

Reading Governance Association
Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2020-21

29th June 2021

Via MS-Teams



Members in Attendance via MS-Teams

28 governors representing 19 member schools.

Also in Attendance via MS-Teams

Hazel Archer (Clerk to RGA)

Welcome and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, being held online. He then handed over to the Clerk to chair the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest for items on the agenda.

Minutes of 2018-19 AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on 24th September 2020 which had been previously made available were reviewed and approved as a correct record. The Chair will sign them at the next opportunity.

Chair's Report

Richard Rolfe presented the Chair's Report, which had been made available before the meeting and is included in Appendix 1 below.

Treasurer's Report

Richard Stainthorp presented the Treasurer's Report (Appendix 2) together with the Income and Expenditure Report for 2021- 21, which had both been made available in advance of the meeting.

Election of Officers and Members of the Executive Committee for 2020-21

The following were elected as Members of the Executive Committee by unanimous vote. Each Governing Board represented had one vote. Officer roles will be decided by Members at the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

Members of the Executive Committee: Julia Cottee, Richard Rolfe, Chris Robinson, Matt Espley, John Ennis, Yvonne Newman. New members are welcome, and may express an interest at any time.

Other Business

There was no other business.

Date of Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

Annual General Meeting closed.

Introduction

The past academic year has been a 'year like no other' for governors as well as teachers, support staff, parents, carers and children. The RGA has had to adapt its offering; moving to 'Teams' rather than 'in person' events, but our purpose and focus has remained constant. We will, as with everyone else involved in education, take what we can from the experience gained and continue to work with the Local Authority, BFFC, and all those involved in governance at schools in the Reading area to assist with the education landscape.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on the RGA board for the time and expertise they give. In particular I want to recognise and thank Richard Stainthorp who is standing down as Treasurer at this AGM.

Key Activities from 2020-21

Conduit to Local Authority

Collaboration and Representation. The RGA board has continued to build on our solid professional relationship with Brighter Futures for Children (BFFC) providing a good forum for mutual feedback and message reinforcement.

We still work closely with Sarah Shortt at Governor Services to plan complementary events which dovetail in with those that Governor Services provide.

Going forward, we have agreed to hold meetings with Prof. Dr. Kate Reynolds at BFFC every Autumn, Spring and Summer. This will give RGA an opportunity to raise strategic issues at the highest level on behalf of our members.

Communication

Website. We have continued to develop the content on our website (www.therga.org.uk). The site is a useful, 'go to' resource for governors providing, amongst other things:

- A summary of the latest news [as it applies to Reading](#)
- Notification of events
- The ability to book places on events in a simple and user friendly way
- Access to presentations from previous events
- Links to useful resources
- The ability to ask a question
- Access to advice or help

Expertise

Over the past year, RGA board members have assisted school boards in a number of ways to improve governance. This activity has included researching and modelling best practice in all aspects of governance, and sharing combined governor experiences to support colleagues with similar challenges.

The RGA can put governing boards in touch with experienced governors if you need help, or if you can offer it. This is an area we would like to develop further so please do share your successes with us for the benefit of everyone.

Training & Events

During this difficult year we have continued to deliver successful events online and have even increased our offering with the introduction of a new network for finance governors.

Next year we will continue the Chairs, Safeguarding and Finance Networks.

We will re-brand the Disadvantaged Network as the Inclusion Network. This is to take into account that this area really encompasses much more than just PP or SEND issues, but also any significant groups that face challenges in education, and all children from a mental health and wellbeing perspective.

Next year we will start two new forums. The first is the Clerks forum, which will be a platform for clerks to get together (away from governors!) and will be hosted by Hazel Archer, the RGA clerk. The second is the New Governors forum, aimed at governors in their first two years of the role, to support their development and create relationships with peers. This will be hosted by local leaders of governance, including RGA board members. These are badged as forums, rather than networks, as they are intended to be networking opportunities, not formal training, and will not have set agendas.

It is important for CPD and for Ofsted that governors have access to support, training and development which makes RGA membership a vital resource. We will continue to provide electronic attendance certificates to all our attendees which can be easily forwarded to your clerks to assist the recording of your board's CPD.

Administration

Membership Administration. Membership currently extends to 40 schools (39 state and 1 independent). 24 Reading state schools are not members, but of these 17 are in academy trusts which in some instances don't even have local governing boards now. So membership remains at a healthy level, although the trend of multi-academy trusts opting out of collaborating with the larger Reading schools community is of concern. We will continue to approach these trusts, and local independent schools, as our aim is ultimately to support all Reading children in ensuring strong governance.

Contact Management. Our contact database holds details of governors, chairs, clerks and SBMs. We only use this database for administration and to notify you of news and events. We do NOT share your data with any other parties. At the start of the new academic year we will be contacting your schools to check these details are up to date. If you are asked, please do give permission to let the school confirm your details with us. When your governors or clerks change, please let us know as that saves time and ensures only those who wish to be kept informed will receive communications from the RGA.

Officers' meetings. The RGA board has continued to meet online every few weeks to discuss priorities, develop our offering and, of course, to plan all the events.

We are always looking for new governors to help out, so please contact admin@therga.org.uk if you are interested in becoming a board member.

Key Priorities for 2021-22

Over the next year our key priorities will be to:

- Seek to work more closely with the Local Authority at a strategic level, to achieve the common goal of every school in Reading being Good or better.
- Further develop the RGA website such that it provides up to date and relevant information on a more frequent basis. Our aim is still for the RGA website to become the go to place for governors

in Reading. We will be monitoring the traffic to our site, and also putting the 'resources' webpage behind a paywall.

- Deliver the growing number of governor networks and forums in a blended offer of face to face and online such that we can support each other to improve the quality of education in Reading, and enjoy ourselves while doing so.
- Grow our networks with other organisations in order to attract more high-profile speakers and alternative voices to conferences and networks.

Strategically, over the longer term, our aspirations are also to:

- Work with governor recruitment organisations such as the NGA, to encourage greater interest and uptake from those considering a future in governance, showcasing Reading schools as a first choice.
- Work with a local teaching school alliance to develop and roll out an accredited 'Local Leader of Governance' scheme for Reading, to fill the gaps left by the suspension of the NLG programme.

We hope you have valued your membership of the Association this year, and are enthusiastic to renew your membership next year. We wish you a pleasant Summer break, and we will see you again in September, ready to navigate the upcoming challenges.

Richard Rolfe
Chair

Summary of Financial Position

The Association’s Net Assets have risen by £825 to £2,625 during the financial year ended 31st March 2021. There are two principal reasons for this rise of 45%: the planned increase in the annual membership fee, and the unplanned pandemic.

Income from Membership

Membership fees rose from £30 per school to £50 per school for the academic year 2020/21. This increased the fees invoiced this year to £1,945 (40 schools) from £1,420 (48 schools). One new school joined us, and nine left us, resulting in a net loss of eight schools. The reasons for the nine leavers were: joined a multi-academy trust (2), poor or nil attendance in previous years (5), fee increase (2). The multi-academy trust model represents a long-term threat to the Association. If those trusts fail to see the benefits from local, cross-phase and cross-organisations sharing best practice in governance, this may result in further withdrawal of schools. The RGA’s vision is that governance should be proactively outward-looking, and so we continue to communicate with those trusts, and other organisations such as independent schools, to encourage them to collaborate across Reading.

Pandemic Costs

The pandemic lockdowns necessitated our provision to move from meeting face-to-face to remote meetings. This resulted in a decrease in room hire and catering expenditure of £1,045, which was offset by the purchase of Microsoft licences to support the delivery of our services via Teams, and associated migration of inboxes costing us an extra £239 in comparison with last year. There will be an ongoing cost of £16.20 per month for these licences. Our plans for next year clearly depend upon the risk assessments and government restrictions regarding the pandemic, but currently we are planning a blended offer to our members, of 50% face-to-face meetings and 50% remote meetings.

Outlook for Next Year

The overall increase in the Association’s reserves indicates that there should be no need to increase our membership fee in the next couple of years. In our efforts to improve our service for our members, we propose to fully introduce three new networks next year: Finance, Clerks, and New Governors. Whilst in pre-pandemic times, this would have resulted in us needing to draw down our reserves to fund the increased room hire and catering, feedback from our members has shown that there is extremely little desire for us to return to a full face-to-face provision, and so by offering a blended provision in future years, we should be able to operate on a reduced cost budget.

As this is my last year and report as Treasurer, I would like to thank my colleagues and offer best wishes to my successor.

Richard Stainthorp

Treasurer