PART ONE MINUTES
Meeting of the Trust Board of The Learning Partnership
Held on Thursday 26th March 2026 at 9:30 am
Venue – Crewe UTC, 45 Meredith Street, Crewe CW1 2PZ

Trustees present:	In attendance
Mr David Wootton CBE DL (DW)-Chair	Mr Dan Thomas (DT)-CEO
Mr Bob Armstrong OBE (BA)	Ms Kate Baddeley (KB)-DCEO
Dr Martin Ashcroft (MA)-left at 2:03 pm	Mr Steve Bulmer, Totus Solutions-joined remotely for item 8
Mrs Helen Ranson (HR)-left at 1:00 pm	Mr Ian Simpson (IS) Finance Director-joined for item 10
Mr Robin McCluney (RMC)	Mrs Sue Pomeroy, clerk
Mr John Clough (JC)	Mrs Sian Wilkinson, clerk
Mr Simon Kidwell (SK)-left at 1:00 pm	
Dame Kathy August (KA)	
Mrs Margaret Cheshire MC)	
Mr Sean Houlston (SH)	

Apologies
Mr Andrew Pear DL

The meeting was preceded at 9:30 am with a meeting between Trustees and the CEO. The main meeting commenced at 10:00 am

Agenda Item	Action
1. Welcome and Apologies The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that it was quorate. Apologies were received and accepted from Andy Pear. **2. Declarations and confirmations** There were no declarations of interest made concerning the items on the agenda. **3. Governance Matters** **a) Trustee/Member recruitment:** DW informed Trustees that it has been challenging to recruit suitable new Trustees, but it is planned to make some new appointments over the next 6-12 months. A skills matrix has been used to identify any gaps, and DT informed Trustees that he has held conversations with a potential candidate. **b) CEO Performance Review and Targets** DW provided an update: • Louise Soden (LS) has been appointed as an external adviser for the CEO's Performance Management. She has a very strong background in education as an ex-senior adviser with the DfE. • A meeting was held with LS and JC, DT and DW. • Objectives were reviewed from last year and new ones set for this year. The targets then had to be revised due to events arising from the Operational	

Review. The new targets are related to the current situation and are based on the outcomes of the operational review. They contain measurable milestones.

- The targets will be monitored monthly by LS and DW. A half yearly review will take place, and LS will attend the next board meeting in July 2026 to update on progress towards meeting the targets.
- JC added that recent events had overtaken the original targets and that new tight deadlines had been added. The new targets are challenging but achievable.

Trustee challenge:

The targets require revision to include one on operational culture. **DT agreed** that this was appropriate and that he would ask LS to include another section on a system for monitoring organisational culture. **ACTION**

The Scheme of Delegation requires revising and implementing by September 2026. DT agreed and stated that this would be actioned and policies and procedures then put in place for September 2026.

Trustees commented that the CEO's Performance Management objectives were appropriate, essential and reflective of the Operational Review report. DT noted that the revised objectives are short term and reflective of the priorities of the current needs of the organisation.

Resolved: Trustees approved the CEO's performance management objectives subject to the addition of an additional objective around the culture of the organisation.

4. Minutes of the previous meeting

a. Trustees reviewed the part 1 minutes from the previous meeting held on 18th December 2025.

Resolved: Trustees approved the part 1 minutes as a correct record of the meeting.

b. Trustees reviewed the part 2 minutes from the previous meeting held on 18th December 2025.

Resolved: Trustees approved the part 2 minutes as a correct record of the meeting.

c. Matters arising

Trustees reviewed and updated the action log, and the following matter was discussed:

Data dashboards

- KB has been working with the data manager to develop a school on the page document [SOAP] for each school. **Trustees asked** whether this would be linked to DFE information. **KB confirmed** that all published data from the DfE on a school would be included along with relevant internal data. A draft document is being prepared, and the central team are discussing the information which needs to be prioritised on there and the audience for the document. **Trustees challenged** that these documents should be appropriate for trustees and prioritise critical issues. **KB responded** that these documents will also be used by LGB's, directors of phase, and Headteachers. Therefore, consideration will be given to whether it is appropriate to produce one document or to produce different ones suitable for different audiences.

It was confirmed that all other actions from the previous meeting had been met or would be addressed on this agenda.

5. Chair's Report

Trustees noted the following actions:

- 22nd of January 2026 consultation regarding the conversion of Shavington Primary School RP to a SEND unit and lowering of the age range to include reception children.

- 13th of February 2026 consultation regarding the lowering of the age range at Leighton Academy SEND unit to include reception children.
- 7th of March 2026 approval of the commencement of formal consultation on the proposed staffing restructures at CHS, KA and SWS.

6. Reports from Committees

Audit and risk committee 04.03.26

RM provided an update:

- The committee had discussed strategic risk and the need for a broader risk focus. A paper will be presented at agenda item 12 on a review of the risk approach.
- The committee had discussed the process by which risks are identified and added to the risk register and agreed that this needs to be made clearer.
- A new health and safety risk had been added to the risk register.
- The A&R committee needs to make a more central leading role in risk management.
- The committee had agreed the process for re tendering for the appointment of the external auditors.
- The committee had agreed a change to the GDPR policy.

Trustees commented that the level of policy approval and decision-making at committee level and trust level needs to be made clearer.

- The committee had discussed horizon scanning opportunities and agreed that risk and opportunities should be treated equally.
- The risk register would be streamlined and then presented at all future meetings of the trust board.

Education Standards and Performance Committee 12.02.26

SK provided an update:

- The meeting had been held via correspondence due to difficulties in arranging a meeting date to suit all parties. Trustees commented that they would prefer not to meet via correspondence again.
- Data had been reviewed regarding the targets set in the autumn term. In the primary sector, EPS and WPS are making good progress with an improving picture at picture at CPS. Issues remain at DPS, SPS and WCLA. In the secondary sector attainment at KA is high with an improving picture at CHS. Issues remain at SWS and TOA around attainment in English and Maths.
- Writing is a national issue and an issue for all the trust schools, and this is being addressed through the school improvement offer.

Trustees noted the positive recent Ofsted report for KA. They challenged why three areas had been rated as expected when other areas had achieved a strong judgement. **KB responded** that in the case of personal development the expected judgement related to individual case studies and the lack of detail around actions and impact. For example, the school could not evidence what it was doing to address year 10 students who were not partaking in enrichment activities. Under leadership and management, one of the main reasons for the expected judgement was around monitoring and tracking of data which informs strategic decision making.

Trustees asked when the plan for year 12 and year 13 provision would be ready and be presented to the trust board. **KD explained** that the proposal had been uploaded to Governor Hub following the last Trust Board meeting and she would present the plan at the July 2026 meeting of the Trust Board. **ACTION**

KB

Trustees also discussed the resignation of the Headteacher at EPS **and asked** how the Trust works to retain senior staff. DT informed them that the Headteacher at

	EPS is moving with a promotion to a larger three form entry primary school. He noted that the Headteacher of WCLA is retiring at the end of August 2026. Recruitment is underway for the two head teacher positions. **Finance and staffing committee 18.03.26** **BA provided an update:** • Due to workload and recent events, two Finance and Staffing committee meetings had been cancelled. • P6 management pack is now available and has been circulated • There are encouraging signs as additional income has been received. • There are two new areas of concern related to restructuring costs and clawback due to the closure of CSS. • F&S meetings need to resume at the earliest opportunity as there is still uncertainty around costs and the Trust's financial position. **Trustees requested** further information on the funding from the DfE which has been withheld**. DT explained** that he was meeting again with the DfE tomorrow morning and is over 50% confident that the DfE will reinstate the funding. **Trustees commented** that many issues have moved on and been resolved. However, agency staffing costs and alternative provision [AP] costs remain high. **DT explained** that this links to the HR system and the lack of consistency in managing staff absence. There are currently three different absence management policies an operation across the trust. The interim HR director will address this. Additionally, it is often difficult to control costs due to issues such as outbreaks of winter sickness. The Trust is looking at purchasing staff absence insurance to mitigate the costs. Also, KB has developed a policy on the use of AP to make sure that it is used in a cost effective and beneficial way. **DT assured** Trustees that a strategic plan is in place to address these issues.	
7.	**Reports from Link Trustees-Summary** AP had been unable to attend this meeting to provide an update.	
8. **9.**	**Strategic Update- Part Two item** **Education Update** **a) School restructures update** KB stated that the restructuring process has commenced at KA, CHS and SWS and the outcomes will be known in the summer term 2026. 19 potential posts are risk, and 60 members of staff are in the pool. Benchmarking information has been used to identify areas where re-structuring is required. The trust has offered voluntary redundancy and flexible working. There are three main areas for the restructure process: • curriculum delivery • financial sustainability in the long term • capacity align to people numbers KB outlined the following risks to the Trust of the restructuring exercise: • culture of the trust versus the school, for example creating the feeling that the trust is doing this to the schools. • an increase in staff absence • strike action **Trustees asked** how likely the risk of strike action is. **DT responded** that a union ballot had taken place yesterday at KA and they are expecting to move ahead with industrial action. The Trust has taken HR advice on the restructuring process, and the consultation is within the law and follows due process. **Trustees asked** how the risk of strike action would be mitigated. **DT responded** that it is difficult when the	

trust does not have any information on how many members of staff would be involved in strike action. A risk assessment would be carried out in the event of industrial action to assess whether it was safe to continue to operate the school. Supply staff could be used. A communication plan has been discussed, and a specialist firm would be used to handle communications with the media. **b) Exception reporting (CHS, DPS, SWS)** **KB referred to *Paper 9b: "Vulnerable School Update".* She highlighted the following points:** • The language used in the report has been changed to match the new Ofsted way of reporting. The terms "celebrate", "validate" and "highlight" are used. This is the way that school improvement visits will be reported on also. • Trustees need to consider the criteria for identifying vulnerable schools. In the past this has been based on either financial issues or school improvement issues. KB asked Trustees to consider whether this should be based on a single issue or should be more rounded judgement. If a school was subject to intervention from the DfE then it would automatically be classified as a vulnerable school. She proposed that any other school should have multiple issues before it is classed as vulnerable. The reasoning for this is that if there were educational issues these would be addressed at the ES&P committee and any financial issues would be addressed at the F&S committee**. It was agreed that KB** would present a model for identifying vulnerable schools to the next A&R meeting for discussion based on Sir David Carter's Quadrant Model. This would then be presented at Trust Board level. **ACTION** **Resolved:** Trustees agreed for CHS to be removed from the vulnerable school list. **10. Finance Update –** **a) Management Accounts and latest forecast-Part Two item** **b) Budget setting 2026-27** **IS provided a verbal update:** • Budget setting meetings were held with all the schools in January 2026. • Core funding information has been received from the DfE. • Further meetings will take place after Easter 2026. • Ownership of each budget line has been made clear. • There are four finance leads and the schools are split evenly between them. **11. Estates Management Update** **DT referred to Paper 11a)** "***Overview and update of identified HS Concerns updated".* He highlighted the following points*:*** • All Health and Safety concerns are detailed on this document. Mitigations have been put in place for issues which cannot be solved yet. • SCA funding is detailed on the document. • The Trust responded quickly to address urgent concerns. • A link Trustee for Health and Safety should be appointed. **Trustees commented** that the 5-year Estates plan now requires updating. **DT informed** them that meetings would be held with all Headteachers after Easter 2026 to review local priorities and the plan would then be reviewed and re-written. **Resolved:** SH was appointed as link Trustee for Health and Safety. **12. Operational Matters** **Review of Risk Approach: "*Paper 12 Example Risk Statement*"** DT informed Trustees that this paper had been included for information as an example risk statement. This Trust needs such a statement which will then be built into a risk appetite framework. This would be developed by the A&R Committee. **13. AOB**	KB

KB asked for Trustees' availability to sit on the two Headteacher recruitment panels. BA indicated he was available for the EPS panel on 21.04.26 and JC indicated he was available for the WCLA panel on 28.04.26. KB also invited Trustees to the Debate Competition on 17.06.26 and to the Trust Art Exhibition on 16.07.26.	
Date and time of next Trust Board Meeting Thursday 16th July 2026 09:30-13:00. Location Crewe UTC	

The meeting moved to the part two agenda