



TRUST BOARD

Minutes of a Virtual Meeting of the Trust Board of South East Cornwall Multi Academy Regional Trust held on Tuesday 20th July 2021 at 5.30 pm.

Present	Yes/No	Present	Yes/No
Dr S Brownlow	Yes	Mr L Hallam	Yes
Mr D Buckley, CEO	Yes	Mrs L Lawson	Yes
Mrs H Casson	Yes	Mr Newton Chance, Chair	Yes
Mr B Cook	Yes	Mr C Piper	Yes
Mr J Crisp	Yes	Mr C Stevens, Vice Chair	Apologies

In Attendance: Mrs J Lumbard, CFO
Mrs K Williams, Clerk to Trust Board

33. **Welcome**
 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially Mr Hallam, newly appointed Compliance Trustee.
34. **Declaration of Business or Pecuniary Interest and Academy-related parties - update on any changes since completion of written declaration**
 None.
35. **Apologies for Absence**
 Mr Stevens had sent his apologies in advance of the meeting and these were received and accepted by the committee. Mrs Lawson had advised she would be a little late. Mrs Casson was due to join the meeting imminently.
36. **Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on 30th March 2021**
 The minutes of the meeting held on 30th March 2021, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record and will be signed.
37. **Progress of action points and matters arising**
M25. CEO update for information
 c) Mr Buckley advised that Jo Yeates has been recruited to an interim position at Saltash to raise achievement. Training is underway to enable her to be the School Improvement Lead for the three secondary schools.
Update: A Trustee queried the position of the training and Mr Buckley advised that the School Improvement Lead is engaged in training at the moment and this will continue next term.
- M21. Progress of action points and matters arising**
M6. Reports and Recommendations from Committees
 f) A Trustee asked if it would be more efficient and effective for the Chairs of the Committees to provide a short summary page for the Trustees to be read alongside the minutes of the meetings. It was suggested that this could be added below the action summary within the minutes. It was agreed that the Clerk will need to ensure that she captures the reflection of the meeting within the minutes with the input of Trustees at the end of each meeting. Clerk to add to template minutes. This summary page could also be circulated to the LGC chairs for information. The Clerk as requested, has provided a summary of the key points for the Trust Board at the end of the committee meetings minutes and it was considered this was sufficient with no need for further narrative. A Trustee suggested that the summary table is put at the start of the minutes in future.

Update: Complete.

M22. Election of Chair and Vice Chair of the Trust

e) A Trustee noted that Academy Ambassadors would be useful to try for recruitment and it was noted that success can be in part due to the location of the Trust. Dr Brownlow suggested a possible lead and Trustees agreed for her to contact and discuss further.

Update: Dr Brownlow had pursued the possible lead but it was unfortunately not successful.

M26. MAT Strategic Plan – Dan Buckley

c) A Trustee queried the Early Career Framework (ECF) which has recently changed and noted that NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers) have now been changed to ECTs (Early Career Teachers). As this is a major change to how schools operate support for early career teachers the ECF should be reviewed by the People and Learning Committee to discuss the changes further. Clerk to add to agendas.

Update: On this agenda.

M27. Adoption of Policies

a) Donations policy and procedure – A Trustee noted concern that there should be the ability to reject a donation on ethical grounds within the policy so a wording change was suggested to include “and ethos”. The Chair agreed to revise the wording in the policy.

Update: Complete.

c) A Trustee noted that a definition of acronyms should be added to all policies. It was suggested that acronyms are written in full the first time they are used.

Update: Complete.

M30. Agreements made by email – For information

Centre Assessed Grades Policy – Mr Buckley advised that this policy has been emailed to governors and Trustees for feedback which has resulted in only a minor revision. Trustees have therefore agreed the process and await circulation of the final policy.

Update: Complete.

M26. MAT Strategic Plan – Dan Buckley

A Trustee asked for an update on health and wellbeing being added to the MAT Strategic Plan. Mr Buckley advised that work has started on drafting the next 5-year Strategic Plan and health and wellbeing will be included.

38. Reports and Recommendations from Committees

a) People – Suggestion of designated committee to oversee recruitment of governors and Trustees
Dr Brownlow advised that the People Committee had discussed that some organisations have a recruitment committee which supports the Chair to recruit and induct new Trustees and governors. It was discussed that the committee would be responsible for working with the Clerk on arising governance issues and supporting the Chair with recruitment.

b) **A Trustee asked if the recruitment committee would make recommendations or would have delegated responsibility to make decisions on recruitment.** Dr Brownlow advised that it would be to make recommendations.

c) **A Trustee asked how this suggestion would be taken forward and would the board need to make a decision.** Dr Brownlow advised that she has submitted her resignation as a Trustee to the Chair of the Trust Board and will also need to submit this to the Chair of the Members as she was appointed by them. Dr Brownlow explained that she has other commitments which she needs to give attention to after a long period of involvement in governance at Liskeard and SMART. It was suggested that the recruitment committee would meet twice a year and be chaired by the Chair of the Trust Board.

Mrs Lawson joined the meeting at 17.45.

- d) Learning 26-05-2021
Mr Crisp noted that the last 14 months have been unprecedented and the work needed by staff and teams for the CAGs (Centre Assessed Grades) has been phenomenal and all staff are due a good break and well deserved rest over the summer. Mr Crisp added that there was nothing discussed during the meeting in May which needs to go to full board for further attention.
- e) Audit & Risk 14-07-2021
Mr Piper explained that the main areas of action during the last meeting were the finance report, Trustees approved the audit plan and there was a presentation from Bishop Fleming. Trustees also approved the internal scrutiny plan and reviewed the school Business Continuity Plans. Following the meeting, Trustees have approved the three-year gas contracts by email.
- f) Resources 10-06-2021 and 14-07-2021 (draft budgets)
Mr Cook advised there were no issues arising or approvals needed during the meeting in June and a summary from this meeting has been provided to the full Trust Board and he noted that this format of communication seems to be working well. Mr Cook has received a first draft of minutes from the July meeting which was held last week and Mr Cook was able to advise that the budgets had been reviewed and were being recommended for approval by the Resources Committee.
- g) The Chair advised that following circulation of the committee minutes, Trustees are welcome and encouraged to raise any issues from the minutes during Trust Board meetings. A Trustee noted that all Trustees are obliged to read all sets of committee minutes.

39. **Approval of draft 2021/22 budgets following recommendation provided by the Resources Committee**

Documents had been circulated in advance of the meeting. From these:

- a) **A Trustee noted the balanced budgets for next year but queried the position and scrutiny of the medium term finances as the long term forecasts are showing deficit budgets in some schools but no deficit overall.** Mr Cook, as Finance Trustee advised that for 21/22 there are balanced budgets for all schools but moving forwards, four school will have a shortfall. There are issues around support staff and teachers pay increases and we have taken pessimistic assumptions on how this will be financed in the future. Mr Cook added that any concerns over individual school budgets have been raised within the CFO notes. Mrs Lumbard added that main assumptions very much follow recommendations from ASCL. Staffing is 70% of our costs and assumptions made are based on our current staffing profile and once we get past year three, we are uncertain on what government funding we will receive. Mrs Lumbard added that we are regularly reviewing information and updating the ICLFP and the data coming to the Trust Board and LGCs is as up to date and as relevant as can be. Mrs Lumbard advised that in terms of process, Trustees only need to agree the next year's budget and assured Trustees that the finance teams will continue to monitor the budgets and any changes to processes are reviewed regularly. and have been content with the timely actions taken to address projected deficits.
- b) Mr Cook advised that the Resources Committee have recommended approval of this year's budget and added that the committee recognises the pressures to budgets and the possible changes and will review and react as they occur. Mr Buckley added that all schools are working towards a good reserve. The Chair advised that the Resources Committee are regularly reviewing the risks to the budgets.
- c) **A Trustee noted the high level of staff absence in schools nationally and suggested that this may continue and asked what steps are the Trust taking to mitigate against this.** Mr Buckley advised that 6% reserve is sensible and there are a number of schools with the correct reserve to protect us from this type of fluctuation.
- d) Trustees unanimously approved the budgets for 21/22.

40. **Update on Equality Impact Assessment meeting and discussion on Protected Characteristics – Sue Brownlow**

Minutes of the meeting had been circulated in advance. From this:

- a) Dr Brownlow explained that the first Equality Impact meeting was held and participants discussed what the focus would be and the group felt that gender should be the starting point. Mr Buckley advised that this ties in well with the Everyone's Invited agenda.
- b) **A Trustee referred to the meeting minute 3d "*Dr Brownlow queried the current governance and Trust Board committee structure and asked if this could not be looked at by the People and Learning Committee and also have an annual process in the Trust Board and LGCs schedule of work*" and asked for clarification on the discussion.** Dr Brownlow advised that it had been discussed if the equality impact assessment sits within the committee structure or within the role of LGCs (Local Governing Committees) but it was agreed that it would be within the remit of the Equality Impact Assessment group.
- c) **A Trustee referred to meeting minute 4a "*Mr Buckley advised that once we have an honest assessment, we can build a policy around this and what mechanisms we have in place to uncover these bias*" and asked for clarification on the type of assessment needed.** Mr Buckley advised that it is right to start with the assumption that bias is in place and we need to look at and uncover the bias to be able to address them. Mr Buckley advised that to take on equality and diversity as a whole would be beyond the capacity of the group but policies could be reviewed for one aspect at a time and this would be achievable. Dr Brownlow noted there is gender bias in the curriculum and the group would need to check that policies and procedures are gender bias free.
- d) **A Trustee asked if there is a timeline for discussion on the other protected characteristics.** A timetable would only be possible if the committee continues and can take these issues forward. It was agreed that a timeline is needed for the other protected characteristics. Mr Buckley advised that the process for uncovering bias will give us a mechanism and we will then follow the same process for each characteristic.
- e) **A Trustee asked what was the rationale for gender being the first focus.** Mr Buckley advised there was not currently a protected characteristic that required immediate attention and so we are able to make a decision as to which one to start with. So we chose a characteristic which is relevant to the current climate.
- f) Trustees approved gender bias as the focus for 21/22 equality impact group.

41. **Consider the legal requirements for the Early Career Teacher Framework**

- a) Mr Buckley advised that from September 2021, the framework for the induction of teachers changes from the NQT (Newly Qualified Teacher) framework to the ECT (Early Career Teacher) framework.
- b) Mr Buckley explained that we have legal requirements which we must meet within the new framework which includes a non-contact time allocation of 10% for the first year and 5% for the second year, weekly mentor meetings in the first year and fortnightly in the second year, termly assessments by a qualified person and the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) must have oversight of the process.
- c) Mr Buckley advised that this has put a strain on the school budgets with 9 ECTs in Saltash, 5 in Liskeard and one in Landulph. We have produced a time allocations document and recruited to this with a person with responsibility to oversee induction and 15 mentors. These staff members are in post and they have timetable allocation which has been included within the budgets. It will be a Trust wide operation so we can share expertise. We are defining it as a specialist pedagogical group and this can be extended to allow these teachers to take a pedagogical role in the schools. The group is confident and building the team already. There will be a meeting with

new ECTs in September.

- d) Trustees acknowledged the positive move forwards in implementing the new framework, which was felt to be a positive move forwards for teacher education and thanked the staff involved with this.

42. **CEO summary**

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

- a) Mr Buckley advised there has been a lack of comparative data over the last 18 months and we will begin again with the Headteacher's reports in September. We will be reviewing the format of the reports again and Trustees will need to decide what data is most valuable. Audits in H&S have been completed and we now have more accurate data.
- b) Update on TAGs (Teacher Assessed Grades)
Mr Buckley explained that we have received confirmation that the schools will not be further moderated. All schools came in within acceptable ranges for the Progress 8 scores.
- c) **A Trustee referred to the CEO summary "The moderation process highlighted concerns in four areas which were noticed by specialists in other schools" and queried if this was picked up by a specialist in a school outside of the Trust.** Mr Buckley advised that internal moderation processes were used and specialists within the other schools in the Trust picked up some specialist issues that senior teams were not able to.
- d) Mr Buckley advised that the appeals process is still unknown at the moment. A process is in place with a compulsory meeting where options can be discussed with a trained member of staff.
- e) Ofsted in 2021/22
A Trustee asked for clarification on catch-up arrangements and key knowledge. Mr Buckley explained that we need to be clear about not increasing the demands on pupils by giving them additional work to do next year in order to 'catch up'. Our focus is on ensuring the long term understanding of pupils and so we will modify the curriculum where we believe topics and knowledge that is crucial for understanding have been missed out last year but we will not be taking an audit of the knowledge missed and adding it to the curriculum.
- f) **A Trustee noted the Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and asked if there is a Trust response to this or is it being dealt with through policies and the working group.** Mr Buckley advised that we are taking a more measured approach and we need to go beyond a Trust wide statement. We could however have a statement on the website Trustees felt this was appropriate but we are already committed to addressing this across the Trust in our policies and practices.
- g) Health and Wellbeing for all
A Trustee noted the level of exhaustion amongst staff and wanted to acknowledge the hard work and commitment of staff over an extremely challenging year.
- h) **A Trustee queried the return to school in September and the position of reduced Covid measures and asked where will we stand on sensible safeguards that we wish to take and how are we prepared for the mix of staff responses to these.** Mr Buckley advised that bubble arrangements have been effective in schools to reduce the spread of Covid. Where we have extended bubbles, there has been spread. Mr Buckley advised that we are following government guidance for September and will not be using bubbles and if it is endemic in the community, we will have large numbers of students affected. It is possible that the current government plan will result in high numbers of people affected. The government assessment suggests that Covid is being downgraded to seasonal flu status and it is not known what we can do to mitigate against this. Feedback from parents following the reduction of government measures has been 50/50 split.

- i) **A Trustee noted the legislation for individual employers is to decide the measures to take and queried how we handle this in terms of health and wellbeing.** Mr Buckley advised that the CEV (Clinically Extremely Vulnerable) have had separate advice and they had slightly higher levels of protection even when the measures reduced. It is hard to have a category for this group when all measures have been removed but we will still consider these on an individual basis but we are not asking for double vaccinated status. We will keep the use of hand sanitisers, ventilation in rooms, robust cleaning and face masks in certain areas.
- j) **A Trustee noted that restrictions may be lifted but we still have responsibility and duty of care for staff and are liable for this.**

Mrs Lawson left the meeting at 18.32.

- k) **A Trustee queried if we are asking staff about having vaccinations.** Mr Buckley initially thought that we should ask staff about this but legally they have no obligation to tell us currently. Therefore, we would be establishing a policy that we could not have confidence in. On a previous occasion when we felt it more logical to ask children to take tests at home, we were legally overruled hence we need to set our policy close to guidelines such as doing onsite tests for year 7 when they return to school and not creating the need to ask vaccination status.
- l) **A Trustee asked how we update Risk Assessments without knowing this type of information.** Mr Buckley explained that staff members have been strongly advised to double vaccinate and so we make the assumption that they have. We will encourage them to seek a personal risk assessment if there are conditions they wish to bring to our attention. This failsafe should allow those with vaccination issues to choose to make themselves known to us.
- m) SLTF – five-year plan discussion feedback
Trustees acknowledged the importance and value of involving more staff with the drafting process of the MAT Strategic Plan.

43. **Items from Chair**

Mr Crisp left the meeting 17.36.

- a) Appointment of Compliance Trustee
The Chair had welcomed Mr Hallam at the start of the meeting and explained that this post was a Member appointment. The Chair thanked Mr Hallam for joining the Trust Board.
- b) Trust Board vacancy and recruitment of additional Trustees
The Chair advised that we have two vacancies on the Trust Board, one for HR, following Dr Brownlow's resignation and one for Community. It was discussed that it would be useful to have more local representation on the Trust Board and the new ATH (Academy Trust Handbook) notes that parental representation should be on the Trust Board and so we could invite parents to apply for the two vacancies. Mr Hallam advised that he will be a Parent Trustee from September.
- c) Allocation and agreement of school links for 21/22
The Chair advised that being linked to a school is to provide a point of contact and Trustees should be visiting the school and one LGC meeting per year. Mr Buckley suggested that the allocation could be rotated yearly or Trustees could get to know the school very well. The Chair advised that further details on the link Trustee role is included in the SoDA (Scheme of Delegated Authority).
- d) The following links were agreed (Pending confirmation from those not present at this point).
Dobwalls – Mr Piper
Liskeard – Mr Stevens
Looe – Mr Crisp

Landulph – Mrs Lawson
Saltash – Mrs Casson
Trewidland – Mr Hallam

- e) Trustee attendance at LGC meetings
The Chair reiterated that link Trustees need to attend one LGC meeting per year to meet with local governors as a point of contact.
- f) Members meeting feedback, MAT Assurance Framework and Annual Review meeting in September
The Chair advised that there was a meeting recently with the five Members, two of which are new to the role. There was a discussion on the role of Members and newly published NGA guidance has confirmed the agreed approach. The MAT assurance framework has been agreed to be the basis of the annual review meeting in September, in judging how effective the board has been. It was noted that the MAT assurance framework can be used internally as part of self-evaluation and for the peer review process between Trusts.
- g) The SMART newsletter has been circulated today which contains a selection of the work in the schools and it is great to see this being published and the activity in the schools. The Trustees wanted to add their thanks to all.
- h) **A Trustee asked how thanks is being passed back to staff.** The Chair will circulate a thank you from the Trust Board to all staff. **A Trustee asked if the Chair could record a short video to go to staff.** The Chair was open to this suggestion, but on consideration decided that flooding people's inboxes with large video files of him might prove irritating. Consequently, an email has been sent to all staff.

Action: R Newton Chance

44. **Adoption of Policies**

- a) SMART Behaviour Policy
A Trustee noted a previous request from parents regarding the danger of knives being added in policies and this should be included specifically in this policy. Mr Buckley advised that the SMART Behaviour Policy is an overarching statement for the Trust and it then feeds into the specific school Behaviour Policy. Mr Buckley advised that we could include this in the central policy or ensure this is included in specific school policies. It was suggested that a short paragraph is added about knives.

Action: D Buckley
- b) Mr Buckley asked if just the revised paragraph can be circulated to Trustees for agreement and it was agreed that this would be appropriate.

Action: Clerk
- c) **A Trustee queried section 2.3 of the policy and noted that this is not included in the staff code of conduct and so there needs to be consistency across the two policies** and Mr Buckley advised that this could be the intention for now and then it would be added to the Code of Conduct when the policy is next due for review as this would require consultation with the Unions.
- d) Mr Buckley advised that the two suggested changes will be circulated for approval.

Action: Clerk
- c) **A Trustee queried peer on peer abuse and asked what sanctions are in place and if they are at school level.** Mr Buckley advised that any restrictions to education is included in the school policy and anything which results in an exclusion is included in the Trust policy.
- d) Trustees approved the policy on the basis of the suggested revisions.
- e) SMART Staff Code of Conduct
Trustees approved the policy on the basis of the suggested revisions.
- f) SMART Health and Safety Policy Statement

To be agreed by email.

g) SMART Safeguarding Policy

To be agreed by email.

Trustees wanted to pass on their thanks to Mr Green, COO for heavily revising the policy in line with the changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education.

h) SoDA

To be agreed by email.

45. **Items from this meeting for report back to LGCs**

a) The Trustees wanted to pass on thanks to the Local Governors and to those working in the schools.

b) Link Trustees for 21/22

Dobwalls – Mr Piper

Liskeard – Mr Stevens

Looe – Mr Crisp

Landulph – Mrs Lawson

Saltash – Mrs Casson

Trewidland – Mr Hallam

c) The MAT assurance framework is being used in September as the basis for the Annual Review meeting with Trustees and Members.

d) There are two vacancies on the Trust Board – HR and Community and any help with recruitment would be welcomed.

e) Mr Newton Chance will provide some information for governors on who sits on the Trust Board.

46. **Agreements made by email**

- a)
- Approval of Safeguarding Policy – June 2021
 - Approval of 16-19 Bursary Policy – June 2021
 - Changes to our Covid operating procedures – April 2021
 - Trustee re-appointment – Richard Newton Chance – June 2021

47. **Summary of the matters for the Trust Board from LGCs**

a) The summaries from each LGC had been circulated for information.

48. **Date of next meetings**

Annual review meeting with Trustees and Members 23-09-2021.

Full Trust Board meetings are: 09-12-21, 07-04-2022 and 19-07-2022 all starting at 5.30 pm.

Mr Buckley added that a Peer Review has been completed and the report will be circulated to Trustees.

Action: Clerk

The Chair thanked Dr Brownlow for her role in governance in the Trust over many years and the wide experience that she has brought to the board and wished her the best of luck. Dr Brownlow noted it has been a privilege to work with the teams.

The meeting closed at 18.57.

Action Summary	
M43. Items from Chair h) A Trustee asked how thanks is being passed back to staff. The Chair will circulate a	Action: R Newton Chance

<p>thank you from the Trust Board to all staff. A Trustee asked if the Chair could record a short video to go to staff. The Chair was open to this suggestion, but on consideration decided that flooding people's inboxes with large video files of him might prove irritating. Consequently, an email has been sent to all staff.</p>	
<p>M44. Adoption of Policies: <u>SMART Behaviour Policy</u> a) A Trustee noted a previous request from parents regarding the danger of knives being added in policies and this should be included specifically in this policy. Mr Buckley advised that the SMART Behaviour Policy is an overarching statement for the Trust and it then feeds into the specific school Behaviour Policy. Mr Buckley advised that we could include this in the central policy or ensure this is included in specific school policies. It was suggested that a short paragraph is added about knives.</p> <p>b) Mr Buckley asked if just the revised paragraph can be circulated to Trustees for agreement and it was agreed that this would be appropriate.</p> <p>d) Mr Buckley advised that the two suggested changes will be circulated for approval.</p>	<p>Action: D Buckley</p> <p>Action: Clerk</p> <p>Action: Clerk</p>
<p>M48. Date of next meetings Mr Buckley added that a Peer Review has been completed and the report will be circulated to Trustees.</p>	<p>Action: Clerk</p>