

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust
Trustees' Board**

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees' Board held remotely (via Microsoft Teams) on Wednesday, 19 August 2020 at 5.30pm.

Present:

Mr S Slater (chair), Mrs V Bennett, Mr S Harper, Mrs P Livesey, Rev M Sherwin.

Also Present:

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Dr S Clark
Chief Finance Officer (CFO) – Mr A Storer
Clerk to the Uttoxeter Learning Trust (ULT) – Mr R Sheldon
Insight HR – Mrs K Groom

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from Mr R Oldham, Mr T Sutcliffe, Mr L Trigg.

279. Declaration of Interests:

A declaration of interest was given from Mr A Storer (Business Manager at Thomas Alleyne's High School) in advance of discussions around the ULT redundancy scheme. (See following Minute 280).

There were no declarations of interest from trustees relevant to agenda items.

280. Review of Redundancy Scheme:

Mrs K Groom, Insight HR, was present for this item.

The CEO had previously circulated to trustees an overview of the redundancy scheme to-date, together with a summary of the possible risks identified by the lawyers to the proposed changes. Copies of the current ULT Redundancy and Redeployment policies were also circulated. The CEO reported that a key risk identified by the Lawyers was that, although unions had been consulted during the review process, there had been no collective bargaining. The CEO further reported that she had raised this matter at a recent meeting with the unions and there had been an indication that it was something that they might now consider although this had not yet been confirmed.

Mrs Groom further outlined some of the risks identified by the lawyers and confirmed the initial response given by unions to the request for collective bargaining on behalf of their members. It was therefore important for trustees to again meet with union representatives to further discuss the proposed changes to the redundancy scheme and to seek agreement for collective bargaining.

Full discussion followed and trustees noted the proposed changes to the redundancy scheme in comparison to the one previously offered. Trustees remained of the view that changes to the scheme were necessary but accepted that a further meeting with the unions could be beneficial in agreeing a way forward.

It was resolved –

- i) That the CEO be requested to arrange a further meeting with the unions in September to determine a way forward, including seeking agreement on collective bargaining. The outcome of the meeting to be reported back at the next meeting of the trust board.
- ii) That the Redundancy and Redeployment policies be received and the CEO, with the support of Insight HR, be requested to revise them as necessary for formal approval at a future meeting.

281. Covid-19:

Trustees had been previously circulated with all school risk assessments completed in readiness for the full re-opening of schools in September. Headteachers had confirmed that the risk assessments had been viewed and approved by local governing bodies/chair of governors. The CEO would ensure that a formal note/minute was received and recorded for all schools prior to 1st September. This would also include any updates due to further revisions to guidance and feedback from the Trust Board. Before any discussion took place, the chair wished to place on record thanks to the CEO, headteachers, school staff and governors for all of the work undertaken to complete the risk assessments. He further reported that he had looked at the detail of each of them and had submitted views, as appropriate, to the CEO.

The CEO provided a further update on the work undertaken at each of the schools and referred also to a recent visit to Thomas Alleyne's High School to look at the plans being put in place given the specific challenges due to the number of students on roll and size of the school site. Appropriate cleaning arrangements remained a key focus for everyone and ongoing discussions continued with all headteachers regarding the risk assessments but the CEO reported that she was confident that all necessary measures to ensure the health and well-being of pupils and staff would be in place when schools re-opened in September.

The CEO also reported that all members of staff continued to receive appropriate advice and guidance and that she was not aware of any issues regarding the return of staff returning from their summer holidays. It was felt that the letter sent to staff before the start of the summer break had been positive. The wearing of face masks within school was an issue to remain under consideration and further Government guidance was waited regarding this. The CEO also reported that consideration should also be given to the possibility of issuing vouchers to all staff to enable them to have a flu vaccination later in the year.

Full discussion followed and trustees noted the continually changing Government guidance and advice. Clarification was sought regarding the role of the trust board and the local governing bodies. The CEO confirmed that headteachers and the governing body, with her support, would continue to keep under review their school's risk assessment and update it as necessary to reflect any guidance received. As the employer, the trustees though had ultimate responsibility for any decisions taken.

Trustees recognised the importance of keeping all risk assessments under review and to monitor the success, or otherwise, of arrangements put in place. As previously reported, the chair had submitted some views regarding the risk assessments and the CEO confirmed that they would be updated to account for them. Other suggestions were put forward about further safety measures, including the use of computer keyboard covers and the CEO reported that she would raise all suggested views at the next meeting of the Headteacher Professional Board and changes made as necessary. Finally, the CEO

reported that, as previously, all risk assessments had been forwarded to the local authority and the unions, although no responses had yet been received. Final versions will be shared with the SRB.

It was resolved –

- i) That the school risk assessments be received with thanks to all concerned and that any trustee views should be submitted to the CEO so that any necessary changes could be made.
- ii) That any updated school risk assessment should be signed-off by the chair of governors and a copy made available on the school's website.

282. Financial Matters:

a) Letter from ESFA

The chair referred to a letter received from the ESFA, dated 23 July 2020, regarding necessary actions to be taken as identified in the Auditor's report. The letter made clear possible actions to be taken should there be non-compliance. The CEO reported that action had been taken to address all identified issues, including improvements to the ULT's website. A letter in response to the ESFA had been prepared and outlined all of the actions taken. The CEO also confirmed that appropriate action would be taken whenever necessary to ensure that the ULT complied with the requirements of the Finance handbook.

It was resolved –

That the actions to comply with the letter received from the ESFA be noted and that the letter in response be submitted.

b) ULT Consolidated Budget 2020/2021

A copy of the ULT consolidated budget 2020/2021 had been previously circulated and the CFO outlined the changes made to the budget since being discussed at the previous meeting of the trust board. Changes included updates for teachers pay; an extension of the teachers' pay grant to August 2021 and Covid-19 funding received to-date. The CFO then went through the detail of the budget for the following years and outlined other funding assumptions that had been made, including in particular the new school funding formula to be implemented from April 2022. Trustees noted that a particular impact of the new funding formula would be an increase in central funding through the top slice and that as a result the central budget for the Trust over the next five years would be more positive. Trustees were reminded that the ESFA only required the approved budget for the next financial year rather than the usual 3-year budget.

It was resolved –

- i) That the ULT consolidated budget 2020/2021 be approved and submitted to the ESFA.
- ii) That the Finance and Audit committee be requested to look at the detail of the budgets for future years, with particular regard to the implications of changing school numbers.

283. Safeguarding:

The CEO reported that a safeguarding audit across all schools in the ULT would be undertaken during the next school year. In readiness for this schools were updating their safeguarding policy, in line with Staffordshire County Council's model policy. The CEO also reported that the ULT Safeguarding policy should also be in line with the model policy, a copy of which had been previously circulated.

An updated copy of the document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' had also been previously circulated and the CEO reminded trustees that they had a duty to read the guidance document and a record kept of this fact. The chair further reported that safeguarding/PREVENT training would be arranged for trustees and governors during the Autumn term.

It was resolved –

- i) That trustees welcome the planned safeguarding audit for all ULT schools.
- ii) That trustees agree to adopt the model Safeguarding policy as recommended by Staffordshire County Council and that the CEO be requested to advise all ULT schools to adopt the same model policy.

284. Policy Approval:

Trustees had been previously circulated with the following updated policies:

- Reserves and Charging policy
- Risk Management policy

A copy of the updated Business Continuity Plan was also made available at the meeting and the CEO outlined the detail of it. The CEO confirmed that each school was also required to have its own business continuity plan. Discussion followed and the following recommendations were made for inclusion in the plan:

- Crisis management team to include the name and contact details for the chair of the trust board.
- Inclusion of details of Diocese representative for any incidents in church schools.
- ULT plan to make clear that it does not replace the one put in place by individual schools.

It was resolved –

- i) That the Reserves and Charging policy and Risk Management policy be received and approved as presented.
- ii) That the Business Continuity Plan be received and approved subject to the identified changes.

285. Other Business:

a) Register of Business Interests

The CEO reported that the business register was currently being updated and that a pro-forma would shortly be circulated to trustees for them to enter appropriate details for inclusion in the register.

b) Academies Handbook

The CEO reported that she was putting together an action plan for trustees to ensure that they were compliant with the requirements of the Academies handbook. The plan would be circulated for discussion at a future meeting of the trust board.

c) Thomas Alleyne's High School – A level Results

Trustees were aware of the national issues regarding the recently announced A level results and the CEO was pleased to report that there had been positive communication between the school and its community. GCSE results were to be announced the following day, with grades centrally assessed, and the CEO was pleased to report that the results would be positive based on the data received from the headteacher.

It was resolved –

That the CEO be requested to pass on trustees thanks to the headteacher and her staff team for the positive results, with congratulations also to the students.

d) Record of Thanks

The chair thanked trustees for the commitment and willingness in attending this special meeting held during the summer break, with thanks also to the CEO for all of the work undertaken in preparation for it.

286. Date of Next Meeting:

Trustees were reminded that the next meeting of the trust board was to be held as planned on Wednesday, 14 October 2020 at 5.30pm. Venue to be confirmed.

Mr S Slater

Signed.....

14 October 2020

Date.....