

## **Uttoxeter Learning Trust Members' General Meeting**

Minutes of a general meeting of the ULT Members held remotely (via Microsoft teams) on Wednesday, 14 July 2021 at 5.30pm.

### **Present:**

Members – Prof E Barnes (chair), Mr G Handforth, Mr G Morley, Mr S Rayner  
Member and Chair of Trust Board – Mr S Slater

### **Also in Attendance:**

Chief Executive Officer – Dr S Clark  
Chief Finance Officer – Mr A Storer  
Clerk to the ULT – Mr R Sheldon

### **86. Declarations of Interest:**

No declarations of interest were given for agenda items although Mr Rayner declared an interest as an employee of Lichfield Diocese which had a service level agreement with the Trust.

### **87. Minutes:**

The minutes of the Members' general meeting held on 17 December 2020, and the annual general meeting held on 1 April 2021, had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the meetings be received and approved.

### **88. Matters Arising**

#### **(Meeting 17 December 2020):**

a) Redundancy Scheme (Minute 79(a) refers)

The CEO reported that the proposed change to the ULT's redundancy scheme had been put on hold due to the pandemic, and this had also given an opportunity to seek further advice on specific issues before any final decisions were taken. The chair of the Trust Board further reported that this matter would be discussed at a special meeting of the Trust Board to be held early in the new school year.

b) Growth of ULT (Minute 79(b))

The CEO was pleased to report that work continued with a view to Richard Clarke First School joining the ULT from September 2021 and that building work for the new school (Bramshall Meadows First School) was to commence shortly, in readiness for the school to open in September 2022.

c) Trust Capacity Fund Bid (Minute 79(b) refers)

The CEO reported that the Trust Capacity Fund bid had been unsuccessful but the quality of the bid had been acknowledged in the feedback received from the Regional Schools Commission.

d) Church Ethos (Minute 84 refers)

The CEO reported that she had met with the Diocese to discuss the Trust's responsibilities in upholding the church ethos of those schools with a designated religious character and that the Mission, Vision and Values statement had been revised to make this clear. The Articles of Association were also to be updated to ensure that church representation was accurately reflected. The CEO further reported that the review of the Appraisal policy would consider Diocese guidance in relation to the setting of headteacher targets.

**(Meeting 1 April 2021):**

a) Trust Capacity Framework (Minute 5 refers)

As previously reported, the CEO reported that meetings continued with the Ark Academy Trust to explore ways to ensure the continued development of the ULT. Ideas were shared with trustees and the ULT's development plan was being updated as necessary.

b) Review of IT (Minute 5 refers)

The CEO reported that the IT review continued and that a revised support structure had been agreed for the next school year. This included school IT technicians with some support from an external provider. The CEO also reported that she was now sharing an office with the chief finance officer and the IT manager and that this arrangement was more effective in supporting and advising schools.

The chair of the Trust Board further reported that the IT review remained a particular focus for the Finance and Audit committee and that the revised structure for the following school year was an interim arrangement to allow for the development of a long-term strategy.

It was resolved –

- i) That members suggest that a timescale be agreed for completion of the IT review and that its progress be monitored through the risk register.
- ii) That trustees be advised to ensure that the IT review should also include policy for cyber security.

**89. Covid-19:**

An update on the impact of Covid-19 for ULT schools had been included in the report to members, a copy of which had been previously circulated. The CEO reported that the pandemic remained challenging for all schools, including in particular for Thomas Alleyne's High School which had experienced a recent increase in the number of students testing positive for Covid-19. All schools continued, however, to respond well to the challenges. Schools were currently planning for the new school year which would include plans being in place to respond, if necessary, to any local outbreaks of infection. Governing bodies continued to review and update school risk assessments, taking into account any local and national guidance received. The CEO was pleased to acknowledge the help given to all ULT schools by the local authority. The CEO also acknowledged the hard work of teachers at Thomas Alleyne's High School to complete the teacher assessed grades and outcomes would be shared with students during the week commencing 9 August. Systems had also been put in place to respond to any parental appeals against grades awarded.

The CEO further reported that arrangements for summer schools continued and some external support was to be provided where activities could not be staffed internally. Discussion followed and members questioned the anticipated levels of pupil attendance. The CEO reported that every effort was being made by schools to ensure that as many pupils as possible were engaged with the summer schools and that the funding allocated to schools was linked to attendance to encourage this.

It was resolved –

That the update on Covid-19 be noted and that members place on record their thanks to all headteachers and staff for the work undertaken in response to the challenges of the pandemic.

#### **90. Minutes of Other ULT Meetings:**

Dates of meetings of the Trust Board, Education committee and Finance and Audit committee had been made available to members and the CEO confirmed that all ratified minutes of meetings could be accessed through the ULT website ([www.utlit.org](http://www.utlit.org)).

It was resolved –

That the dates of all ULT meetings, and accessibility of minutes, be noted.

#### **91. Chair of Trustees/Chief Executive Officer Report:**

A copy of the chair of trustees/CEO report, July 2021, had been previously circulated and taken as read.

The chair of the Trust Board reported that trustees had also spent a lot of time discussing the pandemic and ensuring that systems were in place across schools to respond to the issues. This included receiving and reviewing school risk assessments. The chair also wished to place on record thanks of the Trust Board to the local authority for the support and guidance given. The chair was also pleased to acknowledge how well the headteachers had worked together as a group and this reflected a key positive for schools through being a member of a multi-academy trust. The chair undertook to write to all headteachers, staff and governors to thank them for all of the work undertaken during what had been a very challenging school year.

The CEO also reported on a number of other matters which had not already been discussed earlier in the meeting:

##### **a) Ryecroft CE Middle School**

The headteacher was leaving at the end of the school year and Mrs Rudge, headteacher at Thomas Alleyne's High School, had been appointed as interim executive headteacher. A number of other leadership appointments had been made in response to the appointment of an executive headteacher. The CEO was confident that these appointments would help accelerate improvement progress at Ryecroft.

##### **b) Bramshall Meadows First School**

The CEO reported that trustees had also approved the appointment of an executive headteacher at the new school and that interviews for this post were to be held later in the week. The post had been advertised to all ULT headteachers and the chair of the

Trust Board further reported that this would provide the opportunity to appoint an experienced headteacher.

Discussion followed and the chair asked for information on how well the school improvement arm was working across the ULT. The CEO reported that the main support for school improvement had been provided through the Teaching School but schools also collaborated with each other as necessary to provide appropriate levels of support. The CEO also reported that an audit process was being developed to ensure that robust school improvement systems were in place and that their impact could be monitored. The chair of the Trust Board further reported that school improvement was also being re-modelled to take account of the closure of the Teaching School. He was pleased to report, however, that arrangements had already been made for ULT schools to receive support through the John Taylor Teaching School Hub.

Members welcomed the collaboration of ULT schools in supporting each other, particularly as this would help break down barriers as pupils moved through the school system. The CEO was encouraged to share this particular strength with the local community. Members also suggested that, in addition to collaborative working, consideration should also be given to bringing in external support as necessary for specific issues. The CEO confirmed that external support would be utilised where considered appropriate.

It was resolved –

- i) That the chair of trustees/CEO report be received and noted.
- ii) That when writing to headteachers, staff and governors the chair of the Trust Board be requested to also include the thanks of members.
- iii) That the CEO be requested to prepare a report for the next meeting to show how the school improvement framework was being developed, including the role of the John Taylor Teaching School Hub in supporting this.

## **92. Financial Update:**

Copies of the draft school and consolidated ULT budgets 2021-2026 had been previously circulated and the CFO confirmed that they continued to be closely monitored by the Finance and Audit committee. Arrangements had also been made for the headteachers and chairs of governors at All Saints and Hutchinson Memorial First Schools to meet with the committee early in the new school year to discuss budget plans given the financial concerns due to the small size of those schools. Consultation was currently taking place regarding proposed changes to the national funding formula which, if approved, could have a further negative impact on small school funding levels and trustees were mindful of this. The CFO also confirmed that the consolidated budget did not yet include Bramshall Meadows First School but that it would impact from 2023.

Discussion followed and members questioned investment plans for the level of school reserves currently held. The CFO informed members that reserves were held by the individual schools and was being used to balance in-year deficits or to fund necessary building projects. The CFO also reported that the top slice remained under constant review but that the current level would not support further expansion of the central team or in-house services. However, the growth of the ULT to include a large high school joining, would help to develop both and therefore remained a key priority for trustees.

The CFO was also pleased to report on the successful CIF bids which would generate around £1.8 million to support a number of school building projects. Consideration was now being given to the CIF bids to be submitted for the next year and trustees were also looking at ways to support the small schools with the necessary financial contribution towards any successful bid.

It was resolved –

That the draft school and consolidated budgets 2021-2026 be received and noted with thanks to the CFO.

### **93. Risk Register:**

Members had been previously circulated with a copy of the updated ULT risk register and the CEO outlined the changes that had been made to the previous register. Discussion followed and the chair recommended that consideration be given to including a possible risk due to proposed changes to the national funding formula and the challenge that this would bring to the smaller schools. The chair also suggested that trustees consider putting a plan in place to show how the ULT reserves could be used to further strengthen the central team and to identify possible risks as a result.

The chair of the Trust Board reported that the DfE was currently exploring how multi-academy trusts could be further expanded and that consideration was being given to providing an opportunity for schools to join initially as associate members. Recognition had been given to the ULT through its associate member offer.

It was resolved –

That the updated risk register be received and noted.

### **94. Re-appointment of Trustees:**

The CEO reported that the terms of office for the following trustees were to come to an end during the course of the Autumn term and members were asked to consider their re-appointment at the appropriate time:

- Mrs P Livesey
- Mr L Trigg

It was resolved –

That members agree to the re-appointment of both Mrs Livesey and Mr Trigg as trustees when their current term of office came to an end.

### **95. Any Other Business:**

#### **a) Mr G Morley**

Members were reminded that Mr Morley was attending his last meeting before leaving the ULT. They placed on record their thanks to him for the invaluable help and support he had given to the initial setting up and development of the ULT. This included his role as chair of members. The chair of the Trust Board, on behalf of trustees, also wished to place on record thanks to Mr Morley for the support he had given to the many trustee activities including in particular his support with the CEO recruitment process.

In response, Mr Morley wished to acknowledge the work and commitment of trustees and other members in ensuring the continued development of the ULT and that he was proud of what had been achieved. He wished the ULT every success with its further growth and development.

b) Mr G Handforth

In discussing the appointment of new members for the ULT, Mr Handforth reported that he could be potentially moving from the Uttoxeter area and, if so, he too would regrettably have to resign as a member. He would keep the chair and CEO updated.

Members would continue to identify possible new members and Mr Slater reported that someone with a legal background would complement the skills and expertise of current members.

c) Academies Handbook

The chair reported that she had advised the clerk of the updated Academies Handbook coming into effect from September 2021.

It was resolved –

- i) That the clerk be requested to circulate a copy of the revised handbook to all trustees and members.
- ii) That consideration also be given to arranging a joint training session for both trustees and members to consider the implications for the ULT of the changes made.

**96. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting was to be held on Thursday, 16 December 2021 at 5.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

Signed.....  
Prof. E Barnes

Date.....  
7 December 2021