



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 14th November 2023 at 5.30 pm.

Present	Yes/No	In Attendance	Yes/No
Mr Marcel Aarts, Chair	Yes	Mr Dan Buckley, CEO	Yes
Mr Lee Hallam	Yes	Mrs Jo Lumbard, CFO	Yes
Mr Chris Piper	Yes	Mrs Kate Williams, Clerk	Yes

Summary of matters for the Trust Board

- a) Mrs Lumbard had reported that the annual audit had been a smooth process again this year.
- b) We currently have reserves of 7.9% which is slightly under the EFSA target of 8%.
- c) The catering and cleaning contracts are due for renewal and the tendering processes start soon.
- d) The committee has some concerns regarding compliance tracking and Mrs Lumbard is working with the Senior Operations Officer to find a system which is user friendly and efficient.
- e) The committee have reviewed the Risk Register. The Risk Register will be discussed at the next Trust Board meeting where risks will be allocated to each committee.

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 to declarations.

3. Apologies for Absence

All Trustees were present.

4. Approval of minutes of meeting held on 12th July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 12th July 2023, having been circulated in advance, were agreed as an accurate record and will be signed.

5. Matters Arising

M30. Matters Arising

M19. Finance Report for information (Jo Lumbard)

h) A Trustee noted that the average teacher cost at Trewidland is £111k and queried if this is correct. Mrs Lumbard advised that this corresponds to the total teaching costs for the school so it is not correct.
 Update 12-07-2023: Mrs Lumbard advised that she needs to email the ESFA to advise them.
 Update 01-11-2023: Mrs Lumbard advised that she has not emailed the ESFA regarding this.

Action: J Lumbard

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.

Action: J Lumbard

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.**

Action: J Lumbard

A Trustee queried if it could be a percentage of a school budget rather than a defined amount. Mrs Lumbard explained that primary schools only have a small capital budget so we are generally looking at larger procurement in terms of these thresholds.

6. CFO Finance Report – for information

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard explained the audit process has now come to an end. We have to provide certain documents to the auditors so they may assess the Trust for 'Going Concern'. After which we will have complete sign off of the accounts. We will be meeting with Kevin Connor from Bishop Fleming next week for the audit sign off.
- b) It has been another smooth process this year and the key issues are minor so there is not anything significant which needs to be reported as a risk to Trustees.
- c) Mrs Lumbard advised that in terms of the outturn for 2022/23, overall, we have more than anticipated of about £60K which leaves us with a reserve of 7.9%. **A Trustee referred to underspend in education especially around Pupil Premium (PP) and asked if we are making sure we are getting maximum outputs.** Mr Buckley advised that if we are under 8% for our reserves, we are not underspent. In terms of PP, we have to report on PP spending and output but only some staff costs are formally included in this category when actually lots of staff are involved. Mr Buckley advised that we need to be better on how we account for PP however there are some interventions which have not been targeted at PP students but have had the most impact on this group. It was discussed that 8% reserves is the EFSA target and budgets are in line to where we expect them to be and it is easy to overspent given how tight the budgets are.
- d) Mrs Lumbard explained that in terms of teachers' pay, we have now had the formal allocations of the government contribution towards the pay grant and the overall impact means that we will be able to cover the increase.
- e) The Support Staff pay award is in line with predictions and we have just updated the pay policy to reflect this which will be circulated for approval. **A Trustee asked if there is any government grant for this.** Mrs Lumbard advised there is not. There has been an uplift in GAG (General Annual Grant) funding but this does not really cover this although the government has provided additional funding for the teachers' pay increase by way of the TPAG (Teachers Pay Grant).
- f) The Teachers' Pension scheme will have a 5% increase on employer's contributions and the government has given assurance that support for this will be provided for the 2024-25 fiscal year. We have to provide access to the pension scheme for teachers under our funding agreement.
- g) The Management Accounts are due for circulation. **A Trustee felt we are in a stable and strong position in terms of the reserves.**

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

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised the report needs some work and we want to offer trustees an enhanced report in terms of resources. We now have another member of the TSS (Trust Shared Services) team, Ian Foy who is the Senior Operations Officer. This report will grow and change as we move

through the academic year. TOLT (Trust Operation Leadership Team) is becoming more cohesive as a group.

- b) **A Trustee asked if Mr Foy should attend the Resources Committee meeting.** Mrs Lumbard advised that Mr Foy and other members of TOLT can report to the committee on key items. We may need some additional capacity in the team as we had originally planned to recruit two posts to the TSS/TOLT team. We have three new operations managers at the secondary schools and a new EWO (Education Welfare Officer) and we are trying to get this structure correct before we move forward with an additional team member.
- c) Mrs Lumbard advised that the cleaning contract is due for renewal with the tender process starting before Christmas and the catering contract is due after Christmas. **A Trustee asked if we have recently approved the catering contract.** Mrs Lumbard advised that post Covid, we extended the catering contract. We are using Litmus and working with them is efficient and they hold the contracts to account and keep things running on time. **A Trustee asked if they provide ongoing contract management.** Mrs Lumbard advised that yes they do although this comes at an extra cost which is actually very worthwhile.
- d) **A Trustee asked if there is any potential capital income within the contracts.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we need to have this checked by Bishop Fleming to ensure this does not come under leasing. Mrs Lumbard advised she will also discuss with Litmus. We procure the catering contracts as part of a group of schools. **A Trustee asked if this provision is offered through the nurseries.** Mrs Lumbard advised we do not provide meals in the nurseries.
- e) **A Trustee asked about the salary points for the IT Manager post and do we need to market heavily or increase the pay.** Mrs Lumbard advised that the services manager post starts at £32k with the upper end of £37k. **A Trustee felt that this was around £10k to low and suggested this will not attract a quality candidate. A Trustee asked if we can increase this and what would stop us doing so.** Mrs Lumbard advised that budget constraints would prevent us increasing the salary range. Mr Buckley added that this particular post is in competition with the other school IT Managers and we don't want to increase the salaries across all the schools. We do supplement IT personnel with Nexus and whilst more expensive, it provides flexibility.
- f) **A Trustee noted that this vacancy has been open for a year.** Mrs Lumbard advised that this has been periodically advertised. **A Trustee asked what is the risk of not having this post filled.** Mr Buckley advised that we can experiment with staffing models and we have had Nexus on site to provide support. The position with IT staffing feels manageable at the moment and there are indicators that IT is sufficient. Mrs Lumbard added that the most impact is when there is staff sickness and the IT manager then is required to cover in a school. To have a model to mitigate against this is difficult.
- g) **A Trustee referred to the condition surveys and asked if there is anything which needs to be reported.** Mrs Lumbard advised that what has been highlighted as issues, we are already aware of such as boilers, heating systems and roofs. We don't have enough capital funding to cover everything that needs to be done and so we will look at planning works to cover where there are the biggest risks. Mrs Lumbard advised that in terms of the Capital Allocation policy, we have established that the condition surveys will drive works from the Capital Allocation funding and also use local expertise to carry out works.
- h) **A Trustee asked about the resource's compliance tracker.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we need to look at reporting to the Resources Committee and we have looked at three different types of compliance systems. We have been using the DfE assessment tool for property compliance but we need something more user friendly and efficient. **A Trustee noted that the report is currently light in compliance tracking and it should be providing levels of assurance so this is a concern and needs to be moved forwards before the next meeting.** Mr Piper is happy to meet with Mr Foy to

discuss further. Mrs Lumbard advised she will be able to work on a more enhanced report with Mr Foy and he can attend the next Resources Committee meeting.

- i) **A Trustee referred to SCA (School Condition Allocation) funding and asked does the condition surveys help us gain any additional funding.** Mrs Lumbard advised that sadly this is not the case.
- j) **A Trustee reiterated the need to have compliance tracking in place and felt there is an impact of not having this and the Trust Board being vulnerable if the schools are not being compliant.** Mr Buckley advised that providing assurance to Trustees in terms of reporting is different to not being compliant. **A Trustee suggested that at the moment Trustees cannot be assured as they do not have the necessary data and if there were to be something that was not compliant, this could be a problem.** Mr Buckley advised that we recognise there is a gap and we have looked at possible systems to do that.
- k) **A Trustee asked if we are content that someone in each school that can assure Trustees that all areas are compliant.** Mr Buckley advised yes this is the case. **A Trustee suggested that the committee needs this reported.** Mrs Lumbard advised that we want something more efficient than the DfE tracker and we want any member of TOLT to be able to access the database and have readily available information. **A Trustee felt that a report in the interim would provide assurance.** Mr Buckley felt that having a named person in each school to sign off is a good idea.
- l) **A Trustee asked about the timings for the Audit & Risk meeting.** Mrs Lumbard advised that the Audit & Risk meeting is held in December as this is due to presentations of the annual accounts before the full Trust Board meeting.

8. **Standing agenda item: Risk Register: Progress on any new or emerging risks and risk monitoring**

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

- a) Mrs Lumbard advised that this document has been updated following recommendations from Westcotts.
- b) Mr Buckley advised that there were some issues identified by Westcotts with risk assessment so we have made some radical changes. Each Headteacher, the CFO and CEO will review all the risks every half term and these are then reported to the LGC (Local Governing Committee) meeting. The headteacher will review the risk by updating the level of risk, why it has changed and what the mitigations are. This is a cloud document and has a Trust summary for Trustee use.
- c) **A Trustee asked if there is an anti-Trust view at Saltash due to the school having a double RI.** Mr Buckley advised he has been working to address this with governors and he is attending all the Saltash LGC meetings as an observer.
- d) **A Trustee asked who has completed the likelihood, impact etc scoring.** Mr Buckley advised that this was completed after the last Trust Board meeting and we will review the scoring again at the next meeting. We have also asked the schools to include control procedures and we need schools to verify that these are actually happening. We have put training in place for this and the document has been well received by Headteachers and LGCs.
- e) We have not assumed that the Trust Board owner for each risk will be the same so we need to decide who these should be at the next Trust Board meeting. We should review the Risk Register in the summer term. **A Trustee asked how often this document is being reviewed.** Mr Buckley advised that it is each half term but we need to review the risks that are to be reported on each year. **A Trustee asked how often we review if there are any extra risks.** Mr Buckley advised this is being reviewed each half term and any additional risks can be highlighted to the Trust Board for inclusion. The auditors have said about revisiting risks throughout the year so we have asked LGCs and the Headteachers to review any changes to risk each half term so this should be more robust.

- f) **A Trustee felt this was clear and suggested that how we govern this is the next step.** It was discussed that this should be reviewed at every Audit & Risk committee meeting. We should look at emerging risks and what are the risks increasing in likelihood as well in the Audit & Risk committee and then report to the Trust Board. Mr Buckley agreed there should be a key item on the Audit & Risk agenda and also the other committees. **A Trustee felt that the Audit & Risk committee meeting should be the last meeting of the term and the other committees feed into it with the Audit & Risk feeding directly into the Trust Board meeting.**
- g) Mr Buckley advised that it has been agreed that we move SEFs (Self Evaluation Framework) into the same format as the Risk Register although he is not quite sure how we will do this yet. **A Trustee asked for clarification on what the SEFs are.** Mr Buckley advised that SEFs (Self Evaluation Forms) are not currently accessible to Trustees as they are large documents which align to the Ofsted framework but using a similar model to the Risk Register will allow Trustees to look at key themes across all the schools.
- h) **A Trustee asked if there are any areas which need to be delved into in terms of increased risk.** Mr Buckley advised that there are a couple of areas one being safeguarding concerns at Liskeard. Liskeard have had a spot check of safeguarding and we have now responded by changing safeguarding peer reviews. Mr Buckley advised that an achievement gap has been picked up and the gap has increased nationally so this is a number one priority and will be reviewed by the Learning Committee.
- i) Once we have established who is reviewing which risk, we can look in depth at the risks in the committee meetings. There are some risks which are slightly higher at the start of a new academic year until the new intake students settle, so we would expect there to be more reds in the autumn term. This document will show us the history over the year. In many cases, the change in risk is red rather than the actual risk being red.
- j) Mr Buckley advised that using the cloud version, there is a summary at the end of the rows which may be helpful for Trustees. Mr Buckley asked if the Trustees would prefer to have a downloaded copy or a live copy. **A Trustee suggested that a copy prior to each meeting is most appropriate.**

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

- a) None.

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11. **Date of next meetings**

A&R 07-12-2023, A&R/Resources 20-03-2024, A&R/Resources 05-06-2024 and Resources 11-07-2024 all starting at 5.30pm.

12. **AOB**

A Trustee noted he has not visited any schools yet and asked if there are there any thoughts on Trustee school allocations. The Chair of the Trust Board explained that he is meeting with the CEO, CFO and Clerk on possible changes. He has visited four schools in one day and we need to look at how

connections work moving forwards. Mr Buckley felt it is really positive for Trustees to visit schools. The Clerk also noted that most LGCs are holding Governor Days which might a good opportunity for Trustee.

The meeting closed at 6.58pm.

Action Summary	
<p>5. Matters Arising M30. Matters Arising M19. Finance Report for information (Jo Lumbard) h) A Trustee noted that the average teacher cost at Trewidland is £111k and queried if this is correct. Mrs Lumbard advised that this corresponds to the total teaching costs for the school so it is not correct. Update 12-07-2023: Mrs Lumbard advised that she needs to email the ESFA to advise them. <i>Update 01-11-2023: Mrs Lumbard advised that she has not emailed the ESFA regarding this.</i></p>	<p>Action: J Lumbard</p>
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