

# Uttoxeter Learning Trust (ULT)

## Minutes of the Meeting of the Members' held in a virtual setting on Thursday 15 December, 2022 at 5.30 p.m.

### **Present:**

Prof. Barnes (Member)  
Mr. Slater (Member – Chair of Trust Board)  
Mr. Ball (School Estates Officer – Lichfield Diocese)  
Dr. Clark (CEO)  
Mr. Storer (CFO)  
Mr. Davies (Clerk to Trustees)

### **1 Welcome:**

All attendees were welcomed to tonight's meeting by the Chair. Members had last met in July so tonight's meeting was a good opportunity to highlight the progress of the Trust in recent months and to discuss any successes and challenges that have been faced by Trustees. Documentation had been circulated by email in advance of the meeting with a clear and purposeful agenda.

The meeting was quorate.

### **2 Apologies:**

There were no apologies on this occasion.

### **3 Declarations of Interest:**

No declarations were made by attendees in respect of any specific items on tonight's agenda.

### **4 Election of Chair:**

There was a requirement to elect a Chair at tonight's meeting. Nominations were sought and Prof. Barnes was put forward. She confirmed that she would be happy to continue to function as Chair in the short-term but stated that her intention was to resign from her Members position in March, 2023 as a result of other expanding work commitments. Mr. Slater thanked Prof. Barnes for taking on the Chair role once more and confirmed that attempts will be made to recruit new Members prior to her departure.

**Resolved:** That Prof. Barnes be appointed Chair up to March of next year where this situation will be reviewed.

### **5 Minutes of the Previous Meeting:**

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the Members' Meeting held on Wednesday 13 July, 2022 be ratified with immediate effect.

The Chair will now need to add her electronic signature to the Minutes and forward them to the Clerk so they can be held for reference and audit purposes.

**Resolved:** That the Clerk facilitate this process, liaising with the Chair as needed.

## **6 Matters Arising:**

The CEO confirmed that any matters arising from the July meeting have either been closed down or will be referenced during the course of tonight's meeting.

## **7 Minutes from Trust Meetings:**

It was confirmed that Minutes of the Education Committee; Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee and Minutes of the Trust Board are available online for Members to consider at their leisure. The following sets of minutes were listed on tonight's agenda:

<b>Type</b>	<b>Date</b>
Education	28.06.22 + 11.10.22
Finance and Audit	23.06.22 + 05.10.22
Trust Board	06.07.22 + 12.10.22

Members noted this information and will shortly be able to access all of this information via the ULT website.

## **8 CEO/Chair of the Trust Board Report:**

The CEO and Chair of the Trust Board took this opportunity in the meeting to update attendees on some of the areas of progress that have been realised by the ULT over the course of the last six months. This verbal overview referenced the written report that had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

### **1.1**

Mr. Slater confirmed that the Academy finances are in a robust state with the external audit draft report having been considered by the Trust Board for submission to the ESFA.

Members were informed that the last six months has been a challenging time for all key stakeholders across the Trust with school leaders working hard to provide a high-quality education for children within a safe/secure environment and to drive up standards at every possible opportunity.

From a governance perspective, there are plans being put in place for an external Trust review which will take place in the Spring Term and Mr. Slater confirmed he is also undertaking another 360 review to assist with his development.

Mr. Slater also outlined the Trust's plans for future growth which may see the ULT taking on new schools in the future.

Finally, there was confirmation that a new Trustee has been recruited which will bring additional expertise to the Trust Board and associated committee membership.

### **1.2**

The CEO highlighted some of the recent Ofsted inspections that have taken place across the Trust with all schools continuing to be judged as Good or Outstanding. Various data headlines were contained in the Report with the CEO confirming that the Headteacher from Thomas Alleyne's High School had been invited to an Education Committee to discuss the high school results and what can be done to strengthen outcomes in 2022-23.

There was confirmation that there have been revisions to the SIAMS Inspection Framework with an increased emphasis on the role the Trust plays in fostering Christian values across its family of schools. The CEO confirmed that with Rev. Sherwin acting as a Trustee, the ULT is

well placed to meet this revised approach with the Scheme of Delegation currently being reviewed to enhance this Christian Distinctiveness angle.

The CEO went on to confirm that there has been an extensive programme of continuous professional development rolled out across the family of schools over the last six months. Particular highlights include the two training days for Subject Leaders to focus on curriculum and deep dives facilitated by an ex-HMI; the support that the high school has received from the Teaching Hub and, finally, the plans for the annual Trust conference – Light Up Learning – which is scheduled to take place on 04.01.23. The CEO felt these CPD initiatives demonstrate how keen the Trust is to invest in its people and to grow the talent pool which will have lasting long-term benefits.

There was an update on the Redundancy Scheme with the revised offer being accepted by staff across the ULT with the latest consultation with The Richard Clarke First School also providing no significant issues.

Finally, there was confirmation of recent appointments that have been made to strengthen the Central Team (i.e. full-time CFO; full-time Estates and Health and Safety Lead) as well as plans for a further planning session in the New Year involving Trustees to determine areas for development and future priorities.

Members welcomed both of the updates received. There were questions as to the benefits the Central Team will get by relocating to the ULT's newest school – Bramshall Meadows First School – and also how the new School was being received within the local community.

The CEO gave her perspective on both of these points, feeling that the time was right to relocate the Central Team to Bramshall Meadows given the space that is available; the confidential nature of some of the Trust business that can easily be completed within this setting; the fact relationships with other schools have been fully established and the opportunities that Bramshall Meadows will give Trustees to come together and engage in collaborative, strategic discussions. As for the new school, it was confirmed that the official opening ceremony was well received by the local community (thanks to the CEO and Headteacher for their work in this area) and the numbers are looking positive with new starters set to join the Nursery from January.

## **9 CFO Update:**

The CFO was invited at this point to share a broad financial overview with attendees which included reference to the recently completed external audit and CIF Bids.

The CFO outlined the due diligence process that has been completed in relation to the auditing of the financial accounts for the year ended 31.08.22.

There have been some notable successes in terms of financial management and control. Not only have the fixed assets of the ULT increased (new schools coming on board) but the financial performance of the ULT schools continues to be strong (one school moving from a deficit to a surplus position) with the Trust holding healthy revenue reserves. This strong financial position is testament to the work of the CFO, particularly given the challenges of the pandemic and recent inflationary pressures that continue to put pressure on working school budgets.

The CFO reassured attendees that the Annual Report and Financial Statements will be signed and submitted to the ESFA well in advance of the end of December deadline. He confirmed that this financial information will be made available to Members in advance of the AGM (there was not the time to circulate the information in advance of today's meeting) and that he was always available to take questions from Members on these accounts if needed.

**Resolved:** That Members consider the end of year accounts once they are made available.

Members commended Trustees on the due diligence that is being exercised in relation to the Trust finances and it was clear some resilience was being built into the system – important given the current challenging economic climate.

An overview of CIF Bids was shared in the meeting. Again, the detail of these bids was provided in the circulated report with the CFO adding further context to how successful CIFs have been for the ULT. It was confirmed that the ULT probably has one more cycle available before it has to move to the School Condition Allocations funding model (because of the increased size of the Trust) and attendees were also informed that schools are increasing their contributions for current bids to give them every chance of being successful. Attendees were also informed that the Trust has moved from Entrust to a new external third party (Surveyors 2 Education) who amongst other things is assisting schools with the current round of CIF bids. Already, some positive benefits are being secured in terms of this new collaborative relationship.

Members welcomed this financial overview. They asked some questions around whether the Trust had been successful with any bids related to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS); whether the Trust was getting any additional school capital funding to improve energy efficiency across the family of schools; how the Trust intends to support new schools joining the Trust with any potential CIF Bids; the impact of the energy increases on school budgets and what the Trust has done to mitigate this impact and, finally, the need for the Trust to retender its new external auditors as quickly as possible given some challenges with securing third party support in this area.

The CFO responded to each of these points and welcomed the additional advice and guidance provided by Members.

## **10 Risk Register:**

The CEO confirmed that the Risk Register is a strategic document that is reviewed at every Trust-based meeting. It is an evolving document that reflects the challenges the ULT is currently facing along with the mitigations that have been put in place.

The CEO spent a few moments outlining a number of the heightened risk areas for the Trust. There was reference made to the IT challenges over the last six months although this area has been strengthened by the return of a staff member after a period of long-term absence. There was confirmation that the Trust is carrying out various forms of scenario planning as a result of possible power outages in the coming months and the threat of strike action from the unfunded pay increases was also discussed.

Members asked some questions around the Trust potentially taking on another high school and the extent to which the full risk analysis of such a move has been completed – whether that be pupil numbers, financials, etc.

The CFO confirmed this process was very much underway with further due diligence to be completed in this area. Members will be kept updated by the Chair of the Trust Board as further strategic decisions are contemplated around the growth and future expansion of the ULT,

## **11 Any Other Business:**

There were a number of items of additional business that were discussed at this point in the meeting:

**1.1**

The CEO confirmed that the AGM is likely to go ahead on 29.03.23. Members confirmed they had the availability to attend this governance forum. It was confirmed an agenda and the relevant documentation will be circulated nearer the time.

**1.2**

The CEO confirmed with Members that there are currently discussions taking place regarding the expectations around Trustee attendance at meetings. Not only is this information published but it was felt there does need to be protocols that can be enforced should Trustees miss a number of meetings. A pragmatic balance does need to be struck but it was felt that it will be useful to have additional guidance available in this area – potentially included in the Code of Conduct once finalised.

**Resolved:** That the CEO/Chair of the Trust Board progress this matter with a view to providing an update at the next meeting.

**1.3**

A question was asked as to whether the Trust would retain Thomas Alleyne’s High School as its registered office, even though it was relocating the Central Team to Bramshall Meadows.

The CEO confirmed this to be the case.

**12 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 items needed to be recorded in a Confidential Appendix to the Minutes.

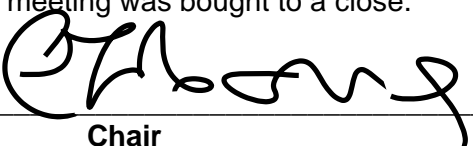
There were no items/materials identified for exclusion.

**13 Dates and Times of Future Meetings:**

It was confirmed the next time Members will come together will be for the AGM on Wednesday 29 March, 2023 at 5.30 p.m. The venue will be confirmed in due course.

All that was left to do was for the Chair to thank all attendees for their contributions to today’s meeting,

The meeting was brought to a close.

  
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Chair

04/01/2023  
Date

## Uttoxeter Learning Trust (ULT)

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Members' held in a virtual setting  
on Thursday 15 December, 2022 at 5.30 p.m.**

### Action Matrix

Minute	Owner	Action Required	Action Update
5	Clerk	Facilitate signing of minutes by Chair.	
9	Members	Consider year end accounts and supporting documentation when circulated.	
11	Chair of TB/CEO	Finalise protocols around Trustee attendance at meetings.	

**Date of next meeting:** Wednesday 29 March, 2023 at 5.30 p.m. (AGM)