

MINUTES OF THE 31st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF JORDANHILL SCHOOL held on Tuesday 24 November 2020 at 7.30pm by Zoom.

PRESENT:-

Mr Alexander (convenor), Mrs Carrie (treasurer), Miss Grant (bursar) and Dr Thomson were present in the school hall. All other members present attended via Zoom.

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2019 were approved. They were proposed by Mr Daye and seconded by Mrs Carrie.

2. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising that would not be covered in the reports and financial statement to follow.

3. BOARD OF MANAGERS REPORT

The convenor welcomed members to the Zoom meeting and thanked them for attending this first ever virtual AGM. He offered positive feedback received from the Parents' Conference in previous years and shared the Board's disappointment that the opportunities to run the normal workshops through the conference were not possible this year. He outlined the running order of business for the meeting and set the tone for discussion as the evening evolved.

Mr Alexander encouraged members to digest the Annual Report and review it to understand the range of activities and excellent achievements delivered in the last year. He commented on Government initiatives addressed in the Annual Report and how the School is performing against a selection of key performance indicators (KPIs).

Mr Alexander explained the continuing financial challenges faced by the School, not least in the middle of a pandemic. Dialogue continues with colleagues from the Scottish Government to discuss the School's budget and recurrent grant. Discussions have been challenging but constructive and have allowed the School to demonstrate to Scottish Government the fiscal responsibilities that have been exercised alongside an expression of challenges the School faces. The Board continues to be firm in defending the School's position and demonstrating best value and good practice.

The convenor thanked members for their contributions to the 'Striving Higher' campaign. Whilst the Development Director has recently departed the initiative continues and the school will seek to continue to connect with alumni and identify opportunities to raise funds. Although the centenary celebrations have been severely curtailed in 2020, the centenary dinner at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum is scheduled for May 2021. He expressed his appreciation for the support and work of the Educational Amenities Trust Fund and reiterated that the encouraging initial response to

Striving Higher has allowed the Board to sustain provision in 2020-21 and limit increases in charges to parents.

The convenor thanked all Board members for their support over the past year, the senior management team, teaching and support staff for playing their part in delivering an excellent education service and reflected on the excellent value added to the pupils' educational experience at the School.

Mr Alexander advised it was his privilege to represent parents on the Board and work with senior School colleagues, engaging in thought provoking discussion for the benefit of all the pupils of the School.

Mr Alexander recognised especially the contribution of Mrs Robertson, Depute Rector who left on 20 November 2020 after 11 years of service. He also thanked the Rector, retiring on 29 November 2020, for his leadership, dedication and vision throughout his 23 years in school and shared some of the highlights of Dr Thomson's career in School.

Finally, Mr Alexander extended a warm welcome to Mr Anderson as Rector and Mr Brown as Depute Rector, both joining the school on 30 November 2020.

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The treasurer, Mrs Carrie, gave a summary of the Financial Statement for 2019-20 and outlined salient points from the Income and Expenditure Account for the year.

She commented on elements of unrestricted income and restricted funding directed to specific purposes and commented on the school's spending on capital works.

There was a surplus of unrestricted income over expenditure of £4,229, which has been added to the reserves which now stand at £162,834. The accounts show that the total funds and assets carried forward by the school for this new financial year stands at £19,053,654. However, it is worth noting that this figure includes the value of the school's endowment i.e. the school estate.

Mrs Carrie confirmed the Board's confidence in the School's financial management and commented that finances formed a discussion point at every Board meeting. The open, transparent and regular updates mean that the Board have full confidence in the school's financial management. She thanked the Bursar and her team. She also thanked PwC for their professional audit service offered over many years.

The audited accounts for the year 2019-2020 were approved:

Proposed: Mr Francis Seconded: Mrs MacRae

5. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

A resolution to appoint Azets as Auditors for 2020-2021 was adopted. Azets have been successfully appointed for 3 years following a tender exercise in 2019.

Proposed: Mr Daye Seconded: Ms Mathie

6. MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD OF MANAGERS

The convenor thanked departing Board members for their contributions and confirmed the election of new parent members.

Departing Parent Members

- Mr Neil Francis, Mr Joseph McKenna, Mrs Julie Carrie and Ms Susan Jeffrey.

New Parent Members

- Mrs Emma Miller, Mrs Deborah Hughes, Mr Andrew Tinkler and Mr Kenneth Hastie who all commence their first term of office.

7. RECTOR'S REPORT

Dr Thomson delivered a presentation covering the following themes

- Where are we now?
- Attainment Trends
- Financial Challenges
- Capital expenditure
- How do we define ourselves?
- Capacity to innovate

Dr Thomson noted that the unique Grant Aided status of the school and the associated capacity to innovate and prioritise underpinned many of the successes of recent years. Academic results for all groups of pupils considerably exceed comparative data. Uptake rates for music, the arts and sport are also far higher than national norms. Likewise, all measures of corporate governance and best value are strong.

The investment in upgrading the Office 365 portal exemplified such innovation. During the COVID lockdown the school had been able to instigate remote learning at scale and in a far more systematic way than most schools thanks to the commitment of staff. This had ensured that no child was left behind. As a consequence, the monitoring and tracking data this term has shown that all year groups are on track with no evidence that they are behind the curve compared to previous cohorts. The distribution of Chromebooks to all pupils in S3-S6 has been a great success.

The pastoral team had undertaken a huge amount of work to support learners and families remotely during the summer term. This term all parental engagement events had moved online and the feedback has been very positive. Again, Dr Thomson wished to record his appreciation of staff flexibility in engaging with these systems.

While noting these many strengths, Dr Thomson also quoted former Harvard President Charles W. Eliot from 1869

“A good past is positively dangerous, if it makes us content with the present, and so unprepared for the future.”

The time to prepare for a new future is now

- Nationally, there will be severe economic challenges in the coming years arising from COVID-19 and Brexit.
- There will be no return to pre-COVID norms in many of the ways in which schools work.
- There will be challenges for the Board and members in considering 'how we define ourselves' as expectations on schools continue to evolve.

He concluded by thanking parents for the ongoing support offered to the School and wished everyone much success for the future.

8. AMENDMENTS TO THE ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION

All members had been issued a paper detailing the proposals and the context behind them.

In introducing the proposals Dr Thomson acknowledging the constraints of Zoom as a forum for discussion. However, the Board's view was that it was important that the proposed changes be brought forward now as failure to address the main issues might create future governance problems. Dr Thomson indicated that in the event that any sizeable number of those present voiced objection to any one of the five key sets of proposals, then that matter would be referred back to the Board for further consideration.

Each of the five sets of changes was discussed in turn.

1. To enable parent members of the Board to continue in office for up to 6 months until the AGM (Clauses 6(b) and 42)
2. To allow the Board to co-opt additional members (Clause 36)
3. To allow any elected or co-opted member of the Board to hold office (Clause 37)
4. To amend the AGM quorum to 40 (Clause 15)
5. To update wording as set out
 - Companies Act 2006 (Clause 1)
 - Gender (Clause 1)
 - Digital communication and ballots (Clauses 1, 32, 33)

Following each discussion the members present were asked to flag any concerns and to indicate if they wished the matter to be referred back to the Board.

Topics 1 and 5

No issues were raised in relation to items 1 and 5. These were approved nem con.

Topic 4

A member asked for clarification of the proposed reduction in the AGM quorum. It was noted that the school has always struggled to attract the necessary number of parents to the AGM. The Parents' Conference was introduced both as a mechanism to engage parents with key aspects of school life of interest to them and to encourage them to stay on for the AGM. While this has been a positive development and has improved the AGM attendance somewhat, participation rates remain disappointing. 40 is deemed to be a realistic number which will ensure that essential business can be transacted.

No objections were voiced to the change and the proposal was approved by the meeting.

Topics 2 and 3

The discussion around changes 2 and 3 related to the following key points

- The co-option of further members would dilute the parent voice.
- Might the creation of executive sub-committees of the Board offer an alternative way forward?
- Should a decision be deferred until the new Board took up office following the AGM?
- The circumstances in which a co-opted member might be appointed as an office bearer.

The following points emerged in discussion

- The proposals were primarily about ensuring that future Boards had the necessary powers and expertise to discharge their legal obligations.
- It would be up to the Board and the parents thereon to determine whether or not to co-opt further members and who to appoint as an office bearer.
- Staff members are not eligible to be office bearers.
- The governance demands on the Board and office bearers had grown considerably since the school was first constituted in its current form.
- While no specific guidance exists in Scotland, successive Board had reviewed their skill set and role against the DfES guidance and that from the Governors; Association in England.
- There are specific legal duties on the Board in relation to specialist areas such as finance and Safeguarding. Neither parent nor staff members are elected on the basis of any form of skills matrix. Nevertheless, there is a legal duty on the Board to ensure that it has the necessary skills to undertake its duties diligently.
- Co-opting the necessary expertise can avoid substantial costs while providing reassurance to the Board as a whole and to members.
- Executive sub-committees operate efficiently only if they have the appropriate powers delegated to them otherwise the same discussion takes place at Board level. In such models the Board would typically meet only 3 or 4 times per annum. Successive Boards, particularly parent members, have wished to be fully involved in all key aspects of school life and have preferred to sustain 7 or 8 Board meetings with sub-committees created on an ad hoc basis. For example, to consider tenders for audit or other specialist functions.

- The convenor and Dr Thomson were confident that the new Board and Rector would work together to utilise these powers to best effect.

In conclusion, it was noted that the points for discussion had been raised by only 2 (perhaps 3) of those present. Members were asked to indicate if they wished the proposal to be referred back to the Board either by speaking, raising their hand on Zoom or by submitting a comment via Zoom. No other members indicated concerns or objections.

Accordingly, each of proposals 2 and 3 were approved.

9. FURTHER QUESTION FROM THE FLOOR

- Q: Is the Striving Higher campaign still the best way of raising additional capital for the school and if so, will the school be looking to relaunch the campaign, especially given the decision by members to reject the financial contribution from CALA Homes?

A: Dr Thomson noted that this clearly relates to the economic and wider challenges referred to in his presentation. It would be a matter for the new Board and the incoming Rector to consider and would, no doubt, require further engagement with the wider parent body.

10. AOCB

None.

The meeting closed.