



TRUST BOARD AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held on Tuesday 25th March 2025 at 6pm.

Present	Yes/No	In attendance	Yes/No
Mr Marcel Aarts	Yes	Mr Dan Buckley, CEO	Yes
Ms Jody Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs Jo Lumbar, CFO	Yes
Mr Lee Hallam	Apologies	Ms Kate Williams, Clerk to Trust Board	Yes
Mr Neill Toms, Chair	Yes		

Summary of matters for the Trust Board

- a) The committee discussed the live risk of Ofsted who were visiting Liskeard on 25th and 26th March. There were no other notable emerging or new risks although there is some staff absence at Trewidland which is being managed. It was suggested that being without a Chair of the Trust Board and low capacity of Trustees should be added to the Risk Register.
- b) The programme of internal assurance testing is underway and the outcome of the testing will be reported to Trustees at the next A&R Committee meeting.
- c) The committee have been provided with confirmation that we are compliant in the following areas:
 - ESFA funding statements agree to October census reports
 - Annual assessment of the MAT against appendix c of the Academies Financial Handbook 'the musts'
 - Report of any novel or contentious transactions to consider risk
 - The Anti-Fraud checklist
 - Regularity update
 - Annual assessment of the MAT against CC8, internal controls in a charity

11. Welcome and Format of Meeting

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

None.

13. Apologies for Absence

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

14. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11-12-2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2024, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.

15. Matters Arising

M6. Presentation of draft Accounts and Management Letter: Bishop Fleming

i) Saltash Community School

The termination notice warning has been withdrawn so no further work is needed in this area as low risk. **A Trustee referred to the management comment about the change in government policy and asked is it accurate.** Mr Buckley advised that this needs to be two separate comments and Mrs Lumbard will provide an amendment to the management comment.

Update: Complete.

n) Annual Report and Accounts

Mrs Oliver advised that Trustees need to be content with the contents of the report and it is compliant. It was noted that there needs to be an amendment to the spelling of Mr Aarts and Ms Chan-Penney's names.

Update: Complete.

t) Mr Buckley explained that the surplus for PP was high for last year and we need to look at ways of spending this. Mr Buckley would like to have a focus on PP next year. Mrs Lumbard explained that the finance managers meet with the PP lead in the schools to give monthly updates on what is available to be spent. There are changes which happen over the year and we might need to look at reviewing spending mid-way through the year. Trustees felt that a PP discussion would be beneficial in a future Learning committee meeting. The Clerk to add to the agenda.

Update: Complete.

M38. AOB

b) Energy contracts

Mrs Lumbard advised that the contract for one meter at Liskeard can now be procured. The energy broker will go to market tomorrow and Mrs Lumbard will be in contact with Trustees for an agreement on a proposal. Trustee asked for a reminder by text.

Update: Mrs Lumbard advised that this was completed following the July meeting.

16. Consider strategic risk including new and emerging risks

- a) Mr Buckley advised the Risk Register has been updated. Ofsted are in Liskeard today and this is a live risk but it is going well.
- b) We have had no other notable risks. There is some staff absence in Trewidland which is being managed by moving staff round the schools.

17. Update on internal assurance scrutiny tests

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised that as agreed by Trustees, we have a annual testing programme broken down into two sets of tests. The first set of tests were after February half term and completed by Wescott's who looked at Risk reporting with Liskeard School as a focus. We won't have the results of the audit until the next meeting as the review with Westcotts is taking place at the end of April. The second part of testing is around finance which will be after the Easter holidays and this can be reported at the next meeting.
- b) **A Trustee asked if this testing needs to be done yearly.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this testing is separate to the Bishop Fleming annual audit. This work is agreed by Trustees and Mr Hallam and Mr Buckley met with Mrs Lumbard to define the second set of testing with Wescott's. The internal assurance report is submitted to the DfE with the Annual Audits and Management Letter.
- c) **A Trustee suggested that the A&R committee highlights areas of focus and what needs testing and the committee needs to agree other areas where assurances are needed in future.** There needs to be testing in financial areas as well as another focus.

18. Minute that ESFA funding statements agree to October census reports

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised that the census report from October gives data on pupil numbers and the EFSA have recognised that the number is correct. It is a key risk if the numbers are different due to the funding attached to the number of pupils in the schools. **A Trustee asked if this relates to**

movement of pupils between October and now. Mr Buckley advised that the census numbers are checked by the DfE and we are funded correctly. This is an annual process to confirm pupil numbers which is separate from pupil movement such as if a student is permanently excluded as we are then invoiced by the LA (Local Authority) who give the funding to the intaking school.

- b) **A Trustee asked about funding for EHE (Elected Home Educated) students.** Mrs Lumbard advised that EHE students don't get funding as they are not registered at a school. The school is not penalised if the student is removed from school to EHE. Mr Buckley advised that we have had one instance where a child was removed from roll the day before census but then returned to school and we received no funding for that child.

19. **Annual assessment of the MAT against appendix c of the Academies Financial Handbook 'the musts'**
A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mrs Lumbard has circulated the annual assessment which is issued by the DfE. We have reviewed 'the musts' to see if we comply with each one. We are fully compliant and this is an annual process.

20. **Report of any novel or contentious transactions to consider risk**

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

- a) Mr Buckley confirmed that there have been no contentious transactions. **A Trustee asked if there are any examples of contentious transactions that have happened.** Mr Buckley summarised an issue within the sixth form a few years ago which was reported to Trustees.

21. **The Anti-Fraud checklist**

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised that we have reviewed a set of questions. We believe that we have all the elements that we need to reduce and minimise the risk of fraud in the Trust.

22. **Regularity update**

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised that we can confirm that there have been no changes in our position since the Annual Accounts were signed at the end of December 2024.
- b) **A Trustee asked about the guidance from the DfE and are there any changes.** Mr Buckley advised we are using the same definition as the DfE and we are aligned with them.

23. **Annual assessment of the MAT against CC8, internal controls in a charity**

- a) Mr Buckley advised we are a charity so we have a list of 'musts' from a charity perspective. There are some areas which are not applicable to our organisation.

- b) Mr Buckley advised that Trustees are accountable for each line. At any point of the year, Trustees can ask questions as they are responsible overall and need to have appropriate assurances that we are compliant. Mrs Lumbard advised that Trustees need to be able to confidently say that we are meeting all areas of ATH (Academy Trust Handbook) compliance and there are sufficient assurances in place.

- c) **A Trustee noted that the Risk Register is normally on the agenda and asked about an emerging risk of the Chair of the Trust Board leaving.** Mr Buckley advised that he has done a summary of the Risk Register and all points can be challenged. Mr Buckley added that being without a Chair has not been included on the Risk Register. Mr Crisp will cover the Chair role in the interim and we are recruiting more Trustees.

- d) **A Trustee asked if Mr Crisp has specified how long he is willing to be in the Chair role for and would a new Trustee find it challenging to step into this role.** Mr Buckley advised that succession planning is needed and the capacity of Trustees is something that needs to be considered. The Clerk advised that the Chair of the Trust Board stepping down and succession planning is on the

agenda for next week's Trust Board meeting. **A Trustee also noted that capacity of the Trustees also should be added to the Risk Register.**

- e) **A Trustee asked is a new format and different judgements are being used by Ofsted visits and are these applicable to the Liskeard visit.** Mr Buckley advised the new Ofsted framework starts next year. Mr Buckley explained that Saltash is due an imminent Ofsted visit.
- d) **A Trustee asked about the Risk Register at Dobwalls and Trewidland which has not been completed.** Mr Buckley suggested that this may be due to the timing of the LGC (Local Governor Meetings) meetings but it was confirmed that the round of meetings have finished so they have identified where the risks are. Trewidland did highlight behaviour in the last LGC meeting and the Dobwalls Risk Register needs to be completed.

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

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

- a) None.

26. **Date of next meetings**

A&R and Resources 03-06-2025 at 6pm and Resources 10-07-2025 at 6pm. It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Teams.

The meeting closed at 18.40.