

**Uttoxeter Learning Trust  
Trustees' Board**

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees' Board held in Thomas Alleyne's High School, Uttoxeter, on Wednesday, 27 September 2017 at 6.00pm.

**Present:**

Member and Trustee – Mr S Slater (in the chair)  
Trustees – Mrs E Bell, Mr R Oldham, Mr T Sutcliffe, Mrs P Livesey  
Trustee and Chief Executive Officer – Mr M Osborne-Town

Clerk – Mr R Sheldon

**Apologies:**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs V Bennett and Rev M Sherwin (Trustees).

**Presentation from Moore Stephens (external auditor):**

Ashley Conway and Nicola Johnson, representative of Moore Stephens, had been invited to the meeting to brief Trustees on financial matters relating to the ULT. Having recently been appointed as the external auditor, meetings had already been held with the chief executive officer and chief finance officer to set out the requirements necessary to complete the first audit to cover the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 August 2017. A timetable for the full audit had been agreed and a report would be submitted to the finance committee for discussion at its meeting to be held on 29 November, before being formally presented to the Trust Board on 7 December. This would enable the accounts to be filed before the required deadline of 31 December 2017. Support would also be given to the chief finance officer in preparing and submitting the required 'academy accounts return' by the 18 January 2018.

Full discussion followed around the audit process and Trustees noted that a key purpose was to show that ULT accounts were true and fair and with no breaches of financial regulations as outlined in the Education and Skills Funding Agency 's (ESFA) financial handbook. Advice would also be provided on internal control measures and best practice around financial control, with a formal presentation given to Trustees and Members at a meeting early in the year. In response to questions raised, initial advice was also given on what financial information should be made available on the ULT website and what should appear on individual school websites. Some advice was also given around short term investment of ULT reserves.

Before leaving the meeting, Trustees thanked the representatives from Moore Stephens for attending the meeting and also invited them to attend the Members' meeting to be held on 13 December when the Trustees formally present the audit report. Attendance was agreed if able to.

**29. Welcome:**

The chair welcomed Pauline Livesey, recently appointed Trustee, to her first meeting of the Trust Board.

The chief executive officer reported that, following the resignation of Ms Andrews as a Trustee, he had circulated an advert via the schools inviting nominations for a Trustee with financial expertise. As yet, no response had been received to the advert. He further reported that Graham Morley (ULT Member) had put forward the name of someone who may be interested in becoming a Trustee, and that he had recently met with him to outline the Trustee role. He had subsequently expressed a willingness to be appointed as a Trustee and the approval of Members was currently being sought.

### **30. Declarations of Interest:**

Mr M Osborne-Town (non-executive director of Entrust) declared an interest in advance of discussions around his chief executive officer's report (see minute 33).

### **31. Trustees' Board Minutes:**

Minutes of a meeting of the Trustees' Board held on 10 July 2017 had been previously circulated.

It was resolved –

That the minutes be received and approved, subject to an amendment to minute 20 – Financial Management and Governance Self-Assessment.

Discussion around the Whistleblowing policy had included the need for it to make clear that it was the responsibility of the complainant to ensure that any complaint had been received by the appropriate trustee.

The chief executive officer confirmed that the revised Whistleblowing policy did now include this requirement.

### **32. Matters Arising:**

#### a) Windsor Park Middle School (Minute 16(b) refers)

The chair reported that the school was to submit CIF bids to fund the improvements to the fabric of the buildings and concern around the state of the buildings had been raised at a recent meeting held with the DfE who had asked to be kept informed of progress of the bids. Trustees also noted that CIF bids were also to be submitted by Thomas Alleyne's High School to improve the fabric of those buildings. A report submitted by the Fire Officer supported the CIF bids.

#### b) Code of Conduct (Minute 18 (a) refers)

The clerk reported that he was still to receive confirmation from some trustees that the code of conduct had been read and accepted.

#### c) Safeguarding Training (Minute 18(b) refers)

Trustees noted that Mrs Bennett and Mr Osborne-Town had attended the level 1 safeguarding training held on 12 September and that Mr Slater had attended the same course on 26 September. Other Trustees were strongly encouraged to attend such a course if at all possible, although some had undertaken similar training in other capacities.

Discussion also took place around Prevent training and safer recruitment training. The chief executive officer would discuss requirements of both with the ULT HR provider.

The chair further reported that, on behalf of all schools in the ULT, he was negotiating joint membership costs of joining the National Governors' Association (NGA).

It was resolved –

- i) That the clerk be requested to send the link for Prevent on-line training to Members and Trustees.

- ii) That Trustees support the chair in negotiating a joint membership fee for the NGA.

d) Cheadle High School (Minute 19 refers)

The chief executive officer reported that Julie Rudge, headteacher of Thomas Alleyne's continued to meet with the headteacher of Cheadle High School but plans for the ULT to offer formal support had not been progressed.

e) Performance Management (Minute 24 refers)

The chair reported that the chief executive officer had presented some possible draft targets for consideration by the performance management group and that he was currently seeking an external adviser to support the process.

### 33. Chief Executive Officer Report:

The chief executive officer presented his 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) Internal Audit

Having received tenders for both external and internal auditors, the finance committee had appointed Moore Stephens as the external auditor for a three year period, and for Staffordshire County Council to be appointed as the internal auditor, subject to further review after one year.

b) JCB Academy

Trustees had recently met with senior officers from the DfE to discuss concerns following the decision to allow the JCB academy to lower its admission age, which would have serious implications for the funding of ULT schools as a likely consequence of falling numbers on roll. It was hoped that some short-term financial support may be provided by the DfE.

The chair further reported that he was shortly to meet with David Bell, chair of the JCB academy, with a view to secure a closer working partnership between the JCB academy and the ULT.

c) Strategic School Improvement Fund

The chief executive officer reported that he had attended a recent meeting to consider the possibility of submitting a bid for school improvement funding. Funding criteria included support for the core subjects and, given that Ebacc and foreign languages in particular was a key challenge for Thomas Alleyne's, a bid would be submitted for funding, subject to foreign languages being classed as a core subject.

### 34. Meetings' Schedule:

The Board had been previously circulated with an updated ULT meetings' schedule for both Members and Trustees for the school year 2017/2018. However, the chief executive officer reported that a number of further changes had been made since the schedule had been circulated and that he would therefore arrange for revised version to be circulated. This would show the timing of meetings set at 5.30pm, with the exception of the Trustees' board meetings which would start at 6.00pm. The updated meetings' schedule would also include the focus for inputs from headteachers and chairs of governors when attending planned meetings.

It was resolved -

That the headteacher input at the meeting to be held in December should also include an Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) and interim school data.

### **35. Education Committee Report:**

A copy of the minutes of a meeting of the Education committee held on 14 September 2017 had been previously circulated. Mr Oldham, committee vice chair, outlined the issues considered, including in particular the following item:

#### Complaints Policy (Minute 25 refers)

The ULT Complaints policy had been revised to make clear the role of the ULT in responding to any formal complaint received. It was clear that all complaints should be investigated in accordance with school policy and, where appropriate, referred to a complaints committee of the governing body. Whilst accepting that there should be no general right of appeal to the ULT against the subsequent outcome of an investigation undertaken by a governing body complaints committee, it was felt that that the ULT should reserve the right to support any investigation into a complaint should it be considered necessary. Mrs Bell offered to look at the revised policy and propose changes to reflect this view.

It was resolved –

- i) That the minutes of the meeting of the Education committee be received and noted.
- ii) That the revised ULT Complaints policy be noted and that Mrs Bell be authorised to make further amendments as considered appropriate before circulating to Trustees for a view and subsequent approval at a future meeting.

### **36. Finance Committee Report:**

A copy of the minutes of a meeting of the Finance committee held on 19 September 2017 had been previously circulated. The chief executive officer briefly outlined the issues considered, including the possible future investment of ULT reserves. The advice offered by Moore Stephens at the beginning of the meeting had been of value in this respect.

#### Budget Forecast September 2017 to August 2018 (Minute 19 refers)

The Finance committee had considered the budget forecast for September 2017 to August 2018 and had recommended its approval by the Trustees' Board. It was necessary for the approved budget forecast to be submitted to the EFA before the end of July 2017.

It was resolved –

That the minutes of the meeting of the Finance committee be received and noted.

### **37. Marketing and PR Strategy:**

Trustees noted that due to a dip in school numbers, positive marketing about the ULT and its schools was key to future development. The headteachers had already started to look at this and a small working group had been set up to identify an appropriate marketing and PR strategy. All schools had also agreed to contribute funding to support any agreed strategy.

It was resolved –

That Trustees welcome such a positive way forward to market the ULT and its schools and support an offer made by Mr Oldham to join the small working group.

**38. Date of Next Meeting:**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Trustees' Board would be held in Thomas Alleyne's High School on Thursday, 7 December 2017 at 6.00pm.

The meeting finished at 8.05pm.

**Signed**.....

**Date**.....