

## Alma Primary Governing Body Meeting 6 December 2023

### GOVERNING BODY OF ALMA PRIMARY MINUTES OF THE FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD AT THE SCHOOL ON WEDNESDAY 6 DECEMBER 2023 AT 7PM

#### Present:

Ilan Jacobs (Chair)  
Yvonne Baron  
Jonathan Levy  
Francesca Mindell  
David Grunwald  
James Burns  
Vicky Shafran  
Ella Rose-Jacobs  
Katie Abrams  
Marc Shoffren (Headteacher)

#### Acceptance/Non-Acceptance of Apologies for Absence

- Apologies were received from Louise Lewis and Ed Lewin.

#### New register of GB interests & declarations of any direct or indirect personal interest (including but not limited to any personal financial interest); confirmation of any changes to Register of Business Interests and Related Parties.

- No new declarations of interest were received.

#### Approval of minutes of 8 November 2023 GB:

- The minutes from the previous Governing Body meeting (8 November) were **APPROVED**.

#### Governance items:

- The 2023/4 Head Teacher's Appraisal Panel was APPROVED.
- The Chair gave an update on the outcome of the recent Parent Governor Election: after a very close election, Ophir Lahav was elected. Governors look forward to welcoming Ophir to the GB.
- JB gave an update on a potential new Chair for the GB.
- A Governor challenged on the diversity of the board and the need to bring on more diverse Governors.
- **DECISION:** Governors nominated & seconded Ilan Jacobs to a third 4 year term as a Co-opted Governor.
- Governor farewell and appreciation – VS volunteered to organise a Governor farewell evening.
- The Chair of the Pay Committee gave a read out on its recent meeting.

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- Appointment of Clerking Services for 2023-4 – a brief discussion was held on the appointment of a new clerking service. **DECISION:** GB agreed to delegate the appointment of the new service to the Head and Chair.

*Jake Lew of BKL Accountants, Alma's auditors, joined the GB to present the 2022/3 Annual Report and Accounts.*

## Presentation of Alma Primary Statutory Accounts, 2022/23

- VS introduced the Trustees Report
- VS explained that the FOP Committee agreed to change the Alma Reserves Policy to set a minimum level of reserves at £100,000.
- Jake Lew talked through the Audit Findings Report and explained that they had set a materiality threshold at £41,000 which is percentage of Alma's income, guided by ICAEW.
- He highlighted a new accounting standard re IT security.
- **ACTION:** BKL to send a list of all the things that have to be on a school's website to the GB.
- Jake Lew explained that the management accounts process at Alma has also checked and that while this should be done on an accruals basis, it is acceptable to not do it on that basis.
- He highlighted that Alma now has a fixed asset register and while there are some minor issues raised with it, these are all minor.
- A Governor challenged as to whether the regulatory report should reflect the recent ESFA auditor's report conducted into Alma. Jake Lew responded that while there were issues that arose from the ESFA auditor's report, he could see that Alma was rectifying them and therefore they did not need to go into the regularity report. He was comfortable with that.
- A Governor challenged as to his view on whether Alma was a 'going concern' and Jake Lew said he can confirm Alma is a 'going concern'.
- Jake Lew also advised that the current Academy Trust handbook is not in favour of Academies having Staff trustees, but perhaps Alma could have a staff member in attendance instead?
- Governors held a short discussion of capital expenditure and what uses the £26000 capital grant which has not been spent could be put to.
- There was also discussion of whether Alma should apply for a Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) grant to part fund capital improvements. **ACTION:** YB to recommend a bidding company for CIF support. **ACTION:** GB to consider whether to prepare a CIF application for October 2024.
- A Governor challenged as to why governance costs have almost doubled? Jake Lew committed to get back to GB as to what that covers. **(ACTION)**
- A Governor challenged on the rent & rates figure which is negative. Jake Lew explained why this was recorded in this way.
- A Governor challenged on insurance costs. Jake Lew explained that these are made up of the risk protection arrangement (RPA) and staff sickness insurance.
- A Governor challenged re whether Alma Staff costs are higher than average as a proportion of income. Jake Lew explained that at 82.7% of income, they were higher and the ESFA suggest that they should be at 75%, but most Jewish schools are over that figure and Alma is not higher than the typical Jewish school.

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- Jake Lew raised the issue of the implications of Harper v Brazil for Alma – the potential liability for all schools regarding part time workers & holiday pay. **ACTION:** MJS to investigate and report.
- MJS noted and thanked Jake Lew and BKL for their support and the way that he had answered all GB's questions.
- Governors **APPROVED** Alma's 2022/3 Report and Accounts.

*Jake Lew of BKL Accountants, left the meeting.*

## Revised budget 2023/4 Update and Resolution of support staff issue

- MJS set out the backgrounds to the issue and why Alma is out of sync with the National Joint Council (NJC) of local authorities.
- Governors debated the issue of the NJC, which has recommended a flat, across the board pay rise for all non-teaching staff.
- A Governor challenged on the question of progression up the pay scale of support staff in the long term.
- **DECISION:** Governors passed the question back to FOP committee to debate the issue and make recommendations back to main GB.

## Risk Register Review

- MJS reminded Governors that GB needs to formally accept the Risk Register as the correct current list of risks facing the school.
- GB Committees need to look at the risks and review actions regularly and make sure that they happen.
- **ACTION:** Reviewing the Risk Register should be a standing item on every FOP and L&C Committee meeting, with the recommendation that it appears early in the agenda.

*Meeting Closed.*