

MINUTES

Local Governing Board Extraordinary Meeting

16:30 on Wednesday 22 March 2023

PRESENT: Helen Priday, Tom Attwood, Aine Markey, Denise Brown and Justin Warren

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Jesse White (Interim CEO), Asad Muzammal (Clerk)

1. Apologies for Absence and welcome of any new Governors:

- a. Apologies for absence were received for Greg Arkus.
- b. Governors noted that JWh will be leaving the Trust at the end of the month.

2. Declarations of pecuniary interest in any of the agenda items:

- a. None.

3. Briefing on the potential merger with the Beckmead Trust:

- a. Governors discussed the background reasons to the potential merger being the DfE policy to seek to merge smaller MATs with larger MATs. Governors discussed how merging with a larger Trust could provide staff with better career pathways, better school to school support and a greater depth of management.
TA said that the Trust Board's view is to choose a merger partner that they respect, rather than have a merger forced upon the Trust later with a Trust who may not be a good fit for T4. The preferred merger partner is the Beckmead Trust. The schools in the Beckmead Trust are all either SEMH or APs and the CEO and Deputy CEO have over 40 years of experience of working and supporting these types of provisions. The Beckmead Trust's schools are all either Good or Outstanding. If the merger goes ahead, then the Beckmead Trust will have 11 schools by the end of this year.
- b. JW said that IMHS has a full roll and ArtsX is under financial pressure, as there are only 47 students on roll, against a capacity of 150. Merging with a larger trust would provide economies of scale, joint CPD and better shared services. For example, there are currently not enough Maths teachers at ArtsX and merging with a larger Trust could offer shared staff. The T4 Trust staff and school leaders have visited the Beckmead Trust's establishments and all believe that there is a good synergy between the Trusts, with a shared ethos and values. The school leaders of the Beckmead Trust's schools have a high level of autonomy on how their schools operate.
- c. Governors noted that a SLA is in place for the Beckmead Trust CEO, Jonty Clark, to take over as interim CEO of T4 for two days a week when JWh leaves at the end of the month.

- d. JWh said that the milestones of the merger process are a TUPE consultation, due diligence by both Trusts and gaining approval of the merger from the DfE.
These processes are more straightforward between two Trusts, than it is for a maintained school to join a Trust. The merger could potentially be finalised by September 2023.
- e. The financial position of ArtsX is a potential obstacle for the merger to go ahead. The Beckmead CFO visited ArtsX today to discuss the challenges of finances and student numbers at ArtsX and to view the building. The Beckmead Executive are confident that they could grow the student numbers at ArtsX over time.
- f. In response to questions on the DfE not supporting the T4 trust's previous merger plans with the Lime Trust, JW said that the DfE's objections to the Lime Trust merger do not exist with the potential merger with the Beckmead Trust.
- g. In response to questions, JWh said that the Beckmead Trust operates a LGB model in all its schools and this is valued by the Beckmead Trust. The only expected difference for the ArtsX LGB would be that they will be providing governance under a different Trust. The college will retain its name. Staff will not notice any change in the day-to-day running of the college.
TA said that decisions have not yet been finalised. The T4 Trust values the work of the LGBs and today's meeting is part of the internal consultation. Governors should raise any concerns they have with the potential merger.
- h. Governors agreed that instinctively, the merger feels like a good opportunity and the right thing for the T4 Trust and ArtsX. The greater depth in management from being involved with a larger Trust would also allow the CLT to focus on developing the college and being more involved in education, than having to focus on staffing matters and marketing, which take up much of the CLT's time and could instead be managed by a larger central team. JW said that this is also the view of the T4 Executive and the school leaders who visited the Beckmead schools as part of the T4 due diligence process.
Governors discussed the period where the Beckmead Trust CEO will be interim CEO of the T4 Trust, would provide them with a better understanding of how the Beckmead Trust operates and noted that the merger process could be halted if there were any concerns. TA advised that Governors will be invited to the next T4 Board meeting if they have any additional questions, they think of which have not been answered in today's meeting and Governors may also contact TA or JWh with any questions or thoughts they have around the merger.
- i. In response to questions on the staff feeling, following JC's presentation to the ArtsX staff earlier in the week, JWh said that JC had made a very positive impression and the staff are happy with everything they heard and are broadly positive.
- j. In response to questions, JWh said that the Beckmead Trust support the idea of the arts providing vulnerable young people with confidence and new skills. However, there are some differences in culture. For example, IMHS operates a no restraint policy with students. Both Trusts are willing to learn and adapt to changes that best meet the needs of the students and schools. TA said that there is a plan to take the Beckmead Trust Executive and senior leaders to visit an open prison in Norway, where restraint is not used even for the most difficult inmates and this has led to many positive effects in those prisons.
- k. In response to questions on the proposal to develop a Girls' only provision, TA said that the Beckmead Trust has some experience of single sex provisions. A Girls' only provision has always been an ambition of the T4 Trust, but there has so far not been enough capacity in the leadership to take this forward.

Agreed: The LGB agreed that they support the merger with the Beckmead Trust.

4. Any other Business:

a. Forward Agenda

- Update on the potential merger
- English & Maths Progress Report
- Policy Review Schedule
- CLT Structure and reporting lines
- Data Dashboard
- Staff Wellbeing Survey
- Launch Event
- Ofsted Action Plan

5. Date of the next meeting:

- 16:30 on 8 June

6. Any Confidential Items:

- a. None

The meeting closed at 17:15

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Chair

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Date

Decisions

Agreed: The LGB agreed that they support the merger with the Beckmead Trust.

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Actions