <p>The Chair advised that that this term he met with the QE Sixth Form College Lead Inspector and Longfield Academy Lead Inspector during the recent OFSTED inspections.</p> <p>He advised that he was currently undertaking the National Governance Association (NGA) development programme for Chairs.</p> <p style="color: green;">Directors advised that learning walks of the schools and college within the Trust would be helpful and the Strategic Development Officer advised that this was something that would be facilitated by the Governance & Policy Officer.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted and learning walks be arranged for the Directors in the schools and colleges within the Trust.</p> <p>11. Membership Document:</p> <p>The Governance & Policy Officer updated Directors with regard to the current membership document.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Directors ratified the appointments of Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Local Governing Bodies for the Autumn Term. b) Directors noted John McCann had been appointed as a General Governor (having previously been a Parent Governor) as of the 8th December 2024. c) Directors noted the following resignations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor Mick Hatton Hurworth Local Governing Body (23rd October 2024) • Governor Laura Hudson Rydal Local Governing Body (3rd November 2024) • Governor David Warman QE Local Governing Body (7th December 2024) 	<p>CFO</p> <p>Governance & Policy Officer</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor Sarah Kelly Longfield Local Governing Body (17th December 2024) <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>12. CEO's Report</p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) provided his report to the Board of Directors, a copy of which is held on file. He advised that during the Autumn Term 2024 both Longfield Academy and QE Sixth Form College had undergone full Ofsted inspections, QE College achieved an 'Outstanding' judgement across all areas with no areas for improvement identified. Longfield Academy were awarded 'Good' across all categories. All Trust academies are now graded 'Good' or 'Outstanding'. Directors asked if a letter had been sent to all staff recognising their hard work in helping achieve these excellent outcomes and the CEO confirmed it had.</p> <p>He advised that in November 2024 the Trust had received approval from the Regional Director for The Federation of Mowden Schools to join the Trust. This would bring the number of schools to six, which together with the number of students, would trigger annual capital funding. The target date for the Transfer of Mowden Schools was the 1st March 2025.</p> <p>Collaboration continued across the Trust, with excellent progress being made with the relaunch of the Trust groups.</p> <p>The Trust would continue to monitor pupil numbers across the Trust. Directors requested that relevant demographic data be included for comparison and the monitoring of trends.</p> <p>The CEO advised Trust expenditure would increase further towards investment in buildings and other infrastructure.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>13. ADEMSS Report</p> <p><u>Aims</u></p> <p>The CEO advised that during the Autumn Term 2024, the Trust had made significant progress in achieving its strategic aims priorities including, as previously reported, the successful Ofsted outcomes for QE and Longfield. The SRMA report had supported the Trust's commitment to structured investment in the learning environment, with a rebalance from salary costs to infrastructure investment.</p> <p>Directors requested that in future reports the inclusion of the definition/metric of the rag rating would be helpful to understand confidently the meaning of the rag rating.</p>	<p>Strategic Development Officer</p> <p>Strategic Development Officer</p>
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	<p><u>Standards</u></p> <p>The CEO advised that during both recent Ofsted inspections for QE Sixth Form College and Longfield Academy, curriculum was seen as a strength, with Longfield embedding further their curriculum across all subjects. Attendance was noted to be strong across all academies and is being addressed where particular groups are below average. Progress and attainment data was also carefully reviewed by Directors. The CEO advised that the appointment of an Executive Director of Education would help ensure an effective culture and processes for academy improvement.</p> <p><u>Money and Environment</u></p> <p>It was noted by Directors that both the money and environment reports had been considered by the Finance & Resources Committee on the 11th December 2024.</p> <p>Further to Minute 13 (Finance & Resources Committee 11th December 2024) approval had been given, subject to the Board of Directors approval, for Northern Arch Learning Partnership to submit CIF (Condition Improvement Fund) bids with match funding for the latest 2025/26 bids. As the deadline for submission of bids was prior to the next Board of Directors meeting, Directors were duly emailed with the relevant information and Board approval was received. The Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee updated the Board that a total of 2 bids had been submitted as they had satisfied the relevant criteria: Hurworth School heating distribution and Hurworth School re-roofing.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the reports be noted and that the safeguarding element of the ADEMSS report would come to the March 2025 meeting of the Standards Committee.</p> <p>14. Feedback from the Finance & Resources Committee – 11th December 2024</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee provided feedback from the Finance & Resources Committee held on the 11th December 2024.</p> <p>She advised that QE Colleges' Annual Report & Financial Statements/Audit findings for the period ending 31st March 2024 had been a clean unmodified audit with no issues identified. The final balance was strong and surplus in year. The Committee had recommended for approval to the Board (Minute 6 above refers)</p> <p>The Northern Arch Learning Partnership Annual Report & Financial statements/audit findings for the period ended 31st August 2024 had a clean unmodified audit, demonstrated the Trust remained a going concern and that there were no fraud or breaches of regulations. The Committee had recommended for approval to the Board (Minute 7. above refers). The Longfield Trading Annual Report & Financial Statements were also recommended for approval to the Board (Minute 8 above refers.)</p>	<p>Strategic Development Officer/Governance & Policy Officer</p>
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	<p>She advised that actions from the SRMA report would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Finance & Resources Committee in March 2025. The Risk Registers would also be considered in more depth at the March meeting.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>15. Feedback from Standards Committee – 20th November 2024</p> <p>The Vice Chair of the Standards Committee provided feedback from the Standards Committee held on the 20th November 2024. He advised that the Committee was pleased to note the excellent Ofsted outcomes for QE Sixth Form College and Longfield Academy. Key trends and headline data had been presented to the Standards Committee via the ADEMSS – standards Committee report. The Committee had identified that SEN (Special educational Needs) were increasing and permanent exclusion numbers, as per national trends. More pupils/students were also noted to be presenting with challenging needs. A new format had been used for updates from individual academies which Directors had found useful.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>16. Strategy:</p> <p><u>Strategic Governance of Northern Arch Learning Partnership</u></p> <p>The Chair advised on the importance of strong Governance at all levels across the Trust. The Strategic Development Officer was leading upon developing this across the Trust to ensure clear and effective lines of governance. It was noted that a skills audit would be conducted for Directors and the Local Governing Bodies to help identify any skills gaps and help inform recruitment. A small increase in the size of the Board was also currently being considered.</p> <p>Directors requested that in order to facilitate further communication between the Local governing Bodies and Directors, link Directors be appointed for each Local Governing Body. This would be considered at the next meeting of the Board.</p> <p><u>Strategic Plan and delivery for next 3-5 years.</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer reported upon the current strategic plan. Challenges and the growth strategy were set out in the plan.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted and link Directors to the Local Governing Body be considered at the next meeting of the Board in March 2025.</p>	<p>Strategic Development Officer and Governance & Policy Officer</p>
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<p>17.</p> <p>18.</p> <p>19.</p> <p>20.</p> <p>21.</p> <p>22.</p>	<p>Scheme of Delegation</p> <p>The current Scheme of Delegation was considered by Directors. There were no new updates at the current time.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the Scheme of Delegation be noted.</p> <p>NALP Risk Register</p> <p>Directors considered the current Northern Arch Risk Register. There were no new updates at the current time.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the Northern Arch Risk Register be noted,</p> <p>Committee Membership</p> <p>The Governance & Policy Officer reported upon the current Finance & Resources and Standards Committee membership and vacancies.</p> <p>After careful consideration Directors approved Director Michael Garmston to being appointed to the Finance & Resources Committee and Director Tarryn Lloyd Payne being appointed to the Standards Committee.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that Director Michael Garmston be appointed to the Finance & Resources Committee and Director Tarryn Lloyd Payne to the Standards Committee.</p> <p>Longfield Trading Review Report</p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer advised that a business strategy was currently being developed for Longfield Trading that would be brought back to the Directors of Longfield Trading for their consideration.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>Policies: -</p> <p>Directors noted the Trust and Schools level policies/strategy/statements that were currently being reviewed by the relevant staff and new policies that would be brought back for Directors' approval.</p> <p>PART D: Confidential Staffing Items</p> <p>Executive Pay Policy</p> <p>Further to Minute 27 (Full Board of Directors 3rd October 2024) a separate policy for Executive Pay was brought for Directors' consideration. Directors requested that the Executive Pay Policy be included within the Trust's Pay Policy.</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p>Governance & Policy Officer</p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>Strategic Development Officer/ Governance & Policy Officer</p> <p></p> <p>HR</p>
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	<p>Directors RESOLVED that the Executive Pay Policy be approved and included within the current Trust Pay Policy.</p> <p>23. Salary proposals for CEO, COO and SDO</p> <p><i>Minute redacted in accordance with Article 125 a.)</i></p> <p>(Note: The CEO, COO, CFO and SDO left the meeting and took no part in consideration of the above item.)</p> <p>24. Salary Proposal for Governance & Policy Officer</p> <p><i>Minute redacted in accordance with Article 125 a.)</i></p> <p>(Note: The Governance & Policy Officer left the meeting and took no part in consideration of the above item.)</p> <p>25. Items of Other Business:</p> <p>a) <u>The Federation of Mowden Schools Joining the Trust</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer advised that the Trust had received approval from the Regional Director for The Federation of Mowden Schools to join the Trust, with the proposed date of transfer being the 1st March 2025. It was noted that a special meeting of the Board would be held in early February 2025 to seek approval of the Federation of Mowden Schools to join Northern Arch Learning Partnership. Solicitors had been duly appointed to provide appropriate advice with regards to the transfer.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the report be noted.</p> <p>b) <u>Teaching Staff/Support Staff Pay Agreement Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer reported that the Teaching staff/support staff pay agreement had not yet been agreed for Post-16 staff and sought approval to action any resulting pay awards, subject to them being within budget.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that delegated authority be given to the CEO to action Post-16 pay awards for Teaching and Support Staff at QE Sixth Form College, subject to them being within budget.</p> <p>26. Approval of documents for inspection</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the agenda, supporting documents and approved minutes be made available for public inspection with the exception of information concerning identifiable pupils, staff and/or teachers.</p> <p>The Audit Findings report at Minutes 6, 7 and 8 be excluded from public inspection as the report has been prepared solely for the use of Trustees, management and others within the academy trust in</p>	<p>CEO/HR</p>
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accordance with Article 125 c.). Information relating to Minutes 23 and 24.– confidential staffing items would remain confidential in accordance with Article 125 a).

27. Time, and date of Directors' Spring Term Meetings

- Standards Committee – Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 4.30 pm
- Finance & Resources Committee – Thursday 27th March 2025 at 5.00 pm
- Full Board of Directors – Thursday 10th April 2025 at 5.00 pm

The meeting concluded at approximately 7.30pm.

These minutes were approved by the Chair of the Board of Directors of Northern Arch Learning Partnership as follows:

on: _____ date

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____