



The Active Learning Trust  
ACTIVE LEARNERS • ACTIVE LEADERS • ACTIVE CITIZENS

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST  
*held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023  
1pm via online Video-link***

# MINUTES

Trustees & Members

Present:

Mr M. Cole

Mr R. Dool (Chair)

Ms R. Weaver BEM

Mrs J. Cutchey

Mrs L. Holzer

Officers Present:

Mr C. D’Cunha

Mrs K. Jarvis (clerk)

Ms E. Hammond

Mr C. Paskell

Invited Guests:

Ms F. Gillespie

THE KEY DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING ARE SUMMARISED BELOW

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| DECISION  | Policies approved (following agreed amendments) for<br>- Gifts & Hospitality Policy<br>- Anti Fraud, Corruption & Bribery Policy<br>- Fraud Response Plan |

# MINUTES

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, NOTICE & QUORUM

1.1. Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mr P. Dabrowa, Mr D. Hilton, Mrs S. Myers and Mr B. Stickley.

1.2. Apologies were accepted.

1.3. Mr Dool introduced and welcomed Felicity Gillespie, consultant for the DfE, and explained that she would be working with the Board to strengthen governance.

1.4. Mr Dool welcomed Mrs Holzer to her first Board meeting since commencing her role as CEO.

## 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1. No new interests were declared for items on the agenda.

## 3. CHAIR'S ACTIONS

3.1. Mr Dool informed Trustees that he had undertaken an action, as agreed at the last meeting, to sign off the Annual Accounts.

3.2. Mr Dool reported on his visits to Reydon Primary School, Albert Pye Primary School and Ravensmere Infant School. He spoke of honest and open conversations with the headteachers and the work being undertaken since they have been in post.

## 4. SPECIAL & ORDINARY RESOLUTIONS

4.1. Trustees were asked to note that the Special Resolution to agree the transfer of Littleport & East Cambs Academy from The Active Learning Trust to another Trust had received sufficient approval by email to be carried.

4.2. Trustees were asked to note that the Ordinary Resolution for Mrs Holzer to be appointed as a Trustee had received sufficient approval by email to be carried.

## 5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022

5.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2022 were agreed as a true record, with two technical corrections suggested:

- Page 9- Action Point for LH to meet with PB – should read LH to meet with PD
- Page 9 – Action Point to make Terms of Reference readily available – see matters arising.

### 5.2. Matters Arising:

8.3. Mr Dool explained that the Terms of Reference were considered by Trustees at committee level, and therefore available to the full Board via committee minutes. He confirmed that, in future, Terms of Reference would be approved by Trustees at Board level rather than by Trustees at committee level.

9. Mr D’Cunha informed Trustees that analysis work has been completed on the behaviour plans of secondary schools. A paper outlining results and proposed actions will be provided to Trustees at the next meeting.

13. Mr Cole asked why the Trust Risk Register is not on the Agenda. Mrs Holzer explained that the Risk Register is being covered within her CEO report/strategic report.

## **6. BOARD COMMITTEES**

6.1. Trustees noted the minutes of the Finance committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Mr Dool gave verbal feedback on the Finance committee meeting held on the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. Areas discussed:

- The capacity and financial capabilities of staff
- Training required on IFP
- Issues around the estates management and the capital programme

6.2. Trustees noted the minutes of the Audit committee meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Mr Dool gave verbal feedback on the Audit committee meeting held on the morning of 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023. Areas discussed:

- List of identified actions to be provided with timelines
- Plans in process for replacing work previously undertaken by Mrs Driver

6.3. Trustees noted the minutes of the Quality of Education committee meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

6.4. Trustees noted the minutes of the Employment, Performance & Reward Committee meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

## **7. GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

Mr Dool explained that the DfE have offered support in the form of a review of governance throughout the Trust, including the Board of Trustees. This follows the strategy meeting held in May 2022 and the subsequent CST Review of the central staffing structure that resulted in the Ten Point Plan. Mr Dool went on to outline Ms Gillespie’s role in the review. Ms Gillespie gave details of her experience and provenance, and confirmed that she would be looking to identify issues in this area and undertaking a supportive role, working with the Board to move forward. She urged Trustees to contact her to discuss their views. It is expected that an initial report will be available within the next week, with next steps agreed soon after half-term. She added that colleagues will be drafted in to provide additional support if necessary,

## **8. CONFIDENTIAL**

## **9. POLICIES & STATUTORY DOCUMENTS**

### **9.1a. Information Governance Report**

Mrs Jarvis informed Trustees that there was no report to consider for this statutory agenda item. Mr Paskell added that the newly outsourced suppliers of this service would provide a report for the next meeting.

### **Policy Updates.**

Mr Dool informed the Board that the three listed policies had been approved by the Finance committee, with minor changes for each:

**9.1b. Gifts & Hospitality Policy**

Purchase of flowers for gifts in exceptional circumstances/occasions to be removed from the policy to meet the Academies Financial Handbook regulations.

**9.1c. Anti-Fraud, Corruption & Bribery Policy**

Be amended to reflect that the Director of Finance is a route for further investigation, rather than the final decision maker.

**9.1d. Fraud Response Plan**

Be amended to reflect action if there is police involvement

***Taking the above amendments into account, Trustees approved the policies as presented.***

Mr Cole asked that all policies be given a front sheet outlining version, author and renewal dates. He reminded all present that this has been requested previously.

**10. CEO REPORT**

Mrs Holzer explained that her written report focused on data and information that Trustees should be made aware of. She added that she would be taking a 'root & branch' look going forward and assess areas to ensure committees receive appropriate information to enable them to carry out their role.

**11. STRATEGIC EVALUATION & PLAN and  
12. TRUSTEE ONLY SESSION**

Mrs Holzer gave a presentation, starting with the process under which a strategic plan has been produced. This led to an outline action plan, which is underpinned by detailed action points in each area. Priorities have been identified and actions to mitigate risks have put in place. Mrs Holzer will be meeting with leads in each area on a regular basis to ensure that the plan is kept on track, with proven outcomes at the forefront of every meeting.

Mrs Holzer informed Trustees that there will be transparency and honesty at every level. She added that she is in no doubt that employees of the Trust are wholly committed to ensuring the best for young people, and are resolute in their integrity, which gives the Trust positive foundations to enable change and impact. Communication will be key across all areas.

Mrs Holzer made it clear that the plan is for the Trust – not for individual schools. Initial evaluations have been carried out, and owners will be held to account at the highest levels. Continual monitoring will be key and priorities may be amended to adjust to future evaluations.

The strategic plan outlined the three core strands as Strategy and Governance, Core Capabilities, and Enabling Capabilities. The powerpoint presentation (attached) gave an overview of how areas have been evaluated and showed timelines for priorities for the Spring and Summer terms. Trustees were asked to give particular attention to identified risks.

Mr Dool followed with an assessment that there is a great deal of work to do. He added that quality assurance will need to be addressed rapidly.

Mrs Holzer highlighted points as follows:

- Objectives and KPIs lie behind the action plans
- Work streams have been considered so that schools are not overloaded
- The Director of Operations appointment is key to work alongside committees and schools
- Good quality consultants have been drafted in
- Other areas, such as Safeguarding, have been expanded
- Targeted schools will receive a package of support

Part of the presentation gave an overview of schools. Each school has been reviewed and the outcomes have been justified. Trustees were given examples of why these assessments have been made.

Mrs Holzer referred to the Trust Risk Register, and six risks that have been added as a result of the strategic evaluation and subsequent plan.

Mr Dool thanked Mrs Holzer for the high level of reporting and information provided. He asserted his belief that the strategic plan and actions will be a robust working document that will allow Trustees to challenge effectively, adding that he was looking forward to seeing the detail underpinning the Plan at committee meetings. Mr Cole agreed, stating that the presentation has given clarity to Trustees. Mr Dool asked for comments from Trustees:

Mr Cole praised the clear analysis and plans to improve across all areas. He said he felt reassured that there is a clear route forward.

Ms Weaver congratulated Mrs Holzer for her report, and the amount of progress achieved in the short time she had been in post. She added that she felt optimistic about the future as problems will be easier to solve now they are known.

Mrs Holzer restated that communication is key. She informed Trustees that three-weekly meetings have been organised with Headteachers to keep them informed. She recognised Mrs Cutchey's point that accurate information is vital to enable Trustees to carry out their roles, adding that this will start with the introduction of the Trust Data Dashboard, which will provide hard, qualitative data. The Dashboard has been developed over two years and Mrs Holzer believes that the capabilities are enormous.

In response to a question from Mrs Cutchey, Mrs Holzer reported on the leadership arrangements of Kingsfield Primary School and Burrowmoor Primary School.

Mr Dool stated that he is positive about the future. Meetings with the DfE will make clear the transformational processes and progress. Mrs Holzer agreed, adding that she had a close working relationship with the DfE and the Local Authority, and has asked them to have confidence in the work being undertaken. Mr Cole stated that the RD and Ofsted will want to see clear evidence of change and improvement.

Mrs Cutchey asked if Trustees can see the conditions attached to the coasting schools once they are available. This was agreed, with Mrs Holzer informing Trustees that the proof needs to be developed into governance reporting to allow LGBs and Trustees to make informed, strategic decisions.

Ms Weaver asked if the Board needed to meet more frequently in the interim period. Mr Dool responded that, although he personally would be willing, he was concerned that other Trustees would struggle to increase their commitment. Mrs Holzer stated that the next stage of the strategic review would be to look at strengthening the Board, which would allow for working parties to be set up to work on time-focused projects.

Mrs Cutchey suggested that all Trustees be invited to attend Quality of Education committee meetings to ensure their knowledge and understanding is current. Ms Gillespie reminded Trustees that consultants can be invited to join to support specific areas.

Mr Dool closed the agenda item by saying how useful he believed the session had been and that he knew all present welcomed the next stages of development.

### 13. TIME & DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023.



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# ACTION POINTS

| Agenda Item | Who? | Action   | Timeline           |
|-------------|------|--|--------------------|
| 5.1         | CDC  | Present paper on behaviour plans in schools                  | Next meeting       |
| 5.2         | KJ   | TORs to be approved at Board level in future                 | When next reviewed |
| 12          | LH   | Trustees to be provided with conditions for coasting schools | When available     |