

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust  
Trustees' Board**

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees' Board held remotely (via Microsoft Teams) on Wednesday, 31 March 2021 at 5.30pm.

**Present:**

Mr S Slater (chair), Mrs V Bennett, Mr S Harper, Mrs P Livesey, Mr R Oldham, Rev M Sherwin, Mr T Sutcliffe, Mr L Trigg.

**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

**335. Business Register:**

Trustees were asked to inform the clerk if any changes to the business register were necessary. Mr Trigg reported that as from 1 April he would no longer be employed by NHS Wolverhampton.

It was resolved –

That the clerk be requested to update the business register as advised by Mr Trigg.

**336. Declaration of Interests:**

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

**337. Chair Power to Act – Report on Actions Taken:**

The chair reported that he had attended, with other trustees, the recent interviews for the appointment of interim executive headteacher at Ryecroft CE Middle School. Mrs Rudge, headteacher at Thomas Alleyne's High School, had subsequently been appointed and she would support the current headteacher of the school during the summer term before taking on the role of interim executive headteacher from September 2021, initially for a one-year period. Working arrangements between both schools were still to be finalised but a salary uplift of 7½% had been agreed. Trustees were asked to keep this information confidential until her appointment had been communicated to both school communities.

The chair also wished to place on record his thanks to the chair of governors at Ryecroft and those trustees who also supported the interview process.

It was resolved –

That trustees support all actions taken by the chair, relating to the appointment of executive headteacher, with thanks to him.

**338. Trust Board Minutes:**

Minutes of meetings of the Trust Board held on 10 February and 3 March 2021 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of both meetings be received and approved.

**339. Matters Arising:**

- a) Richard Clarke First School (Meeting 10 February - minute 322(a) refers)  
The CEO reported that work continued for Richard Clarke First School to formally join the ULT but that the conversion date had been put back to 1 May 2021. This was due to issues around land ownership still to be finalised. A trustee question was raised regarding planned replacement of the school roof, due to be funded by the local authority, and whether this work would be undertaken as planned following academy conversion. The CEO reported that she was not aware of a project to replace the school roof but undertook to find out. Trustees would be kept updated.
- b) New School (Meeting 10 February - minute 325(d) refers)  
The CEO was pleased to confirm that planning for the new school continued and remained due to open in September 2022. S10 consultation would shortly commence and would be supported by a PR/Marketing plan being developed by SERO.
- c) Trust Capacity Framework (Meeting 3 March - minute 339 refers)  
The CEO reported that the Trust capacity framework continued to be completed as appropriate, with input from trustees and headteachers and views of chairs of governors were also to be sought. Some of the initial feedback had already been given to the Ark Academy Trust leaders and the ULT development plan would be informed by the outcomes of this review. Trustees would be kept updated.

CEO reported that work to update the Improvement Plan continued and that it would be submitted at a future meeting of the Trust Board for formal approval.

**340. IT Review:**

The CEO confirmed that the IT review continued as previously discussed and a report had been previously circulated outlining the financial implications for the various scenarios. The CEO went through the detail of the report and trustees noted that the information was based on costings received from Concero. The CEO further reported that costings were awaited from Staffs. IT to be used as a comparison. An outline was given of the different levels of support that could be provided for all schools and possible costs they might be expected to pay in future. The CEO also made it clear that a number of issues required further consideration, including in particular any IT costs to be paid by the first schools.

Full discussion followed and, whilst welcoming the report to highlight the financial implications of any future IT support, trustees were of a view that further consideration should be given to a number of issues before going out to tender. In response, the CEO confirmed that the figures were only based on initial discussions with companies and that the subsequent tendering process, once completed, would clarify final proposals for future IT support and costs to be met by each school.

During the discussion, suggestion was also given to the ULT taking responsibility for all IT staff employed within the Trust and the financial cost of any agreed contract with a managed service provider. Schools could then be charged based on whatever usage was made of the IT support service. The chair also reported that before any decisions were taken careful consideration had to be given to the likely impact on school budgets,

particularly for the first schools, and that any proposals should be discussed with headteachers. The CEO reported that possible outcomes of the IT review were already being discussed with headteachers and that the first schools were aware of its funding implications. Trustees were also advised that the tendering process should commence as soon as possible to ensure that a revised IT support programme would be in place for September 2021. Any delay in this would impact on the temporary support measures currently in place.

It was resolved –

That the continuation of the IT review process be delegated to the Finance and Audit committee and that the next steps, including the tendering process, be determined at its next meeting to be held on 5 May 2021. Other trustees would be invited to also attend the committee meeting.

### **341. ULT Finance Report:**

#### **a) Covid-19 Grant Funding**

The CFO reported that clarification had been sought from the Regional Schools Commission regarding eligibility for workforce grant funding to help support Covid-19 expenditure, particularly with regard to the criteria around the level of reserves held within a Trust. Confirmation had been given that projected year-end reserves must be below 4% for eligibility to receive funding support. Any funds received would be clawed back should the year-end level of reserves be above 4%. The CFO further reported that funding support would be given for LAT testing and appropriate claims would be submitted on behalf of schools conducting the tests.

It was resolved –

That, as the year-end reserves would be above 4%, trustees agree that a claim should not be submitted for Covid-19 workforce funding support.

#### **b) CIF Bids**

The CFO reported that the outcome for this year's bids would shortly be received. Trustees would be kept updated.

#### **c) Central Costs**

A financial report of central funding costs for the ULT had been previously circulated and the CFO took trustees through the detail of it. The CEO further reported that consideration was currently being given to allocating administrative support for the equivalent of one day a week at a cost of around £6K.

It was resolved –

That trustees approve the allocation of funding for administrative support for the equivalent of one day a week.

#### **d) Apprenticeship Levy**

A question was raised regarding the funding made available for the apprenticeship levy and the CFO gave an update. He reported that there were currently no apprenticeships offered across the ULT, although a number of schools were currently looking at this, and confirmed that the levy wasn't being used to its full potential.

It was resolved –

That trustees agree to pursue this matter further and that Mr Oldham be requested to liaise with the CFO to explore how the apprenticeship levy could be used to its full advantage.

### **342. CEO Report:**

A copy of the CEO's report had been previously circulated. The CEO reported that most of the issues outlined in the report had already been discussed earlier in the meeting and referred in particular to the following matters:

#### a) Covid-19 Positive Tests

The CEO reported that, since the report had been written, there had been three positive tests at Thomas Alleyne's High School and self-isolation requirements were being followed. The CEO also wished to place on record her thanks to Rev. Sherwin for her support in enabling some Trust members of staff join the vaccination programme.

The CEO further reported that schools continued to follow guidance regarding the wearing of face coverings by pupils whilst in the school classroom. The DfE was, however, shortly to review this guidance.

#### b) Oldfields Hall Middle School

The CEO reported that the Education committee had approved in principle the proposals for a sports hall and additional teaching accommodation at Oldfields Hall Middle School although discussions would continue with the local authority around the possibility of staggering the increase in the school's planned admissions number (PAN).

#### c) Trustee Training Courses

The CEO highlighted a number of training courses available to trustees, including those available through the NGA. The CEO also reminded trustees of the requirement for all of them to have undertaken the level 1 Safeguarding course. Arrangements would be made for this course to be made available shortly.

### **343. Safeguarding/Covid-19 Update:**

The CEO confirmed that all appropriate matters had been discussed earlier in the meeting and that there was nothing further to report.

### **344. Education Committee:**

Trustees had been previously circulated with minutes of the Education committee held on 26 January 2021. Trustees also noted that a meeting of the Education committee had recently been held on 16 March 2021. Rev Sherwin, committee chair, outlined the issues that had been considered. She confirmed that most items considered had been discussed earlier in the meeting but referred in particular to a presentation given by Mr Gliddon regarding proposals for a sports hall and teaching block at Oldfields Hall Middle School. Discussion had also taken place regarding the re-opening of schools and consideration given to the pupil catch-up plans put in place by schools. The committee had also been pleased to receive a report regarding the ULT's positive profile within the local community.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the Education committee held on 26 January 2021 be received and accepted and that the report of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 be noted.

**345. Finance and Audit Committee:**

Trustees had been previously circulated with minutes of a meeting of the Finance and Audit committee held on 3 February 2021. Trustees also noted that a meeting of the Finance and Audit committee had recently been held on 24 March 2021 and Mr Trigg, committee chair, confirmed that most of the issues considered had been discussed earlier in the meeting. He referred in particular to discussions around central services and a recommendation made for the appointment of a premises manager to also have responsibility for the ULT's asset management plan. Consideration had also been given to the level of reserves held by the Trust and a recommendation made that schools should set an in-year level of 2%.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the Finance and Audit committee meeting held on 3 February 2021 be received and accepted and that the report of the meeting held on 24 March 2021 be received and noted.

**346. Review of School Governance Structures:**

The chair reported that the governance structure review had been raised at the recent meeting of the school representation board and there was limited support for a reduction in the size of governing bodies. Discussion followed and trustees again recognised that the skills set of governors appointed to a governing body must be the important factor.

It was resolved –

- i) That over a period of time, and subject to the governors' skills set, the size of local governing boards be reduced to between 10 and 12 governors.
- ii) That the CEO be requested to ask governing bodies to look at current governor skills sets before filling any vacancies on the governing body and that consideration also be given to appointing associate governors to support specific governing body statutory functions.

**347. Articles of Association:**

The CEO reported that DfE advice had been sought from the DfE regarding any need to update the ULT's Articles of Association in readiness for Richard Clarke First School formally joining. Confirmation had been given that specific change was not necessary although the DfE had advised that the Articles be updated to reflect the current model recommended for MATs consisting of non-church and church schools. The CEO also reported that any change to the current Articles of Association would have to be agreed by members.

It was resolved –

That the CEO and clerk be requested to arrange for the Articles to be updated as appropriate and that they be considered further by trustees before submitting to members for approval.

### **348. Risk Register:**

Trustees had been previously circulated with an updated copy of the risk register and the CEO reported that changes had been made to reflect discussions at the recent committee meetings. In particular, the changing role of the teaching school and the impact through loss of funding and school improvement opportunities, had been included as a risk.

It was resolved –

That the updated risk register be received and noted.

### **349. INSET Days 2021/2022:**

A copy of a report to identify the INSET days, recommended by schools for 2021/2022, had been previously circulated. The CEO reported that the Uttoxeter pyramid of schools had for a number of years agreed to co-ordinate the INSET days each year to make it easier for families with children in different phases to have their children off school on the same days.

It was resolved –

- i) That the following INSET days for 2021/2022, as recommended by the Uttoxeter pyramid of schools, be approved:
  - Wednesday 1st September 2021
  - Friday 22nd October 2021
  - Tuesday 4th January 2022
  - Monday 25th April 2022
  - Thursday 21st July 2022
- ii) That consideration be given to the pattern of school holidays at a future meeting of the Trust board.

### **350. Policy Approval:**

The following policies had been previously circulated and the CEO confirmed that each of them had been reviewed by the appropriate committee and recommended for approval:

- ULT Governors and Trustees – Code of Conduct
- ULT Grievance policy
- ULT School Improvement policy
- ULT Exclusion policy
- ULT NQT policy
- ULT Safeguarding policy (to reference children missing in education and protocol for children with health and medical needs)
- ULT Gifts and Hospitality policy
- ULT Investments policy
- ULT Financial Policy and Procedures manual (to include the scheme of financial delegation)

It was resolved –

That all policies be approved as presented.

**351. Other Business:**

a) AGM – School Reports

Trustees had been previously circulated with individual school reports prepared in readiness for the AGM to be held the following night.

It was resolved –

That trustees place on record their thanks to headteachers for the positive reports that had been submitted.

b) School Re-opening – Record of Thanks

As previously discussed in the meeting, trustees again recognised the work and commitment of all schools following their successful re-opening and placed on record their thanks to all concerned.

It was resolved –

That the chair also be requested to write to headteachers to thank them for all the work they continued to do to support their schools and pupils.

c) Trustees – Record of Thanks

The chair acknowledged the additional responsibilities placed on trustees during the pandemic and wished to place on record his thanks to them for all the support they were giving.

**352. Date of Next Meeting:**

Trustees were reminded that the next termly meeting of the Trust Board was to be held on Wednesday, 12 May 2021 at 5.30pm.

Signed.....  
S. Slater

Date.....  
12 May 2021