

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust
Education Committee**

Minutes of a meeting of the Education Committee held remotely (via Office 365 Teams) on Tuesday, 16 March 2021 at 5.30pm.

Present:

Mr T Sutcliffe (in the chair), Mrs P Livesey, Mr R Oldham, Rev M Sherwin, Mr S Slater.

Dr S Clark – Chief Executive Officer

Mr R Sheldon – Clerk to the ULT

Apology:

An apology for late arrival, due to technical issues, was received from Rev Sherwin (committee chair).

226. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda items.

227. Minutes:

Minutes of the Education Committee meeting held on 26 January 2021 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting be received and approved.

228. Matters Arising:

a) New School (Minute 219(a) refers)

The CEO was pleased to report that planning work for the build of the new school continued and that the required S10 consultation would shortly commence.

b) IT Review (Minute 219(b) refers)

The CEO reported that following the recent meeting of the Trust Board, possible options for future IT support had been discussed with headteachers. Meetings with the Chief Finance Officer and the IT systems manager continued with particular focus given to how a future relationship between a Managed Service Provider (MSP) and the Trust's IT support team could be developed and possible financial savings through such a partnership.

The CEO further reported that due to the shared site at Ryecroft there were a number of challenges to resolve but discussions were taking place with Staffordshire University Academy Trust to agree a way forward.

c) Richard Clarke First School (Minute 219(d) refers)

The CEO reported that due to a number of issues around ownership of the land, the date for Richard Clarke First School to formally join the Trust had been put back to 1 May 2021. The CEO was pleased to further report that approval had been given for Tom Thumb Nursery to be included with the school.

229. Oldfields Hall Middle School – Proposed Sports Hall and Teaching Block:

Mr Gliddon, headteacher, was present for this item to inform trustees of proposals to build a sports hall and teaching block at his school, and documents relating to the proposal had been previously circulated. Mr Gliddon outlined the background to this matter, which included an earlier unsuccessful request to the local authority to build a sports hall on the school site and the need for additional school places to be made available within Uttoxeter to meet future demand from planned housing developments. It was made clear to trustees that no work would commence without the approval of the Trust Board.

Mr Gliddon reported that the local authority, in response to the future demand for additional school places, had requested that those place (equivalent to 1FE) be provided at Oldfields Hall Middle School. Alongside this, the opportunity was therefore being taken to also include in any proposals, plans for a sports hall. An outline was given of the proposed sports hall and Mr Gliddon confirmed that its ultimate size would be dependent on the funding available. Discussions continued with the local authority regarding the sports hall and the teaching block, which would accommodate 6 new classrooms, and that County Council and S106 monies in the region of £2.8 million would be made available. If approved, it was hoped to start the build early in 2022 and completed before the end of the year. Mr Gliddon confirmed that he was happy with the proposed 1FE additional places at his school but would not support any further additions. He also recognised the importance of ensuring that any expansion at Oldfields Hall did not impact on admissions at Windsor Park Middle School.

Discussion followed and consideration given to the school's existing planned admission number (PAN) and trustees agreed that future consideration should be given to setting it at a more reasonable number. Consideration was also given to the proposed size of the sports hall and that support be given to ensuring that it was of the appropriate size to best meet the needs of the school and wider community.

It was resolved –

- i) That Mr Gliddon be thanked for attending the meeting and outlining proposals for the build of a sports hall and 6 classroom teaching block at Oldfields Hall Middle School.
- ii) That trustees support in principle the proposals for the expansion of Oldfields Hall Middle School, subject to ongoing discussions with the local authority.
- iii) That the Finance and Audit committee be authorised consider this matter further on behalf of the Trust Board and to submit any recommendations for approval at a future meeting of the Trust Board.

230. Covid-19 and the Re-opening of Schools:

The CEO was pleased to report that the re-opening of schools had gone extremely well and thanked headteachers for all the work undertaken to help ensure that this was the case. Lateral flow tests were being undertaken and the CEO was also pleased to report that there had been no positive Covid tests. There were some issues around the wearing of face masks/coverings in schools, similar to the national picture, but schools were managing the situation.

It was resolved –

That trustees note the successful re-opening of schools and also place on record their thanks to headteachers and all members of staff for the work undertaken.

231. Covid-19 and Quality of Education:

Copies of school catch-up plans for pupils, following their return to school, had been previously circulated. The CEO also referred to recent surveys undertaken to seek both pupil and parent views around the remote learning programmes that had been in place and copies of the survey reports had also been previously circulated. The surveys had focussed in particular on the quality of the learning programmes and accessibility. The CEO was pleased to report that, in the main, responses had been positive although there were some areas to be developed further should it be necessary to offer remote learning programmes in the future. Headteachers had been asked to look in more detail at the responses for their own school and trustees noted that some headteachers had also undertaken their own survey and those responses would also be taken into account when identifying issues for further development. Schools would work with each other as appropriate to put support plans in place.

Discussion followed and trustees were pleased to note the many positive responses to the questions asked in the survey. However, some concern was noted around the less than positive response from parents with regard to their child knowing how to access support for their well-being. Specific consideration was given to this and trustees recognised that the response though was not consistent across schools. Trustees therefore agreed the need to look at this issue in more detail and to develop processes to address some of the concerns raised. In giving consideration to this matter, trustees would look in particular at why responses differed across schools and identify best practice that could be adopted by schools. Trustees also recognised that in developing future support programmes the views of pupils should also be sought and taken into account. The CEO was requested to discuss this matter further with headteachers with a view to developing appropriate support programmes and that the further views of parents should be sought at a point in the future regarding any actions that had been taken to address this matter.

Discussion also took place regarding the school recovery plans and the CEO reported that she had met with headteachers and that schools in the different tiers were to work with each other to ensure some consistency around the support programmes and to identify best practice. The first schools were putting together robust assessment programmes for pupils and the middle school headteachers were working together to also put robust assessment programmes in place. The CEO also reported that the mid-year headteacher performance reviews were to be held over the next few weeks and that the focus of the review would be around the effectiveness of school recovery plans.

It was resolved –

- i) That the remote learning surveys be received and that the CEO be requested to discuss with headteachers future plans to support pupil well-being and that a further questionnaire be developed and sent to parents at a point in the future to seek their further views on the effectiveness of any plans subsequently put in place.
- ii) That the school recovery plans be received and trustees again place on record their thanks to the headteachers for all of the work being undertaken to identify, and put in place, appropriate intervention strategies to support pupil catch-up plans.

232. Trust Capacity Framework:

The CEO reminded committee members that this matter had been discussed at the recent meeting of the Trust Board and that it was agreed that the Trust Capacity Framework would be completed as appropriate by trustees. This would support the Trust-to-Trust Development Programme in which the ULT had been paired with the Ark Multi-Academy Trust. A copy of the framework had been previously circulated to trustees and the CEO thanked those trustees who had already completed and returned the form.

The CEO further reported that the framework had also been shared with headteachers and they were working in their school tiers to complete the form as appropriate. Once completed the headteacher responses would be collated and shared with the CEO to help identify next steps.

It was resolved –

- i) That the Trust Capacity Framework be noted and that further consideration to how best trustees should respond would be given at the meeting of the Trust Board to be held the following week.
- ii) That consideration also be given to school link trustees and chairs of governors working together to respond to the form.

233. Ryecroft CE Middle School – Appointment of Interim Executive Headteacher:

The CEO updated trustees on the recruitment process and reported that the post had been advertised. A meeting of the Trust Board had been arranged for the following week to short-list applications received. The CEO further reported that CECET had confirmed that it would also be supporting the recruitment process.

It was resolved –

That trustees note the recruitment process being followed for the appointment of interim executive headteacher at Ryecroft CE Middle School.

234. Safeguarding:

The CEO was pleased to report that there were no specific safeguarding matters to bring to the attention of trustees.

235. Policy Review:

The following policies had been previously circulated and the CEO reported that some were due to be reviewed and others were new policies to be approved:

a) ULT Governors and Trustees – Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct was to be reviewed and the CEO reported that no amendments were necessary. The chair of the Trust Board reported that consideration should be given to changing the wording around trustees guaranteeing to take certain actions and replaced by trustees holding to account those responsible for those actions.

It was resolved –

That the Code of Conduct be approved, subject to changes made as identified.

b) ULT Grievance Policy

The CEO reported that the policy had been amended to better reflect the structure for the headteachers, CEO, governors and trustees dealing with grievance and appeals.

It was resolved –

That the ULT Grievance policy be approved as presented.

c) ULT School Improvement Policy

The CEO reported that the policy had been amended to take account of the implications of Covid-19. The chair of the Trust Board suggested that the policy should be further amended to make clear responsibilities for mental health and other health and safety issues. Discussion also took place regarding the school improvement role of the Raising Achievement Board.

It was resolved –

That the ULT School Improvement policy be approved, subject to changes around awareness of mental health and other health and safety issues, and to also make clear that the Education committee would take on the role of the Raising Achievement Board in supporting school improvement.

d) ULT Exclusion Policy

The CEO reported this policy had been previously discussed and amended as agreed to include links with other appropriate ULT policies. Consideration had also been given to the Trust's responsibility for establishing an exclusion review panel should it be necessary.

It was resolved –

i) That the ULT Exclusion policy be approved as presented.

ii) That the CEO be requested to explore the possibility of linking with another MAT to seek its support in taking on the role of an external review panel whenever necessary.

e) ULT NQT Policy

The CEO reported that this policy had been previously considered and amended as agreed to make clear the role of small schools in supporting NQTs. Mr Sutcliffe reported that new guidance was shortly to be implemented with reference made to an early career framework.

It was resolved –

That the ULT NQT policy be approved as presented, subject to any changes made as necessary in line with new guidance.

f) ULT Safeguarding Policy

The CEO reported that the Safeguarding policy had been amended to include and make clear ULT policy for children missing in education and protocols to be followed for children with health and medical needs.

It was resolved –
That the ULT Safeguarding policy be approved as presented.

236. Risk Register:

A copy of the updated risk register had been previously circulated and the CEO reported that it had been updated to include risks associated with approved CIF bids and school affordability to pay the required 10% contribution. No other changes had been made to the register.

It was resolved –

That the updated risk register be received and noted.

237. Other Business:

a) Financial Support for Uttoxeter Schools

Rev Sherwin reported that a programme was in place to support schools in Uttoxeter town (not the wider community) to help narrow the learning gap as a result of schools being closed due to the pandemic. £1K was to be given to Picknalls, Oldfields Hall, Windsor Park and Thomas Alleyne's. Unfortunately, the funding programme would not apply to the other ULT schools.

It was resolved –

That Rev Sherwin be thanked for informing trustees of the financial support being given to Uttoxeter town schools.

b) Profile of the ULT

Rev Sherwin was pleased to inform trustees that a local school had expressed an interest in perhaps joining the ULT at a point in the future. This interest had come about due to the positive comments of the headteacher at Richard Clarke First School in making clear the support given to her school through initially being as associate member of the ULT and then becoming a full member of school.

It was resolved –

That Rev Sherwin be thanked for bringing this matter to the attention of trustees and that they welcome such comments in helping with future growth of the ULT.

238. Date of Next Meeting:

As previously agreed, the next meeting of the Education Committee was to be held on Tuesday, 27 April 2021 at 5.30pm. The meeting would again be held through Microsoft Teams.

Signed: M. Sherwin
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27 April 2021
Date: