



TRUST BOARD RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Resources Committee of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held on 18th April 2024 at 5.30 pm.

Present	Yes/No	In Attendance	Yes/No
Mr Marcel Aarts, Chair	Yes	Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes
Ms Jody Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs J Lumbard, CFO	Yes
Mr Lee Hallam	Yes	Mrs K Williams, Clerk	Yes
Mr Chris Piper	Apologies		

Summary of matters for the Trust Board

- a) The Trust are waiting for information from the government on teacher and support staff pay awards. The support staff pay award will be applied from 1st April 2024 once it has been agreed.
- b) Trustees have acknowledged that small schools' data is skewed on the ICLFP due to the small numbers involved.
- c) The Trustees have discussed the catering at Trewidland. It was noted that only Trewidland is having issues with the quality of food being provided. Mr Foy is discussing this with the catering company and Mrs Lumbard is waiting for an update and if there have been improvements. The catering contract is due for renewal and we are undergoing a tendering process.
- d) The Trustees have discussed the predicted deficit for Trewidland and are confident that a model for the school will be in place for September which will relieve some of the pressures on the budget.
- e) Trust compliance has been reviewed and Trustees were content with the outcome.
- f) A number of finance policies have been reviewed and approved by the Trust Board. These can be found on the SMART website.

13. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

There were no changes.

15. Apologies for Absence

Mr Piper had sent his apologies as he was delayed in traffic but was hoping to attend.

16. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 1st November 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st November 2023, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.

17. Matters Arising

M5. Matters Arising

M30. Matters Arising

M19. Finance Report for information (Jo Lumbard)

h) **A Trustee noted that the average teacher cost at Trewidland is £111k and queried if this is correct.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this corresponds to the total teaching costs for the school so it is not correct.
Update 12-07-2023: Mrs Lumbard advised that she needs to email the ESFA to advise them.
Update 01-11-2023: Mrs Lumbard advised that she has not emailed the ESFA regarding this.
Update 20-03-2024: Mrs Lumbard explained that the benchmarks have now been superseded by updated versions.

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 will the threshold likely to 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.*

Action: Mrs Lumbard

Mr Piper joined the meeting at 5.50pm.

18. Finance Report for information

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard explained that she has provided a finance update. The key changes are teachers and support staff pay as we have not had any further information. We are continuing to allow for the same as last year pending being given further details on the pay awards. Support staff pay has an initial claim which is very high and the unions are asking for the pay award to be fully funded by the government although the chances of this is very low. Any pay award would be effective from April 2024 for support staff.
- b) There has been an increase in teachers' pension contributions of 5% and as we are waiting for actual allocations of the grant which will be paid by the government to offset this additional expenditure, we will advise Trustees of any discrepancies. **A Trustee asked about the teachers' pay increase and if this will this be provided in a government grant for a couple of years.** Mrs Lumbard advised there is no guarantee of the funding for this in 25/26 and it would put immense pressure on budgets if this is not provided. We can choose to pay our support staff outside of the range of NJC (National Joint Council) pay rates however there are issues with doing so as it would affect our staff retention and recruitment. There is a continued lack of information and as any pay increases for support staff applies now, staff are waiting to hear and this impacts our lower paid staff.
- c) The period 6 management accounts were circulated prior to Easter and period 7 are due to be finalised in the next two weeks. Budgeting is well underway. We are hoping to hit the deadlines for draft budgets to be circulated to LGCs (Local Governing Committee) this half term and then for budgets to be ratified after the half term holidays.
- 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.

Action: Mrs Lumbard

- e) Mr Buckley noted that there are some anomalies in the report from the understanding of the CACE group such as the levels of reserves of Trusts in the county. Mr Buckley added that free CPD is now only going to be offered to staff in schools who are in the top 50% of schools with higher levels of PP and our secondary schools are lower than this but we have still been told that we have qualified for this training. It was queried how reliable DfE data is.
- f) Mrs Lumbard advised that we have to complete a school resource management self-assessment tool annually and this needed to be submitted before the 15th March 2024. The dashboard data is based on 2021/22 so our ICFLP (Integrated Curriculum Lead Financial Planning) is much more up to date. **A Trustee asked about the red areas and is this due to the size of the school.** Mrs Lumbard explained that this relates to the size of Trewidland and there is also a deficit.
- g) There are only two questions which have not been answered yes and there have been actions provided on how this will be addressed. **A Trustee asked if the Trustees should all be meeting with Members.** It was explained that all Trustees will be invited to the future AGM (Annual General Meeting) which is now part of the new Articles of Association. Trustees were assured by the action plan.
- h) Mr Buckley explained that that random sampling of information and data should be used as part of a Trustee monitoring visit during the year. Mrs Lumbard added that the document is also checked as part of the audit process.

19. **Issues raised by the Local Governing Committees**

- a) Trewidland – Quality of Chartwells food and predicted deficit budget for next year
Mrs Lumbard explained that Trewidland do not have a kitchen to operate from so the food is prepared at Dobwalls and then transported to Trewidland. Mr Foy has investigated the issues and he had discussed this with Chartwells. Mrs Lumbard is waiting for an update and if there has been improvements. Mr Buckley advised that issues with the catering is only affecting Trewidland. Mrs Lumbard added that we are holding a tendering process for the new catering contract and the bidders are due to visit the schools soon. We use Litmus as project managers for the procurement and they assist us with management of the contract.
Action: Mrs Lumbard
- b) The predicted deficit for Trewidland was discussed by the Trust Board during their meeting on 16th April 2024. Mr Buckley summarised the potential models for operating Trewidland for September 2024.

20. **Resources Update for information**

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard has provided further information for Trustees in terms of compliance and this document shows key elements of operations across the Trust. We have RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated the documents in place and we are using My Compliance which Site Managers are being trained to use as it will allow us top level monitoring and reporting to Trustees in future.
- 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.
Action: Mr Piper
- c) **A Trustee noted in terms of website compliance, the amount of compliance was incredibly positive.** Mrs Lumbard advised that it was good to be compliant as we have had several Ofsted visits and we need to have this in place. Mr Buckley thanked Mrs Corrigan for her work on designing

the websites so that we have a common structure across all the websites which aids efficient checking of the websites for compliance.

- d) **A Trustee queried the position of toilet facilities in the Trust and asked if we are supporting the schools with the issues that they are having with them.** Mr Buckley explained that issues with the toilets are highlighted during student voice opportunities. He advised that toilets with cubicles are challenging for staff to police and children will use these spaces inappropriately. The only way to address this is to redesign the toilets and move away from cubicle style facilities.
- e) The primary school toilets have been addressed and we have secured funding for Saltash which will be changed over the summer. The only school which will not be addressed is Liskeard as there have been changes to the toilets over the last year where they have been opened up although there are still cubicles. Children can ask to use the toilets during lessons or ask for a pass so they don't have to use them during break and lunch times. We are trying to remove barriers but there is a funding gap for Liskeard which we are trying to address so for those who have expressed concerns, they have been provided with alternatives.
- f) **A Trustee queried how plans for rectifying the issues with the toilets are being communicated with the Headteachers and how is this then being communicated to parents.** Mr Buckley advised that TSLT (Trust Senior Leadership Team) meet every 6 weeks and meetings have discussed the issues with toilets each time. He will discuss this further with the Liskeard Headteacher. Mr Buckley added that the Liskeard Deputy Headteacher has been part of the Everyone's Invited group which discussed the issues with the toilets.
- Action: Mr Buckley**
- g) In summary, we are aware of the issues with the toilets but is it taking time and expense to rectify.
- h) **A Trustee referred to the capital programme and asked why is Saltash showing £3.6 million pounds worth of work on the condition survey.** Mrs Lumbard explained that much of this is roofing work and it has been highlighted that it needs replacing. The roofing company has resurveyed and there is some work that will be completed under warranty and there are some areas which do need to be repaired. However, the cost of this is much lower than stated in the condition survey. The changes to Saltash's toilets will be covered by section 106 funding which is being held by the Local Authority. The school will also have a canopy over the back of the school installed to increase space for the students.
- i) **A Trustee asked if there is any funding for Liskeard from the new developments in the area.** Mr Buckley advised that Dobwalls will receive Section 106 money from the housing development in that area. Mrs Lumbard will contact the Local Authority to discuss the position of funding for Liskeard.

Action: Mrs Lumbard

21. **Risk Register – Review and consider any changes**

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised that the Risk Register is being reviewed in all Trust Board and Committee meetings. This will be discussed further in the Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

22. **Policies to review and recommend for agreement by Trust Board**

- a) *a) Charging and Remissions policy*
b) Counter theft, fraud and corruption policy
c) Reserves & Investment policy
d) Donations policy and procedure
e) Financial Regulations procedures and policy
f) Financial Scheme of Delegation
g) Trustee Governor Expenses
h) School Meal Debt policy

- b) The policies were approved by the Trust Board on the 16th April 2024.

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

- a) Energy Contracts were agreed.

24. **Summary of matters for the Trust Board**

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- b) Trustees have acknowledged that small schools' data is skewed on the ICLFP due to the small numbers involved.
- c) The Trustees have discussed the catering at Trewidland. It was noted that only Trewidland is having issues with the quality of food being provided. Mr Foy is discussing this with the catering company and Mrs Lumbard is waiting for an update and if there have been improvements. The catering contract is due for renewal and we are undergoing a tendering process.
- d) The Trustees have discussed the predicted deficit for Trewidland and are confident that a model for the school will be in place for September which will relieve some of the pressures on the budget.
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25. **Date of next meetings:**

05-06-2024 and 11-07-2024 at 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 6.56pm.

Action Summary	
<p>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 will the threshold likely to 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. <i>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.</i></p>	<p>Action: Mrs Lumbard</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>Action: Mrs Lumbard</p>

<p>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.</p>	
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