



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 virtually at 6pm on Thursday 10th July 2025.

Present	Yes/No	In Attendance	Yes/No
Mr M Aarts, Chair	Yes	Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes
Ms J Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs J Lumbard, CFO	Yes
Mr Gary Simpson	No	Mrs K Williams, Clerk	No
Mr N Toms	Yes		

25. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

26. Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties - update on any changes since completion of written declaration
None.

27. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received in advance of the meeting from Mr Simpson.

28. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 25th March 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th March 2025, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record and will be signed.

29. Matters Arising

M17: Mrs Lumbard contacted Paul Renowden to see if 106 funds are due for Liskeard. He is responsible for development for the LA. He confirmed no new 106 money are available but schools will be notified when this occurs.

Trustee asked if we had to bid – Mrs Lumbard responded not

Trustee asked if funding depends on number of houses – Mrs Lumbard confirmed that this is based on the volume of affordable housing.

Mr Buckley confirmed the arrangements and gave the example of 106 recent funding to Dobwalls and how as the development was an affordable housing development by a housing association we were not in receipt of significant 106 funding.

30. Draft budgets for consideration and recommendation to Trust Board

a) This year, the CACE FD group expertise was used for reference guidance as was Institute of school and Business Leaders. ISBL benefits from some of its members being SRMA (School Resource Management Advisors)

b) Both set out the standard assumptions that the Finance team have used to prepare the budgets for 2025/26 as detailed in the budget assumptions paper.

Mrs Lumbard detailed the additional funds that have been made available for the teacher's pay rise. This is to help cover the cost of the 4% Teachers pay increase recently announced.

For the inflationary Support staff pay effective from 1st April 2025 we have budgeted for a 4% increase, but the current offer is 3.2%. Mrs Lumbard was pleased that we have budgeted in excess of the 3.2% offer as the NJC unions have recently balloted their members who have rejected the

offer of 3.2%. Currently, we will accept the result of the NJC negotiations and as soon as this is agreed we will pass this payment on to our staff.

- c) The new government aims to reinstate the SSSNB (School Support Staff Negotiating Body) in future so the process of agreeing support staff pay may be quicker.
Overall ICLFP – a small budget surplus of £53K across the Trust which is remarkable given the delay to information being received.
- d) We will retain a 5.6% reserve for 2025/26, but we are aware that drops in pupil numbers at Landulph and Saltash will have an impact. We are hoping numbers could begin to rise again given positive OFSTED. Liskeard and Looe have a dip initially in 2025/26 but are projected to then stabilise.
- e) The projected deficit in the long term includes all of our calculations that are prudent and don't assume future grants. If these negative predictions come to fruition we would have time to adjust staffing to bring budgets into line.
- f) There is a small deficit with the TSS budget. This is mainly due to staffing. The SCA (School Capital Allocation) has doubled to £861K which will allow us to do a great deal of the required improvement work.
- g) **A Trustee asked for clarification of how the SCA is allocated.** Mrs Lumbard confirmed that our 3000 + pupil number is key so proactively a number of measures are being put in place to bolster sixth form numbers as the pupil numbers in primary project to drop to maintain this 3000 pupil requirement.
- h) **A Trustee asked about lines in the budget not related to the staffing and noted an £800K increase in this other expenditure, which is equivalent to an 11% increase, hence over inflation. Could a saving be made against this as it is the only one that could be reduced as the other costs are structural and based on staffing and costs that we have less control over.**
- i) Mrs Lumbard explained that reductions in some of the other expenditure items in the past means that the projected rises here may need to be larger over this term. Mrs Lumbard gave the example of the photocopy project that has been able to rationalise the bid across numerous schools and benefit from the usable life in devices not having been reached to hold on to this and so to cut costs and the make gains across the Trust. New minibus contracts have also enabled savings where older minibuses have been retained as the mileage was lower than anticipated.
- j) Interest on the 95 day savings account and additional capital funding are all investments we can benefit from.
- k) **A Trustee stated that the grants are good news but what commitments for continuation has occurred.** Mrs Lumbard stated that these will be rolled into the regular GAG pupil funding in future. However, Mrs Lumbard warned that when these grants are integrated in this way the overall usable amount is often lower. As we don't know the rules for these we have put in place cautious predictions. Mrs Lumbard made the point that timely decision making enables us to react to any new information as it is received.
- l) **Trustee asked about inflationary predicted interest seems very specific** – Mrs Lumbard explained this figure is the recommendation taken from national expectations hence the reason they are so specific.
- m) **Trustee asked a question about the management accounts and that it appears agency staff is costing more than we expected. It is £240K over.** Mrs Lumbard explained that some of these costs are offset against gapped posts so you will see a favourable variance which will be offset

against some of the unfavourable the agency costs variance. Mrs Lumbard explained that there are further secure lines to allow for variation. The Finance team act on what we know of staffing profile and known information about particular staffing for example if we know staff are soon to retire or not return.

- n) **A Trustee asked about the use of insurance policies to cover staff absence**
Smaller primary schools tend to use absence insurance policies. However, this is not the case for secondary schools as the premiums are so high. Generally, so we tend to self-insure these. The TSS budget pays for maternity leave costs and the schools cover the costs for staffing who are covering the posts.
- o) Mrs Lumbard went through the ICLFP and budgets for each school which had been circulated earlier.
- p) **Trustee asked if we had considered sharing staff between schools for absence.** Mrs Lumbard answered that the timetables are not aligned across secondary schools, but we do share teachers across the primary schools where possible – since we have had an executive head in place across Dobwalls and Trewidland this has worked extremely well.
- q) **A Trustee asked for clarification as to why this was not possible in secondary.** Mrs Lumbard answered that this was extremely difficult to align. Discussions do take place to consider what flexibility there would be to do so for 6th form working and these discussions resulted in no viable solution.
- r) Mr Buckley explained in more detail how the timetables of Secondary staff are very efficient and so there are not lengthy gaps that can be exploited in this way even if the timetables were aligned. Also, the availability that does exist, is being used to bring staff together for precision planning and to use specialist staff to reduce the long-term impact of absence of a colleague.
- s) **A Trustee asked about pensions and if these costs being covered correctly given the size of the pensions number and the teachers pension grant if this is rolled into the national formula results in less actual funding. Does this have an unseen negative impact?** Mrs Lumbard confirmed that when the additional grants are rolled in to the national pupil funding formula it was not usually a like for like transfer, but the differences are manageable and hence sustainable.
- t) The ICLFP documents have all been considered by the LGCs and they recommend that Trust Board should agree these. Mr Buckley confirmed that LGCs recommend rather than agree and that the committee can challenge their recommendation.
- u) **A Trustee asked about the difference in average teacher costs and why if there was a lower teacher ratio this didn't balance out.** Jo explained that the seniority of our staff is higher in Cornwall and for the area. Only 28% of staff are in the main pay scale in our Trust which is a figure in line with Cornwall but small compared to the national picture.
- v) **A Trustee asked how sustainable is this model given the model percentage.** Jo confirmed this issue – all schools in Cornwall are in this position and it is something that is a common themed issue which sound budgeting and timely planning enable us to manage sustainably.
- w) **A Trustee argued how is this sustainable in the longer term?** – Dan explained some more of the Context including how timely planning enabled the schools to remain in budget by altering the staffing in time to bring budgets back in line. This may result in larger classes or efficient high contact times but with the benefit of experienced staff. Despite this, the challenge is clear in that Cornwall schools generally perform lower than national.
- x) **Trustees all recommended all the budgets for approval to the board.**

y) There was wide praise for the whole finance team for having brought these budgets in line, during such a tough financial year with such late information and other challenges to deal with. Trustees pointed out that it was particularly impressive that OFSTED and outcomes improvements were achieved alongside the management of the financial pressures.

31. **Mrs Lumbard talked through the Resources Update that had been circulated prior to the meeting.**

- a) Mrs Lumbard praised the ICT team who have managed the absence of the Head of ICT exceptionally well, taking on the large cross trust projects that have involved research and skills they have developed collectively.
- b) Mrs Lumbard described that we have been unable to gain a site manager for Liskeard having now filled this post at Saltash.
Huge amount of work being planned for the summer from S106 funds as well as capital funding.
- c) **A Trustee asked about timescale for all this building work:** Mrs Lumbard described how this was being phased to enable it to occur during the summer with some of the work taking place during term time where this is safe, non-disruptive and efficient to do so.
- d) Mrs Lumbard described how the new heating management system should enable us to lower costs by more localised control.
- e) Mrs Lumbard praised Mr Lacey, Head of Estates for having brought students into the process where possible. He made arrangements for a group of 6th Form geography pupils to see a geologist who attended site to take a core sample prior to a new build. The geologist is keen for the students to see the next steps of the project and how the core sample will be used.
- f) **A Trustee asked for clarification of the ARB and why it is expanding.** Mrs Lumbard explained the growing need for ARB provision in Cornwall and hence the building work to extend this. The school is being given two classrooms as a new build in a different location on site to replace two classrooms near the ARB that are being adopted by them.
- g) Mrs Lumbard went from school to school to describe the projects detailed in the report.
- h) **A Trustee asked if the team had explored companies in the area and their provision for social value** – e.g. school adoptions that have happened in Plymouth. Mrs Lumbard explained how they had discussed this at TOLT and how we have been exploring opportunities and collaboration for future companies. Mrs Lumbard explained that these discussions in TOLT will continue as there is strong awareness of the benefits to pupils and possibilities for opportunities for pupils on offer. Also, the possible investment and hence reduction or the cost to our budgets.
- i) **A Trustee asked about how the spending dictated by the red, amber, green in the condition survey also directed these bids.** Mrs Lumbard stated that these were separate projects governed by some of the S106 priorities that we need to meet.
Mrs Lumbard explained that the projects funded by our own funds are ones that are in the condition survey which is most of the projects being done this year. Mrs Lumbard explained and praised how The Head of Estates has been revisiting the condition surveys based on specialist information to be able to time projects and group them to make them more efficient to deliver.
- j) **A Trustee asked for clarification that this ARB money was all coming from Cornwall so the full amount will be provided for funding the new build classrooms.** Mrs Lumbard explained why this was needed and confirmed that the funding will be coming from Cornwall Council.
- k) **A Trustee asked if the school rented the school rooms to the ARB** – Mrs Lumbard clarified that all aspects are managed by the school in the same way in both the Trust's ARBs. The whole budget allocation comes to the school who directs this provision. Mr Buckley explained that in order to

ensure the funds benefitted these students we have developed a form of internal charging for the facilities between Trust budgets. Funding for these pupils happens in the same way as the majority of pupils with SEND but pupils with an ARB place will have a higher pupil funding rate. High needs top up funding is higher than the EHCP top up funding rate.

- l) **A Trustee asked how to see these figures in the budget if it is by internal charging.** Mrs Lombard described that there is an income line for High needs funding described using this term.
- m) Mr Buckley explained how a fair proportion of this funding is allocated for the supporting costs of cleaning and maintenance etc. Mrs Lombard also pointed out that this division of funding has enabled us to ask for more precise amounts required for individual needs from the Local Authority.
- n) Fire compliance and legionella compliance based on the rag rating of the compliance reporting somewhat direct our funding as well as the conditional fund.
- o) **A Trustee asked if they could see the RAG compliance reports**
ACTION – Mrs Lombard will provide them to the November meeting.
- p) Mrs Lombard explained that Mr Foy, Head of Operations, has done a breakdown of operations work including updates on Cleaners, Catering. There has been some adjustment in NI rises. The EWO team have increased hours for September and are working well. We are hoping this is a service to extend to other Trusts again given successes.
- q) Procurement of minibuses, joint photocopy procurement, single central record, policy reviews etc. Mrs Lombard invited questions on any of these items. There were no questions, but support for pursuing this.
- r) A Trustee asked how drivers for minibuses works as we are not employing drivers. Mrs Lombard explained we may need to consider employing specific drivers if we extend minibus transport to sixth form use.
- s) As the average age of staff increases, a smaller proportion of staff will have a D1 licence for the larger minibus, so TOLT are looking at possible use of smaller minibuses that don't need a D1 licence. Using smaller buses does not require the £1,000 per training per staff member should a full minibus licence.
- t) **A Trustee asked about what funding was being put into reputational interaction and PR to bolster numbers.**
- u) A lengthy debate was entered into about the relative merits of hiring a new TSS central member of staff with an advertisement for someone with marketing and promotion skills. This was explored with the counter model of having expertise widely spready in each school as is now the case in Saltash.
- v) Trustees welcomed the discussion which was able to consider the factors of cost as investment to guard against the further loss of students as opposed to focussing on providing the funds to schools to maximise them being excellent places to learn so that pupils, staff and parents advocate on social media and elsewhere to raise the aspiration and reputation over time.
- w) There was praise for the steps taken at Saltash by the Head to improve staff dress codes and the use of posters and wall coverings to raise the standard of appearance and hence expectations. Also, the new and growing contact with primaries in the area as is also happening in the other schools.
- u) **A Trustee asked if enough was being done to offer events that would draw in the crowd and also questioned if Saltash and/or Landulph should have had a stand at the recent Saltash fayre.**

- x) Mr Buckley shared that the presence of Saltash in the past and the cost of giving our promotional material was high and with what was felt to be limited impact compared to the staffing cost. There are also concerns about the negativity currently expressed by the community and how on social media Liskeard and Saltash have been able to control this commenting through switching off the opportunity or use out of school. Saltash has recently begun to turn the tide with parents now countering comments with positive support.
- y) **A Trustee challenged the quality of the available data on pupil destinations and argued that without such data, the TB could not oversee an informed strategy.**
- z) Mr Buckley shared that in the last Looe LGC a member of the senior team had looked at the change in proportion of the available children in a catchment to conclude Looe was attracting a high proportion of the pupils and this proportion had grown. There was wide support for such a more complex and useful set of measures.

Action: Annual calculation of Total year 6 numbers (as a proxy for total children living within a particular catchment area.) minus the number of pupils who then join year 7 who also live in the traditional catchment area.

32 Considering the Risk Register updated for LGC6

- a) Dan went through each line on the updated risk register where a Headteacher had entered a change and described the reasons for each of them.
- b) Key items of note are the positive assessments of community and Trust collaboration by the new Head at Looe, coupled with their more realistic concerns about quality of teaching and student outcomes.
- c) Also of note were steps to bring Trewidland into policy alignment with Dobwalls whilst retaining its unique identity and character in the lack of funding for SEND need and for minor building related to safeguarding practice.
- d) **A Trustee cited the appointment of a new chair as a risk which will be addressed in the Autumn meeting.**

33. Items raised from the oversight of LGCs

- a) None to highlight to the committee.

34. Agreements made by email – For information

- a) None.

35. Summary of matters for the Trust Board

- a) Recommending all of the budgets for agreement by Trust Board.
- b) Praise for the Finance Team maintaining reserves whilst improved outcomes achieved in a touch year.
- c) Praise for the ICT team stepping into Trust wide projects very effectively as a team in the absence of the Head of ICT
- d) Praise for the range of projects and achievements from Mr Foy, Head of Operations and Mr Lacey, Head of Estates together with the sheer volume of work being done over the summer to benefit pupils.
- e) A call for more complex calculated date to inform the Trust Board of changes to the success of the schools in attracting pupils from their own traditional catchment area.

36. Date of next meetings:

Mrs Lumbard clarified Tuesday 15th July at 6pm in the Conference room at Liskeard School for the next Trust Board meeting and the next Resources meeting will be on 4th November.

37. **AOB**

A Trustee requested an update on the phone mast at Saltash – Mrs Lumbard updated that the rent will be £2,500 per year. The negotiations are continuing. She also thanked Marcel for the support offered over this issue. Mrs Lumbard also clarified that removal of the mast from the land is not possible.

The meeting closed at 7:40pm

Action Summary	
<p>M31. Mrs Lumbard talked through the Resources Update that had been circulated prior to the meeting</p> <p>o) A Trustee asked if they could see the rag compliance reports</p> <p>z) Mr Buckley shared that in the last Looe LGC a member of the senior team had looked at the change in proportion of the available children in a catchment to conclude Looe was attracting a high proportion of the pupils and this proportion had grown. There was wide support for such a more complex and useful set of measures.</p>	<p>Action: Mrs Lumbard will provide them to the November meeting.</p> <p>Action: Annual calculation of Total year 6 numbers (as a proxy for total children living within a particular catchment area.) minus the number of pupils who then join year 7 who also live in the traditional catchment area</p>