

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust  
Members' General Meeting**

Minutes of a general meeting of the ULT Members held remotely (via Microsoft teams) on Thursday, 17 December 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

**76. Election of Chair:**

It was resolved –

That Prof Barnes be elected as chair of members until the first meeting of the Autumn term 2021.

**77. 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.

**78. Minutes:**

The minutes of the Members' general meeting held on 16 July 2020 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting be received and approved.

**79. Matters Arising:**

a) Review of Redundancy Scheme (Minute 68(b) refers)

The chair of the Trust Board reminded members that the decision to revise the redundancy scheme had been put on hold to allow for further advice to be sought from lawyers and staff unions. This had been further considered at the recent meeting of the Trust Board, taking account of advice received, particularly with regard to the possible dismissal/ re-engagement of staff should the scheme be revised. He informed members that trustees remained of the view that if changes were not made then this could impact on the future financial viability of the Trust. The CEO was seeking clarification around legal obligations in dismissing and re-engaging staff and whether there was a requirement to consult personally with members of staff not supporting the revised scheme. A special meeting of the Trust Board was to be held on 13 January 2021 to confirm the next steps.

Discussion followed and members questioned if there would be possible financial implications for the ULT through the dismissal/re-engagement of any members of staff.

The CEO confirmed that the clarification being sought around the process would also include any possible financial risks. All advice received would be made clear to trustees to help them make a final decision.

It was resolved –

That members support the rationale for the proposed change to the redundancy scheme.

b) Growth of ULT (Minute 73 refers)

The CEO reported that the application for Richard Clarke First School to join the ULT had been presented to a meeting of the RSC's Headteacher Board earlier that day and a positive decision was expected shortly. Arrangements also continued for the new free school to open in September 2022 and work on the site would commence during the summer months.

The chair of the Trust Board also reported that a Trust Capacity Fund bid had very recently been submitted and, given the expansion of the ULT, it was hoped that the bid would be successful. He also reported that a focus for the further expansion of the ULT was for larger schools to join and discussions continued as appropriate with those schools expressing an interest.

c) ULT Mission, Vision and Values (Minute 74(a) refers)

A copy of the ULT's Vision, Values and Mission statement had been previously circulated and the CEO confirmed that it had been updated to reflect members' views, as discussed at the previous meeting.

It was resolved –

That the Mission, Vision and Values statement be received and noted.

## 80. 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 it had been particularly challenging for schools during the second half of the autumn term but was pleased to confirm that all schools had remained open. Necessary actions continued to be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of staff and pupils whilst maintaining a quality education for all. Parents were also supportive of all of the work being done by schools. The CEO also informed members that there were financial implications for schools although catch-up funding was available to schools. Headteachers were concentrating on the deployment of those funds and appropriate plans being put in place. The Education committee would monitor and review the impact of the plans.

The chair of the Trust Board also reported that trustees fully recognised all of the work being undertaken by headteachers and all members of staff and that a letter of thanks was to be sent to them on behalf of the Trust.

Discussion followed and members also expressed their appreciation for everything being done by both schools and the Trust. Members also asked how the schools were working together to support each other and to also share best practice as necessary. An update was also requested on the development of remote learning. The CEO reported that she continued to meet regularly with headteachers to discuss all issues and they all shared best

practice as appropriate. The CEO also reported that she was also exploring actions being taken within other MATs. Members were also informed that a review of IT provision and support across the Trust was being undertaken and it was hoped to complete this, and agree actions, during the early part of the new year.

The chair of the Trust Board further reported that the additional costs due to the impact of Covid-19 were currently in the region of £200K and likely to increase further. Schools continued to log the additional costs and, where eligible, would claim support funding from the Government. However, not all schools would be eligible to claim due to the level of reserve funding currently held. The Finance committee would continue to monitor and review the situation.

It was resolved –

- i) That the update on Covid-19 be noted and that members also request that a letter of thanks also be sent to all staff on their behalf.
- ii) That members strongly encourage the CEO and trustees to continue to develop the sharing of best practice across all schools in the Trust.

#### **81. 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.uttlt.org](http://www.uttlt.org)). Mr Rayner reported that minutes of the more recent meetings were not on the website. The CEO confirmed that minutes of meetings were only added to the website once they had been ratified and that the website was updated on a termly basis for their inclusion. The CEO undertook to ensure that any ratified minutes of meetings not included on the website at the time of members' meetings would be included with the agenda.

It was resolved –

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

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

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

The chair of the Trust Board referred in particular to the 1:1 discussions with other trustees and chairs of governors to seek their views on the efficiency and effectiveness of the Trust and to help identify training needs. Feedback had been positive and some joint training sessions were to be arranged. Members that noted that some trustees had recently attended a level 1 safeguarding course.

Discussion followed and members asked if the discussions had helped to identify any training gaps. The chair of the Trust Board confirmed that gaps had been identified, particularly around financial management, and that training courses would be arranged in the near future. Consideration was also being given to how the ULT compared with other MATs, also suggested by chairs of governors. Members recognised the importance of trustees and local governing bodies understanding their different roles and responsibilities and suggested that a training course around the differentiation of roles may be helpful. Mr Rayner further reported that the DfE had recently produced updated guidance around the

different roles and that it would serve as a useful reference point. He was requested to circulate the link to trustees.

It was resolved –

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

### **83. Financial Update:**

The chair of the Trust Board reported that the external audit had recently been completed and that the Finance committee had met with the auditors (Mazars) to consider the draft financial statement and report for the year 2019/2020. The committee had been generally satisfied with the draft report but a number of amendments were proposed and the auditor had agreed to update the audit report prior to formal approval being given at a meeting of the Trust Board held on 9 December. The chair further reported, however, that the final report had only been made available a few hours before the meeting and there was therefore insufficient time to fully consider, and approve, the financial statement and audit report at the meeting. A decision had therefore been taken for a special meeting of the Trust Board to be held on 13 January to consider and approve the audit report to ensure that it was submitted to the ESFA by the agreed date of 31 January.

Discussion took place and members made clear their role to receive and challenge financial reports. It was therefore agreed that a copy of the draft financial statement and audit report should be circulated to members and that views, if any should be submitted to the CEO. It was also agreed that members would be invited to the special meeting of the trust board to be held on 13 January to consider and formally receive the audit report.

Discussion also took place regarding the financial benefits to schools through being in a MAT. The chair of the Trust Board confirmed that, as previously reported, the school top slice to support central services was to be increased to 3% from April 2021 and would help support the growth of the ULT. Members asked about the arrangements made for the allocation of condition funding and the CEO confirmed that each school retained its own agreed allocation. A view expressed that, similar to arrangements operated by other MATs, it might be more beneficial for this funding to be held centrally and distributed on the basis of need. The chair reported that such an option remained under review although it was currently difficult to hold this funding, and other funding streams, centrally as it would require someone to be employed specifically to manage this. The Trust Capacity Fund bid, if successful, would support the growth of the Trust and to expand the central staff team. The chair also confirmed that the Finance and Audit committee continued to monitor and review ULT funding.

It was resolved –

- i) That the financial update be received and noted.
- ii) That members would attend the special meeting of the Trust Board to be held on 13 January 2021 to formally receive the financial statement and audit report.

### **84. 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. Members were

also informed that schools were also using a similar risk register template. The new risks included:

- Growth of the ULT – the importance of engaging with another secondary school partner remained a priority.
- Covid-19 issues – this was flagged as red in the register given the ongoing concerns. Contingency plans continued to be developed as necessary.

Mr Rayner referred to the purpose of the Trust in upholding the church ethos of those schools with a designated religious character and to ensure they were conducted in accordance with the principles, practices and tenets of the Church of England. He questioned how this requirement was made clear and continually monitored to ensure that any necessary changes were made. He suggested that an appropriate statement should be included in all future ULT annual reports.

It was resolved –

- i) That the updated risk register be received and noted.
- ii) That the CEO be requested to ensure that a statement, to make clear the role of the Trust in upholding the church ethos, be included in all future annual reports.

**85. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting, and annual general meeting, of ULT Members was to be held on Thursday, 1 April 2021 at 5.30pm. The AGM would again be held remotely (through Microsoft Teams).

Signed.....  
Prof. E. Barnes

Date.....  
14 July 2021