

Uttoxeter Learning Trust Annual General Meeting

Minutes of the annual general meeting of the Uttoxeter Learning Trust held in Ryecroft CE(C) Middle School, Rocester, on Thursday, 11 April 2019 at 5.30pm.

Present:

Members – Mr G Morley (chair), Prof E Barnes, Mr G Handforth
Member and Trustee – Mr S Slater
Trustees – Mrs E Bell, Mr L Trigg

Chief Executive Officer – Mrs A Tapp
Chief Finance Officer – Mr A Storer
Clerk to the Uttoxeter Learning Trust – Mr R Sheldon

Also in Attendance:

All Saints CE(C) First School – Mrs A Kenny (headteacher)
Oldfields Hall Middle School – Mr C Gliddon (headteacher), Mr S Clarke (chair of governors)
Ryecroft CE(C) Middle School – Mr S Dobson (vice chair of governors)
The Richard Clarke First School – Mr J Hough (chair of governors)
Thomas Alleyne's High School – Mrs J Rudge (headteacher)
Windsor Park Middle School – Mrs L Wilbraham-Jones (headteacher), Mr I Johnstone (chair of governors), Mr D Goodfellow (vice chair of governors)

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from:
Trustees – Mrs V Bennett, Mrs P Livesey, Mr R Oldham,
All Saints CE(C) First School – Mrs C Wheawall (chair of governors)
Hutchinson Memorial CE(A) First School – Mrs P Snee (headteacher)
Picknalls First School – Mr P Johnson (chair of governors)
Ryecroft CE(C) Middle School – Mrs R Baramuszczak (headteacher)
The Richard Clarke First School – Mrs K Hanson (headteacher)
Thomas Alleyne's High School – Mr M Prescott (chair of governors)

1. Welcome and Introductions:

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited all present to introduce themselves.

2. Minutes:

Minutes of the annual general meeting held on 29 March 2018 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes be received and approved.

3. Appointment of Members and Trustees:

The chair reported that no trustees had been removed or appointed since the last annual general meeting. He further reported, however, that during this period Mr C Hopkins had

resigned as a member, representing CECET. As yet, a replacement member had not been appointed.

It was resolved –

That the resignation of Mr C Hopkins be noted and that the clerk to the ULT be requested to contact CECET to express ULT concerns regarding the delay in appointing his successor.

4. Annual Accounts and Report 2018/2019:

Copies of the ULT's annual accounts and report for 2018/2019 had been previously circulated and the chief finance officer confirmed that the accounts had been submitted to the ESFA, as required, before the deadline.

The chief finance reported that there were no issues in the accounts to cause concern and that the issues outlined in the annual report had been addressed as necessary. The chair of the Finance committee further reported that whilst there were no concerns with the accounts, trustees were keeping under review those schools which currently relied on reserves to achieve a balanced budget. Trustees were working to ensure that all schools could set balanced budgets without the use of reserves. In response to this Mr Johnstone, chair of governors at Windsor park Middle School, reported that the use of reserves to achieve a balanced budget for the current financial year had been due to a number of unexpected bills received by the school. Approval to do this had been given by the chief finance officer and governors were confident that a balanced budget could be achieved next year without the use of reserves.

It was resolved –

- i) That the annual accounts and report 2018/2019 be received and noted.
- ii) That members fully support trustees and local school governors working together to set balanced budgets without the need to use reserves.

5. Appointment of Auditor 2019:

The chair of trustees reminded members that it was their responsibility to appoint an external auditor and recommended them to defer an appointment for the current financial year.

The chair of the finance committee outlined a number of concerns that had arisen during the previous external audit and, in particular, late receipt of the final audit report which also contained clauses that trustees had been uncomfortable in signing. A further concern was the current practice of the auditor, Mitten Clarke, being responsible for both the preparation of the final accounts and their subsequent audit. This was contrary to recommended practice. Arrangements had been made for the auditor to meet with the Finance committee to enable discussion around the issues causing concern and the chair of trustees recommended that a decision on their re-appointment, or otherwise, be deferred until discussions had taken place.

It was resolved –

That members note the concerns and that approval be given to trustees to recommend the appointment of an auditor for the current financial year following their discussions with the current auditor, Mitten Clarke.

6. Annual report on the Work of the ULT 2018/2019:

The chair of trustees gave a verbal report on the work of the ULT during the last year and placed on record his thanks to all who had contributed to its continuing in success. Thanks in particular went to the chief executive officer, chief finance officer, chairs and all governors of local governing boards, headteachers and all staff of ULT schools. The chair of trustees also reported in particular on the following matters:

a) Meeting with Regional Schools Commissioner

The chair reported that, together with the chief executive officer and Mrs Rudge, headteacher of Thomas Alleyne's High School, he had attended a recent meeting with the regional schools commissioner. The meeting had been robust but the strengths of the ULT had been acknowledged. The chair further reported that written confirmation of the meeting had been received earlier that day, which included a request for the ULT to consider sponsoring other schools. Trustees welcomed this opportunity and ongoing consideration would be given to sponsorship of the appropriate school.

b) Central Funds – Top Slice

The chair reported that the regional schools commissioner had expressed surprise at the comparatively low 2 ½% central funds contribution by schools but reasons for this were clearly explained. The low rate relied on the commitment of all schools to support each other as required. The chair also confirmed that trustees continued to work to keep central funding at this rate but that it would be kept under review.

c) Membership of the ULT

Work continued to encourage other schools to join the ULT and the chair was pleased to welcome The Richard Clarke First School having recently joined the ULT initially as an associate member.

d) Thomas Alleyne's Teaching School Status

The chair was delighted to report the teaching school status awarded to Thomas Alleyne's High School and acknowledged the benefits of this for the ULT. He placed on record his thanks to the headteacher and members of staff for their hard work in achieving the award.

e) CIF Bids

The chair was pleased to report that 3 CIF bids for 2019/202 had been successful with a total value of around £1million.

f) School Performance

The chair reported that improving school performance remained a key priority for trustees. They looked forward to working with local governing boards to bring about improvement where necessary.

g) Trustee Self-Review

Following the recent completion of the external review of school governance, action plans had been put in place by each governing board to address identified issues. Trustees would be working with the local governing boards to ensure that the visions

and values of the ULT remained a key focus. The chair reported that the trustees had also agreed for an external review to be undertaken of the Trust Board.

Further to the chair's report, the chief executive officer had also previously circulated a written report to highlight the achievements of the ULT over the course of the year. Much of the report gave further detail around the achievements highlighted by the chair of trustees but particular reference was also made to the following issues:

a) Free School Presumption Application

The chief executive officer was pleased to report that the bid for sponsorship of the new school to be built on land to the west of Uttoxeter had recently been completed and submitted by the agreed deadline of 12 April. The bid had taken up a lot of time to complete and the chief executive officer wished to place on record her thanks to Andrea Kenny and Paula Snee (headteachers of All Saints and Hutchinson Memorial Schools respectively) for their work in helping with completion of the bid. Successful bidders would be invited to interview sometime in June before a final decision was taken.

b) Easter Bonnets

The chief executive officer was delighted to report that pupils at Picknalls First School had recently made Easter bonnets and that one of them had made a bonnet to reflect the ULT. This was an indication of how the ULT was now being accepted by pupils, parents and the wider community.

Finally, the chief executive officer also wished to place on record her thanks to the chair of trustees, other trustees, headteachers and local governing boards for all the help and support given to her during the year.

It was resolved –

- i) That members place on record their thanks to all concerned for ensuring the continued successful development of the ULT.
- ii) That the chair of trustees be requested to circulate the letter received from the regional schools commissioner with headteachers and chairs of local governing boards so that the positive messages could be shared with parents and the wider community.

7. CEO Recruitment Process:

The chair of trustees reported that the recruitment process for the appointment of a new chief executive officer was now underway. The post had been advertised to offer it on a full-time contract but with some flexibility if necessary. Interviews had been scheduled for 29 April and headteachers and chairs of local governing boards had been invited to participate in the interviews.

It was resolved –

That the update on the chief executive officer recruitment process be noted.

8. Articles of Association:

The clerk reported that members had previously agreed to amend the Articles of Association to reflect their decision that any future chief executive officer would no longer also be a trustee. This was in line with current DfE guidance. A copy of the Articles of

Association had been previously circulated to highlight the proposed amendments which also included consistency around the name of local governing boards rather than local governing bodies.

It was resolved –

That the clerk be requested to arrange for the Articles of Association to be amended as highlighted.

9. ULT Vision, Values and Strategy:

The chief executive officer reported that the original ULT Vision, Values and Strategy document had now been in place for two years and that it was necessary for it to be revised to reflect the continued growth and development of the ULT. As such, a working group of headteachers and trustees had recently met to consider the document and that an updated version would be submitted to trustees for approval at a future meeting.

The headteachers reported that the document would reflect the evolution of the ULT particularly around the ULT's plans to cover a wider geographical area and not just Uttoxeter.

It was resolved –

That members look forward to receiving the updated version of the ULT's Vision, Values and Strategy.

The chair once again thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting finished at 6.05pm.

Signed.....

Date.....