



## 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 4<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 6 pm.

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<b>Present</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>	<b>In Attendance</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
Mr M Aarts, Chair	Yes	Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes
Ms J Chan-Penney	Yes	Mrs J Lumbar, CFO	Yes
Mr G Simpson	Yes	Ms K Williams, Clerk	Yes
Mr N Toms	Yes	Mr A Steinhardt, Head of IT Services	Yes

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

- a) Pupil numbers and Trust expansion. The committee discussed pupil numbers which are in decline due to low birth rates and the possibility of Trust expansion to ensure that we remain over 3000 pupils in terms of funding. There will be a discussion with the RG.
- b) It has recently been announced that it is planned to have a three year pay deal for teachers which does not include any additional funding. It is expected that this will be challenged by unions although it would allow better financial forecasting.
- c) The annual audit is underway.
- d) The committee discussed reserves, particularly relating to Landulph. We need to ensure that we hold between 6% and 8% which is operating costs for one month. Reserves are currently at 6.8%. In terms of Landulph, the operating model was discussed at length and Trustees were assured that the position of Landulph is in line with other schools of a similar size but with additional leadership capacity built in which has an additional cost.
- e) The committee discussed at length meeting Digital Standards risk mitigation with Mr Steinhardt, Head of IT Services. Most of the DfE guidance is already in place.
- f) Due to staff capacity, the My Concern reporting system is not being used sufficiently. This has caused the committee concern and there will be an interim visit by Mr Toms who will report back to the committee on compliance.
- g) The committee also reviewed the policy tracker and there is a large number of policies which are out of date. The committee has noted that there should be zero tolerance to policy non-compliance and this will be shared with TSLT next week.

### **1. Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

There were no changes.

### **3. Apologies for Absence**

All Trustees were present.

4. **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record.

5. **Matters Arising  
circulated prior to the meeting**

o) A Trustee asked if they could see the rag compliance reports

*Update: On this agenda.*

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.

*Update: Mr Buckley advised we have looked at giving numbers based on location and DfE data now allows this distinction.*

***A Trustee asked if Trustees would get a report later in the year.*** Mr Buckley advised we have the capability to do this. The case for Looe was made because we wanted to make sure we were attracting all the students in the area. We can report on all schools when places are agreed in March and analysis where students are coming from. The overall drop in numbers in the region is higher than in Looe.

***A Trustee noted that there was also a discussion around recruiting students to Saltash from the whole area.*** Mr Buckley advised we can clarify when we want the data and in terms of traditional catchment areas, what proportion we have managed to recruit and if schools are meeting their requirements for student numbers and add this level of analysis.

***A Trustee asked if this type of analytical data can be used against sixth form.*** Mr Buckley advised that numbers are very small and we are not recruiting from outside of the school. This was raised in the Learning and People committee meeting and if we are being aggressive enough with sixth form marketing. A very low number of Looe students are attracted to Liskeard or Saltash sixth forms so marketing in this area has already started. Some colleges are making connections with local employers and we could look at this. Our sixth forms have tried to meet the need of students who want a local solution rather than attracting career minded students for outside the school community. Mr Buckley added that we have had an agreement from Saltash and Liskeard to fund a minibus to cover transport costs for students and this might encourage more students into the schools. It will be largely the Year 11s that will make up these numbers.

***A Trustee asked if we have apprenticeships.*** Mr Buckley advised we only offer A Levels but we do have apprenticeships within the school staff profile. There are some students who might also benefit from advanced apprenticeships which is something we have not offered before but could. Some suggestions have been discussed with the sixth forms and Mr Carrington. We will be sharing strategies with Trustees. Sixth Forms will be meeting with Year 6s to discuss long term goals and opportunities.

***A Trustee suggested that the catchment area metrics would be updated once per year on the risk register.*** Mr Buckley advised the timescales would be post confirmation of student placements. Addition of estimates of proportion of pupils in catchment recruited to be added into the new risk register mitigations.

**Action: D Buckley**

***A Trustee asked when we will know when student numbers are developing.*** Mrs Lumbard advised that she has the October 25 census numbers which is 3049 students which means we are still over threshold for SCA capital funding sees up to April 26 onwards. Mr Buckley added we have challenged the RG (Regional Group) around their preference of place based learning and then allocating a school to an out of region Trust without any consultation. We are meeting with the RG at Looe with Mr Hodges in attendance to discuss when the RG will support us in Trust expansion. Mr Buckley advised he has invited

*all local schools to an event with Mary Meyers. If we are able to attract one more school it would comfortably sustain pupil numbers over 3000.*

**See Confidential appendix**

6. **CFO Finance Report – for information**

To include revision of Finance Policy & discussion regarding Financial Scheme of Delegation. A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mrs Lumbard explained that for the financial year end of 2024/25, processing is complete and auditors are working on this information with a view for everything being ready for circulation on 10<sup>th</sup> December. Out turn overall has a £291K increase in actual Trust revenue reserve which is 6.86%. The increase in actual outturn is mainly due to Liskeard and Saltash who were conservative with their funding and wished to use some for site works but these works were impacted by capacity due to site staff absence and money was not spent.
- b) Since the report was written, the STRB have made a proposal for teaching pay for three years of a 6.5% increase overall but this will be weighted towards the end of this period as the increase is not intended to be funded. It is suspected that teaching unions negotiations will result in a different outcome. Teaching pay is normally agreed on an annual basis which doesn't allow us to forecast for future years. This year, for the first time, we have a situation where they are trying to have three year agreement for teachers. **A Trustee asked if unions have agreed this.** Mrs Lumbard advised this has only just been announced so it has not been agreed by unions. Mrs Lumbard advised that ASCL have already prepared papers around this as feedback. **A Trustee noted we are in a good healthy position and agreeing three year pay in advance is interesting**
- c) Mrs Lumbard advised the results from the Local Government Pensions Scheme triennial valuation have been received. There will be a reduction in the employer rate from 22.2% to 19.2%. **A Trustee asked why this is.** Mrs Lumbard advised it is due to a positive return on investment and will be effective from April next year for three years. A 3% reduction equates to around £31K per annum based on current pension costs.
- d) Support staff pay was agreed and Trustees agreed the pay policy so this could be paid and back paid to April. The Support Staff pay award was less than anticipated and the budget will be adjusted against this..
- e) **A Trustee noted that primaries are losing money, excluding Dobwalls and are in deficit.** Mrs Lumbard advised that primary schools do not have so much flexibility in terms of staffing. Landulph's decrease was only about £2K from what was expected and budgets are limited due to staffing profile. Mr Buckley added that with Landulph and Trewidland, we need to have a flexible set up and the loss of one or two children can have a massive impact to the budget and we can't mitigate against this. We have an executive head model at Trewidland and Dobwalls which allows flexible staffing. We have additional leadership skill in Landulph which gives less flexibility so we are looking to reduce to a two class model.
- f) **A Trustee asked about the deficit and how does this work and balance out.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we have a Trust return to the DfE but we do have to detail by school so the Trust needs to be in surplus. We do carry a reserve in the TSS (Trust Shared Services). When the schools set their budget, it should be balanced. Given pupil numbers, it is not expected that the deficit will increase. Mr Buckley advised that having secondaries as part of the Trust are a benefit for Trusts.
- g) **A Trustee noted that we have set policy with an agreement to have reserves.** It was explained that we do have an agreed policy and reserves should be between 6-8% which is only about a month of operations. High Alternative Provision costs could easily have significantly reduced the reserves but measures were taken quickly to avoid this. We require all schools to set a balanced budget as the funding should be used for the students in school during the year. Trewidland run a pre-school and numbers build up over the year but looks like it will be running at a deficit at the

start of the year and so we share this risk with the school. Usually by the end of the year there is a breakeven situation. We might need to have the same model with the Landulph nursery.

- h) **See confidential appendix.**
- i) **A Trustee referred to the server equipment and £90k spending and asked is this reflected on the asset register.** Mrs Lumbard advised this is added to the fixed asset register and will be depreciated and is part of the rolling programme. We build this cost into the annual costs to all schools.
- j) Finance policy  
Mrs Lumbard advised there is a small revision to the finance policy and one paragraph has been added. All local banks have now closed so we have wound down the cash in petty cash. We have started to issue a pre-paid debit card instead of giving small amounts of cash for school trips with caveats on spending and collecting receipts. Mr Buckley added that where receipts are not submitted we may ask staff to cover this cost and this is now stated clearly in policy. Mrs Lumbard summarised the processes which needs to be followed for staff when going on school trips. Trustees were in agreement to approve the amendment to the policy.
- k) Financial scheme of delegation  
Mrs Lumbard advised she is leaving as CFO in early January. To enable smooth transition, Mrs Lumbard wanted to propose to amend the financial scheme of delegation so that the new CFO is a signatory so that she can function with the caveat that she can only use this once she starts in the role. Mrs Lumbard has discussed this with the banking relationship manager who has no concerns.
- l) **A Trustee asked if there is any risk around this.** Mrs Lumbard advised the new CFO would not be able to do anything over £1,000 without another signatory and any cards would only be delivered to the business address so there would be no access prior to the start date.
- m) **A Trustee asked about new CFO start date and transition plan.** Mr Buckley advised she will be joining us one day a week and starts on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2026. There will be 5 days of transition over 5 weeks. Trustees were in agreement with the proposal and that there should be risk controls.

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

To include information on Meeting Digital Standards risk mitigation. A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised she has circulated a report with input from all staff from TOLT (Trust Operational Leadership Group). Mrs Lumbard explained we have a full complement of staff which is making such a difference.
- b) IT  
Our apprentice would like to stay for his level 4 apprenticeship. The server at Saltash has been renewed. There is some work which needs to be done on network connectivity at Liskeard. The rolling programme is working well, and the Looe Headteacher wants to move towards a laptop from a desktop model. We can use some residual equipment from the Connect the Classroom upgrade and repurpose this without the cost implications for the change. The firewall is coming to the end of its life and we are discussing this. Mr Steinhardt and the team have been working on a digital standards document.
- c) Meeting Digital Standards risk mitigation  
Mr Steinhardt explained that it is a good opportunity to look at how we put our vision together and how this is delivered across the Trust and there is a lot of greens on the RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating. We are working to fill any gaps over the coming months. Mr Buckley added that DfE guidance only came out in August and this is quite comprehensive so to have turned round a RAG rated document so quickly is astounding. All credit to the team that most of the DfE requirements were pre-empted. Mr Steinhardt advised that we need some deeper discussion around whether

we can or should follow all the DfE guidance such as using cloud based services. Mr Steinhardt wanted to highlight some of the red areas and that he will be looking at internet connections at the schools, using the latest WIFI standards to ensure we are future proofing ourselves and reviewing centrally managed switches and infrastructure improvements.

- d) **A Trustee referred to WIFI 6 or 7 standards and noted that there will be data transfer limitations. A Trustee added that in terms of resilience across the sites, perhaps Starlink might be worth looking at.** Mr Steinhardt advised we are limited due to location so Starlink is a good suggestion and we have good SLAs (Service Level Agreements) in place. Systems that we have chosen are good and resilient.
- e) **A Trustee asked do we have insurance for cyber-attacks.** Mr Steinhardt advised we do. **A Trustee asked do we have to follow the DfE recommendations.** Mr Steinhardt advised they have provided guidance. Mr Buckley advised these are aspirational standards so it is impressive that we have much of this in place already.
- f) **A Trustee referred to hybrid versus fully cloud based vision and suggested that a cost benefit analysis would be useful to see and if there are more targeted products for schools.** Mr Steinhardt advised this is up for review and he needs to look at the firewall first and then look to see if the market has changed. **A Trustee noted that by using hybrid reduces the risk to downtime with cloud based sites.** Mr Buckley added that to be able to have the risk identified and the mitigations in place is really helpful and Mr Steinhardt would be happy to work with Trustees to enable them to see where the risks are and have confidence in the systems.

Mr Steinhardt left the meeting at 19.18.

- g) Estates  
Mrs Lumbard explained that estates staffing has continued to be an issue. We did manage to recruit staff at Saltash into the summer term and this impacted the capacity of the team as the manager and caretaker needed training. There was a significant amount of work at Saltash over the summer. We have still not been successful at recruiting a site manager at Liskeard and we have a further member of staff who is retiring. We have advertised for both posts and the adverts closed yesterday; we will have interviews next week. One of the challenges we have experienced in recruiting to the site manager post is the expectations for GCSEs qualifications for applicants and these have not yet been met. Our paygrades for support staff are under a pay grading system and there is an expectation around communication and reporting so we have to justify that we are recruiting to grades as we have set them.
- h) **A Trustee asked if we could flex this against experience.** Mrs Lumbard advised we have slightly tweaked this to give more flexibility. This has put pressure on the rest of the site team as Mr Sanders has been training new staff and filling gaps at Liskeard. This has therefore impacted compliance. Compliance is in place as we have a manual system as well as the My Compliance system. Mr Lacey will be working on recording in My Compliance.
- i) **A Trustee noted that this is seen as an administration task but we need to make sure the team is prioritizing recording as Trustees do not have the reports that they need to ensure we are compliant.** Mr Buckley asked is there benefit in having an interim visit by a Trustee to satisfy the committee that compliance is in place.
- j) **A Trustee asked how far we are away from having My Compliance up to date.** Mrs Lumbard advised if we are able to recruit, it would be quite soon. Mrs Lumbard suggested that having an interim visit arranged and an ultimate deadline would be a good approach.
- k) **A Trustee asked if any consideration has been given to having a reduced recruitment package and then training the new site manager. It is common for people to have relevant experience but not the relevant qualifications and we could facilitate this training as an education provider.**

Mr Toms offered to complete the interim visit and work alongside Mr Lacey and then provide a summary for the committee to relieve some pressure. Mrs Lumbard advised this would be well received and very beneficial for both Trustees and Mr Lacey given Mr Toms' experience.

**Action: N Toms**

- l) Trustees were in agreement to this approach as Trustees are currently blind to risks until there is adequate reporting.
- m) Operations  
Mrs Lumbard advised there has been significant amount of work in operations. The EWO (Education and Welfare Officer) service has been reviewed and is compliant and in line with DfE guidance. There will be a change to the telephony system with suggested proposals being submitted to TSLT (Trust Senior Leadership Team) and the digital switch over is in 2027. The contract for the SIMs provider is due to expire in March 2027 and this will be a significant change for all schools so work is already underway to look at alternatives
- n) The cleaning contract is working well. For the catering contract, we have agreed an uplift in the cost of a school meals and we have tried to keep this affordable for parents and have looked at the offer available. **A Trustee noted that it was raised at Liskeard by a member of SLT that charges have increased significantly since the start of the year and asked is this allowed.** Mrs Lumbard advised they can only do this with her and Mr Foy's agreement. We meet with the caterers regularly and they cannot just increase prices.
- o) **A Trustee asked if there is flexibility for increasing in charging for something which is not part of a set meal and are there any controls.** Mrs Lumbard advised they cannot increase any prices without consultation and agreement.
- p) **A Trustee asked how this is communicated with staff as they seem not to be aware of this.** Mrs Lumbard advised that operations managers communicate this by circulating menus etc. Mr Buckley advised that this perception of staff will be picked up with the Liskeard SLT (Senior Leadership Team). Mrs Lumbard advised that it is important to address this perception so that there is no impact in uptake of meals for example.
- q) Mrs Lumbard explained that we are seeing an increase in SARs (Subject Access Requests) which are very time consuming. We have processes in place and Mr Foy is the DPO (Data Protection Officer) for the Trust. SARs are time limited and this can increase pressure on operational staff.
- r) **A Trustee asked if we report on the increased numbers of SARs.** Mr Buckley advised that we have included this in the Learning and People Committee Report which includes data on complaints. We have never done data collection on SARs and we might need to start as they take so much time and resource.
- s) **A Trustee asked if we could review policies to reduce some of the burden.** Mr Buckley advised that we need to keep records for 5 years after a staff member has left.
- t) **A Trustee asked if the committee needs to request that policies are reviewed to reduce workload around SARs.** Mr Buckley advised it would be fair for Trustees to query what processes are at this stage.

## 8. Policies

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

- a) Mr Buckley explained the use of the policy tracker. There are a number of policies which are out of date and we are chasing up where policies need to be updated. DfE and Ofsted are checking websites to see what policies are out of date. Mr Buckley advised that we have gone for a radical change to SEND policy and work around this had happened rapidly. There is a narrative around all the policies which are not up to date.

- b) **A Trustee asked if there is a case to rationalise the number of policies that we have.** Mr Buckley explained that statutory policies we have to have. The only ones that we could dispense of are non-statutory policies and we have discussed with heads about reducing the number of these policies. There is a requirement from the unions that we can't make a policy Trust wide for the sake of it being Trust wide until it is due for review. Policy work is still very time consuming, and we want to get to the stage where we are reviewing policies ahead of time.
- c) **A Trustee asked when does the policy start to move into amber and what is the trigger point.** Mrs Lumbard advised that review should start 60 days before and the policy should be circulated to LGCs and Trustees 30 days before it is due.
- d) **A Trustee noted that non-compliant policies are over 60 days out of date. A Trustee felt that we do need to support rationalising the number of policies and if there is a more pragmatic way of reviewing policies and asked why the H&S policy needs to be a school specific policy.** Mr Buckley advised that there are four categories of policies: those at Trust level (e.g, finance), non-statutory at school level, statutory policies which are school specific which we have a template for, and finally policies that could be brought together at a review but currently established practices in the six schools are dissimilar and reflected in historic policies.
- e) **A Trustee asked if Mr Buckley is satisfied that we have the minimum number of policies in place.** Mr Buckley advised that there is still more rationalising to be done. Any policies which we have had challenged by the DfE, we have managed to address quickly.
- f) **A Trustee noted that we need to reduce some of the workload such as remove names from policies.** Mr Buckley advised that we only send polices for agreement where there are significant changes and any minimal changes are just published.
- g) **A Trustee asked how are policies which are out of date are being prioritised.** Mr Buckley advised that we still have functioning policies but they are missing a review dates.
- h) **A Trustee noted that we need to have zero tolerance to policy compliance in particularly anything related to health, safety and wellbeing. A Trustee added that some of the policies are absolute rather than reasonably practicable.** Mr Buckley advised that we perhaps need to bring forward the review dates.
- i) **A Trustee noted that we need to have a plan to bring compliance back into green.** Mrs Lumbard advised that many staff are also working term time only which needs to be taken into consideration. Mr Buckley added that policy compliance perhaps should be discussed at the Trust Board meeting. It was felt that senior leaders having compliant policies should be part of performance management. The Trust Board are meeting in December, and it is anticipated that there will be improvements in policy compliance by this point. Mr Buckley initiate implementation of a zero tolerance level for overdue statutory policies.

**Action: D Buckley**

9. **Standing agenda item: Risk Register: Progress on any new or emerging risks and update on risk monitoring from recent Trust Board meeting**

Update on handover arrangements for CFO role. A document was circulated in advance of the meeting. From this:

- a) Mr Buckley advised he will be taking a new iteration of the Risk Register to TSLT next week and there will be a further update at the next full Trust Board meeting.

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

- a) None.

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

- a) Pupil numbers and Trust expansion. The committee discussed pupil numbers which are in decline due to low birth rates and the possibility of Trust expansion to ensure that we remain over 3000 pupils in terms of funding. There will be a discussion with the RG.
- b) It has recently been announced that it is planned to have a three year pay deal for teachers which does not include any additional funding. It is expected that this will be challenged by unions although it would allow better financial forecasting.
- c) The annual audit is underway.
- d) The committee discussed reserves, particularly relating to Landulph. We need to ensure that we hold between 6% and 8% which is operating costs for one month. Reserves are currently at 6.8%. In terms of Landulph, the operating model was discussed at length and Trustees were assured that the position of Landulph is in line with other schools of a similar size but with additional leadership capacity built in which has an additional cost.
- e) The committee discussed at length meeting Digital Standards risk mitigation with Mr Steinhardt, Head of IT Services. Most of the DfE guidance is already in place.
- f) Due to staff capacity, the My Concern reporting system is not being used sufficiently. This has caused the committee concern and there will be an interim visit by Mr Toms who will report back to the committee on compliance.
- g) The committee also reviewed the policy tracker and there is a large number of policies which are out of date. The committee has noted that there should be zero tolerance to policy non-compliance and this will be shared with TSLT next week.

12. **Date of next meetings**

10-12-2025 (A&R), 24-03-2026 (A&R), 24-03-2026 Resources, 02-06-20256 (A&R) and 08-07-2026 Resources.

It was noted that this will be Mrs Lumbard's last Resources Committee meeting but she will at the remaining meetings for the year.

The meeting closed at 20.16.

<b>Action Summary</b>	
<p><b>M5. Matters Arising</b>  <b>A Trustee suggested that the catchment area metrics would be updated once per year on the risk register.</b> Mr Buckley advised the timescales would be post confirmation of student placements. Addition of estimates of proportion of pupils in catchment recruited to be added into the new risk register mitigations.</p>	<b>Action: D Buckley</b>
<p><b>M7. Resources update (IT, H&amp;S, Catering, Cleaning, Capital projects) – for</b>  <b>k) A Trustee asked if any consideration has been given to having a reduced recruitment package and then training the new site manager. It is common for people to have relevant experience but not the relevant qualifications and we could facilitate this training as an education provider.</b> Mr Toms offered to compete the interim visit and work alongside Mr Lacey and then provide a summary for the committee to relieve some pressure. Mrs Lumbard advised this would be well received and very beneficial for both Trustees and Mr Lacey given Mr Toms' experience.</p>	<b>Action: N Toms</b>
<p><b>M8. Policies</b>  <b>i) A Trustee noted that we need to have a plan to bring compliance back into green.</b> Mrs Lumbard advised that many staff are also working term time only which needs to be taken into consideration. Mr Buckley added that policy compliance perhaps should</p>	<b>Action: D Buckley</b>

<p>be discussed at the Trust Board meeting. It was felt that senior leaders having compliant policies should be part of performance management. The Trust Board are meeting in December, and it is anticipated that there will be improvements in policy compliance by this point. Mr Buckley initiate implementation of a zero tolerance level for overdue statutory policies.</p>	
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