

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

Minutes of a meeting of the ULT Members held in Picknalls First School, Uttoxeter, on Thursday, 18 July 2019 at 5.30pm.

### **Present:**

Members – Mr G Handforth, Mr G Morley  
Member and Trustee – Mr S Slater (in the chair)

### **Also in Attendance:**

Chief Executive Officer – Mrs A Tapp  
Chief Finance Officer – Mr A Storer  
Clerk to the ULT – Mr R Sheldon

### **Apology:**

An apology for late arrival was received from Mr G Morley (chair).

### **45. Declarations of Interest:**

A declaration of interest was given from Mr G Handforth (Entrust consultant) and from Mr Morley in advance of discussions around the external audit. He declared that the auditors, Mitten Clarke, were known to him and used for his own purposes. (See Minute 51)

### **46. Minutes:**

The minutes of the Members' meeting held on 20 December 2018 and the minutes of the annual general meeting held on 11 April 2019 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of both meetings be received and approved.

### **47. Matters Arising from Meeting held on 20 December 2018:**

#### a) ULT Code of Conduct(Minute 35 refers)

The clerk reported that the Code of Conduct had been revised to reflect discussions held during the meeting and a copy sent to all members and trustees early in the new year.

The chief executive officer further reported that the Scheme of Delegation was also being revised to include the governance structure of the ULT. A copy of the updated Scheme would be sent to members as soon as it was completed.

#### b) Articles of Association(Minute 36(e) refers)

The clerk reported that the current Articles of Association were still to be updated to reflect a previous decision that the chief executive officer would no longer automatically become a trustee. The clerk further reported that it was necessary for the Articles to be revised further as in his view they did not clearly reflect the governance of church schools (aided and controlled) in the ULT. A meeting was in the process of being arranged with CECET to discuss this further.

It was resolved –

That the report be received and that the clerk be requested to meet with CECET as soon as possible to enable the Articles to be revised as necessary.

c) CECET Member Representation (Minute 36(f) refers)

The clerk reported that following the recent appointment of Mrs Claire Shaw as the Director of Education for the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education she would be a member of the ULT to represent CECET. She would attend meetings where possible although other colleagues may attend future meetings as required to represent CECET interests.

d) Minutes of ULT Meetings (Minute 37 refers)

The chief executive officer reported that all minutes of ULT meetings were now stored on the ULT website and able to be accessed, as necessary, by members and trustees.

e) ULT Development Plan (Minute 39 refers)

The chief executive officer reported that the overarching ULT Development Plan had been updated to include local and national initiatives. The Plan had been developed with the support of headteachers and it underpinned the schools' own development plans to reflect their local priorities.

It was resolved –

That members welcome a common framework for the ULT which would benefit all stakeholders.

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

As previously reported the chief executive officer confirmed that minutes of the following meetings, held since the last members' meeting, had been made available on the ULT website:

- i) Trustees' Board – 13December 2018, 13February 2019, 3 April 2019, 15 May 2019.
- ii) Education Committee – 29January 2019, 19March 2019, 30 April 2019, 25 June 2019.
- iii) Finance Committee – 31January 2019, 28March 2019, 9 May 2019, 27 June 2019.

It was resolved –

That members note the availability of all minutes of ULT meetings.

#### **49. Risk Register:**

Members had been previously circulated with a copy of the risk register and the chief executive officer reported that it had been updated to include national risks as well as local risks. The scoring mechanism had also been revised to identify risks and the register was now a standard item for meetings of the Education and Finance committees. The chair of trustees further reported that the highest risk to the ULT was the change in admission arrangements at JCB Academy which would likely have a significant impact on future numbers at Thomas Alleyne's High School and subsequently its funding. Concerns had been raised with the Regional Schools Commission and the matter remained under review.

Full discussion followed and the chair of trustees outlined various strategies that had been agreed to minimise risks which included strengthening the curriculum links between the middle and high schools and highlighting to parents the greater success criteria of Thomas Alleyne's as compared to JCB Academy. The thoughts of members were sought around other short and long term strategies that could be identified to better compete with JCB academy. Suggestions for further consideration included a possible future need to re-skill students with more of a focus on arts and culture and closer working relationships with regional groups. The importance of the ULT creating its own niche, rather than just trying to compete with JCB Academy, was also recognised.

It was resolved –

That trustees be requested to consider setting up a strategic working group, to include member representation, to develop ideas for strengthening the ULT and its schools.

## **50. Chair and Chief Executive Officer Reports:**

The chief executive officer had previously circulated, for information, copies of her reports that had been presented to meetings of the trust board held on 13 February 2019, 3 April 2019, 15 May 2019 and 10 July 2019.

A copy of a joint report prepared by the chief executive officer and chair of the trust board was circulated at the meeting. The chair went through the detail of the report and referred in particular to the following matters:

### **i) Meetings**

A variety of meetings continued to be held to discuss ULT issues, including:

- Discussions with governing bodies of schools expressing an interest in joining the ULT.
- Consultation meetings with trade unions and ULT staff to consider proposed changes to the redundancy and redeployment schemes.
- Meetings with headteachers of the middle and high schools to discuss school performance.

### **ii) Link Trustees**

All trustees had now been linked to a ULT school and would be required to visit the school at least twice over the year (one to see the school in operation and another to attend a Governor meeting).

### **iii) Regional Schools Commission**

At a recent meeting with the Regional Schools Commission the strength of the ULT had been recognised and had been encouraged to sponsor other schools. A concern had been raised, however, around the comparatively low top slice funding which remained at 2 ½%.

### **iv) External Reviews**

A number of successful external reviews had been undertaken at ULT schools for governance, safeguarding, financial audits, and health and safety audits. Schools had also been successful with a number of CIF bids for 2018/19 and 2019/20 with work approved at a total cost of around £5 ½ million.

- v) Growth of the ULT  
Discussions continued with the governing body of Richard Clarke First School, currently an associate member, to join as a full member of the ULT from April 2020.
- vi) Appointment of CEO  
Mrs Sarah Clark had recently been appointed as the new chief executive officer and would take up post in January 2020. Arrangements were in hand for an interim chief executive officer to be appointed for the autumn term.

It was resolved –

That the chair of trustees and the chief executive officer be thanked for providing a summary report of the work of trustees and that it be received.

## 51. **Financial Update:**

(Mr Morley joined the meeting at this point and declared an interest in advance of discussions around the appointment of the external auditor).

The chief finance officer circulated details of the consolidated budget projections for the ULT and those of individual schools. He reported that the budget projections had been discussed in detail with the Finance committee and subsequently approved. He also confirmed that the budgets took account of a number of assumptions around funding streams and took into account the predicted loss of students from Thomas Alleyne's. Meetings continued to be held with school headteachers to discuss funding levels and all had plans in place to reduce expenditure as necessary.

Discussion took place regarding the 2 ½% top slice for central expenditure and the chief finance officer confirmed that this was not sustainable. As such trustees, and the Finance committee in particular, were looking at where savings could be achieved through central service level agreements and an acceptance also given to an offer made by the Regional Schools Commission to provide financial advice on the allocation of ULT funds. The chair of trustees further reported that schools had to support an increasing number of pupils with high level medical needs without the support of additional funding. Consideration was therefore being given to the ULT employing its own nurse to support those pupils which would also include pupils with mental health issues. This would only be possible, however, if the level of top slice funding was increased. He reported that this was to be reviewed further early in the new school year with several funding models being explored.

The chair of trustees further reported that a positive meeting had been held with Mitten Clarke, ULT auditors, to discuss several concerns that had been raised by trustees following the last external audit. A number of re-assurances had been given in advance of the next audit and trustees were now willing to continue working with Mitten Clarke for the next audit. Members were reminded that the current agreement with Mitten Clarke was for 3 years and that the next audit would be the last before a new contract was sought. The chief finance officer also reported that an internal audit of all schools had been completed and that the audit report from Staffordshire County Council was expected shortly. The initial feedback, however, had been positive. A number of small issues had been identified for further consideration, including arrangements for school trips, and these were being reviewed as appropriate.

It was resolved –

- i) That members thank the chief finance officer for his financial reports and that they be received and noted.
- ii) That members support a review of the level of top slice funding and as part of this request trustees to look at levels of staff turnover and the implications of not automatically replacing them.
- iii) That trustees be requested to provide a report for the next members' meeting to show the percentage level of staff turnover and the appointments made as a consequence.
- iv) That members support the continued use of Mitten Clarke for the external audit of the ULT and that this matter be included on the agenda for the next meeting to consider the contract for future external audits.

**52. Other Business:**

Mr Morley reminded members that he would not be continuing in his role as chair when his current term expires from the date of the next meeting to be held during the autumn term. A new chair would therefore need to be elected at that meeting. He further reported that he would likely stand down as a member at the end of the 2019/2020 school year.

**53. Evidence from Meeting to Support the ULT's Visions and Values:**

Members were satisfied that all discussions held during the meeting were to help secure the agreed visions and values, with a particular focus on future visioning, financial sustainability and viability, including in particular the planned responses to the change of admission arrangements at JCB Academy.

**54. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next meeting of ULT Members was to be held in Oldfields Hall Middle School on Thursday, 19 December 2019 at 5.30pm.

Signed..... Prof E Barnes

Date..... 30 April 2020