



## TRUST BOARD

Minutes of a Meeting of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held at Liskeard School & Community College on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 5.30 pm.

Present	Yes/No	Present	Yes/No
Mr M Aarts	Apologies	Mr L Hallam	Yes
Ms J Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs L Lawson	Yes
Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes	Mr S Lloyd	Apologies
Mrs H Casson	No	Mr C Piper	Yes
Mr J Crisp	No		

**In Attendance: Mrs J Lumbard, CFO  
Mrs K Williams, Clerk to Trust Board**

- Welcome and Evacuation Procedure**  
The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties - update on any changes since completion of written declaration**  
There are no changes to declarations.
- Apologies for Absence**  
Apologies had been sent from Mr Aarts and Mr Lloyd which were received and accepted by the committee. Mrs Casson had advised that she was running late and Mr Crisp was expected to attend.
- Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023**  
The minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record and were signed.
- Progress of action points and matters arising**
  - M33. Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties - update on any changes since completion of written declaration**  
No update to declarations. The new related parties forms have been circulated and need to be completed.  
*Update: Complete.*
  - M37. Reports and Recommendations from Committees**
    - i) The Chair felt that we need to decide how the Trust Board gets assurance moving forwards. The Chair and the Clerk will meet to discuss and explore wider with Trustees in the new academic year.  
*Update: The Chair advised that he met with the CEO, CFO and the Clerk to look at how Trustees; can get assurance from the executive leads.*
    - k) The Chair noted that in future, this agenda item needs more time than five minutes per committee. The Clerk to revise template agenda.  
*Update: Complete.*
  - M39. CEO update**
    - i) **A Trustee felt that succession planning is important especially for the CEO and CFO which would be a real risk to the Trust. A Trustee asked if we are intending on setting deadlines and the impact of this on staff.** Mr Buckley advised that there can be a dependency culture which is unhelpful so we

need schools to have a paper trail on what has not been met. Mr Buckley will be looking at a suitable model to bring back to the Trust Board for discussion and agreement on the level of information required.

*Update: The Chair noted that succession planning is difficult in a small Trust but we have appointed to the Director of Education role. Mr Buckley advised that we don't currently have the level of experience in Headteachers to cover the CEO role. **A Trustee asked what is the level of recruitment like for these types of roles.** Mr Buckley advised that this is a challenge and some Trusts have needed to merge as they have not been able to appoint to the high level roles.*

#### **M40. Discuss DfE Confirmation of Compliance and Liskeard Safeguarding Report**

**d) A Trustee asked if there is a risk in terms of the disconnect between the language used in the report and it's actual meaning. A Trustee asked if we need to have external safeguarding reviews in the other schools.** Mr Buckley advised that he would be confident that any external reviews would find that safeguarding is robust in the schools. **A Trustees asked how we get assurance.** Mr Buckley advised that the LA needed to review the safeguarding and they have made an assessment that safeguarding is effective. **A Trustee asked for the LA outcome letter to be circulated.** It was agreed that the report which is due in September and assurance letter from the LA needs to be circulated. [Clarification following the meeting: The LA was asked for their judgement by OFSTED and DfE – their support was reflected in these cases being closed. The CEO response was incorrect as there is no written evidence of what the LA reported back to agencies about the school only verbal].

*Update: Mr Buckley noted that the LA had now re-inspected Liskeard and provided a positive report that has been shared.*

**e) A Trustee suggested that an external review would be beneficial to ensure that internal reviews are robust and asked if we can commission an external review.** Mr Buckley advised that OFSTED visits are a safeguarding review and no reviews have found safeguarding to be less than effective but it is of benefit for the LA to return in September. Mrs Casson asked if she could complete a Safeguarding visit. It was suggested that Looe would be the obvious choice for a visit. Mr Buckley suggested this could be completed by both Mrs Casson and himself and this was agreed and can be scheduled for the Autumn term. Mr Oakes is the Safeguarding lead across the Trust. All schools have been visited by OFSTED over the last 5 years.

*Update: The Chair noted this will be covered later in the meeting.*

#### **M41. Items from Chair**

##### **a) Summary of discussions from informal meetings with Trustees and Chairs of Governors**

The Chair explained that informal meetings were held and he posed questions to CoGs (Chairs of Governors). They discussed how we provide mutual assurance, new ways of working and the Chair visiting schools in the new academic year which is open to others to attend. The general feeling is that the CoGs don't see the Trust Board enough, they don't always feel information is disseminated to LGCs and it was agreed that meeting again informally once a year is useful. The Chair felt it would be useful for CoGs to attend Trust Board meetings for 10 minutes to create a better connection and it was suggested that this could be built into agendas. The CoGs would give an update on their schools.

*Update: Ongoing.*

**e) A Trustee suggested recruiting a headteacher from another Trust.** It was discussed that this would be useful. It was suggested that Trustees could use their local networks to recruit new Trustees. We could also look the BAME networks. The Clerk will contact recent Trustees to see if they would consider joining the Members. **A Trustee asked about potential for recruiting from LGCs.** The Clerk advised that recruitment of governors is challenging and given the work they are involved with such as panels, it would not be ideal to recruit governors at this time as it may not be possible to fill the gaps left.

*Update: Recruitment of Trustees is ongoing.*

#### **5. Summary of LGC minutes**

A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

a) Mr Buckley advised that the LGCs (Local Governing Committees) are sub committees of the Trust

Board so we need to have a connection between the two. Mr Buckley advised that there has been some calls from LGCs for advice and support which he has provided to Dobwalls and he is also observing all the Saltash LGC meetings. Following the Saltash meetings, he is providing guidance notes for the Chair of Governors and school which has been really beneficial.

- b) **A Trustee referred to the Dobwalls, Landulph and Trewidland summaries and noted the difference in the level of depth of communication to the Trust Board from the LGCs on SATs results.** The Clerk advised that she is able to make this more consistent across the minutes. Mr Buckley noted the depth of conversations in LGC meetings can differ depending on how the agenda item is presented during the meeting. Mr Buckley has added a trend line to the Headteacher reports which should make the data easier to compare the schools in the Trust. The Clerk advised that the red highlighted areas on the summaries are where there is a concern.

6. **Consider nominations and approve Chairs/Vice Chairs for Local Governing Committees:**

- a) Dobwalls: Alan Johnson/Rebecca Manning, Landulph: Helene Ansell/Linda Hobley, Liskeard: Dean James-Robbins/Sally Berne, Looe: Keith Simmons/Steve Pinnell, Saltash: Tim Parkman/Stacey Pengelly, Trewidland: Gary Powell-Jones/Andrew Fowler.
- b) Trustees were content to approve Chairs and Vice Chairs for the 2023/24 academic year.

7. **Reports and Recommendations from Committees<sup>1</sup>**

Documents were circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

a) People and Remuneration 19-10-2023

The Chair noted that Mr Lloyd was not present at the meeting so summarised the meeting from the minutes. The committee reviewed the Risk Register and suggested that a deeper dive is needed for the disadvantaged group. Exclusion and suspension data was also reviewed. It was noted that the Trustee and Local Governor Code of Conducts have been agreed by email. Having a Safeguarding agenda item is on the agenda tonight.

- b) See confidential appendix.

c) Resources 14-11-2023

The Chair noted that Mr Aarts was not present at this meeting. The Chair summarised the content of the committee meeting. Our self-imposed target for reserves is 8% but the ESFA have now advised a threshold of 5% - 20% for Trust reserves. Mrs Lumbard advised that the Reserves policy will be revised in the spring but we are comfortable with the Trust having 8% reserves. The catering and cleaning contract tendering process starts soon. The committee discussed compliance tracking and making sure there is a data set for assurance. The committee also reviewed the Risk Register. Mr Buckley had recommended a temporary solution to the compliance tracker and the committee agreed that they would accept separate statements which we now have in place.

d) Learning 30-10-2023

The Chair noted from the summary of the minutes that we need to recruit further Trustees. The committee reviewed the Risk Register. The committee also reviewed the Headteacher's Reports and looked at how we measure the quality of teaching.

e) Audit & Risk 07-12-2023

*Verbal recommendation from committee on draft Annual Accounts for Trust Board approval*

The committee had noted the excellent work of Mrs Lumbard and the finance team and congratulated them all on a smooth audit process.

- f) It was agreed that the approval of the draft accounts would be circulated to Trustees by email

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<sup>1</sup> To include items raised for TB consideration by LGCs

given there were a number of Trustees missing from the meeting although the meeting was quorate. Mr Buckley reiterated that a clean audit is a major achievement.

**Action: The Clerk**

8. **CEO summary of HT Reports – focus on Pupil Progress**

- a) Mr Buckley advised that the Headteacher's Report has been revised. This report is agreed each year and we agree it collectively on what we believe is the most important data to track.
- b) Mr Buckley advised that Trustees can be provided a link to the live document. A summary of the last years data is given. There are tabs for each school and governors are instructed to ask questions on any red areas. The red highlighting comes from falling below benchmark and these are school specific targets.
- c) Attendance was a concern across all the schools. The Headteachers agreed that we should remain using targets from pre Covid levels for attendance but we are now going to use current national averages. **A Trustee asked if Cornwall have a lower national average.** Mr Buckley advised that this is the case.
- d) The DfE have provided us with an attendance adviser, we have appointed an attendance lead and we revised both the student and staff attendance policies. The suspensions and exclusions levels are higher than we have been used to and Mr Buckley advised that the numbers in the country have risen with an average of 575 days lost for a school the size of Saltash. We are not happy with them being as high as they are even though they are lower than national. **A Trustee asked if there are trends behind this.** Mr Buckley advised that we are working with Trusts who have high expectations for behaviour and using this model does lead to a high rate of suspensions. Given that we have a school with double RI and the expectations of the Regional Group, we have therefore enforced our disruption free classrooms but one of the downsides of this is a higher suspension rate.
- e) **A Trustee noted the staff workload behind a high rate of suspensions and exclusions.** Mr Buckley summarised the processes which the Clerk engages in for the statutory panel work. **A Trustee asked about the two numbers given for Liskeard's suspensions.** Mr Buckley advised this is cumulative and termly data. We need to monitor the Liskeard suspensions rates and it is hoped that this will drop in time. We have been instructed to follow the Greenshaw model and so it is expected that the suspension rate at Saltash will also increase.
- f) Staff absence is in the bottom 20% and we have launched a new staff attendance policy. So far this policy has been robust although we have had a couple of misinterpretations which we have addressed in both cases.
- g) Mr Buckley advised that the peer review model and the Risk Register have both been revised. The Chair noted that we have discussed how well the LGCs are using the Headteacher's Report and Trustees should see evidence of challenge in the LGC minutes. Mr Buckley explained the new version of the Headteachers Report which will be used from January. There are some different elements following feedback from Trustees, governors and Headteachers.
- h) **A Trustee asked about benchmarks being used.** Mr Buckley advised that these are all based on national benchmarks. We have now added a trend graph to the data set which compares the schools to benchmark and this should enable deeper conversations. We are working on this with the TSLT (Trust Senior Leadership Team) after Christmas on how to present this to governors. **A Trustee asked when this document is completed.** Mr Buckley advised that this is completed termly and a link to the document when updated will be circulated to Trustees. All data should be RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated.

**Action: The Clerk**

9. **Update on Saltash Coasting work**

A document was circulated in advance. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley explained that we have an action plan (School Development Plan) for all schools but

the DfE advised that we needed to have agreed a version with them just for key priorities in Saltash. The RIP (Rapid Improvement Plan) met all the requirements of the DfE and included all the targets that we have to meet. No Ofsted inspection has found that we are focussing on the wrong areas but they have questioned the pace in Saltash. The targets have been signed off by the DfE, thereby agreeing the pace of change but they have now asked us to reconsider if the pace is quick enough as well as asking for some more information on the Director of Education and what are our top three priorities. [update – confirmed that reduction to 3 key priorities meets their concerns]

- b) **A Trustee asked if the Director of Education will be attending the DfE meetings.** Mr Buckley advised that only the CEO and the Chair of the Trust Board are able to attend the meetings. **A Trustee asked if the Warning of a possible Notice of Termination, letter was published.** Mr Buckley advised that it has been published.
- c) Mr Buckley noted that persistent absent children have impacted the rate of improvement in results and this is the case in other Trusts. The Chair noted that the purpose of SIPs and possible conflict of interests were raised with the DfE. It was explained that we are not aligning to Greenshaw's model but instead we are adopting some of their delivery methods and adapting to our own context.
- d) Mr Buckley asked if the Trust Board consider that the Saltash Rapid Improvement Plan was rapid enough. **A Trustee felt that the DfE definition of rapid would be helpful but Trustees confirmed that they had considered the pace.**

#### 10. **Safeguarding update**

- a) Mr Buckley advised that a recent inspection of the safeguarding culture at Dobwalls has found it to be strong. Saltash has been Ofsted inspected and the safeguarding was also found to be strong. We have had 5 parental complaints at Liskeard which went straight to Ofsted and so this school was visited by the Local Authority (LA). Mr Buckley noted that we get a reasonable number of complaints and Trustees needs to understand trends rather than individual cases. In the case of Liskeard, we had not given the Trust Board notice of the safeguarding inspection until after it had taken place as there were short timescales involved and we have learnt from this. As stated earlier, the follow up LA visit has confirmed safeguarding is effective at Liskeard.
- b) **A Trustee suggested that parents might not always have a voice where there is a complaint.** Mr Buckley noted that we have an internal process to check structures. If a complaint comes in, Mr Buckley is made aware of it so he can ensure that the process is followed and we are well involved in complaints. We have done full investigations on the cases which generated the LA inspection. There were some proposed improvements which the LA found during their visit and we have addressed these. The return visit gave a glowing report and they also reviewed our Behaviour Policy which the LA are using as an exemplar.
- c) See confidential appendix.
- d) Safeguarding is standing agenda item moving forwards.

#### 11. **Risk Register update and agreement of allocation of risks to committees**

A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) It was noted that it may be difficult to allocate risks to committees without the Chairs of Committees present so it was agreed that it would be more beneficial to circulate recommendations which are then agreed by email.

**Action: The Chair/CEO**

- b) Mr Buckley advised that there is a Trust Board summary on the Risk Register and tabs for each of the schools. As a Trust Board, we have agreed the five year Strategic Plan which has goals and we then look at the goal and what are the risks are for not achieving them. Guidance states we should have no more than 30 risks. We have previously discussed how likely the risk is and the

impact of the risk.

- c) Each half term the SLT and management review the risk and they decide if the risk has increased, decreased, or stayed the same and what is being done about it. The SLT then report this to the LGC. We should monitor risks of this kind every 8 weeks but we monitor all of them every half term.
- d) The Chair felt that each risk should be allocated to a committee meeting to ensure that governors are also monitoring each risk and the Audit & Risk committee will review the risks and the changes to risk.
- e) It was agreed that a recommendation for allocation will be circulated for agreement. It was agreed that safeguarding should be a Trust Board allocated risk and also for the People Committee. It was noted that green areas can be celebrated but we need to look at where we spend our finite time. Mr Buckley summarised the November Curriculum day and how well this worked this year.
- f) **A Trustee asked about the risks and how they were agreed.** Mr Buckley advised that initially the Trust Board agreed the risks. The Chair noted that committees need to review the risks and discuss if any risks need to be added. Mr Buckley advised that April would be a good time to review this in more detail and this would align with internal audit. **The Chair noted that this is a really positive and powerful document.** Mr Buckley added that this has been well received by Headteachers and governors. Headteachers have challenged Mr Buckley to move the SEF into the same format.
- g) Mr Buckley proposed that we take feedback on the Risk Register from each committee during the year and then make changes annually.

## 12. **Formal minuted agreement for adoption of Articles of Association**

- a) There was produced to the meeting a form of written resolution of the Members of the Company (Written Resolution) to adopt the amended articles of association in total substitution of the existing articles.
- b) It was noted that the amended articles of association have been agreed with the Department of Education.
- c) It was noted that the Members' request had been received from the requisite percentage of Members.
- d) After careful consideration of the Written Resolution, IT WAS RESOLVED to:
  - (a) approve the Written Resolution in the form produced to the meeting; and
  - (b) send the Written Resolution to every eligible member of the Company and to the Company's auditors.
- e) Mrs Lumbard explained that Mr Hallam is still a Member so we are adopting the DfE model articles which removes this responsibility.

## 13. **Items from Chair**

### a) Members and AGM

The Chair explained the powers of the Members who meet three times a year and they hold the Trust Board to account. The AoA (Articles of Association) demands that we have an AGM (Annual General Meeting) and this would have happened in December if we had adopted the revised version before now. The Chair has agreed that we don't need to rush to have an AGM and will hold one next year. There are differing views on the format of a AGM and if it should be open to stakeholders or not. This will be an ongoing discussion. Mrs Lumbard will discuss this with Bishop Fleming to see if they have guidance.

- b) **A Trustee asked about the agenda for the AGM.** The Chair advised that the main item is the presentation of the annual accounts. This will be discussed in more depth at the Members meeting next week. The Clerk to add this to the next Trust Board agenda. **A Trustee suggested using a hybrid method for the AGM.**

**Action: The Clerk**

- c) Meeting with CEO/CFO/Clerk

The Chair advised that the group discussed assurance for the Trust Board. We also need to hold a governance review. Mrs Lumbard is going to look at this through the internal audit function and we would be looking at the quality and the questioning of the committees rather than the structure of governance. We can also approach the CST and the NGA for a governance review. Mr Buckley added that if there are debates over concerns of process during Trust Board or committee meetings, this should be included in a confidential appendix.

- d) Link meetings

The Clerk advised that we are moving away from having link meetings for People, Learning and Resources and will in future have a Primary and a Secondary group. This should make discussions more relevant for those involved. The link meetings will also be used as a way for Trustees to gain assurance in the work of the governors and agenda items will be agreed from the Headteacher's Report and any areas where there are concerns. There will be an expectation that Trustees will be in attendance at these meetings and will need to be linked to Primary or Secondary.

- e) Mr Buckley added that no Trust staff would be attending the Link meetings. **A Trustee asked if we should be formally allocating areas of the Headteacher's Report to committees.** Mr Buckley advised that this might be useful although Resources would have oversight of the TOLT report and there are only few lines for staff in the Headteacher's Report and the rest of it is for learning.

- f) Trustee recruitment

Ms Chan-Penney has been appointed.

Dr Traverse's appointment is underway and he will be the second Health and Wellbeing Trustee. We have three educational trustees in place, Mrs Casson, Mr Lloyd and Mr Crisp.

#### 14. **Adoption of Policies**

- a) EYFS Policy

Trustees agreed the policy as presented.

#### 15. **Items from this meeting for report back to LGCs**

- a) Dobwalls: Alan Johnson/Rebecca Manning, Landulph: Helene Ansell/Linda Hobley, Liskeard: Dean James-Robbins/Sally Berne, Looe: Keith Simmons/Steve Pinnell, Saltash: Tim Parkman/Stacey Pengelly, Trewidland: Gary Powell-Jones/Andrew Fowler.

Trustees were content to approve Chairs and Vice Chairs for the 2023/24 academic year.

- b) The format of the Link meeting will be changing and the Clerk has already circulated preliminary information to governors.

- c) The Trust Board have appointed Ms Chan-Penney as the new Compliance Trustee and Dr Traverse's appointment is underway and he will be the second Health & Wellbeing Trustee.

- d) The Trust Board will approve the annual accounts ahead of the submission date of 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023.

#### 16. **Agreements made by email**

- a) Support Staff Pay Policy – November 2023  
Admissions Arrangements 25-26 – November 2023  
Trustee and Local Governor Code of Conducts – November 2023  
Extension of review date for Capability Policy – September 2023

17. **Any Other Business**

**The Chair asked if the Director of Education could attend the next Trust Board meeting for introductions.** He starts formally in January.

**Action: D Buckley**

Going Concern

Trustees were content to approve but it was agreed that it would be circulated by email as several Trustees were absent.

**Action: J Lumbard**

18. **Date of next meetings**

25-03-2024 and 18-07-2024

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

<b>Action Summary</b>	
<p><b>M7. Reports and Recommendations from Committees</b> f) It was agreed that the approval of the draft accounts would be circulated to Trustees by email given there were a number of Trustees missing from the meeting although the meeting was quorate. Mr Buckley reiterated that a clean audit is a major achievement.</p>	<b>Action: The Clerk</b>
<p><b>M8. CEO summary of HT Reports – focus on Pupil Progress</b> h) <b>A Trustee asked about benchmarks being used.</b> Mr Buckley advised that these are all based on national benchmarks. We have now added a trend graph to the data set which compares the schools to benchmark and this should enable deeper conversations. We are working on this with the TSLT (Trust Senior Leadership Team) after Christmas on how to present this to governors. <b>A Trustee asked when this document is completed.</b> Mr Buckley advised that this is completed termly and a link to the document when updated will be circulated to Trustees. All data should be RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated.</p>	<b>Action: The Clerk</b>
<p><b>M11. Risk Register update and agreement of allocation of risks to committees</b> a) It was noted that it may be difficult to allocate risks to committees without the Chairs of Committees present so it was agreed that it would be more beneficial to circulate recommendations which are then agreed by email.</p>	<b>Action: The Chair/CEO</b>
<p><b>M13. Items from Chair</b> b) <b>A Trustee asked about the agenda for the AGM.</b> The Chair advised that the main item is the presentation of the annual accounts. This will be discussed in more depth at the Members meeting next week. The Clerk to add this to the next Trust Board agenda. <b>A Trustee suggested using a hybrid method for the AGM.</b></p>	<b>Action: The Clerk</b>
<p><b>M17. Any Other Business</b> <b>The Chair asked if the Director of Education could attend the next Trust Board meeting for introductions.</b> He starts formally in January.</p> <p><u>Going Concern</u> Trustees were content to approve but it was agreed that it would be circulated by email as several Trustees were absent.</p>	<p><b>Action: D Buckley</b></p> <p><b>Action: J Lumbard</b></p>