

Uttoxeter Learning Trust (ULT)

Minutes of the Meeting of the Education Committee held in a virtual setting on Wednesday 27 April, 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

Present: Rev. Sherwin (Chair), Dr. Clark (CEO), Mr. Slater, Ms. Livesey

In attendance: Mr. Davies (Clerk to the Trust Board)

1 **Welcome:**

Trustees were welcomed to today's meeting by the Chair. Mr. Slater confirmed at the start of the meeting that Mr. Oldham had resigned from his Trustee post and would therefore not be attending today's meeting. Following a presentation that was delivered by The Richard Clarke First School in March, today's meeting followed a more traditional format with the usual updates around the Risk Register, Trust priorities, curriculum intent and relevant policies that were up for review. Documentation had been circulated in advance of the meeting and there was a healthy level of engagement throughout the discussions.

The meeting was quorate.

2 **Apologies:**

Resolved: That an apology for absence be received and accepted from Mr. Sutcliffe.

3 **Confidentiality:**

Trustees were reminded that all discussions that take place at this meeting should remain confidential to the meeting.

4 **Declarations of Interest:**

No declarations of interest were made by Trustees in respect of any items appearing on today's agenda.

5 **Minutes of the Previous Meeting:**

Resolved: That the Minutes of the Education Committee held on Monday 14 March, 2022 be approved as a true and accurate record.

Mr. Slater asked that the term 'resolved' be removed from the minutes on this occasion given the status of the Committee which was not quorate.

Resolved: That the Clerk amend the minutes to reflect this feedback point.

Resolved: That the Minutes, Agenda and all reports and other papers considered at the meeting be made available for inspection if required.

The Clerk will sign and date the ratified minutes on behalf of the Chair. This task is important to ensure the PA to the CEO can ensure there is an electronic copy of historical minutes, retained for future reference and audit purposes.

6 Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising from the March minutes. The listed next steps have either been progressed or will be directly referenced during the course of today's meeting.

Trustee Challenge: A Trustee did enquire as to the current status of the collaborative relationship between The Richard Clark First School and Talbot First School, including adding some academisation-related perspectives.

The CEO noted any observations that were shared.

7 Policy Ratification:

The agenda was switched around at this point to take account of key decisions that needed to be taken prior to one of the Trustees giving their leave of absence from the meeting.

The following policies had been circulated for approval in advance of today's meeting:

- ULT Bereavement Policy
- ULT Early Career Framework Policy
- ULT Home School Communication Policy.

Trustee Challenge: Trustees asked that in relation to the ULT Bereavement Policy, contact is made with the Local Authority (LA) to establish whether there are any other bereavement services available in addition to the Educational Psychologist provision. Trustees also asked that in relation to the ULT Home School Communication Policy, both links to other relevant policies (i.e. Safeguarding, Behaviour and Anti-Bullying) are included and that the Parent Code of Conduct, referenced in the Policy, is sourced, shared with Headteachers and circulated in advance of the next Trust Board meeting.

Resolved: That all listed policies be approved, subject to the listed actions being taken.

Resolved: That the approved policies be forwarded to the Trust Board for formal ratification.

8 Risk Register:

The latest Risk Register was shared with Trustees in advance of today's meeting. The following key areas were discussed:

1.1

The CEO confirmed there have been one or two problems identified in relation to website compliance. Both reported issues are being addressed with the necessary mitigation put in place.

As well as the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Overviews requesting that compliance is documented in this area, it was also agreed that a Governor within each LGB (potentially a Link Governor role) is tasked with undertaking termly checks in this area. By being accountable for this compliance issue, the central team can then focus on more strategic issues around the website provision – i.e. looking into the standardisation of websites and how any capacity that is available from the centre can have maximum impact.

Trustees asked that both schools are written to about the need for on-going compliance in this area. It was also agreed that the local solution that was being proposed will be taken to the School Representation Board (SRB) for discussion and agreement. This position can then be formally ratified at a future Trust Board meeting.

Resolved: That the CEO/Mr. Slater take account of these actions.

1.2

Trustees noted a couple of tweaks that needed to be made to the Register which included some minor modifications to wording and presenting a couple of phrases in a more positive light – i.e. ‘the lack of alignment of systems and processes in finance.’

Resolved: That the CEO tweak the Risk Register in line with Trustee feedback before making a revised version available.

9 Safeguarding:

The latest Safeguarding update was shared with Trustees.

1.1 - Covid

Trustees are aware that the ULT has agreed with HR/SCC that staff who test positive for Covid-19 can isolate until they test negative before returning to work with any relevant absent not impacting on their Bradford score. These arrangements remain in place up to 01.05.22.

At today’s meeting, the CEO confirmed that only today Headteachers had concluded that they were happy to move to the Government guidelines from 1 May and ultimately away from the current approach. Members of the Education Committee were not happy to agree these next steps without all Trustees having an opportunity to give their perspective on the current situation.

It was agreed that the CEO would email all Trustees following today’s meeting, asking that the current position is maintained until the next Trust Board scheduled for 17.05.22. This will also allow the Trust to discuss the current position with Chairs of Governors at next week’s SRB.

Resolved: That Trustees approve this action being taken. The CEO will now email all Trustees outside of today’s meeting to secure this holding position.

As an aside, there were also discussions around why it is important the Trust acts with some caution in this area (Mr. Slater shared some data) and there was also some clarification sought as to the latest position surrounding Covid-related absence from an insurance perspective.

1.2 – Power Outage

The CEO reported that Picknalls First School has suffered a power surge (faulty connection on the distribution board) which resulted in a school evacuation. The Headteacher at the School has confirmed that there should only be minimal disruption from the episode with the School closed for a short period of time and pupils hopefully back in from tomorrow. Trustees were reassured that all evacuation procedures were followed to the letter in relation to this episode.

1.3 – Parental Complaint

The ESFA related complaint has already been referenced in these minutes. The CEO provided some additional supporting context, confirming that the Chair of the Trust Board was working on a response that needs to be submitted by 29.04.22. Should there be any further developments in relation to this matter, Trustees will be informed.

1.4 – Ukraine

It was reported that a small number of Ukrainian children are entering the ULT academy structure at Thomas Alleyne’s High School and Oldfields Hall Middle School. Whilst the ULT will do whatever it can to accommodate these requests for places, the CEO confirmed that all

requests must come through the LA. Trustees were informed that one such request has come from the Renew Church which has been redirected accordingly.

In terms of on-going support once pupils are in the educational system, the Headteacher confirmed she has having regular dialogue with Headteachers to establish what support they need to smooth the transition process for these children, many of whom have suffered particularly traumatic events. One particular challenge is the language barrier which will need some careful consideration as to the appropriate mitigation that needs to be put in place. Trustees were pleased to hear that the ULT is invested in this area and thanked the community for everything it is doing to protect and safeguard these vulnerable families. Further updates will no doubt follow.

Ms. Livesey gave her leave of absence at this point in the meeting.

10 Summer Examinations:

This summer marks the return of formal examinations after nearly two years without them. There are a number of considerations that schools within the ULT are having to take account of to ensure that pupils have the best opportunity to be successful. The CEO provided a brief outline of the key modifications that have been made to the examination system to take account of the disruption caused by the pandemic (i.e. Advanced Information on exams, provision for candidates that miss examinations during the cycle; adaptations that have been made to coursework requirements, the need for schools to gather evidence through mock exams and other internal measures should a fall back position be required, etc.) and confirmed the performance benchmarks are also going to need careful consideration, particularly at Key Stage 4 and Key Stage 5 where the standard lies somewhere between the June 2019 standard and the TAG/CAG system that has been used in the past two years.

The CEO confirmed the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) have been holding various webinars on this particular subject which schools leaders will have found particularly useful.

11 White Paper:

There was a general discussion around the recent White Paper that had been published in March 2022. Trustees can take in the documentation for themselves and there was a discussion around some of the headlines that would impact the ULT should they become statutory at some point in the future.

Trustees' attention was drawn to the performance target expectations for 2030; the length of the School week where a minimum expectation of 32.5 hours is being muted; the future thinking around the size of Trusts and what constituted a strong position in this area and how provision needs to be enhanced for vulnerable cohorts in terms of any future educational offer.

The CEO confirmed that the Trust will be meeting with the Regional School's Commissioner in the coming weeks to discuss the key headlines from the White Paper in more detail and what steps the ULT might want to put in place to take account of some of the current thinking. Trustees briefly discussed how some of the ULT schools could get up to 32.5 hours who are currently not operating at this level and there was also some thought given to the implications of having to take on 'RI' schools if extra capacity is seen to exist within the ULT model.

Trustees confirmed they would consider the White Paper, the SEND and AP Green Paper and the Confederation of School Trusts PowerPoint slides that had been emailed to them on 19.04.22. It is likely the themes coming from these strategic documents will be discussed at future meetings with Trustees needing to ensure the ULT can flex and evolve to reflect any changes in the external environment.

Resolved: That Trustees take account of this action.

As an aside, Rev. Sherwin confirmed that she was working on the protocols for Link Trustees which will direct them to use their contact to understand some of the strengths and weaknesses within a particular school. This will be useful intelligence to have in mind when Trustees are talking about some of the implications of educational reform and how this reform could impact both at a Trust and a local level. Mr. Slater added that when collecting this local intelligence, Trustees must remain strategic, not operational in approach. This will ensure leaders can get on with running schools at a local level whilst Trustees are considering strategic issues that appear to be common for a number of schools across the ULT alongside any mitigations that need to be put in place. It was confirmed the protocols for Link Trustees will be shared at a future meeting.

12 Curriculum:

The latest updates on the curriculum were shared:

1.1 – Curriculum Intent

The CEO outlined what activities are going on behind the scenes to secure a greater consistency around the delivery of the curriculum intent across the Trust. Discussions with Headteachers are on-going with threshold concepts being shared at each Key Stage as well as the aspects of cultural capital that need to be secured around the implementation of the curriculum offer. The plan is to ensure all key stakeholder groups have their opportunity to engage on this issue with Heads of Departments also being brought into the debate. The CEO confirmed that once a framework has been established which is based on a set of common principles, it will be brought to the Trust Board for formal adoption and ratification.

1.2 – Subject Leadership – Deep Dives

The CEO confirmed that there has been an agreement across the Trust to disaggregate one INSET day into a series of twilight sessions. This additional flexibility will enable the CEO to source appropriate external CPD that will focus on curriculum deep dives and what staff can expect from any challenge in this area – so crucial from an Ofsted Readiness perspective.

Trustees were informed that the CEO is exploring a number of avenues in terms of sourcing appropriate CPD. These avenues include an ex-HMI input from a known network contact, a quote from Ark academies to deliver the training and an approach to the John Taylor Teaching School Hub to establish what CPD it offers in this area. By the time of the next Trust Board, the CEO will have a fully costed proposal in this area to share.

Resolved: That the CEO progress this matter to a satisfactory resolution.

Trustees were informed that the Trust does need to progress this area at a fairly rapid pace given the timing of the Ofsted window for some schools. It was also acknowledged that there are experienced staff across the Trust who could deliver a training input in the short-term should this be required.

13 Any Other Business:

There was one additional item of business that was discussed at this point in the meeting.

There was recognition that the Committee did need to boost its numbers to avoid any quoracy issues in the future. Mr. Slater discussed how the Trust Board might want to set about this task with, in the short term, a Trustee on the Finance and Audit Committee being asked to switch across.

Resolved: That this issue be forwarded to the Trust Board for further discussion.

14 Confidentiality:

Trustees were asked to identify if there were any items/materials which needed to be excluded from any Agenda, Minutes, reports or other papers discussed at the meeting which would normally be made available for inspection following the meeting.

Trustees were also asked to identify any items included on the Agenda which require recording in a Confidential Appendix to the Minutes.

Resolved: That it be identified that no item needed to be recorded in a Confidential Appendix to the Minutes.

There were no items/materials identified for exclusion.

15 Dates and Times of Future Meetings:

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 14 June, 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

All that was left to do was for the Chair to thank all Trustees for their attendance and contributions to today's meeting,

The meeting was brought to a close.

Rev. Sherwin PP P. Davies – Clerk

14.06.22

Chair

Date

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Action Matrix

Minute	Owner	Actions	Action Update
5	Clerk	Amend minutes to reflect Trustee feedback.	
5	Clerk	Make March minutes available for inspection.	
5	Clerk	Sign ratified minutes on behalf of Chair and forward to PA.	
7	CEO	Take actions in relation to circulated policies.	
7	CEO	Ensure policies are forwarded to Trust Board for formal ratification.	
8	CEO/ Mr. Slater	Write to two schools. Take solution around website compliance to next SRB forum.	
8	CEO	Address Risk Register in line with Trustee feedback.	
9	CEO	Email all Trustees to secure holding position around Covid-related absence.	
11	Trustees	Take account of educational documentation shared by email on 19.04.22.	
12	CEO	Produce a fully costed proposal around curriculum/deep dive related CPD.	
13	TB	Consider membership of committees at next meeting.	

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 14 June, 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

Absent Trustees to be informed.