



## 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 Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at 5.30 pm.

Present	Yes/No	In Attendance	Yes/No
Mr M Aarts, Chair	Yes	Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes
Ms Jody Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs J Lumbard, CFO	Yes
Mr Lee Hallam	Yes	Ms K Williams, Clerk	Yes
Mr Chris Piper	Apologies		

### Summary of matters for the Trust Board

- a) The committee is content to recommend the budget for 2024-25 for approval. There is a risk to Trewidland's budget if pupil numbers drop but school leaders are working to mitigate against this.
- b) A Head of Estates has been appointed along with a Head of Finance. These posts will join the Head of Operations and increase the membership of TOLT.
- c) ICT has now recruited to the final vacancy and are a full team. There are some ongoing issues with recruiting to the site and maintenance teams.
- d) The EWO team is working well and providing a service to all the schools and this is being outsourced to a small number of other schools in the area.

### 26. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

There were no changes to declarations.

### 27. Apologies for Absence

Mr Piper sent his apologies in advance of the meeting and these were received and accepted by the committee. Mr Hallam had advised that he would be around 10 minutes late.

### 28. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.

### 29. Matters Arising

#### M17. Matters Arising

#### M32. Resources update (IT, H&S, Catering, Cleaning, Capital projects)

**h) A Trustee asked about thresholds for procurement.** Mrs Lumbard 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 will the threshold likely to 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.*

**Action: Mrs Lumbard**

#### **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.*

**Action: Mrs Lumbard**

#### **M19. Issues raised by the Local Governing Committees**

a) Trewidland – Quality of Chartwells food and predicted deficit budget for next year

Mrs Lumbard explained that Trewidland do not have a kitchen to operate from so the food is prepared at Dobwalls and then transported to Trewidland. Mr Foy has investigated the issues and he had discussed this with Chartwells. Mrs Lumbard is waiting for an update and if there has been improvements. Mr Buckley advised that issues with the catering is only affecting Trewidland. Mrs Lumbard added that we are holding a tendering process for the new catering contract and the bidders are due to visit the schools soon. We use Litmus as project managers for the procurement and they assist us with management of the contract.

*Update: Mrs Lumbard advised that the quality of the catering has returned to the required standard and will be changing providers moving forwards.*

Mr Hallam joined the meeting at 5.36pm.

#### **M20. Resources Update for information**

b) **A Trustee noted that the report is excellent and sets out the compliance position and provides a narrative which gives assurance that areas are being reviewed. A Trustee suggested that he would expect to see the overall compliance position and there are some other checks which should be happening.** He will provide a list of what should be included so that there is assurance that this is being undertaken.

*Update: Mrs Lumbard has not received this from Mr Piper.*

**Action: Mr Piper**

f) **A Trustee queried how plans for rectifying the issues with the toilets are being communicated with the Headteachers and how is this then being communicated to parents.** Mr Buckley advised that TSLT (Trust Senior Leadership Team) meet every 6 weeks and meetings have discussed the issues with toilets each time. He will discuss this further with the Liskeard Headteacher. Mr Buckley added that the Liskeard Deputy Headteacher has been part of the Everyone's Invited group which discussed the issues with the toilets.

*Update: Mr Buckley advised that there are no plans to communicate with parents about toilets. We are just about to survey students and there will be some questions around this. **A Trustee asked how students access the survey.** Mr Buckley advised that a Microsoft form is sent to all students which is returned centrally. Mr Buckley advised it is an online form so they are given access to IT or can be granted*

permissions to use a phone in school. Schools can choose their own approach to how the students access it. The survey has never been a Trust wide survey before and will be circulated to Years 4 through to Year 13. We will have data on which schools managed to attract the most students to complete the survey. Saltash have been using QR codes and allowing students to use their phones. **A Trustee suggested that setting it as homework on Classcharts would be a good approach. A Trustee felt that an offer of amazon voucher is a great incentive for completion.** Mr Hallam explained that in terms of outstanding actions, Mr Piper has advised that he is not going to renew his term of office. **A Trustee asked about Trustee recruitment.** We have one new Trustee who will attend the next meeting.

**i) A Trustee asked if there is any funding for Liskeard from the new developments in the area.** Mr Buckley advised that Dobwalls will receive Section 106 money from the housing development in that area. Mrs Lumbard will contact the Local Authority to discuss the position of funding for Liskeard. *Update: Mrs Lumbard has been in contact with the Local Authority and she is waiting to hear back from them.* **A Trustee asked if there is a mandatory requirement for 106 funding.** Mr Buckley advised that there is a requirement for it to go to education. We have received funding for Dobwalls and this provided a covered walkway. **A Trustee asked if we get an automatic notification when there is money available from a new development.** Mr Buckley advised that there is a set formula. Mr Buckley advised that there is a large drop in pupil numbers over the next few years due to a drop in birth rates nationally.

### 30. **Draft budgets for consideration and recommendation to Trust Board**

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised that the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) Rated ICLFP (Integrated Curriculum Led Financial Planning) has been circulated along with the key assumptions. She attended the CACE finance directors meeting last week and discussions found that there are similar assumptions being used with similar outcomes and there are some challenges with balancing budgets in Trusts. There is a positive that we have a good reserve in terms of going concern and we will need to wait for further information on government funding. We really do need information with longer term vision from the government. Mr Buckley advised that education has previously done better under a Labour government.
- b) **A Trustee asked how does it work with a new government and how long does it take to feel the benefit of more funding.** It was explained that there will be a spring budget. We are still waiting for information on teachers' pay and we normally get supplementary grants to cover any increase in costs. In terms of pupil funding, this is lagged and we should know about this for 2025/26. Mr Buckley advised that nationally there is a teaching recruitment crisis although this has been less problematic in the Southwest. **A Trustee queried if Labour are going to review Ofsted and would this help with teacher recruitment and retention.** Mr Buckley advised that there needs to be the right balance and we need to have a nationally agreed 5 year plan for teaching.
- c) We have a very small surplus for 24/25. Pupils numbers have not changed much from the current year into next year. There is stability in terms of pupil numbers in the primary schools. In terms of expenditure, key challenges are staff pay and this is a key risk and the teachers' pay is a 4% predicted increase. We have included this in the budgets and that this will be funded. We are still waiting for support staff pay increases and we have used an estimate for the negotiations based on several different scenarios. We are not expecting this to be funded.
- d) **A Trustee noted that some schools are using significant costs savings such as redundancies to balance budgets but that is not the case for SMART.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this is the case and some Trusts have needed to make some difficult decisions. We do have a healthy reserve. Future years never look very positive but we are mindful in our decision making throughout the year to enable us to have a balanced budget.
- e) The only other risk to the overall budget is Trewidland's budget if pupil numbers reduce but we are working to mitigate against the risk of this. **A Trustee asked if this is captured on the Risk Register. A Trustee asked if the change in structure is in the public domain.** Mr Buckley advised

that this is the case and we have worked hard to have a smooth transition and staff have met with parents. The impact of a change of Headteacher is more significant in small schools.

- d) **A Trustee asked who are considered as support staff.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this is anyone not on a teaching contract. **A Trustee asked how this increase is afforded if we don't get given the funding.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we will need to make efficiencies.
- e) Mrs Lumbard advised that the ICLFPs have been considered and agreed by each of the LGCs (Local Governing Committees). Mrs Lumbard asked if the Trustees are happy to recommend the budgets for approval for the Trust Board.
- f) **A Trustee referred to the red areas on the TSS (Trust Shared Services) ICLFP and asked how this should be interpreted.** Mrs Lumbard advised that the teaching staff element is Mr Buckley, Mr Carrington and Dr Bull and so the TSS is heavily weighed on staffing but these staff members are used across the Trust. We have invested some of the reserve in school improvement due to the double RI grading at Saltash and we have employed a Director of Education, Mr Carrington.
- g) **A Trustee asked why does Saltash have such a large capital reserve.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this has been carried forward from previous years and we are working with the school to spend this money and this has not been spent due to staff capacity. Mrs Lumbard will prioritise this when the new finance lead and Head of Estates start.
- h) **A Trustee referred to the new central posts and asked has this cost us more money.** Mr Buckley advised that we have changed titles to "head of" and we have moved to the model where staff are head of a service. We have a slight increase with the finance post but this is the same model as agreed when the COO (Chief Operating Officer) resigned. We have not increased the pay grades at all but we have needed to increase strategic leadership capacity for TOLT (Trust Operational Leadership Team).
- i) Trustees were content to recommend the budgets for approval to the Trust Board.

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

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised that the Head of ICT has given an update on the team. We have managed to recruit a senior technician for ICT. There is some Connect the Classroom work which has been funded by the DfE and Dobwalls and Saltash received the benefit of this. The ICT rolling programme is operating and it is more emended and efficient.
- b) We have recruited a Head of Estates who starts at the end of July. We have struggled to recruit to the maintenance and site staff positions, and this is due to the hourly rate being so low compared to other available vacancies.
- c) The toilets at Saltash are now on hold due to the delay up with tendering process at the Local Authority but we are hoping to push through the work on the canopy over the summer. Due to the amount of work needed on the toilets, this will now have to take place next summer and this is very disappointing.
- d) **A Trustee asked can the Local Authority revoke the funding for the toilets.** Mrs Lumbard advised that no they can't as it has been assigned to the school. **A Trustee asked about the scope and responsibility for Head of Operations and Head of Estates.** Mrs Lumbard advised that Mr Foy, Head of Operations has been supporting Mrs Lumbard in terms of Estates in the interim. He has the responsibility for what happens in the schools. The Head of Estates has the responsibility for the actual sites.
- e) The Head of Operations has provided an update and the EWO (Education and Welfare Officers) team has been a new service for the schools. We are hoping to extend the services and widen the

team and service outside of the Trust. **A Trustee asked if we are outsourcing this service.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we have outsourced this service to a small number of schools as an SLA (Service Level Agreement). **It was noted by a Trustee that this has a different liability and the Trust Board should be aware of this.** Mr Buckley advised that we also had an SLA for estates as well and if we have a healthy operating site team, we would also look to offer this again. Mrs Lumbard advised that these are services that we have historically provided to other schools. **A Trustee asked if this is included in the 5 year Plan.** Mr Buckley advised that this is already written into the Trust Strategic Plan.

- f) **A Trustee asked if there are any other services which we are selling externally.** We could for ICT in the future and we could further extend the EWO team. In the longer term, we would like to sell consultancy services to Trusts. It is the long term vision that all the services develop so that we can offer them as an SLA to other schools. **A Trustee asked if this income is included in the TSS budget.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this is the case.
- g) The report has given catering and cleaning contract updates along with the appointment of external auditors who have been approved by the Members. We are looking at the procurement of the minibuses. We are also looking at the assurance for compliance in terms of the support staff and having common systems in place for the SCR (Single Central Record) and safeguarding processes.
- h) **A Trustee asked is there anything to note on the My Compliance software.** Mr Lumbard advised that this is moving forward well and the new Head Of Estates will take this over when he commences in role.

### 32. Risk Register – Review and consider any changes

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised there is a change to behaviour and we hope we have successfully addressed this.
- b) Landulph have had some challenging pupils which they are managing and Looe has some issues which Liskeard have supported with and this has mitigated the risk.

### 33. Monitoring and overseeing the LGCs are fulfilling obligations towards Resources Issues

- a) Mr Buckley advised that the LGCs are part of the Trust Board and Trustees should be making sure they are attending link meetings and have overall oversight. **A Trustee asked if Trustees are attending the LGC meetings.** Mr Buckley advised that we need to make sure that we look at the methods to bridge the gap to ensure the LGCs feel part of the Trust.
- b) **A Trustee asked if the expectation for Trustees need to change and that each LGC meetings should be attended by a Trustee.** Mr Buckley advised that we need to make sure everyone believes we are one common organisation. **A Trustee felt that connecting the main Trust Board into the Chairs of Governors and perhaps having more meetings will allow the chairs to attend the Trust Board meetings so they can engage more with the Trust Board.** It was suggested that the governance review may provide some ideas. The capacity of Trustees and the Chairs of Governors was discussed and the Clerk voiced concern over requiring the Chairs to attend more meetings given their workload already. **It was noted by a Trustee that some of the LGC meetings have been on Teams and asked if Trustees can join virtually.** Mr Buckley advised that that each school has the option of holding hybrid meetings.

### 34. Agreements made by email – For information

- a) 16-19 Bursary Policy – June 2024  
Catering Contracts - June 2024  
Cleaning Contracts – June 2024

### 35. Summary of matters for the Trust Board



<p><b>M20. Resources Update for information</b></p> <p><b>b) A Trustee noted that the report is excellent and sets out the compliance position and provides a narrative which gives assurance that areas are being reviewed. A Trustee suggested that he would expect to see the overall compliance position and there are some other checks which should be happening.</b> He will provide a list of what should be included so that there is assurance that this is being undertaken.</p> <p><i>Update: Mrs Lumbar has not received this from Mr Piper.</i></p>	<p><b>Action: Mr Piper</b></p>
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