

Uttoxeter Learning Trust Members' General Meeting

Minutes of a general meeting of the ULT Members held remotely (via Microsoft teams) on Thursday, 16 July 2020 at 5.30pm.

Present:

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

Also in Attendance:

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

Apology:

An apology for absence was received from Mr G Handforth.

65. Welcome:

The chair welcomed Mr Rayner to his first meeting of the ULT, as CECET representative.

66. 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.

67. Minutes:

The minutes of the Members' general meeting, and annual general meeting, both held on 30 April 2020 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of both meetings be received and approved.

68. Matters Arising:

a) Top Slice Funding (Minute 59 refers)

The CEO reminded members that approval had been given to increase the level of top slice funding from 2 ½% to 3% with effect from April 2021. The impact of this on schools would therefore not yet be known. The chair reported however that, as shown in other multi-academy trusts with a bigger top slice, an investment in central services produced savings in other areas across the schools.

General discussion took place regarding levels of funding and the likely financial impact of Covid-19 on the ULT and its schools. The CEO reported that there would be some Government support with funding although this would be limited for those Trusts and schools with a high level of reserves. More would be known once schools had submitted their returns to claim funding. The chair of trustees confirmed that the financial impact of Covid-19 was a concern but the trust board had given approval for schools to submit individual claims, rather than one claim from the Trust on behalf of all schools. This was subject to Government approval. Members would be kept informed.

b) Redundancy Scheme (Minute 63 refers)

The CEO reported that the proposed change to the ULT's redundancy scheme remained on hold but was to be further reviewed, together with other associated policies, at a special meeting of the Trust Board to be held during August.

69. Covid-19:

The chair of trustees reported on the excellent work done by the CEO and all schools to enable the partial re-opening of schools on 15 June, rather than 1 June as recommended by the Government. Schools had welcomed the decision to delay the re-opening. The chair of trustees further reported that planning continued for the return of all pupils from September, with all local governing bodies required to undertake school risk assessments with formal approval for re-opening to be given by the Trust Board.

The CEO was pleased to further report the positive feedback from parents following the partial re-opening of schools on 15 June, and in particular the decision to allow Y4 and Y8 pupils to attend during the final week of the school year. The CEO also reported that she was working with all schools to help them complete their risk assessments, taking account of local and national guidance received.

The CEO confirmed that it was a challenge for all schools to ensure they were able to fully open in September but all were confident that they would be able to do so and to continue to offer a full and varied curriculum. The necessary cleaning regime to be put in place at each school was one of the biggest challenges. The CEO further reported that many staff had been working from home where possible but that all staff were required to be in school from September. A special meeting of the Trust Board was to be held on 19 August 2020 to review all school risk assessments and to formally approve their re-opening in September.

Full discussion took place and members raised a number of questions regarding the impact of Covid-19:

- Use of other buildings – the CEO confirmed that consideration had been given to the possible use of other buildings in the community for educational purposes but that such an option was not being explored further. An outline was given of the reasons for this decision.
- Remote Learning – the chair of trustees reported that all schools continued to explore how to continue to improve the remote learning available for pupils, including the accessibility of IT equipment. An outline was given of the work done by Thomas Alleyne's High School in particular to provide all disadvantaged students with laptops. A number of fundraising events had been held to support the provision of IT equipment and this had also generated positive PR for the school. Members welcomed the work being done by schools to further develop remote learning, but concern was raised around schools using different learning platforms. Issues included the difficulties of providing consistent CPD and for ongoing technical support across all schools.
- PR and Marketing – the CEO reported that headteachers were fully supported by trustees in the work they were doing in response to the impact of Covid-19. Support in this area was also being given by a marketing company that had been recruited initially for a three-month period. A further tender would be issued in September for a further period of support.

It was resolved –

- i) That the update on how trustees and schools were responding to the impact of Covid-19 be noted with thanks to all concerned for the work being undertaken and, in particular, the common approach taken to complete school risk assessments.
- ii) That members strongly recommend that trustees continue to work with headteachers to identify a common remote learning platform that could be used across all schools.

70. 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 minutes of meetings could be accessed through the ULT website (www.utlft.org)

It was resolved –

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

71. Chair of Trustees/Chief Executive Officer Report:

A copy of the chair of trustees/CEO report, July 2020, had been previously circulated and taken as read.

It was resolved –

That the chair of trustees/CEO report be received and noted.

72. Financial Update:

A copy of the ULT consolidated budget 2020/21 was made available and the CEO reported that the ESFA had confirmed that, due to the impact of Covid-19, budget returns should be submitted by 29 September rather than 31 July as in previous years. The Finance committee continued to review the figures to take account of the expenses, and savings, linked to Covid-19. The chair of trustees further reported that the budget for the next year was manageable. A copy of the final consolidated budget would be made available at the next meeting.

Brief discussion took place regarding the level of reserves held by the Trust and the chair of trustees confirmed that most were historic and continued to reduce.

It was resolved –

That the financial update be received and noted.

73. 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. The new risks included:

- New school – changes made to reflect the decision taken by the trust board to defer the opening of the new school to September 2022. The CEO outlined the reasons for the decision. The CEO further reported that the local authority had guaranteed a budget for 15 pupils for the first three years of the school opening which would meet

the anticipated costs. The predicted numbers for 2022 would be above the combined current PAN for ULT schools.

- Expansion of ULT – members were informed that the governing body of Richard Clarke First School had agreed for the school to join the ULT on a permanent basis and the necessary arrangements were being made to complete this at the earliest opportunity. The chair of trustees also reported that a group of schools had expressed an interest in joining the ULT and responses had been given to all of the questions that had been asked. A decision was awaited.

Discussion took place and the CEO further reported that she was looking to revise the format of the risk register. Members welcomed this and suggested that the risk assessments put together by schools in response to Covid-19 could be used as the basis for change.

It was resolved –

That the risk register be received and that members note, with thanks to trustees, the actions put in place in response to those risks.

74. Other Business:

a) ULT – Mission, Vision and Values

A copy of the draft revised Mission, Vision and Values document had been previously circulated and the CEO highlighted the key changes. Mr Handforth, ULT member, although unable to attend the meeting had provided some thoughts on this document. He had suggested that 'Inspired Teaching, Inspiring Pupils' should be included within the 'Our Purpose' section of the document as this would help drive the narrative for a positive growth mindset. Members noted that it was currently included in the 'We Do This' section although with no reference to inspired teaching.

It was resolved –

That the draft Mission, Vision, Values document be received and noted and that the CEO be requested to further update the document to reflect the suggestions made by Mr Handforth.

b) Record of Thanks

Members placed on record their thanks to the trust board and CEO for the work being done in response to the impact of Covid-19. They also wished to place on record their thanks to headteachers and school staff for all the work they were also doing.

c) Staff Well-being

Members asked what was being done to safeguard staff well-being at this difficult time and the CEO reported that trustees had been very supportive, with members of staff being able to work from home where possible. The decision of the trust board to defer the partial re-opening of schools for two weeks after the recommended date set by the Government had been welcomed. The CEO also reported that she regularly visited all schools and that staff were encouraged to complete stress management forms. Indications were that the work being done by headteachers and trustees was being well received and positive.

75. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of ULT Members was to be held on Thursday, 17 December 2020 at 5.30pm. (Venue – tbc)

Prof E Barnes

Signed.....

17 December 2020

Date.....