

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust
Members' General Meeting**

Minutes of a general meeting of the ULT Members held remotely (via Microsoft teams) on Thursday, 30 April 2020 at 4.30pm.

Present:

Members – Prof E Barnes (chair), Mr G Handforth, Mr G Morley
Member and Trustee – 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

Apology:

An apology for absence was received from Mrs C Shaw.

55. Declarations of Interest:

No declarations of interest were given for agenda items although Mr Handforth reported that his contract with Entrust had now finished and it was therefore no longer necessary to declare this interest.

56. Election of Chair:

Mr Morley reported that he would not be seeking re-election as chair and would also be resigning as a member. However, he confirmed that he would be willing to remain as a ULT member until the end of the 2020/21 school year to allow time for the appointment of a new member.

Mr Morley also wished to place on record his thanks to members and trustees for the support they had given him and to the development of the ULT.

It was resolved –

- i) That Prof Barnes be elected as chair of members until the first meeting of the Autumn term 2020.
- ii) That members place on record their thanks to Mr Morley for all that he had done for the ULT both in his role as member and as chair. Arrangements would be made to appoint a replacement member.

57. Appointment and Introduction of Chief Executive Officer:

Mr Slater, chair of the trust board, was pleased to report that since the last members' meeting, Dr Sarah Clark had been appointed as chief executive officer. Members congratulated Dr Clark on her appointment and formally welcomed her to the ULT.

It was resolved –

That members place on record their thanks to Mrs Tapp and Mr Sutcliffe for the support they had given to the ULT in their roles as acting chief executive officers.

58. Appointment of Members and Trustees:

Members were informed of the changes to members and trustees since the last meeting:

- Appointment of Member – Mrs C Shaw (representing CECET).
- Appointment of Trustee – Mr S Harper
- Resignation of Trustee – Mrs E Bell

It was resolved –

That changes to members and trustees be received and noted.

58. Minutes:

The minutes of the Members' general meeting held on 18 July 2019 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the general meeting be received and approved, subject to the following amendment:

Apology – an apology for absence had been received from Prof E Barnes.

59. Matter Arising:

Top Slice Funding (Minute 50(iii) refers)

The CEO reported that trustees had agreed for the level of top slice funding to be increased from 2 ½% to 3% with effect from the 2021 financial year. Schools had been advised.

It was resolved –

That members fully support the increase in top slice funding to 3%.

60. Minutes of Other ULT Meetings:

The clerk informed members that the trust board and its committees continued to meet on a regular basis and details provided for information only. All minutes were available in Office 365.

It was resolved –

That details of all trust board and committee meetings, and availability of minutes, be noted.

61. Chief Executive Officer Reports:

Copies of the CEO reports to trustees for February and April 2020 had been previously circulated for information. The CEO reported that she was still getting to know the schools but that she was developing a detailed plan for continued improvement of the ULT. Discussion followed and members acknowledged the work already undertaken by the CEO since her appointment and welcomed in particular the marketing and PR strategies being developed.

It was resolved –

That the CEO reports for February and April 2020 be received and noted

62. Appointment of External Auditor:

Mr Slater reported that three tenders had been received for the appointment of an external auditor and copies had been previously circulated. They had been considered in detail by trustees who had also been mindful of the criteria on which they had been assessed. Trustees were of a view that the strongest bid based on the quality of the audit offer had been received from Mazars Ltd, although this was not the cheapest in price. Trustees were therefore recommending that Mazars Ltd be appointed as external auditor.

It was resolved –

That members approve the appointment of Mazars Ltd for the three-year period 2020-2023.

63. Risk Register:

Members had been previously circulated with a copy of the ULT risk register and the CEO outlined the highest risks, including in particular the implications of the coronavirus. The risks included:

- New school – this was scheduled to open in September 2021 as planned although this could now be delayed. As such, contingency plans were being put in place which could include pupils being admitted to other ULT first schools for a temporary period from September 2021, or the opening being deferred until September 2022. Members were assured that trustees would continue to monitor the situation carefully and take account of local authority and DfE guidance when taking decisions.
- Student numbers – this remained a risk due to the possible impact on student numbers as a result of changes to the admission arrangements at JCB Academy. Members noted, however, that the number of students being admitted to Thomas Alleyne’s High School in September were higher than originally anticipated. The CEO was pleased to further report that the governing body of Richard Clarke First School had agreed to join the ULT on a permanent basis and that arrangements were in hand for this to be completed as soon as possible.
- School performance – a recent external review of Ryecroft Middle School had recognised some strengths but also highlighted a number of areas where improvement in performance was necessary. The CEO reported that she was working with the headteacher to develop an improvement plan and trustees, particularly through the Education committee, would continue to monitor the situation.
- Sustainable budgets – the CFO reported that a number of schools were still using reserves to balance budgets but that he was working with them to identify areas where savings could be made. This included a review of service level agreements and the sharing of staff, where appropriate, across schools. Trustees, particularly through the Finance committee, would continue to monitor school budgets.

Full discussion followed and members welcomed the systematic approach given to supporting schools in working closely with each other. Mr Slater further reported that a

redeployment policy, being developed in conjunction with a review of the redundancy scheme, would further support this. Trustees were asked to consider looking at financial modelling to show the positive impact of the sharing of resources which could then also set a target to move towards.

Members then discussed the impact of the coronavirus on ULT schools and the CEO confirmed that all schools currently remained open for vulnerable children and the children of NHS staff and other key workers. All other pupils were receiving support through distance learning programmes. Consideration was currently being given to how schools could re-open when the time allowed but that no final decisions would be taken until Government guidance was received. In response to members' questions the CEO confirmed that schools were considering pupil transition arrangements and a number of ideas being put forward. Transition would be a key priority including in particular the needs of vulnerable students.

Consideration was also given to the awarding of student qualifications at Thomas Alleyne's High School and the CEO reported that the headteacher and senior leaders were working hard to put a robust system in place to ensure the consistency of the information being provided to the exam boards. Trustees also recognised that a number of appeals could be received regarding the awarding of qualifications and plans being made to make clear their role, and that of the school, in considering appeals.

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.

64. Date of Next Meeting:

The next meeting of ULT Members was to be held on Thursday, 16 July 2020. (Time and venue – tbc)

Prof E Barnes

Signed.....

16 July 2020

Date.....