



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

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST
held on Thursday 9th December 2021
1pm via online Video-link**

MINUTES

Trustees & Members
Present:

Ms L. Adams
Prof. A. Boddison
Mrs J. Cutchey
Mr R. Dool (Chair)
Mr M. Kerr
Ms R. Weaver BEM

Mr J. Beswick
Mr S. Chamberlain (CEO)
Mr C. Bush
Ms M. Lloyd
Mrs C. Quinn

Officers Present:

Mr C. D’Cunha
Ms E. Hammond
Mr C. Paskell

Mr D. Hilton
Mrs K. Jarvis

Invited Guests:

Mr G. Miller (Price Bailey Auditors)

THE KEY DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING ARE SUMMARISED BELOW	
DECISION	Approved appointment of Ben Stickley and Shaheen Myers subject to successful meeting with Mr Dool and Mr Chamberlain
DECISION	Ratification of Trust Modern Slavery Statement
DECISION	Ratification of ICT Security policy
DECISION	Ratification of Email Acceptable Use policy
DECISION	Ratification of Internet, Social Media & ESafety policy
DECISION	Ratification of Subject Access Request policy
DECISION	Stone King should be appointed to support the Trust with SIMS renewal contract negotiations. This includes becoming part of a group of MATs in a similar position.
RECOMMENDATION	Annual accounts be accepted by Members once all amendments finalised

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE, NOTICE & QUORUM

1.1. Apologies for absence had been received prior to the meeting from Mr Singh.

1.2. Apologies were accepted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

2.2. Trustees were reminded that they should return an updated declaration of interests form to Mrs Jarvis.

3. AUDITORS REPORT & ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Mr Gary Miller was introduced as Lead Auditor from Price Bailey. He explained the role of the external auditors in the review and production of the Annual Accounts, which must be submitted to the EFSA by 31st December 2021.

Mr Miller explained that auditors do not check education information, but provide an audit report, management letter and subsequent Trustee statement. He added that, at the time of the meeting, work is still being carried out on the accounts and so the information presented to Trustees is a first version that will likely be amended as audit queries remain outstanding. Areas considered by the auditors are:

- Revenue recognition
- Management overview
- Related parties
- Fund Allocation
- Staff and salary costs
- Accounting estimates (eg LGPS) – a new considered introduced by the EFSA
- Detecting irregularities, including fraud – a new considered introduced by the EFSA
- Accounting standards are prioritised within the Management letter from 1 to 4.
- Accounting systems within the Trust for robust

Mr Miller took Trustees through the Management letter providing clarity were requested. Statements included:

- Thanks to Mr Paskell and the Finance team
- Balances are at the higher end of those seen in other Trusts. He recommended that Trustees consider whether the level of reserves is appropriate.
- Very few adjustments have been needed
- Very few problems with financial systems – they are working ‘quite well’
- Trustees can have a high level of confidence in the finance functions
- There are no priority 1 points to report
- Priority 2 points relate to Trustee updates
- There are no priority 3 points to report
- Priority 4 points are recommendations

Mr Dool thanked Mr Miller for his report and reiterated the thanks of Trustees to the Finance teams at Trust and school level. Mr Chamberlain stated he believed that the minor issues found are due to inexperienced staff rather than lack of ability. Mr Paskell agreed, stating that new staff are being supported as appropriate.

Mr Miller left the meeting at this point.

Mr Bush questioned whether, given Mr Miller's recommendation, Trustees should consider the £10 million plus balances. Mr Chamberlain stated that the reserves for a Trust the size of ALT are not unreasonable, and it should be noted that they are spread across schools. He asked Trustees to recognise future high-spend projects, and that budget issues are emerging that will reduce the reserves significantly.

Mr Dool asked Trustees whether they felt in a position to recommend to Members that the Annual Accounts be accepted. ***Trustees agreed, recommending that the Members meet (virtually) and sign off the Annual Accounts once all amendments have been made.***

4. BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Trustees confirmed that they had received and reviewed a report from the Company Secretary prior to the meeting.

4.1. The report included confirmation of three resignations: Mr David Bateson, Prof. Adam Boddison, and Mr Greg Hely-Hutchinson.

4.2. The report included confirmation of Chairs for Board Committees for this academic year.

4.3. The report included brief personal bios and proposals for two new Trustees. Mr Chamberlain confirmed that he was aware of both nominations and he and Mr Dool would be meeting the candidates early in the new year. Trustees present agreed that the experience of the candidates would be welcomed, and they therefore approved the nominations of Shaheen Myers and Ben Stickley, dependant on a successful interview process with Mr Dool and Mr Chamberlain.

4.4. The report included an update on the membership of local governing bodies in schools. Trustees were pleased to note the number of vacancies has declined.

Mr Bush asked about if there has been any progress on appointing a new Chair at Neale-Wade Academy. Mr Chamberlain explained that he would be attending the next LGB meeting at NWA to discuss a way forward.

5. CHAIR'S ACTION

Mr Dool informed Trustees that he had undertaken not undertaken any Chair's Actions since the last meeting.

Mr Dool reported on his recent visits to Pakefield, Westwood and Grove primary schools. Mrs Cutchey had joined the visits for Westwood and Grove. Mr Dool reported that all heads at the school were excellent ambassadors and a joy to meet. He asked that Trustees note that the support of the central team is particularly valued, but they are unhappy with the level of support from Suffolk local authority and links with local high schools. KS3 education is a concern raised at all three schools. Mr Dool added that governors felt well informed.

6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 21st OCTOBER 2021

6.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 8th July 2021 were accepted as a true record, with no technical corrections.

6.2. Matters Arising & Action Points

1. Trustees confirmed they had received logons for the National College training module.
2. Mr Dool confirmed that he and Mrs Jarvis are meeting to discuss the Trustee link role.

7. BOARD COMMITTEES

7.1. It was noted that the Finance Committee meeting scheduled for 21st October did not take place. Mr Dool confirmed that the meeting scheduled for the morning of 9th December did go ahead.

7.2. It was noted that the Audit Committee meeting scheduled for 21st October did not take place. Mr Beswick gave brief verbal feedback from the meeting held on the morning of 9th December, stating that the reports were well written and gave a high degree of assurance.

7.3. Trustees noted the minutes of the Quality of Education Committee meeting held on 25th November 2021. Mr Bush drew attention to the section relating to Gusford Primary School, and it was agreed that the notes of the meeting will be

7.4. As requested by the Committee, Mr Chamberlain gave a verbal update on schools of concern.

LECA: the first phase of headship interviews have taken place with the view of appointing before the end of term. Mr Chamberlain will be chairing a meeting of the LGB, also before the end of term.

Burrowmoor: there remains concerns about safeguarding and the pace of progress. Mr Chamberlain outlined options.

Gusford: senior members of the central team will be carrying out a full review early in the new term.

7.5. Trustees noted the minutes of the Safeguarding Committee meeting held on 25th November 2021.

7.6. As requested by the Committee, Mrs Young had provided an update on schools of concern – see attached notes.

8. CEO's REPORT

8.1. Trustees confirmed they had received and reviewed the CEO report prior to the meeting. Mr Chamberlain took Trustees through his report, highlighting the following:

Section 1: Attendance & COVID-19

- Latest figures on staff and pupil positive cases presented
- New guidance has been issued (on the morning of the meeting) relating to the changing situation on COVID and Omicron
- Staff absence is high, impacting teaching and budgets
- No supply staff are available
- Report from DfE shows that basic skills have gone backwards over the past year
- All ALT schools are COVID safe and, at the time of writing, seasonal events are going ahead as planned
- Trust work is taking place as usual

Section 2: Strategic Plan: Operating Model

- Proposals for future operating model presented
- Team has been strengthened by the recruitment of two health & safety officers
- Need to move all schools to one network – will improve cyber security as well as service

Mr Bush asked how will capability and appraisal be monitored. Mr Chamberlain explained how Ms Hammond will use specialist knowledge.

Section 3: Strategic Plan: Communications Plan

- Presented the guiding principles of communication model
- Noted it will be a challenge to recruit someone with specific skill set
- Trustees asked to share any experience of models with Mr Chamberlain

Section 4: Curriculum Conference Feedback

- Thanks to Mr Hilton and his team for organising the conference content, which focused on teaching, learning and assessment.
- Feedback from attending has been extremely positive
- HMI experience and Ofsted training was used effectively and developed for staff
- Work continues in individual schools
- Mr Hilton thanked Mrs Jarvis for facilitating

Section 5: Meeting with RSC & Growth Principles

- Meeting took place on 23rd November with Deputy RSC
- Persistent absence was raised – more analysis being carried out on PA across schools and how trigger points can be early identified.
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- DRSC alluded that growth would be considered on a case-by-case basis

Mr Dool felt it was disappointing that the Trust did not receive any steer on future plans. Mr Hilton stated that it is important to note that attendees were able to communicate the progress made over the past years and given evidence of improvement in the curriculum.

Prof. Boddison stated that there is an emphasis on teaching CPD. He added that the ITT market review is taking place and may result in changes in this area. Mr Chamberlain agreed, adding that Ambition are bidding to be the market provider.

Section 6: ICT Strategy Update

- Was explained as part of the Operating Model
- Schools are being asked to complete RATER model so that service perception can be gauged
- Planning to move all schools onto same tenancy sooner than scheduled - abortive costs are minimal compared with advantages

Section 7: Buildings & Estate Updates

- The Carr Street development has stalled. Mr Chamberlain asked the Board to support the view of the Trust and Adrian Orr, Suffolk CC. This was willingly given.
- Ground has been broken on the Peile Centre – work will be completed by Easter 2022
- Chantry's extension is due to be completed by September 2022

Section 8: ALT Institute of Teaching & Leadership

- Arts strategy was paused due to lockdown, but now gaining momentum
- Jane Ryder and Peter Woollard have met with heads and staff

- Aim to hold a cross-Trust performance
- EAAREC conference held – Mrs Quinn extolled value and encouraged Trustees to get involved

Section 9: Strategic Plan: One-Trust Approach – Mission, Vision, Values & Ethos

- One-Trust badge initiative launched with great success
- Heads and schools embracing ideas of ‘Actives’
- Learning Commission set up – over 100 students over 4 secondary schools attending
- Data collected from students being reviewed
- Next steps – commissioners to view lessons and introduce year 9 & 10 induction commissioners for Year 7
- Commissioners could be invited to present to Board in the future

Section 10: Ofsted Reports

- **Pakefield:** Mr Chamberlain informed Trustees that the official report has been published and a letter of congratulations has been received from the RSC.
- **Neale-Wade:** The final version of the letter has been received by the school and Athene (Comms team) are supporting the wider message. The majority of staff recognise the position the school is in and are keen to move the school forward.

Trustees noted the content of Mr Chamberlain’s comprehensive report and thanked him for its detail.

9. ITT & ECT BUSINESS PLAN

Trustees confirmed that they had received and reviewed the full Business Plan for ITT and ECT. Mr Paskell presented the plan, noting thanks to Sarah Martin. He stated that the biggest issue is the current market review which may result in amendments being required.
 Year 1: Current position – the budget is marginally improved
 Year 2: Budget expected to be as predicted
 Year 3: Budget position may change

Mr Dool stated that he appreciated seeing the rationale, risk and budget together in one document. Mr Chamberlain informed Trustees that a meeting of key personnel has taken place to discuss options, and an extensive review will be required as preferred providers are approved in the coming months.

10. POLICIES AND STATUTORY DOCUMENTS

10.1.a. Modern Slavery Statement

Trustees ratified the Trust Statement on Modern Slavery.

10.1. Report from Data Protection Officer

Trustees noted the content of the annual report from the Trust’s Data Protection Officer (which had also been presented at the previous meeting) and noted the work being undertaken in this area across all schools.

Following due process, Trustees ratified the following policies:

- a. ICT Security Policy

- b. Email Acceptable Use Policy
- c. Internet, Social Media & ESafety Policy
- d. Subject Access Request Policy*

*one amendment required relating to retention of leavers information.

11. TIMES & DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as Thursday 10th February 2022, at 1pm.

12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

Mr Paskell asked for Trustee approval to enter into a legal agreement with Stone King to consider the implications of SIMS moving to a three year deal. This is needed as three years will require an OJEU process, which there is insufficient time to complete. There is a possibility of a legal challenge from other providers and so Stone King are establishing a consortium of MATs in the same position that they will provide support and advice to. The move is likely to attract public and media attention.

Trustees agreed that legal advice will be required and Stone King should be appointed to provide this.

Mr Dool asked that Mr Chamberlain pass on the thanks of all Trustees to the central team for their sterling work this term, and in 2021 as a whole.

Final thanks were given to Prof. Boddison, who was attending his last meeting. All present wished him well in the future, with Mr Dool stating that he hoped Prof. Boddison would remain a friend of The Active Learning Trust for years to come.

Mr Dool wished all a very Happy Christmas.



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ACTION POINTS

Agenda Item	Who?	Action	Timeline
2.2.	ALL	Return declaration of interest form to Mrs Jarvis	ASAP
3.	CP	Distribute final Annual Accounts and Auditors Management letter to Members when available	ASAP
4.3.	SC & RD	Meet with prospective Trustee candidates	Early January 2022
4.4.	SC	Discuss NWA Chair position with LGB	Next LGB meeting
12.	SC	Pass on thanks to central team from Trustees	December 2021
12.	CP	Engage Stone King to support with SIMS contact renewal	December 2021