

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust
Trustees' Board**

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees' Board held in Picknalls First School, Uttoxeter, on Wednesday, 13 February 2019 at 6.00pm.

Present:

Member and Trustee – Mr S Slater (in the chair)

Trustees – Mrs E Bell, Mrs V Bennett, Mr R Oldham, Rev M Sherwin, Mr T Sutcliffe, Mr L Trigg

Also Present:

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) – Mrs A Tapp

Clerk to the Uttoxeter Learning Trust (ULT) – Mr R Sheldon

Apologies:

An apology for absence was received from Mrs P Livesey.

125. Declarations of Interest:

There were no declarations of interest relevant to agenda items.

126. Chair – Power to Act:

The chair reported on the following actions taken between this and the last meeting:

- As previously reported, he had written to the DfE to express concerns regarding changes made to the listing of schools in the performance tables. The changes had meant that the success of Thomas Alleyne's High School was not properly reflected in the tables. He was pleased to further report that changes had been made to the recently published performance tables and which now saw the inclusion of the school.
- As previously reported, he had written to the DfE to express concerns regarding the new national funding formula which disadvantaged high schools in a three tier system. The headteacher had also written a similar letter of concern and had received a reply to state that the funding formula was being reviewed with changes to be made for the financial year 2019/2020. The headteacher was also seeking support from the local MP for financial support for the period between now and then.
- As previously reported he had responded to JCB Academy which was consulting on changes to their admission arrangements. An objection to this had been made clear in the response. He had also written to the RSC and DfE to request a meeting to discuss the implications for ULT schools if approval was given to the revised admission arrangements.

It was resolved –

That trustees fully support all actions taken by the chair, with thanks to him.

127. Trustees' Board Minutes:

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees' Board held on Thursday, 13 December 2018 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting be received and approved.

128. Matters Arising:

a) Governor Pen Portraits (Minute 110 refers)

As previously requested, the chief executive officer had circulated pen portraits for all governors of schools in the ULT.

It was resolved –

That the pen portraits be received and noted, with thanks to the chief executive officer and that trustees approve the current membership of local governing boards.

b) Pay Policy (Minute 118(a) refers)

The chief executive officer reported that, at their recent meeting, the Finance committee had approved the revised ULT Pay Policy. A copy had been submitted to the unions to seek their views before being formally submitted to schools.

129. External Audit:

The chair reported that the process for the external audit had been fully discussed at the recent meeting of the Finance committee and concerns expressed regarding the agreed process. The Finance committee chair reported that of particular concern was the wording of the required letter sent to the auditors to confirm that trustees had fulfilled all of their responsibilities. He stated that, in this instance, he had agreed to sign the letter to ensure that the audit report and accounts could be submitted within the agreed timeframe but that a similarly worded letter would not be signed on completion of the next audit. The Finance committee chair further reported that he also remained uncomfortable with the appointed auditor being responsible for both the accounts and the subsequent audit. A request had therefore been made for the appointed auditor to attend the next meeting of the Finance committee to discuss the wording of submissions from the ULT following the completion of future audits, and other audit matters.

The chair further reported that the external audit had also highlighted the fact that any capital funds used to improve the fabric of a church school building would be regarded as church assets and not the ULT. The implications of this were discussed given that the school would be required to contribute 10% towards the funding of any successful CIF bids. Trustees felt that as any building improvements for a church school would be identified as a church asset then the church should be requested to fund the 10% contribution.

It was resolved –

- i) That trustees fully support the concerns expressed by the Finance committee regarding the external audit process and look forward to the outcomes of future discussions with the appointed auditor.
- ii) That the chief executive officer be requested to ask the chief finance officer to write to the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education to ask if it would be willing to contribute towards successful CIF bid for any of its schools and to also ask a representative to attend the next meeting of the Trustees' Board to discuss this matter further.

130. External Governance Reviews:

The chief executive officer reported that all governance reviews had been completed and a copy of each of the subsequent reports had been previously circulated. The chief executive officer had also previously circulated an overview of all the reports and was pleased to confirm that the outcome of the reviews had been very positive with the local governing boards identified as being fit for purpose. The chief executive officer also reported that a pro-forma for the action plan had been developed to ensure that all governing boards used the same format and a copy of the action plan developed by the governing board for Picknalls First School was circulated. Discussion followed and trustees were of the view that it had been a useful process to help with the ongoing development of the governing boards, including the possible future alignment of meeting agendas.

It was resolved –

- i) That trustees look forward to seeing other completed action plans to help evidence the continued progress of governing boards.
- ii) That the chief executive officer be requested to discuss the possibility of aligning agendas across all meetings of the governing boards at a future meeting of the School Representation Board.

131. Trustee Self-Review and External Review:

The chair reported that it was important for trustees to undertake a self-review and then to report findings to the Members. The DfE had recently issued guidance around this – “MAT Development Programme 2018”. Consideration was also given to the need for an external review of ULT governance, subject to a suitably experienced reviewer being identified. Trustees with any thoughts around this were requested to let the chair know.

It was resolved –

That trustees agree to undertake a self-review in the first instance, to enable any identified issues to be addressed before undertaking an external review.

132. ULT Vision and Values:

The chair reminded trustees that the UTL had originally been established with a particular focus on schools in Uttoxeter and the surrounding area. However, the ULT was now looking to expand and schools from other areas were being encouraged to join. As such, it was necessary for the originally identified vision and values of the ULT to be revised. Discussion followed and it was felt that a small working party should be established to determine a revised vision and new set of values.

It was resolved –

- i) That the working party should comprise trustees, local governors and headteachers and that the chief executive officer be requested to make the necessary arrangements.
- ii) That trustees accept, with thanks, the offer from Mrs Bennett and Rev Sherwin to represent the Trustees' Board on the working party.

133. Chief Executive Officer Report:

The chief executive officer presented her report on the work of the ULT, a copy of which had been previously circulated. Discussion followed with particular reference to the following matters:

a) CIF Bids

All CIF bids for ULT schools had now been submitted, with the cost of the bids amounting to around £4.4million. The outcome was expected around March/April.

b) Meeting with Unions

A meeting with the Unions had been planned for 21 March to seek their views on the ULT's Pay and Discipline policies. It would also be an opportunity to commence the consultation on the proposed change to the Redundancy scheme.

c) Growth of the Uttoxeter Learning Trust

The chair and chief executive officer continued to discuss with other first, middle and high schools the possibility of them joining the ULT at a point in the future. Trustees would be kept informed of any positive outcomes from the discussions.

d) Safeguarding

Discussions had been held with headteachers to ensure that all necessary safeguarding information was made available to trustees to enable them to monitor safeguarding incidents and also look at any trends. The chief executive officer was also pleased to further report that the designated safeguarding leads at each of the schools had agreed to meet on a regular basis to ensure that necessary information was provided through the use of a common format.

It was resolved –

That the chief executive officer be thanked for her informative report and that it be received.

134. Education Committee Report:

Trustees had been previously circulated with minutes of a meeting of the Education committee held on 20 November 2018. Trustees also noted that a meeting of the Education committee had recently been held on 20 January 2019. The committee chair outlined the issues that had been considered at both meetings.

He reported that particular focus continued to be given to school performance, with particular regard to KS2 outcomes in the middle schools and post-16 outcomes in the high school. The Education committee was to look in greater detail at the difference between KS1 and KS2 outcomes which indicated that pupils were not building on prior learning, despite middle schools being able to offer a wider curriculum and specialist teaching. Initial decisions taken by the committee had been to ensure that all school data was based on FFT20 targets and for Mr Slater and the chief executive officer to meet with the middle school headteachers for a frank and open discussion around KS2 outcomes and strategies being put in place to bring about the required improvement. Mr Slater had also agreed to have a further meeting with the headteacher of Thomas Alleyne's High School to consider strategies to bring about improvement in post-16 outcomes.

It was resolved –

- i) That the minutes of the Education committee meeting held on 20 November 2018 be received and accepted and that the report of the meeting held on 20 January 2019 be received and noted.
- ii) That trustees fully support actions being taken by the Education committee to bring about improved school performance.

135. Finance Committee Report:

Trustees had been previously circulated with minutes of a meeting of the Finance committee held on 29 November 2018. Trustees also noted that a meeting of the Finance committee had recently been held on 31 January 2019.

The committee chair outlined the issues that had been considered at both meetings. He reported in particular on an email scam and related invoice for Thomas Alleyne's High School but pleased to confirm that staff had identified the scam before payment was made. School business managers had been made aware of the email scam and internal action had been taken to prevent something similar happening in the future.

The committee chair also reminded trustees of their approval in principle given at the previous meeting to consult on a proposal for any future staff redundancies to be based on the statutory scheme rather than Staffordshire County Council's scheme which was currently in place. Insight HR had attended the committee meeting and had circulated a draft business case to consult on a proposed change to the redundancy scheme. Consideration had also been given to a possible timeframe for undertaking, and completing, the consultation process to allow for any scheme to be implemented from January 2020, subject to trustees' approval. Mr Slater reported that he had also discussed the proposal with headteachers and that they had understood the rationale for the proposed change.

It was resolved –

- i) That the minutes of the Finance committee meeting held on 29 November 2018 be received and accepted and that the report of the meeting held on 31 January 2019 be received and noted.
- ii) That trustees confirm their approval for consultation to be undertaken on a proposal for any future staff redundancies to be based on the statutory scheme and that the chair of the Finance committee, together with other trustees who may be available, be requested to join the chief executive officer at the meeting with unions to be held on 21 March 2019.

136. Other Business:

ULT Code of Conduct

A copy of the revised ULT Code of Conduct had been previously circulated and the chief executive officer reported that it had been revised to make clearer the differing roles of members, trustees and local governors.

It was resolved –

That the revised ULT Code of Conduct be received and approved, subject to an amendment to include all 7 principles of public life as defined by the Nolan Committee.

137. Appointment of Chief Executive Officer:

(Mrs Tapp, chief executive officer, left the meeting at this point).

The chair reminded trustees that Mrs Tapp’s contract as chief executive officer ceased on 31 August 2019 and that the post would need to be advertised before the end of the current term to ensure an appointment was made to be effective from September 2019. A timeframe would need to be determined with interviews likely to be held towards the end of May. He recommended that an appointments committee should be established to oversee the recruitment process and those interested should let him know. Discussion followed with particular consideration given to the nature of the post and whether it should be part-time or full-time. Trustees were reminded that the current post was on the basis of three days a week. As the ULT was looking to expand, trustees felt that the post should be advertised on a full-time basis although accepting that the financial implications of this would need to be taken into account.

It was resolved -

That trustees express a preference for the appointment of a full-time chief executive officer but that before a final decision was taken, the chief finance officer be requested to prepare a report to show the financial viability and sustainability of advertising for such a post.

138. Date of Next Meeting:

It was resolved –

- i) That the next meeting of the Trustees’ Board be held in Thomas Alleyne’s High School on Wednesday, 3 April 2019 at 6.00pm.
- ii) That the chief executive officer be requested to determine future meeting dates for the Trustees’ Board but that it would continue to meet on Wednesday evenings at 6.00pm.
- iii) That the venue for future meetings should be shared between all schools in the ULT and that trustees should attend, if possible, 30 minutes before the start of the formal meeting for a tour of that particular school.

Signed.....

Date.....