



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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06/10/2020

Minutes

An Daras Multi-Academy Trust Members

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 6th October 2020 at 1.30pm at ADMAT Central Office and via Zoom

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present in Person: Paul O'Brien, Margaret Young, Graeme Barriball (Trust Chair), Will Hermon (CEO)

Present Virtually via Zoom: Eva Paynter, Ann Nicholson, Sue Lockwood (Eden)

In Attendance in Person: Toni Martin (Governance Officer)

As per article 25, the Chair of the Trust Board chaired the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest/Pecuniary Interests Relevant to this Agenda

No conflicts of interest with this agenda less MY who declared an interest with Launceston Pre-School at item 4. Annual declarations will be sent out by email for completion by Members.

3. Approve Previous Minutes (28th January 2020)

No actions required. Note that accounts were presented at this meeting. Members agreed the minutes and the Chair will sign a copy in future.

4. Confidential Agenda Items

Launceston Pre-School was discussed and is recorded at confidential minutes.

5. Appoint External Auditor for 2021

The recommendation to Members from the Trust Board is to appoint Francis Clark as the external auditor for the following reasons in accordance with the Academies Financial Handbook Pg 35:

- FC are experienced auditors and are on the Register of Statutory Auditors.
- FC have experience with MATs and the education sector. They will need to gain an understanding of Andaras MAT but FC have noted that their work will be more in depth for the first audit while they get to know the trust.
- We have used Bishop Fleming for the last few years and it is sensible to have a change to ensure a fresh set of eyes looks at our accounts and processes.
- CFO and CEO are content that FC can provide the level of service required.

The members agreed that FC is a suitable firm and that a change of auditors is sensible. **SL asked for an explanation of the tendering process?** WH explained the process, including that 3 auditors were approached but only 2 submitted a tender. The costs were considered and there were follow up discussions with both companies. An assessment was made as to the way forward and this was discussed at full Board, who then produced a recommendation for the Members.

An Daras Members appointed FC as the external auditor for 2021.

6. An Daras MAT Strategic Update

WH briefed the Members to ensure they were updated on the latest key matters across the Trust:

a. Update on Covid 19 Risk Assessments/School Attendance and Routine

WH briefly updated the Members on what happened during lockdown and school closures, followed by the plan to get as many children in school after half term in a safe way. Most schools were at 75-100% attendance in July. This turned out to be good practice for the transition for schools opening in September. Parental confidence is high, attendance is very good and the children have come back with a very positive approach to learning. Covid has affected the way learning is provided but there hasn't been many absences due to Covid so far.

Risk assessments for each school are constantly reviewed and updated, and this does create an enormous amount of work for the school leaders. The schools are functioning well but the processes throughout the day have increased the staff workload. School leaders are under a great deal of pressure to deliver effective learning but with a backdrop of extra requirements.

Central staffing has been an issue with working practices and currently the team is functioning at 50% capacity. Some work is slightly behind it will be caught up on.

b. Update on MAT Top 3 Risks

The top 3 risks were shared with and discussed by the Members:

(1) The long term loss of key leadership staff at MAT or school level at short notice, this includes losing staff if they resign or are off with a long term issue. A member challenged what Directors are doing about succession planning for leaders across the MAT? WH explained that Jo Callow wears the hat of 'Deputy CEO', has been trained and kept in the loop on various leadership, finance and trust meetings so is in a position to step in for WH in the short term. There is enough flex in the school structures for staff to step up and cover school leaders in the short term. In essence, short term capacity is fine but not long term sustainability. If someone was off in the long term, it is hard to plan for that financially and also because we won't know where the gap will be until it appears. Staff are continuing with CPD with much of the training now being on-line. *A member noted their concern for staff welfare, from cleaners through to Head teachers.* WH confirmed that senior leaders are resilient and professional, and their good will and desire to do the job is getting things done, but that they are doing at least 70+ hours a week. The members agreed this is not sustainable and will lead to burn out if not managed carefully. **The members wished to pass on their thanks to all staff at An Daras.**

(2) Financial security. WH noted that the finances have taken a hit with Covid costs and additional staffing requirements. There has been some reimbursement from government but it hasn't covered all the costs. On a positive note, admissions were over subscribed this year and it is hoped that this will continue.

(3) CV19 related long term financial, staffing, governance, safety and legal risks which may lead to short term efficiency issues. Much of this detail had already been covered.

c. Recovery, Improvement & Curriculum

WH explained that the school improvement plans have now been replaced by the recovery schedules. He explained the funding process for this including the government funding. He noted that the Directors consider recovery a priority and have also funded it with MAT reserves.

7. Any other Business

WH and the Chair of Trust Board met with the RSC in Jan 2020 for the annual review. The Trust received the letter regarding the outcomes of this in September, and this was shared with the Members.

WH highlighted the latest news of shortfalls in safeguarding procedures across the Church of England and sought confirmation from the Eden Member that appropriate steps are being taken to tighten up safeguarding matters. SL noted the letter of assurance sent from the Diocese on 5th October and explained what measures are in place. She noted that any Clergy that visit schools or are part of LGBs should undergo DBS by the school itself. An Daras Child Protection Officer can liaise with the Diocese Safeguarding Officer.

It was noted that the official opening of the new college primary school is due to be Sep 2021 and members questioned when will we have an idea of when and if this will affect our admission numbers? WH confirmed that this year most of our schools were over subscribed and that lots of new houses are being built in the area which will hopefully keep the numbers up.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The Governance Officer is trying to tweak the timings of meetings, while staying compliant with our articles, with the aim of having the AGM at a useful time of the year (to have accounts presented and appoint auditors etc). The current AGM time of July is out of synch. At the moment, Members interim general meeting is planned for January/February time to provide an update to members and present the accounts. The Governance Officer will confirm arrangements with Members.

The meeting closed at 14.20

TJH Martin

ADMAT Governance Officer

Distribution List:

P. O'Brien – Member

E. Paynter – Member

A. Nicholson – Member

M. Young – Member

Eden – Member [S. Lockwood]

G. Barriball – Chair Board of Directors

W. Hermon – CEO Director/Executive Head