

PART ONE MINUTES - Meeting of the Trust Board of The Learning Partnership

Held on Wednesday 20th March 2024 at 1:30 pm

Venue – Knutsford Academy, Westfield Drive, Knutsford, WA16 0BL

Trustees present:

- Mr David Wootton (DW)
- Mr Bob Armstrong (BA)
- Mr John Clough (JC)
- Mr Robin McCluney (RMc)
- Dr Martin Ashcroft (MA)
- Mrs Helen Ranson (HR)
- Mrs Alison Greatbanks (AG)
- Dame Kathy August (KA)
- Mr Andrew Pear (AP)

In attendance

- Mr Dan Thomas (DTh)- CEO
- Mr David Twambley (DTw) -DCEO
- Dr Allan Howells (AH)- Director of Quality
- Mrs Sue Pomeroy (SP)- Clerk

Apologies:

- Mr Simon Kidwell (SK)

Agenda Item	Action
<p>1. Welcome and apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone and confirmed that the meeting was quorate. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr Simon Kidwell. The Chair explained that today’s agenda had been organised into two sections to allow Trustees to focus on strategic items.</p> <p>2. Declarations and confirmations</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made concerning the items on the agenda.</p> <p>3. Minutes</p> <p>a. Trustees reviewed the part 1 minutes from the previous meeting held on 14th December 2023. The clerk was requested to correct Robin McCluney’s name and to amend Kathy August’s title. ACTION</p> <p>Trustees approved the minutes as a correct record of the meeting, subject to the above amendments.</p> <p>Matters arising:</p> <p>Page 2-an update on carbon footprint would be provided at the next Trust Board meeting to be held on 18th July 2024. ACTION</p> <p>Page 4-AH had provided examples of standardised Headteacher’s reports to the LGB. He explained that further work is required on aligning data drops and the timing of meetings and that the format of the reports is still evolving. Trustees requested an update on the format of the Headteacher’s reports as they evolve. He also informed Trustees that a Governor’s Conference had been provisionally booked for 13th July 2024. It would be internally focussed and there would be input from the NGA. Trustees requested that a draft of the programme be shared with them. ACTION</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>DTw</p> <p>AH</p>

<p>b. Trustees approved the part two minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2023 as a correct record of the meeting.</p> <p>c. Trustees reviewed the matters arising report and discussed the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Item 27-Trust Board committees are reviewing their risks, but a standardised approach needs to be developed. • Item 29-AH had provided supplementary papers for this meeting on governor recruitment and retention. Trustees commented that there was a significant amount of detail in the recruitment pack which could be daunting to prospective governors. AH responded that informal discussions take place with prospective candidates, and they are encouraged to observe at meetings prior to appointment. 	
<p>4. Chair's report</p> <p>a. Summary of actions taken</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of a reduction in the PAN at UTC. • Confirmed positive responses to the consultation to incorporate Egerton Preschool into the Trust. • Confirmation that Trustees are content to approve the lowering of the age range to two years old at EPS. <p>The Chair explained that Reading and Early learning are priorities for the Trust and therefore Nursery provision at all its schools is important. The consultation at EPS was 100% positive, and the move will benefit the community. The reduction in PAN at UTC and the lowering of the age range at EPS are both subject to RD approval and a Significant Change Request had been submitted.</p> <p>Trustees noted and endorsed the Chair's actions in the period from 20th December 2023 to 13th March 2024.</p> <p>b. Update on meeting with RD Office 19th March 2024 The CEO, DCEO and Chair had attended the meeting. The following items had been discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance-the RD had stated that an even number of Trustees and members is preferred, even though the Trust had been directed to have 10 Trustees when it merged. The RD had been supportive of the governance arrangements and liked the formation of the ESP Committee. • School data -the Trust had been able to share internal data. • The RD had noted evidence of improvement and the impact of initiatives. • Growth strategy-The RD had been happy with this and encouraged the work being carried out with other schools. <p>The meeting had been worthwhile and Vicky Beer (RD for the North West) had been invited to visit the Trust.</p> <p>5. Reports from Committees</p> <p>c. Chair's report-Finance and Staffing 21.02.24.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Staffing Committee (BA) provided a verbal report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The IT proposal from Novus had been a focus for the meeting. • School budgets had been discussed. An additional committee meeting had been arranged on 9th May 2024. • There were no major staffing issues to report. <p>d. Chair's report-Audit and Risk 06.03.24</p>	

<p>The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (AG) spoke to the Chair’s report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal audit reports had been received-reasonable assurance. • Risk Register had been reviewed. Two risks had been retired and one relating to SWS and TOA had been split to form two separate risks. • The appointment of external auditors had been discussed. <p>The Chair requested an update from the Governance Committee. AH responded that the committee meets as necessary to approve new governors for the LGBs. Two new appointments had been made to the governance team-Sue Pomeroy and Sharon Dutton- and a third appointment was pending. All three had governance experience and backgrounds in education. The new team had started looking at workload and sharing out responsibilities. Each school would have a dedicated clerk and the clerking contract with Entrust would cease at the end of this academic year. An external review of governance was being planned which would be overseen by Governance Committee. A draft scope of work had been prepared by AH and the NGA and this would now be considered by Governance Committee via a view to commissioning the work. The aim was to conclude the work this academic year.</p>	
<p>STRATEGIC ITEMS</p> <p>6. School Improvement- [Confidential Item]</p> <p>a. Sir William Stanier (SWS) [Confidential Item]</p> <p>b. Daven Primary (DPS) [Confidential Item]</p>	
<p>7. Digital-Novus [Confidential Item]</p>	
<p>8. GAG Pooling</p> <p>The issue of GAG pooling and its advantages and disadvantages had been raised by the auditors in December 2023. The DCEO informed Trustees that it is becoming more prevalent in MATs and can be beneficial in driving school improvement and strengthening the vision of a single organisation. In principle the Trust would be in favour of moving towards GAG pooling and recommended re-visiting the issue in 24 months’ time. There are currently disparities in the financial position of the schools, and some have been building reserves for a considerable time to fund projects.</p> <p>Trustees agreed that GAG pooling is not currently a focus priority for the Trust and that it is important to continue to build the relationship between the Trust Board and the LGBs. It was suggested that an interim stage could be to raise the top slice by 1% to create a central reserve fund which could be accessed by the schools as required. This would develop the ethos of a family of schools supporting each other. The Executive would reflect further on this as part of the current budget setting process.</p>	
<p>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</p> <p>9. School Improvement – Director of Education</p> <p>The recruitment pack for this role had been shared with Trustees. The CEO informed Trustees that the advertisement is now live and that the Trust is working with Satis Education recruitment agency. He stressed that this is a key appointment and that the process would be repeated if a suitable candidate was not found in the first round of applications. DW, AP, BA and SK would be involved in the interview panels and KA would also provide input.</p> <p>Q. Is this a common role in Trusts?</p>	

<p>R. Yes, and it was specified by the RD’s Office.</p> <p>Trustees noted that experience as an Ofsted inspector had been specified as desirable for this role and whilst recognising the value of this, questioned how often the Trust would want their Director of Education to be out inspecting at other schools. The CEO responded that the role would be developed in consultation with the ESP Committee once the right candidate had been identified. Trustees stressed the importance of tailoring the role to meet the needs of the Trust.</p>	
<p>10.MAT Leadership Team of the Year</p> <p>This award had recently been achieved from the Multi Academy Trust Association (MATA). The CEO informed Trustees that the purpose of applying for this award had been to raise the profile of the Trust and to recognise the work of the whole organisation in the merger of the two previous Trusts to form TLP. He thanked the Chair, Vice Chair and DCEO for their support. Trustees offered their congratulations.</p>	
<p>11. Recent Trust and School Successes and Achievements</p> <p>The following items were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas show at Knutsford Academy. The Chair stated that he had attended the show and been impressed by the standard of the production. This reflects the fact the school invests in the arts and offers a broad range of activities. • Opening of the Nursery at WCLA. This provides a fantastic resource for the school and its local community. The CEO explained that the school had been saving for a long time to open a Nursery and that it is proving to be very popular. It is expected that the second class would open in September 2024, earlier than originally planned. • Expansion of the site at CHS in partnership with Cheshire East. The school is very popular. • Reading Buddy training for Year 9 and Year 10 pupils to support weaker readers. Secondary School debating competition to be held next week at Cranage Hall, organised through Debate Mate. • Ofsted inspections at two of the Trust schools with “good” judgements. Reading had been praised at WPS and the subject lead from the school would share good practice across the Trust. 	
<p>12. School Improvement Support- Update</p> <p>Trustees commented that the School Improvement report (paper 12) was clear and informative. The RD had praised the Trust’s work on Reading and the Headteachers are appreciative of the SEND support and resources provided by the Trust.</p> <p>Q. The Trust has an English lead. Is there a Maths lead across the Trust?</p> <p>R. Expressions of interest for a Maths lead had been requested but none had been received. The Trust is considering using support on a consultancy basis from the Confederation of School Trusts.</p> <p>Q. Are the schools involved in Maths projects?</p> <p>R. Yes, the schools work with the Maths Hubs.</p>	
<p>13.Strategic Safeguarding update</p> <p>Trustees received a detailed report within the meeting papers. AP informed Trustees that Emma Hooley, Director of Safeguarding and School Improvement Coordinator, now has a narrower remit which is more focussed on Safeguarding. This provides greater assurance to Trustees. The report (paper 13) is in a new format and will evolve as more information on trends becomes available. EH was working with schools to</p>	

introduced standard reports for LGBs and to enhance the consistency of recording and reporting incidents.	
14. Finance Update Trustees noted the update.	
15. Risk register It was confirmed that the Risk Register is discussed and reviewed in detail at the Audit and Risk Committee and that the highest-ranking risks are brought to the attention of the Trust Board. Trustees requested that this item be placed higher up the agenda at the next meeting of the Trust Board to allow for a thorough review. ACTION Risks S3 (SEND) and G2 (governance) were highlighted for discussion at a future Board meeting.	Clerk to adapt agenda
16. Health & Safety and Marketing Update This item was deferred until the next Trust Board meeting to be held on 18 th July 2024. ACTION Trustees requested that this be the first item on the agenda.	Clerk to add to agenda
17. AOB There were no items of any other business agreed for discussion at the meeting.	
Date and time of next meeting: Thursday 18 July 2024 – Main meeting 13:00pm. Location TBC	

The meeting closed at 4:05 pm