

**ETHOS ACADEMY TRUST  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> September at 5pm at Reach Academy & via Microsoft Teams

<b>Present:</b>	Victoria Del Giudice (VDG)	Chair & Trustee
	Jane Acklam (JA)	Trustee
	Karen Bennett (KB)	Trustee
	Alison Black (AB)	Trustee
	Gary Cox (GC)	Trustee
	Graham Dewhirst (GD)	Trustee
	Jem Greenwell (JG)	Trustee
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Melanie Nightingale (MN)	Clerk to the Board
	Jayne Foster (JF)	CEO
	Dewi Bennett (DB)	CFOO
	Lesley Conway (LC)	HR Manager
	Katie Stevens (KS)	Member

Item	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Appointment of Chair &amp; Vice Chair</b>
<p>The Clerk reported that Victoria Del Giudice had expressed an interest in continuing as Chair of the Board of Trustees. VDG left the room while a vote was taken.</p> <p><b><u>Resolved:</u> Trustees unanimously approved the appointment of Victoria Del Giudice as Chair.</b></p> <p>VDG returned to the meeting and her appointment was confirmed.</p> <p>The Clerk reported that Graham Dewhirst had expressed an interest in continuing as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees. GD left the room while a vote was taken.</p> <p><b><u>Resolved:</u> Trustees unanimously approved the appointment of Graham Dewhirst as Vice Chair.</b></p> <p>GD returned to the meeting and his appointment was confirmed.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>
<p>VDG took the Chair and welcomed everyone to the first hybrid meeting. She formally welcomed Alison Black to her first official meeting as a Trustee.</p> <p>VDG briefly ran through the tips provided by KB on hybrid meetings. She asked all participants to join the meeting via Teams, use the raise hand function if they wished to speak and make use of the chat facility. Remote participants should mute when not speaking and in-person participants should stay on mute, as there was a microphone in the meeting room. It was important that everyone felt included regardless of whether they were attending in person or remotely.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Donna Tandy. Karen Bennett would be leaving the meeting at 6pm.</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	

Agreed as an accurate record

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<b>3</b>	<p><b>Previous Minutes &amp; Matters Arising</b></p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> The minutes of the previous meeting (public and confidential version) held on 9<sup>th</sup> July were accepted as a true record.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> The minutes of the Members’ meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> July were accepted as a true record.</p> <p>The CEO noted that any matters arising were being dealt with.</p>
<b>STRATEGY &amp; PLANNING</b>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Executive Summary</b></p> <p>The CEO took questions on the Executive Summary containing the KPIs and the Trust Strategic Development Plan for 2021-2026, which had been made available in advance of the meeting.</p> <p><u>KPIs</u></p> <p>The CEO asked for Trustees’ views / comments. The Chair noted that the value of some of the KPIs had been questioned at the end of the previous academic year in terms of RAG rating and relevance therefore Trustees’ experience and input was welcomed.</p> <p><b>Trustees made the following comments / suggestions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KPIs needed visible actions, i.e. quantifiable measures with targets. In the case of the first KPI about financial solvency, a set percentage above reserve levels could be stated rather than “not produce a deficit”. Giving outreach as an example, a measure would not be sending out literature about outreach but the response received from it, e.g. the number of visits generated from the communication.</li> <li>• Benchmarking was important. An article was quoted in which James Timpson of the Timpson Group stated that he did not look at data but focused on whether the shops were open and the staff were happy.</li> <li>• Consider whether there was enough in the KPIs about the students and their perception of the service they received. Stakeholders needed to include staff, parents, local commissioners and children. Consider whether service users and commissioners would recommend the Trust. This would be a good way to expand the HR section of the KPIs.</li> <li>• KPIs to be used as accountability measures and be brought in line with the Committees, e.g. a People &amp; Culture measure could be stakeholders.</li> <li>• There should be a hybrid of data, KPIs and strategic aims but not just reporting for the sake of it.</li> <li>• Financial KPIs were not very specific and did not reflect the movement from the Academies Financial Handbook to Academy Trust Handbook, particularly with reference to H&amp;S / Estates etc. Audit red flags could be included in the financial KPIs.</li> <li>• Important to focus on finance and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Review the situation annually and consider whether there were issues on the risk register that needed to inform the annual KPIs.</li> </ul>

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- Important to have a balance between deciding on / debating KPIs and putting them into action. The RAG rating was useful as an overview.
- Benchmarking for alternative provision had been discussed in the past but it was difficult to find this information so EAT could strive for continuous improvement against its own targets.

**Trustees asked who decides the RAG rating for each KPI and what the qualifiers were for them to move categories. KPI no. 10 (SEMH and academic progress and outcomes strong in all academies) was a good example of this and Trustees asked how green had been achieved and if this reflected the overall picture. Trustees asked if KPI no. 6 (Increased capacity, physical expansion and / or new schools) was green because of the Priory conversion and if this KPI should now revert to red. Trustees asked how the Executive Team would like to progress with the KPIs.** The CEO suggested discussing KPIs at Committee level in line with relevant Committee remits and highlighting to the Board. The CEO explained that KPI no. 10 was broad (SEMH and academic progress and outcomes strong in all academies) but was reported on regularly in detail at the Learning and Achievement Committee. **Trustees agreed that strategic KPIs should be divided up among Committees and only needed to be discussed again at Board if there was a problem (exception reporting), e.g. the RAG rating was trending in the wrong direction. Some KPIs were only annual and did not require discussion at every meeting. Trustees asked if the KPIs were the right ones and whether there were too many rated green. Having all KPIs rated green was not necessarily reassuring.** The CEO explained that red ratings could be cohort dependent and as long as Trustees and the Executive Team were aware of the situation and the Board had assurance that the Exec was working on the situation then a red rating was not a problem. **Trustees asked if there was more information about the destinations of children leaving Ethos College, as it was not just about academic achievement but also about preparing children for the next step in their lives.** The CEO explained that this was detailed in the annual report as an annual measure but perhaps was not publicised enough. Last year 100% of Ethos College students progressed to education, training or employment for the first time ever. The CEO noted that consideration should also be given to younger children who were transitioning successfully through the academies or returning to mainstream. This could be easily reported.

**Action: There would be a data focus at the next meeting.**

The CFOO suggested spending time with each of the Committees to set priorities for the next sixth months / year and scrutinise this at Board level. These priorities could change as the year progressed. The Chair agreed with this approach and noted that Committee priorities were on the agenda for this meeting.

The CEO thanked Trustees for their input on the KPIs, which had been really helpful and would bring suggestions for KPIs to each of the Committees based on tonight's feedback.

**Action: CEO and Chair to develop a set of strategic KPIs at Board level and work with Committee Chairs to develop KPIs for each Committee.**

JF /  
VDG /  
MN

JF /  
VDG/  
C'tee  
Chairs

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Strategic Development Plan (SDP)

The Chair commented that the Trust should be proud of the Strategic Development Plan and share it far and wide. The CEO added that she was happy with the focus on SEMH (social, emotional and mental health) and the three objectives underpinning this. **Trustees noted that the report was well-presented and asked where it could be distributed.** One suggestion was local authorities. The CEO explained that there was an operational action plan behind the SDP for the Executive Team but the SDP was a strategic document, which gave Trustees an overview rather than unnecessary detail. **Trustees asked how the Executive Team would report on the SDP, e.g. how the Trust was changing the public narrative regarding SEMH pupils and provision.** The CEO asked how Trustees would like this to be reported and welcomed their suggestions. **Trustees suggested quarterly progress reporting in a summary document, comparing progress with the previous quarter and giving a RAG rating. Trustees advised caution about creating extra work with reporting but thought that the success criteria were a good starting point with success criteria.** The CFOO noted that the success criteria were quite binary and did not lend themselves to a RAG rating but the Exec could simply report whether the criteria had been achieved or not. **Trustees agreed with this approach.**

Returning to the KPIs, Trustees noted that the financial KPIs could be improved and also suggested that internal audit be used differently to look at parts of practice rather than focusing on finance and payroll. Trustees suggested looking at the interdependencies between resources and spending, i.e. stating what had been spent in order to achieve each objective.

**Action: Further discussion to take place in Committees about how to achieve the strategic objectives in the SDP and also the KPIs.**

C'tee  
Chairs

*KB left the meeting at 17:55*

**Trustees noted their thanks to the CEO and Exec Team for the SDP.**

The CEO asked if there were questions on other areas of Exec report.

**Trustees asked for a brief overview on Evolve (formerly the Priory Centre), which had joined the Trust on 1<sup>st</sup> September.** The CEO reported that David Kiss, Head of Evolve, would be invited to the next Board meeting to give a 15 minute presentation. She explained that EAT was at the beginning of a huge improvement journey with Evolve. Work was needed to embed the Trust culture and core values, as well as dealing with some historic staffing issues and working practices. The majority of the staff had bought into the Head's vision and the future of being part of EAT. A new Assistant Head had been appointed and another Assistant Head was being recruited with a SEN (special educational needs) remit, in order to increase leadership capacity to support the Head. Priorities were supporting school improvement and onboarding systems to fit with other Trust systems. Trust Business Managers (BMs) were mentoring the BM at Evolve. Staffing had been declared as a measure and the structure would be realigned to other academies in the Trust. The HR Manager was working closely with CEO and the Evolve Head on this. Discussions were in progress about how to improve premises to

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make them safe and funding had been secured. *[Confidential item redacted and included in a separate, confidential minute].*

**Trustees asked if Evolve was full.** The CEO explained that there was capacity for 60 children but currently only 40 places had been filled. This was typical for this time of year, as Y9 pupils had transitioned to KS4. Having fewer children at this stage in the academic year released more staff to make a bigger difference to the younger pupils. **Trustees asked what the timeline was for CIF bids and what the biggest priority was in terms of funding.** The CFOO explained that the deadline was the end of October and that H&S works were the most critical. **Trustees asked if it would be five years before Evolve was a replica of other EAT academies.** The CEO reported that Evolve would expect an Ofsted inspection in two years' time and would be aiming for a good outcome. She felt Evolve would be embedded in the Trust within two years. The CEO explained that EAT had been working with Evolve for 18 months prior to conversion and a new leadership team was now in place and on board with the Trust's vision. **Trustees asked if EAT had done enough self-evaluation against the new Ofsted framework, as this had now been changed and made harder. They asked if Trust KPIs were up to date with the new framework.** The CEO reported that KPIs were based on annual self-evaluation using the Ofsted framework. **Trustees asked if the Learning and Achievement Committee was scrutinising the Ofsted self-evaluation.** The CEO commented that this was not as high on the agenda as perhaps it should be. **Trustees asked if the Executive Team looked at other Ofsted reports from alternative provision (AP) settings to get a comparison.** The CEO confirmed that they did. **Trustees noted that meeting the Ofsted quality of education framework after Covid lockdowns was difficult.**

**Action: CEO to take new Ofsted framework to Learning and Achievement to be scrutinised against the KPIs.**

JF

**Trustees asked if AP was going to be trialled against a separate AP Ofsted framework.** The CEO explained that the Ofsted framework was still the same for AP as it was for mainstream.

The Chair asked the CEO if she and the Executive Team felt adequately supported by Trustees on wider issues, e.g. the winter plan, immunisation programme, CO2 monitors.

**Action: Clerk to add national issues to the agenda for future Board meetings.**

MN

The CEO explained that the greatest challenges throughout the pandemic included the amount of information received on a daily basis relating to changing legislation and requirements. The value of being part of a Trust was that the Executive Team could take some pressure off the Heads by filtering this information and EAT had become more agile in responding to these kinds of issues. Covid testing in schools was a challenge for Ethos Academy Trust children. It had been voluntary last year and was again this year. Uptake for mass testing was low. Conversations had taken place with parents to ensure they had home testing kits if their children were not comfortable with onsite testing. Vaccination of 12-15 year olds would take place in schools and EAT was awaiting clarity on this. The CFOO was due to attend a webinar from Stone King (legal advisors) about the legal implications of the vaccination programme. Risk assessments had been updated for the return to school in September in line with updated

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national guidance, e.g. face masks no longer being mandatory. This was managed at central level and cascaded to academies for them to tailor appropriately. Information was being shared with staff and unions to ensure transparency. **Trustees asked if there was a requirement for staff to be vaccinated.** The HR Manager (LC) explained that it was not compulsory and the Trust was not allowed to maintain lists but had a good overview of vaccination uptake amongst staff. **Trustees asked if staff had expressed any concerns about safety.** LC reported that staff felt more confident, particularly after being vaccinated. Staff had been offered individual risk assessments but no-one had taken this up and staff seemed happy with the remaining measures that were in place. There had been no challenge from unions. **Trustees asked about H&S with regard to CO2 monitors and whether this was a requirement.** The CFOO explained that CO2 monitors monitored airflow in the room to ensure ventilation but they were currently being trialled and no specific instructions had been received. LC added that key measures were to keep windows open and the Trust had expected to be sent CO2 monitors but nothing had been received as yet. **Trustees asked if EAT was involved in the National Tutoring scheme.** The CEO explained that EAT was not part of this scheme and had chosen to approach tutoring differently. Funding was still provided for the tutoring but EAT used internal tutors to adapt to the needs of the children. **Trustees asked if EAT received the catch up premium.** The CEO confirmed that this premium was provided but it was a similar situation to pupil premium whereby the funding was only given if the child was on roll. **Trustees asked if the Trust had to report on catch up premium spending.** The CEO noted that no instructions about reporting had been received as yet. **Trustees noted that catch up funding was included in the Ofsted framework so the Trust would need to report on it. They also noted that the Ofsted framework referred specifically to the use of tutoring and suggested that EAT think about the impact of a national tutoring programme.**

**Action: CEO to look at impact of tutoring and report to the next Learning and Achievement Committee.**

JF

The CEO reported that the isolation rules had changed and children could attend school if there was a Covid case in the family. This potentially had implications for infections within school and the Trust was continuing with remote learning in preparation for absences. The remote learning offer at Evolve needed to be developed. The CEO explained that the three founding academies would potentially fall into the Ofsted window for this academic year. Their focus will be on Ofsted readiness, quality assurance work etc. There had been an announcement about the Multi Academy Trusts Bill, which would extend the remit of Ofsted to monitor performance of MATs. New Ofsted guidance had been produced on the summary evaluation of Academy Trusts. The CEO thought that this made sense, as Trust performance impacted on the performance of its individual academies. **Trustees asked if there would be a report on the Trust itself as well as its constituent academies.** The CEO confirmed that this would be the case.

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GOVERNANCE & COMPLIANCE	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Board Self-Evaluation &amp; Governance Planning 2021/22</b></p> <p><u>Reflection on Board / Committee Effectiveness 2020/21</u></p> <p>The Chair referred to the Board effectiveness survey that had been sent out recently and welcomed Trustees’ responses. She noted that it was important to measure Board effectiveness and the survey would form the basis for future discussion and an evaluation cycle. The Board had to be held accountable to the same measures as the Executive Team. Annual internal reviews of governance would be held in between external reviews, which would be held every three years. The survey, along with the Trustee skills audit would feed into Chair and Vice Chair 360s and their work on Board effectiveness. The NGA had updated its skills audit template and a skills audit based on this new model would be sent to all Trustees ahead of the October Board meeting.</p> <p><b>Action: Chair and CEO to bring back the Board effectiveness survey to the next Board meeting in October to review outputs and inform discussion.</b></p> <p><u>Governance Systems and Processes 2021/22 (including Committee Priority areas of focus)</u></p> <p><b>Trustees flagged up the issues of multiple log-ins and passwords (Every, email, One Drive etc) and asked if this could be simplified. They asked if there could there be some kind of navigation map to direct Trustees to the relevant documents or if all the documents could be put on Teams or another central repository.</b></p> <p><b>Action: CFOO to look at possible solutions to the issue of multiple log-ons and report back to the Board.</b></p> <p>The Chair suggested that each Committee defined its focus rather than being discussed at Board level.</p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to add Committee Priority Areas of Focus to the first agenda of each Committee meeting.</b></p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Governance Documentation</b></p> <p><u>Declaration of Interests Forms</u></p> <p>The Clerk reported that all DOI forms had been received from Trustees and she had chased up two Members for their forms. This would form the basis for the register of interests (ROI), which would be published on the Trust website. This was a statutory annual requirement.</p> <p><b>Trustees suggested using Microsoft Forms in future for DOI forms.</b> The Clerk also noted that the ROI could be sent out in future for Trustees to either accept or amend.</p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to use a more user-friendly method for collecting declarations of interest next academic year, such as a Microsoft Forms or sending out the register of interests and asking Trustees and Members to confirm or amend their details.</b></p>

VDG / JF

DB

MN

MN

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There was some discussion around the amount of documents on Every and how to approve / amend. The CEO explained that the Central Team went through all Trustee comments and produced a final version of the documents taking into account Trustee comments and amendments.

**Governance Code of Conduct**

**Resolved: Trustees approved the Governance Code of Conduct.**

**Trust Scheme of Delegation**

**Resolved: Trustees approved the Trust Scheme of Delegation.**

**Trust Financial Scheme of Delegation**

The CEO explained that this would not be a separate document in future, as it was contained within the Trust Scheme of Delegation.

**Resolved: Trustees approved the Trust Financial Scheme of Delegation and agreed that it did not need to be a separate document in future.**

**Board Terms of Reference**

**Resolved: Trustees approved the Board Terms of Reference**

**Committee Terms of Reference**

**Resolved: Trustees approved the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference.**

**Resolved: Trustees approved the Learning and Achievement (formerly Curriculum and Standards) Committee Terms of Reference.**

The Chair noted that the People and Culture (formerly Pay and Performance) Committee Terms of Reference did not reflect the wider remit of wellbeing and stakeholder engagement and should be updated further.

**Action: CEO and HR Manager to review People and Culture Committee Terms of Reference and produce an amended version for approval at the October Board meeting.**

JF / LC

**Committee Membership**

The following expressions of interest in the Committee Chair roles had been received:

- FAR – Gary Cox
- Learning & Achievement – Donna Tandy
- People & Culture – Karen Bennett

Gary Cox left the meeting to enable Trustees to vote on his appointment and returned after the vote. As Donna Tandy was absent from the meeting and Karen Bennett had already left before this item, a vote could take place on their appointments.

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**Resolved:** Trustees approved the appointments of Gary Cox as Chair of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee, Donna Tandy as Chair of the Learning and Achievement Committee and Karen Bennett as the Chair of the People and Culture Committee.

Membership of the Committees was agreed as follows:

Finance, Audit & Risk Committee

- Gary Cox (Chair)
- Victoria Del Giudice
- Graham Dewhirst
- Jem Greenwell

Learning & Achievement Committee (formerly Curriculum & Standards)

- Donna Tandy (Chair)
- Alison Black
- Jem Greenwell

People & Culture Committee (formerly Pay & Performance)

- Karen Bennett (Chair)
- Jane Acklam
- Gary Cox

The Chair explained the rationale behind name changes for the learning and Achievement and People and Culture Committees to reflect their respective remits.

The Chair asked other Trustees to consider Committee membership and let her know. She reminded Trustees of the importance of the children being served by the academies and that this was the reason the Trust existed. **Trustees also noted the Trust core values and the importance of keeping them at the forefront during discussions. They suggested considering at the end of each Board and Committee meeting whether the decisions made benefited the children. Trustees suggested a short “case study” at the start of meetings to remind Trustees of their purpose.** The CEO reported that the first 15 minutes of each future Board meeting would have a specific focus area relating to the purpose of the Trust.

**Action: Clerk to update Board and Committee agendas with Board / Committee reflections before AOB.**

MN

**7 Appointment of Link Trustees**

Following expressions of interest prior to the meeting and discussion during the meeting, the following Link Trustee roles were confirmed:

- Compliance (H&S / Risk) – Jem Greenwell
- Careers – Gary Cox
- Parent – Victoria Del Giudice and Alison Black
- Finance – Graham Dewhirst

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	<p>Other vacant roles were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vulnerability (statutory role comprising SEND, safeguarding, behaviour and wellbeing)</li> <li>• Curriculum &amp; Data</li> <li>• HR</li> </ul> <p><b>Action: CEO and Chair to discuss the Vulnerability Link Trustee role outside of the meeting and consider who to approach for this role.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to contact Donna Tandy to ask if she was happy to continue as Link Trustee for Curriculum and Data.</b></p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to contact Karen Bennett to ask if she was happy to continue as Link Trustee for HR.</b></p>	<p>JF / VDG</p> <p>MN</p> <p>MN</p>
<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Statutory Documents &amp; Policies</b></p>	
	<p>Trustees had confirmed receipt of the Academy Trust Handbook via Every. The Chair explained that the “musts” section of the ATH would be reviewed at the first Finance, Audit and Risk Committee meeting.</p> <p>Trustees had confirmed receipt of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) via Every. There would be a Trustee safeguarding update in October, which would become an annual event, to cover KCSIE in more detail. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) would be involved and would take questions from Trustees.</p> <p><u>Safer Recruitment Policy</u></p> <p>The Chair noted that all Trustees with an educational background (JA, AB and DT) were Safer Recruitment trained but suggested that further Trustees may wish to benefit from this training.</p> <p><b>Resolved:</b> Trustees approved the Safer Recruitment Policy, which had been circulated via Every.</p>	
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Any Other Urgent Business</b></p>	
	<p>The Clerk noted the appointment of Alison Black as Trustee by Members on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2021. There being no further business, the meeting finished at 19:05.</p>	
<p><b>10</b></p>	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting / Future Meeting Priorities</b></p>	
	<p>21<sup>st</sup> October 2021</p> <p><b>Action: Clerk to send new meeting invitations containing a Teams link to all Trustees and Members for future Board meetings and to relevant Trustees for Committee meetings to ensure hybrid meetings could continue.</b></p>	<p>MN</p>

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<b>Action Points</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Completion</b>
• Include a data focus at the next Board meeting.	JF / VDG / MN	21/10/2021
• Develop a set of strategic KPIs at Board level and work with Committee Chairs to develop KPIs for each Committee.	JF / VDG / GC / DT / KB	September to November 2021
• Further discussion to take place in Committees about how to achieve the strategic objectives in the SDP and also the KPIs.	JF / VDG / GC / DT / KB	September to November 2021
• Take new Ofsted framework to Learning and Achievement to be scrutinised against the KPIs.	JF	06/10/2021
• Add national issues to the agenda for future Board meetings.	MN	30/09/2021
• Look at impact of tutoring and report to the next Learning and Achievement Committee	JF	06/10/2021
• Bring back the Board effectiveness survey to the next Board meeting in October to review outputs and inform discussion.	JF / VDG	21/10/2021
• Look at possible solutions to the issue of multiple log-ons and report back to the Board.	DB	30/09/2021
• Add Committee Priority Areas of Focus to the first agenda of each Committee meeting.	MN	20/09/2021
• Use a more user-friendly method for collecting declarations of interest next academic year, such as a Microsoft Forms or sending out the register of interests and asking Trustees and Members to confirm or amend their details.	MN	September 2022
• Review People and Culture Committee Terms of Reference and produce an amended version for approval at the October Board meeting.	JF / LC	08/10/2021
• Update Board and Committee agendas with Board / Committee reflections before AOB.	MN	20/09/2021
• Discuss the Vulnerability Link Trustee role outside of the meeting and consider who to approach for this role.	JF / VDG	30/09/2021
• Contact Donna Tandy to ask if she was happy to continue as Link Trustee for Curriculum and Data.	MN	22/09/2021
• Contact Karen Bennett to ask if she was happy to continue as Link Trustee for HR.	MN	22/09/2021
• Send new meeting invitations containing a Teams link to all Trustees and Members for future Board meetings and to relevant Trustees for Committee meetings to ensure hybrid meetings could continue.	MN	22/09/2021

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