



## 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 Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at 6.30 pm.

<b>Present</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>In attendance</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Mr Marcel Aarts	Yes	Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes
Ms Jody Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs J Lumbar, CFO	Yes
Mr Lee Hallam	Yes	Mrs K Williams, Clerk to Trust Board	Yes
Mr Chris Piper	Yes		

### **Summary of matters for the Trust Board**

- a) The committee discussed any new and emerging risks to the Trust. These include:
  - Changes at Trewidland
  - Changes in the Regional Group
  - No win, no fee complaints
  - Temporary Senior Leadership Team at Saltash
  - Estate team vacancies
  - Trustee availability for meetings
  - Looe exam outcomes and Ofsted
  
- b) The committee have considered a number of statutory items. These include:
  - Annual assessment of the MAT against CC8, internal controls in a charity
  - Regularity update
  - The Anti-Fraud checklist
  - Report of any novel or contentious transactions to consider risk
  - Annual assessment of the MAT against appendix c of the Academies Financial Handbook 'the musts'
  - ESFA funding statements agree to October census reports

#### **11. Welcome**

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**

No changes.

#### **13. Apologies for Absence**

All Trustees were present.

#### **14. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 07-12-2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023, having been circulated in advance and were agreed as an accurate record.

#### **15. Matters Arising**

There were no actions from the previous meeting.

*Mr Piper was having difficulty with his internet connection. Mr Aarts took over chairing the meeting.*

16. **Consider strategic risk including new and emerging risks**

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

- a) Confidential appendix.
- b) There is an issue with a no win and fee complaint which we are working through and supporting the school involved. **A Trustee asked if we are taking legal advice.** Mr Buckley advised this is the case and the insurers are also involved. Mr Buckley keeps the Chair of the Trust Board apprised of any issues which could result in legal action.
- c) **A Trustee asked about the level of risk around Looe's results and potential Ofsted outcome.** Mr Buckley advised that there has been a change in Ofsted lead who is more focused on exam outcomes. Mr Buckley advised the Progress 8 score is -0.35 and this could be a concern and could place them at risk. We are expecting an Ofsted visit before the summer. To mitigate this, Mr Carrington and Mr Buckley are providing support to Looe along with using cross Trust groups.
- d) **A Trustee asked if there are ongoing issues with subjects at Looe.** Mr Buckley advised that staffing issues have been resolved and we can demonstrate that we have taken the right measures to improve grades in the subjects where there is a concern.
- e) There is a risk in terms of vacant posts in the estates team and we have taken action but this remains a potential risk whilst we are understaffed.
- f) **The Chair of the Trust Board noted from the recent Members meeting that the Members had raised a concern that there was not enough challenge around staffing in the People Committee minutes and it was asked if there are any possible issues with staff retention and morale.** Mr Buckley explained that where there are changes in Senior Leadership this can impact staff but there are currently no concerns in this area.
- g) **A Trustee noted that the Clerk has raised a concern about Trustee availability for meetings including those that are ad hoc to the SMART calendar.** It was suggested that this needs to be included in the Risk Register. **A Trustee suggested that some Trustees do not feel well enough equipped to attend some of the ad hoc meetings as requested.** Mr Buckley felt that the Trust Board is strong and he has no concern about Trustees attending meetings but it would be useful to attend in pairs to gain experience. We do need a balanced board and should look to recruit a number of Trustees that have capacity for meetings during the day.
- h) Mr Buckley advised that the temporary SLT (Senior Leadership Team) at Saltash is seen as a risk in terms of Ofsted but they are working well and are being supported. There is a risk in terms of not being able to appoint permanently at this time and we will need to advertise any post senior post nationally.

17. **Minute that ESFA funding statements agree to October census reports**

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard explained the document has been reviewed and funding statements are correct in terms of census data.

18. **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 explained the ATH (Academy Trust Handbook) has a section of 'musts'. The spreadsheet is compiled by the ESFA and this has been reviewed by the CFO and AO (Accounting Officer). The yellow area is a new 'must' for this year but is not applicable to the Trust. Apart from this, all areas are green.

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

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

- a) Mrs Lombard advised we must consider if there are any novel or contentious transactions and since the accounts were signed in December 2023, there have been no such transactions in the Trust.

20. **The Anti-Fraud checklist**

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

- a) Mrs Lombard explained that this checklist is issued by the ESFA and it has a series of 10 questions which we must consider. The CFO and AO have reviewed this and they require the committee to raise any questions if Trustees believe they can't answer any of the questions themselves. Trustees felt assured by the internal processes in place which would pick up any issues and they have considered the questions.

21. **Regularity update**

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

- a) Mrs Lombard advised this is a mid-year check. As part of the audit process, this is checked and the AO and Chair sign the accounts to this effect. There have been no changes since the accounts were signed in December 2023.

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

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

- a) Mrs Lombard explained that the CC8 internal controls are in place as we are also a charity. The AO and CFO have reviewed the checklist and there are a number of areas which are non-applicable as these questions do not apply to us as an educational Trust. There are no concerns.
- b) **A Trustee noted that the riskiest items are covered by the Audit process and we have a strong audit regime which provides assurance to Trustees.** Mr Buckley advised that this checklist also provides evidence that the executive leads have formally considered.

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

- a) None.

25. **Date of next meeting**

05-06-2024.

The meeting closed at 7.31pm.