



## TRUST BOARD RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Resources Committee of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held at Liskeard School & Community College on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 6pm.

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<b>Present</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>In Attendance</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Mr M Aarts	Yes	Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes
Ms J Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs J Lumbar, CFO	Yes
Mr L Hallam, Chair	Yes	Ms K Williams, Clerk	Yes
Mr N Toms	Yes	Mrs J Eason, CST Observer	Yes

### **Summary of matters for the Trust Board**

- a) Teachers and Support Staff pay increases have been agreed. The pay policies have been circulated to the Trust Board for approval. These increases will be back dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> of April for Support staff and the 1<sup>st</sup> of September for teachers. The Core Schools Budget Grant has been provided to offset the pay increases.
- b) There is still high expenditure on staff absence in part due to being unable to claim for some staff sickness. It is anticipated that expenditure will continue to decrease as there are now more robust staff attendance policies and procedures in place.
- c) The Trust have appointed a new Head of Estates and Head of Finance. Both are strong appointments and complement the Head of Operations and Head of IT. The Heads of Services will be attending the Resources Committee meetings over the academic year. The IT teams are now at full capacity which is positive.
- d) The Committee have reviewed the Risk Register. There is a risk around outcomes at Saltash and Looe which may impact pupil numbers. Sixth Form and the small primary school pupil numbers are also a concern. Callywith continues to be the main competitor for the sixth forms.

### **1. Welcome**

Mr Hallam welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained Mr Aarts changes in circumstances. Mr Hallam is chairing the committee temporarily.

### **2. Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties - update on any changes since completion of written declaration**

There were no changes.

### **3. Apologies for Absence**

Mr Aarts will be on long term apologies due to work commitment which were received and accepted by the committee.

### **4. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.

### **5. Matters Arising**

#### **M29. Matters Arising**

**M17. Matters Arising**

**M32. Resources update (IT, H&S, Catering, Cleaning, Capital projects)**

**h) A Trustee asked about thresholds for procurement.** Mrs Lumbard summarised the thresholds for authorisation and at what point we use Litmus. **A Trustee referred to the £20K threshold which requires for Trustees to agree this and felt this was low.** It was noted that we need to review the changes to the Academy Trust Handbook and could discuss a revision to policy.

Update: Mrs Lumbard explained that the revision of the policies will be in the spring term and she will update then.

Update 20-03-2024: A Trustee asked what the threshold will likely be. Mrs Lumbard advised she needs to discuss with Mr Buckley in his role as Accounting Officer and we need to look at what the ceiling of thresholds should be. A Trustee felt it should be a lot higher than £20k to allow quicker decision making.

Update 18-04-2024: Mrs Lumbard explained that the Financial Scheme of Delegation was revised and reviewed by the Trust Board and Mr Buckley can authorise up to £214K for goods and services and Mrs Lumbard can approve up to £20K. Trustees would always be advised of any large purchases. Mr Buckley explained that there had been a piece of work done around staff understanding how the use of funding is authorised and this has been addressed in full by providing training but this could have been a risk if this had not been picked up early enough. **A Trustee felt this should be reflected on the Risk Register.** Trustees confirmed that they were content with a change to the thresholds for authorisation.

Update 11-07-2024 Mrs Lumbard advised that she needs to complete this.

*Update 05-11-2024: Mrs Lumbard explained that she still needs to action this.*

**Action: Mrs Lumbard**

**M18. Finance Report for information**

d) The Bishop Fleming benchmark report has been circulated. We are more or less on average across the board. Mr Buckley referred to the understanding of CACE members that Cornwall is one of the lowest paid per pupil areas but the report gives different information to that so queried if the benchmark is just from Bishop Fleming data rather than from the national data. **A Trustee asked if Bishop Fleming is just South West based.** Mrs Lumbard explained they are part of Kreston Reeves, which is national, but she will query this with them.

*Update: Mrs Lumbard advised that she needs to check with them about what data set was used and how wide it is.*

*Update 05-11-2024: Mrs Lumbard needs to action this. Mrs Lumbard is meeting with the auditors in person on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November.*

**Action: Mrs Lumbard**

**M20. Resources Update for information**

**b) A Trustee noted that the report is excellent and sets out the compliance position and provides a narrative which gives assurance that areas are being reviewed. A Trustee suggested that he would expect to see the overall compliance position and there are some other checks which should be happening.** He will provide a list of what should be included so that there is assurance that this is being undertaken.

Update: Mrs Lumbard has not received this from Mr Piper.

*Update 05-11-2024: It was agreed to use the report as it is. Mr Buckley advised that our new appointment of Head of Estates adds lots of expertise to the team. Mrs Lumbard added that some of the Head of Services will be attending the committee meetings.*

**6. CFO Finance Report – for information**

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

a) Mrs Lumbard advised that when we budget, we give a projected forecast. The year ended overall with a revenue reserve of 5.8% which is around £124K less than forecasted. It is however still a healthy reserve and within policy thresholds.

b) The Teachers and Support Staff pay policies have been circulated for approval. These increases will be included in the November pay and backdated to 1<sup>st</sup> April for Support Staff and 1<sup>st</sup> September for Teachers. Our finance managers are working on the calculations between what we forecasted and what the pay awards were agreed. The Core School Budget Grant (CSBG) has been provided to offset the pay increases. It is looking favourable at the moment and we will be reporting what is left of this grant.

- c) **A Trustee asked if there is definitive information from the DfE for funding the national insurance increase.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we are waiting for further information for this so we can establish what we need for budgets.
- d) **A Trustee referred to the Core Schools Budget Grant and asked does this cover the pay increases itself.** Mrs Lumbard explained that the CSBG is applied to the Teachers pay increase, which was 1.5% over what we had anticipated and we are still looking at the numbers for the Support Staff pay increase which will hopefully leave us at a surplus. This grant is meant to be used for more than just the pay increases. It is expected that we will get more funding for national insurance increases. Mr Buckley advised that there is extra funding of £2.2 billion for both SEND and national insurance increases but there has not been confirmed information on how much is being committed to each.
- e) **A Trustee asked is there something else being increased which might need additional funding.** Mrs Lumbard advised that the grant is to be used for increased costs in schools such as pay and it could also be used for increased running costs.
- f) Mrs Lumbard advised that there has been communication on extra grants being provided for improving building and increasing the number of nurseries but they have removed funding for small schools wanting to merge. **A Trustee asked if this is signalling change in government policies.** Mr Buckley advised that he didn't think so but the government are not funding or driving expansion.

Mr Aarts joined the meeting at 18.16.

- g) **A Trustee asked about expenditure due to staff absence and is this forecast to be reduced or changing in any way.** Mrs Lumbard advised that for schools with staff absence insurance policies, it depends on the staffing profile and who is off sick. With insurance, there are a number of waiting days before the school can claim and there is some absence which we can't claim for. At Looe, this situation is starting to calm and when there are instances of absence particularly long term absence, we do try and come to the best solution and meet with the Headteacher and Ops Manager to find the best route for the pupils and the finances.
- h) **A Trustee asked if there are any trends in terms of absence.** Mr Buckley advised that we have identified that staff attendance is poor and this data has been reported to governors and Trustees in the Headteacher's Report as this was too high coming out of Covid. We now have more robust staff attendance policies and procedures and these have had a positive impact to attendance and we are expecting this to continue to improve. We are looking at the trends which are an improving picture and should reduce costs. Mr Buckley added that there also were spiralling costs of Alternative Provision from last year and we moved quickly to address this. We now undertake an annual staff survey and we have picked up that there was some unhappiness in staff at Looe and we have taken action to address this. The logic being that happy staff should be present more often in school.
- i) **A Trustee noted that Period 1 Management Accounts have been circulated and asked are there any trends.** Mrs Lumbard advised that not at the moment but we are looking at the Support Staff pay awards and we will be using revised budgets for Period 2 Management Accounts and you will be able to see where there are any fluctuations.
- j) **A Trustee referred to the national insurance contribution increases and asked are we impacted by this.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this is the case and we are waiting for information on additional funding.

## 7. Resources update (IT, H&S, Catering, Cleaning, Capital projects) – for information

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard explained that we have recruited a Head of Finance (Mr Neil Ellicott) and a Head of Estates (Mr Nigel Lacey). Both are really positive additions to the team, and this is giving some specialist experience in the team. Mrs Lumbard is excited to be working with a full team and their aim is to achieve the business plan targets. Each Head of Services have provided a narrative for the report. Mr Ellicott will be attending the next meeting.
- b) IT now have full staffing and this will help us deal with projects such as server replacements and more specific data analysis. Mr Lacey as the new Head of Estates is already making progress at looking at the roof replacement at Saltash and there will be a tender pack and proposal for Trustees to agree shortly. In terms of the section 106 money at Saltash, Mr Lacey has been working with the Local Authority (LA) on this and we are hoping to get more out of the funding that originally anticipated with the aim to have a second canopy. We have been approached by the LA because we have had an increase in high needs places so they are willing to fund the expansion of the ARB and provide extra classrooms and we are expecting to see the finer details of this. Mr Lacey has also secured a nursery building under budget for Landulph and this could be ready for next summer.
- c) **A Trustee asked what is an ARB.** Mrs Lumbard explained that it is Area Resource Based unit which is commissioned by the LA for those with high needs and they are hosted within schools at Saltash and Liskeard. The funding model is different from mainstream.
- d) **A Trustee asked if the capital budget can now be spent as there is more capacity in the team.** Mrs Lumbard advised this is correct and she is working with Mr Lacey on how to spend this in the short term and also longer term.
- e) **A Trustee noted the work completed at Looe in the quad area which was not very good quality.** Mrs Lumbard explained that this is already being addressed at no cost to us.
- f) **A Trustee referred to Liskeard's roofs and suggested that is it leaking again.** Mrs Lumbard advised that she has only had positive reports on the quality of work carried out at Liskeard and was not aware that this was an issue.
- g) Mrs Lumbard advised that Mr Foy, Head of Operations has been struggling in terms of recruitment for the admin teams. The TSS (Trust Shared Services) team are covering for HR and Ops roles. We are managing this as carefully as possible.
- h) In terms of procurement, the new catering and cleaning contracts are bedding in and there have been some teething problems. We have had meetings with Aspens and Purgo and we are now happier that contacts are moving forwards and relationships are building well. We have a co-bot in Liskeard. **A Trustee asked what this is.** Mrs Lumbard advised that it is a robot cleaner which complements the cleaning team.
- i) Mr Foy is continuing to work on policies, central systems such as the SCR (Single Central Register) and reporting from safeguarding. He is working with Mr Carrington, Director of Education and they have aligned systems across the schools such as CPOMS to ensure that everyone is working to the same standards. This helps with cross Trust working.
- j) **A Trustee asked about rolling out My Compliance and how has this been.** Mrs Lumbard advised this is being used primarily for estates and is working well. Mr Lacey is complementing this with a set of files that sit in each of the schools which allows any Ops Manager or Headteacher to see what is and is not compliant. **A Trustee asked if we could get good compliance reporting from this.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this should be possible and it can be added as a rolling agenda item The Clerk to add to agenda.
- k) **A Trustee asked about condition improvement funding and is it possible that we are missing opportunities for funding.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we are automatically eligible for SCA (Schools Condition Allocation) funding instead of CIF (Condition Improvement funding) which designed for

**Action: The Clerk**

smaller schools on a bidding basis. We have condition surveys undertaken every 3-5 years. **A Trustee asked when these are next due.** These were completed last October. Some of the works being completed were present in the last survey and we will be taking a look at longer term needs.

- l) **A Trustee noted that the Saltash ARB looks in good condition and nearly new and then there are some other areas of the school which are in poor condition.** Mrs Lumbard advised that the ARB has been invested in by the LA. In terms of maintenance programmes, this is a key piece of work that Mr Lacey is working on so that there is not a disparity in the condition of buildings across the same site. The Chair noted questions on premises should remain directed at Mrs Lumbard and she will discuss with the Heads of Services. Mr Buckley advised that the condition surveys are RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated and we have had issues with capacity so we have needed to prioritise the most urgent needs. We are working to make sure the team is up to capacity again.
- m) **A Trustee felt that a statement of compliance from the Headteacher is still useful for Trustees as assurance and noted there are still issues with sufficient funding for improving school buildings.**
- n) Mr Buckley has delivered training to the new team and we have a good base to build on in terms of the strategic leadership team. **A Trustee noted that the executive team have worked hard to cover specialist areas outside of their own expertise and we now have a good team which is a relief.**

8. **Standing agenda item: Risk Register: Progress on any new or emerging risks and risk monitoring**

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised that there are no major changes to risk. There is a concern about outcomes and the impact on pupil numbers at Looe and Saltash until these have improved. Liskeard have made significant improvement in outcomes but the change in the ARB students grading has brought them back into a negative P8. Looe is the only school which has not made progress in terms of outcomes.
- b) Pupil numbers in the sixth forms and small primaries is a concern. **A Trustee asked about the impact of Callywith.** Mr Buckley advised that they are still a competitor and it is hoped that Cornwall College should not become a concern as a key competitor. We could do more in terms of recruitment from Looe to Saltash and Liskeard's sixth form.
- c) **A Trustee asked is there any variation in the offers in terms of sixth forms.** Mr Buckley advised we monitor what students want and try and match to need. The size of the sixth forms that we have means we can't cater to all specialisms.

9. **Agreements made by email – For information**

- a) Electric contract renewal – July 2024.

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- c) The Trust have appointed a new Head of Estates and Head of Finance. Both are strong appointments and complement the Head of Operations and Head of IT. The Heads of Services will be attending the Resources Committee meetings over the academic year. The IT teams are now at full capacity which is positive.

- d) The Committee have reviewed the Risk Register. There is a risk around outcomes at Saltash and Looe which may impact pupil numbers. Sixth Form and the small primary school pupil numbers are also a concern. Callywith continues to be the main competitor for the sixth forms.

11. **Date of next meetings:**

A&R 11-12-2024 at 4.45pm, A&R and Resources 25-03-2025 at 6pm, A&R and Resources 03-06-2025 at 6pm and Resources 10-07-2025 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 18.56pm.

<b>Action Summary</b>	
<p><b>M29. Matters Arising</b>  <b>M17. Matters Arising</b>  <b>M32. Resources update (IT, H&amp;S, Catering, Cleaning, Capital projects)</b>  <b>h) A Trustee asked about thresholds for procurement.</b> Mrs Lumbard summarised the thresholds for authorisation and at what point we use Litmus. <b>A Trustee referred to the £20K threshold which requires for Trustees to agree this and felt this was low.</b> It was noted that we need to review the changes to the Academy Trust Handbook and could discuss a revision to policy.  Update: Mrs Lumbard explained that the revision of the policies will be in the spring term and she will update then.  Update 20-03-2024: A Trustee asked what the threshold will likely be. Mrs Lumbard advised she needs to discuss with Mr Buckley in his role as Accounting Officer and we need to look at what the ceiling of thresholds should be. A Trustee felt it should be a lot higher than £20k to allow quicker decision making.  Update 18-04-2024: Mrs Lumbard explained that the Financial Scheme of Delegation was revised and reviewed by the Trust Board and Mr Buckley can authorise up to £214K for goods and services and Mrs Lumbard can approve up to £20K. Trustees would always be advised of any large purchases. Mr Buckley explained that there had been a piece of work done around staff understanding how the use of funding is authorised and this has been addressed in full by providing training but this could have been a risk if this had not been picked up early enough. <b>A Trustee felt this should be reflected on the Risk Register.</b> Trustees confirmed that they were content with a change to the thresholds for authorisation.  Update 11-07-2024 Mrs Lumbard advised that she needs to complete this.  Update 05-11-2024: Mrs Lumbard explained that she still needs to action this.</p>	<p><b>Action: Mrs Lumbard</b></p>
<p><b>M18. Finance Report for information</b>  d) The Bishop Fleming benchmark report has been circulated. We are more or less on average across the board. Mr Buckley referred to the understanding of CACE members that Cornwall is one of the lowest paid per pupil areas but the report gives different information to that so queried if the benchmark is just from Bishop Fleming data rather than from the national data. <b>A Trustee asked if Bishop Fleming is just South West based.</b> Mrs Lumbard explained they are part of Kreston Reeves, which is national, but she will query this with them.  Update: Mrs Lumbard advised that she needs to check with them about what data set was used and how wide it is.  Update 05-11-2024: Mrs Lumbard needs to action this. Mrs Lumbard is meeting with the auditors in person on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November.</p>	<p><b>Action: Mrs Lumbard</b></p>
<p><b>M7. Resources update (IT, H&amp;S, Catering, Cleaning, Capital projects) – for information</b>  <b>j) A Trustee asked about rolling out My Compliance and how has this been.</b> Mrs Lumbard advised this is being used primarily for estates and is working well. Mr Lacey is complementing this with a set of files that sit in each of the schools which allows any</p>	<p><b>Action: The Clerk</b></p>

<p>Ops Manager or Headteacher to see what is and is not compliant. <b>A Trustee asked if we could get good compliance reporting from this.</b> Mrs Lombard advised that this should be possible and it can be added as a rolling agenda item The Clerk to add to agenda.</p>	
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