

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust
Trustees' Board**

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees' Board held remotely (via Microsoft Teams) on Wednesday, 3 March 2021 at 5.30pm.

Present:

Mr S Slater (chair), Mr S Harper, Mrs P Livesey, Mr R Oldham, 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

Apologies: An apology for absence was received from Mr L Trigg. A belated apology for absence was also given from Mr T Sutcliffe.

335. Declaration of Interests:

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

336. Re-opening of Schools – 8 March 2021:

The CEO was pleased to report that all schools were ready to re-open to pupils on 8 March and copies of the associated risk assessments had been previously circulated to trustees. There would be a staggered start for pupils in the middle and high schools to allow for lateral flow tests. These would initially be undertaken in schools before then being undertaken at home. Arrangements for this had been a challenge for schools and the CEO acknowledged the work of staff to ensure that everything was in place.

The CEO also reported that a letter had been sent to all parents to give advice and guidance around the wearing of face masks by staff and pupils whilst in a school building. All headteachers had been previously reminded that trustees had agreed that there was an expectation that all staff should wear a face covering whilst in school, whilst also recognising that it should be a local decision. Trustees were informed that DfE guidance was now that all secondary school age pupils should wear a mask whilst in class. Discussion took place and the CFO reported that costs had been sought for the purchase of masks for all staff and pupils across the Trust but that the DfE had also agreed to supply schools with face masks. However, the quantity of masks to be provided was not yet known or how long the supply would continue. Also, the first batch of masks was not expected in readiness for the re-opening of schools. Trustees therefore gave consideration to the purchase of masks by the Trust and the CEO confirmed that the cost of this would unlikely be covered by Government grants.

Discussion also took place regarding the school risk assessments and the chair confirmed that he had looked at the detail of each and had submitted his views to the CEO. These would be discussed with headteachers and the risk assessments would be updated as necessary to reflect those views. The chair requested that all trustees should also read the risk assessments, particularly for the school at which they were link trustee, and to submit any views to the CEO as soon as possible for subsequent consideration by the headteacher.

The CEO further reported that the NAS/UWT had expressed a number of concerns nationally regarding the arrangements for the re-opening of schools and that she had recently met with them to discuss various local issues. The union had acknowledged the role of the Trust in supporting schools with their re-opening plans.

Finally, trustees recognised the importance of schools re-opening with the minimum of disruption and with all measures in place to try and ensure that any possible spread of the virus was as minimal as possible. Trustees also recognised that the actions of parents when accompanying their children to school would be key to this.

It was resolved –

- i) That trustees look forward to the re-opening of schools on 8 March and place on record their continued thanks to headteachers and staff for all of the work undertaken to ensure that their schools were ready.
- ii) That the associated school risk assessments be received and accepted, subject to an understanding that they would remain under ongoing review and revised as considered necessary by individual schools.
- iii) That all schools should follow DfE guidance around the wearing of face masks by staff and pupils and that the CFO be requested to purchase the necessary number of face masks for all staff and pupils, but dependent on the number of masks received from the DfE. This would be reviewed after Easter.
- iv) That the CEO be requested to ask headteachers to write to parents to inform them that, when standing outside the school entrance, they should wear a face mask and to also ensure that social distancing requirements were being followed.

337. Ryecroft CE Middle School – Appointment of Interim Executive Headteacher:

Following Mrs Baramuszczyk's decision to leave the school at the end of the current school year, the chair reminded trustees that he and the CEO had met with the chair of the governing body to discuss arrangements for the appointment of a headteacher. A decision had subsequently been taken to appoint an interim executive headteacher to be responsible for the running of the school until such time that all areas were judged as at least good. It was anticipated that the interim arrangements would be in place for around 12/18 months, following which time a decision would be taken regarding the appointment of a permanent headteacher. This decision had been reported at the recent meeting of the School Representation Board, with no issues raised. Confirmation had been sought though, and given, that the post would be open to all current headteachers within the ULT.

A copy of the draft job description had been previously circulated and the chair reported that if trustees had any thoughts around this then they should refer them to either him or the CEO. Insight HR was providing support with the recruitment process and the timeline would shortly be finalised. It was hoped to place an advert shortly but, before applying, a headteacher would be required to have discussed the application with their chair of governors and also be confident that there was sufficient capacity within the school's leadership team to cover any absence whilst leading two schools. The role would be effective from April 2021, with the executive headteacher working alongside Mrs Baramuszczyk to offer guidance and support, before assuming responsibility for the school with effect from September 2021. The salary would be negotiated with the successful candidate.

The chair requested trustees to let him know if they were willing to help with the recruitment process and all present at the meeting offered to support, if required.

Finally, the chair also confirmed that consideration would be given to the posts of heads of school following the appointment of the interim executive headteacher, to enable the successful candidate to have an input into the requirements of such a role.

It was resolved –

That trustees support the appointment of an interim executive headteacher at Ryecroft CE Middle School and that the chair be thanked for outlining the recruitment process.

338. Members' AGM:

The chair reminded trustees that the members' AGM was to be held on Thursday, 1 April 2021. The meeting would be held through Microsoft Teams and an invitation for headteachers and governors to attend the meeting had been given at the recent meeting of the School Representation Board. A request had also been made for schools to prepare a report, if they wished, to inform members of particular school successes during the course of this year.

Discussion took place and the importance of chairs of local governing bodies submitting a report on key actions of their governing body was recognised but that any report should also be made available to trustees. Consideration was given to the frequency of such reports, whether on an annual basis or termly, including also the possible use of a pro-forma to ensure some consistency in reporting.

It was resolved –

That the CEO be requested to explore this matter further with headteachers and chairs of governors, whilst also ascertaining from members the level and detail they would wish from any such report.

339. Trust Development:

The CEO reported that the ULT had been given the opportunity to participate as a mentee in the Trust-to-Trust Development Programme organised by the RSC and had been matched with ARK Schools as the mentor trust which currently has 38 schools. This would help support the future growth of the ULT. To help with this programme a multi-academy trust (MAT) school improvement capacity framework had been previously circulated which, once completed by individual trustees, should help the ULT understand its capacity to support school improvement. The framework had already been shared with headteachers and would also be shared with local governing bodies. The CEO further reported that, due to other priorities to ensure the re-opening of schools, she would contact the Ark Trust to discuss the date for completion of the capacity framework.

It was resolved –

That trustees be requested to consider, and complete as appropriate, the capacity framework and return it to the CEO by Wednesday of the following week. This would give the CEO time to moderate the responses before submitting to the Ark Trust.

340. Date of Next Meeting:

Trustees were reminded that the next termly meeting of the Trust Board was to be held on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 at 5.30pm.

S. Slater
Signed.....

31 March 2021
Date.....