



## 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 Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 7pm.

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

### Summary of matters for the Trust Board

- a) There is an expected short fall in terms of funding for the NI increases. The allocation of funding will not be paid until September 2025.
- b) Information from the government on funding is being provided extremely late this year which will impact the budgeting processes.
- c) Following recruitment earlier in the year, the TOLT group now have more capacity. There is some long term absence in IT but this is being managed. There are also some vacancies in the site team as well.
- d) The work is progressing with the toilets at Saltash and Looe and Section 106 funding is being used for this.

### 12. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

There were no changes declared.

### 14. Apologies for Absence

Mr Hallam had sent his apologies in advance of the meeting which were received and accepted by the committee.

### 15. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024 having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.

### 16. 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 Lumbar 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.

*Update 25-03-2025: Mrs Lumbard explained that this has been resolved as Mr Buckley can authorise up to £214K but this has not been reflected on the Risk Register as there is no increased risk to this. Trustees felt that this would speed up procurement processes.*

#### **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.

*Update 25-03-2025: Mrs Lumbard advised that she has included this in the finance report and the information shows the breadth and width of what is covered. In the benchmarking report there is a broad coverage of schools. The information from CACE is Cornwall based and Cornwall is one of the lowest funded counties. Mr Buckley advised we use national data and there are occasions where it is useful to use Southwest data such as for P8 scores. Mr Buckley added that almost all of his CEO colleagues will have to go through redundancies this year. For the second time running, we will not be looking at redundancies for the new academic year but this may not be the case in future years.*

#### **M7. Resources update (IT, H&S, Catering, Cleaning, Capital projects) – for information**

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.

*Update: Mrs Lumbard advised that the My Compliance Tool reporting should be added to the agenda for each meeting. Mr Lacey, Head of Estates has also introduced a complementary compliance system in each school as this helps him to do some on the spot compliance checking and it gives simple access to the Ops Manager. Getting the My Compliance Tool report in place is the next action for Mrs Lumbard to discuss with Mr Lacey. **Trustees noted the need for assurance that compliance is in place at all the schools.** Mrs Lumbard explained we still have a vacancy for a site manager at Liskeard and an absence at Saltash. Mr Buckley advised that there is a standard paper system at all the schools now.*

#### **17. Finance Report for information (Jo Lumbard)**

Including the Management Accounts, compliance check and ICLF. Documents were circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

a) Mrs Lumbard explained that she has highlighted changes since the budgets were agreed. The Teachers pay rise in September will be 2.8% but we are waiting for final agreements. The pay deal

for Support Staff was agreed in November 2024. The claim from NJC for next year is a £3k increase on every scale which makes a 12.68% increase at bottom end of the pay scale. **A Trustee asked why this is not a percentage based increase.** Mrs Lumbard advised this is the same as previous years and as it is pitched so high, it takes a long time to negotiate. We have forecast for 4% and we will keep this for the time being.

- b) **A Trustee asked if we won't be able to pay any increase to Support Staff until negotiations are finished.** Mrs Lumbard advised this is the case. The Support Staff negotiating body will be reestablished from 2027.
- c) **A Trustee asked about the relief for the NI (National Insurance) increase.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we have now had a ready reckoner which calculates a grant for us based on pupil numbers. When this is reviewed against our budgeting tool, there is a short fall of about £39K for the 5 months from April to August 2025 with around a £100k short fall over a 12 month period based on our current staffing profile and anticipated pay increases.
- d) The actual allocations will be available in May even though this comes into effect in April and the funding will be received in September. We will be accruing for this in our accounts. There is a negative effect on all schools from this short fall of funding. Mrs Lumbard advised that supplementary grants have been provided in previous years and these are being rolled into the national funding formula next year and we will be getting less funding overall.
- e) **A Trustee asked if this position may change following the budget.** Mr Buckley advised this is unlikely. **A Trustee asked what communication is happening with our MPs.** Mr Buckley advised we are working with the CST (Confederation of Schools Trusts) who represent us well and Cornwall CEOs are being vocal on the reduced funding. Mrs Lumbard is a member of the Cornwall Schools Forum and they discussed the pressure on the high needs block and the historical low funding. There was a unanimous vote to approach the local MP with a full package which they can take forward on our behalf.
- f) Mrs Lumbard advised the funding statements and information from the DfE has been really late this year. We did have Pupil Premium (PP) rates at the end of last week with a 2.3% increase which is not enough to cover costs. There is no information on Sports Premium but this is still being added to budgets. We are still missing information on NIC grants for post 16 and it will likely be a short fall and not cover the increase.
- g) **A Trustee asked if we would need to revise policies to react to less funding.** Mr Buckley advised that we have discussed with TSLT (Trust Senior Leadership Team) the likely need to cut staffing due to the 0.5% increase in funding and they will need to consider this when looking at staffing hours. There is a risk to funding for capital projects as we need to have over 3000 children and we have 3100 so we might need to be strategic in encouraging students into our sixth forms by investing in minibuses for transport for example. SCA (School Capital Allocation) funding is worth £412k per year. The only alternative to this if we fall below the 3,000 pupil count will be the CIF (School Improvement Fund) which have very few projects agreed through this funding allocation. **A Trustee asked if lack of funding for capital projects is on the Risk Register.** Mr Buckley advised that this has been updated.
- h) Management Accounts  
Mrs Lumbard advised the Management Accounts for period 6 have just been circulated and we are trying to have these prepared and circulated quicker to Trustees.
- i) **A Trustee had asked some questions on the Management Accounts by email.** One question related to Alternative Provision (AP) and the overspend. Mrs Lumbard advised that she has discussed this with the Liskeard Finance Manager. It transpires that we do have additional income which is offsetting against AP and the extra expenditure.

- j) **A Trustee asked about the £85K and will this be split up to reduce the risk.** Mrs Lumbard advised this is per bank and we don't have much choice apart from what bank we are using.
- k) **A Trustee referred to the cash flow and asked if Trewidland had £2million in their account.** Mrs Lumbard advised this is the high investment account. We are expecting around £20K interest on this for the first quarter of investment.
- l) **A Trustee noted GAG (General Annual Grant) funding is negative.** Mrs Lumbard advised that in the period 6 accounts, Liskeard have an ARB and some funding is from GAG and some the LA. How this is recorded and where the budget is going has now been aligned. Mrs Lumbard advised that cumulatively we have £37K surplus and cumulatively £195K and some of this sits with Liskeard due to the CSBG (Core Schools Budget Grant) as we were waiting for the NI funding increase. Saltash have already planned this spending but this is on hold until authorised by Mrs Lumbard.
- m) **A Trustee asked about an update on Section 106 funding.** Mrs Lumbard advised that at Looe and Saltash are benefiting from 106 money and the toilets and canopies are being funded by this funding stream. Looe has some historical funding from a local development which has enhanced outdoor areas. There are regulations on how this money can be spent and the LA must agree to the plan. **A Trustee asked if we are notified when there is 106 funding available.** Mr Buckley advised that the law changed and there must be money allocated to schools but it must be spent on increasing capacity in the schools. Mrs Lumbard will circulate information on the 106 funding for Liskeard. Dobwalls has also benefited from section 106 funding. Mr Buckley advised that the funding is a percentage based on the number of affordable homes being built. Mrs Lumbard will double check if there is more money from the section 106 for Liskeard.  
**Action: J Lumbard**
- n) **A Trustee referred to the staff pay rises for the new academic year and asked will this be provided as a grant.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this is doubtful but if it does it will come in as another government grant.
- o) **A Trustee asked if the Section 106 funding is for other organisations or just schools.** Mr Buckley advised that this used to be shared but it is now allocated to schools although there might be other allocations for organisations and we no longer have to bid for this funding.
- p) Mrs Lumbard advised the bench marking report from Kreston Reeves has been circulated. There was nothing to note and we are in the medium MAT category but only just as we have 3,100 students. Trustees can ask Mrs Lumbard any other questions by email.
- q) Mrs Lumbard added that there is an annual expectation for her and Mr Buckley to review the self-assessment tool to make sure we are using resources in the best possible way. Mrs Lumbard explained that there is evidence of the return made and we have determined if we are compliant in each area. There is an action plan and we need to have a revised estate vision and strategy plan. This will be ready for the next meeting. This is in line with the good estates management strategy from the DfE. There are no other actions needed. The DfE have introduced a new benchmarking tool and there are no surprises as we use the ICLFP (Integrated Curriculum Lead Financial Planning) and benchmarks so we use this tool to complement our own. They benchmark nationally to schools with the same characteristics and we use national benchmarks already as well as we use the ICLFP to a high level already.

#### 18. **Resources Update for information**

Including update on compliance. Documents were circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised that the various members of the TOLT (Trust Operational Leadership Team) have contributed to this report.
- b) Confidential appendix.

- c) There are some site staff vacancies. Mrs Lumbard advised the roofing work at Saltash has been finished and signed off which is positive. There is an update on the toilet work in Saltash. Mr Lacey has given an update on the capital works programme. The roof work is being reviewed to ensure we are using funding as effectively as possible. The premises compliance has been discussed. **A Trustee referred to the boilers and what is the position.** Mrs Lumbard advised we changed the boilers at Looe and Saltash boilers have been reviewed.
- d) Mr Foy is working hard to bring staff together across the Trust to have common working practices and writing SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). There is nothing significant to report in terms of the catering and cleaning contracts but we have removed the monitoring from Litmus and are doing this ourselves as Mr Foy now has capacity. **A Trustee asked how this impacts the next tendering process.** Mrs Lumbard explained that we can employ Litmus to do this. The EWO (Education and Welfare Officer) team is a success and we are looking to offer them some additional hours next year.
- e) We are investing in a telephony system; copiers and printers and minibuses need to be procured and in place for September. There is more capacity in the team now. In terms of policies, we have the tracker in place which keeps everything as up to date as possible and this is being embedded to reduce any non-compliance. **A Trustee asked if we do have some red policies.** Mr Buckley advised we are 89% compliant.

19. **Draft budgeting process – For information**

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised that now we have funding statements, the finance teams are starting the budgeting process. Meetings with key personnel are already booked in and there is a structured timetable to ensure they have a draft budget in place for the LGC meeting in the summer term.

20. **Risk Register – Review and consider and changes**

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised that this was covered in the A&R committee meeting.

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

- a) Approval of policies 14<sup>th</sup> March 2025
  - Charging and Remissions policy
  - Counter theft, fraud and corruption policy
  - Reserves & Investment policy
  - Donations policy and procedure
  - Financial Regulations procedures and policy
  - Financial Scheme of Delegation
  - School Meal Debt policy

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

- a) There is an expected short fall in terms of funding for the NI increases. The allocation of funding will not be paid until September 2025.
- b) Information from the government on funding is being provided extremely late this year which will impact the budgeting processes.
- c) Following recruitment earlier in the year, the TOLT group now have more capacity. There is some long term absence in IT but this is being managed. There are also some vacancies in the site team as well.
- d) The work is progressing with the toilets at Saltash and Looe and Section 106 funding is being used for this.

23. **Any Other Business**

- a) Mr Buckley advised that the plan to have an outdoor cabin for the Landulph nursery has not been viable for several reasons and so we are intending to reconfigure internal space. Mr Buckley explained that we have been able to bid for funding for this and we were allocated £100K. Mr Buckley added that there is a solution for creating internal space. **A Trustee asked if this would reduce the capacity of the school.** Mr Buckley advised that we should gain more overall by making the changes.
- b) **A Trustee asked what the anticipated nursery numbers are.** Mr Buckley advised that the previous numbers have been around 8. Pre-school funding was discussed at length and we should have flexibility with staffing as we have other SMART nurseries so we should be able to make the Landulph nursery work.

24. **Date of next meetings:**

A&R and Resources 03-06-2025 at 6pm and Resources 10-07-2025 at 6pm.

The meeting closed at 19.50.

Action Summary	
<p><b>M17. Finance Report for information (Jo Lumbard)</b></p> <p>m) <b>A Trustee asked about an update on Section 106 funding.</b> Mrs Lumbard advised that at Looe and Saltash are benefiting from 106 money and the toilets and canopies are being funded by this funding stream. Looe has some historical funding from a local development which has enhanced outdoor areas. There are regulations on how this money can be spent and the LA must agree to the plan. <b>A Trustee asked if we are notified when there is 106 funding available.</b> Mr Buckley advised that the law changed and there must be money allocated to schools but it must be spent on increasing capacity in the schools. Mrs Lumbard will circulate information on the 106 funding for Liskeard. Dobwalls has also benefited from section 106 funding. Mr Buckley advised that the funding is a percentage based on the number of affordable homes being built. Mrs Lumbard will double check if there is more money from the section 106 for Liskeard.</p>	<p><b>Action: J Lumbard</b></p>