

**Board of Trustees**  
**Minutes: 18 May 2020, 4pm**

Conducted using the online platform MS Teams due to the Covid-19 pandemic

**Trustees:**

Isabel Cherrett – in the chair	Jane Collings	Dominic Course
Nicola Dunford (CEO)	Mike Fisher (MF)	Roy Gillard (RG)
Jason Hayward-Jones (JHJ)	Cheryl Mathieson (CM)	Fiona Walters (FW)

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**In attendance:** Matt Matthew, Trust Business Manager (TBM)  
Rachel Hill, Clerk to the Trust (Clerk)

**Welcome and apologies**

The Chair welcomed Dominic Course (DC) to the Board of Trustees. There were no apologies.

**Declaration of Business Interests**

The CEO and Dominic Course (DC) are listed as Directors of South Dartmoor Academy. This will continue until 31.08.2020. Jane Collings (JCO) is a Trustee of Broadhempston Village Hall.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Part 1 minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2020 were agreed as an accurate record. These minutes will be signed at a later date when Government restrictions allow.

2. **Matters Arising**

2.1 **Item 2.2 Income Generation Vacancy**

The CEO reported. Executive/Academy Heads (E/AHs) have been consulted to find out how effective their PTFA fundraising efforts are. E/AHs responses have shown that results are inconsistent. The Trust is now looking to see if Administrators can pick up the role of income generation for one day a week. DC asked if PTFAs operated as stand-alone Charities? The CEO responded affirmatively but added that Beames' PTFA runs under the auspices of the School. Schools give the PTFAs targets to fundraise for on an annual basis. The Trust still requires someone to take responsibility for applying for funds from the bigger Foundations. It was agreed that the CEO would report back on this matter at the next meeting of Trustees on 13 July 2020 and follow up at the Finance & General Purposes committee meeting of the 03 July 2020.

**Action CEO**  
**Agenda Item for 13 July 2020 meeting of Trustees**

2.2 **Item 10 Local Boards – training for Clerks**

The CEO advised that she was currently developing, with HR, a training programme for Local Boards (LBs). Three LBs are presently without Clerks. The CEO agreed to provide a summary about LB Clerking at the 13 July 2020 Trustee meeting. DC asked if the Trust would consider virtual clerking? The CEO did not see an issue with this.

**Action CEO**  
**Agenda Item for 13 July 2020 meeting of Trustees**

2.3 **Item 14 Health & Safety**

The CEO reported that she and the TBM were developing a job description for a new post of Health & Safety Officer; the role would include some routine maintenance tasks across all schools.. Officers hoped the post would be operational by September 2020.

2.4 Item 17 Potential Trustees

The Chair reported that she had circulated an advertisement for potential Trustees to Executive and AHs with the request that it was placed in local Parish magazines. The Chair will update the Clerk and then Trustees if any responses are received.

**Action Chair**

2.5 Item 18.3.2 Attendance Policy

No further action is required on this policy as the attendance letters have been removed.

2.6 Item 18.3.4 SEND Policy

The next time this policy is reviewed the CEO will seek to increase the focus on children with disabilities.

2.7 Item 5 MAT Review

The CEO and the Chair were expecting a MAT review on 01 June 2020 with the Regional Schools Commissioner. This meeting was deferred with no new date set.

2.8 Item 12.5 Local Boards

The Chair asked if there was a title that the three new schools from SDA preferred? The CEO replied that this had not been confirmed as yet but that they were looking at the title The Moorland Schools. The CEO felt it was helpful to new schools joining the Trust to continue with their own Local Board arrangements in the first year with a gradual integration with a new Local Board if that was the preferred option. DC advised that he remained the Chair of Governors at Moretonhampstead Primary School and had spoken with Chris Elliott the Chair of Governors at Widcombe Primary School. They had proposed retaining their existing Boards but joining for every second meeting of each term as a Local Board (Hub) meeting.

3. **Covid-19**

A copy of the CEO's detailed Covid-19 report is appended to these minutes.

A letter had been sent to all parents on 18.05.2020 advising that the Link Academy Trust will open the schools on the 01 June 2020. All measures for the opening of schools, as requested by the Government and Department for Education (DfE) will be put in place prior to opening. The CEO has talked with staff, the Senior Leadership Team and Executive and Academy Heads about the arrangements and completing the Risk Assessments for each school before being checked by the CEO. The letter to parents emphasised that it is the parents' decision as to whether their child returns to school. No punitive measures would be imposed for pupils' non-attendance. The CEO was of the opinion that there would be a gradual increase in numbers returning to school. Some staff also felt vulnerable. The CEO confirmed that chronically vulnerable staff will not return to work, nor will those who are pregnant; they will, however, continue to work from home. Executive/Academy Heads will assess each individual staff member's case. Wraparound care would be discussed on 19 May 2020.

- **CM asked, if a parent decides not to return their child to school, would they continue to be supported with online learning?** The CEO replied affirmatively adding that home school learning will continue to be provided for all children not at school.
- **DC asked how does the Link Academy Trust compare with other primary based Trusts?** The CEO replied that very few Trusts were operating differently to the Link Academy Trust. The Link Academy Trust is also sharing information with the Head of Morchard Bishop Primary School
- **JHJ added that he had been speaking with the Vision Institute. The observation nationally is that when this situation happens again and home schooling becomes significant, how will electronic learning become a greater component and how will it be managed and risk managed?** The CEO replied that the Trust is now working with Cornerstone Academy, a market leader of IT in schools. Online learning, IT provision and the risk management around these areas will form part of the Link Academy Trust's strategic improvement plan for 2020-2021.
- **JCO asked if detailed information could be sent to parents describing how children would be grouped at school, as this could give reticent parents more confidence.** The

CEO replied that she anticipated reticent parents would not send their children back to school for the first two or three weeks or until they felt more confident about safety. There were some children who would not be able to come into school for health reasons and these children would join classes remotely.

- DC asked if the Government had provided the Trust with educational reasons for bringing back Early Years, Reception and Year 1 pupils to school? The CEO replied that social and welfare reasons had been provided.
- DC asked if schools had a percentage idea of those who had not been engaged with online learning? The CEO replied most pupils had at least completed the minimal amount. Some families have found it difficult due to parents' work commitments. In situations like this the Head Teacher might do a phone-call catch up. It is anticipated that there will be some gaps in learning but the children's good mental health came before learning. The system being used, Educare, is a holding experience for children and encourages learning in a different way.

The CEO agreed to keep Trustees apprised at a high level of the preparations for the re-opening of schools and, if possible, email a weekly summary through the Clerk for distribution to Trustees.

**Action CEO**

#### 4. **CEO's Report**

The CEO's report was circulated prior to the meeting and is appended to these minutes. The CEO asked for any points Trustees might wish to discuss.

JCO asked if Broadhempston and Landscope Primary Schools were included in the pre-school development plan? The CEO/TBM replied that Broadhempston Primary School had issued a parent survey but they had not yet produced evidence of need. They now need to come up with a plan.

Morchard Bishop School

**The meeting moved to Part II minutes**

**The matter returned to Part I minutes**

#### 5. **Business Plan**

Mike Fisher (MF) updated on **Central Business & Property**.

- Results of CIF bids are due at some point in May but they are likely to be delayed.
- The two classroom projects are underway at Ilsington and Bearnas. The Trust has been reviewing feasibility to ensure that they are getting the most out of the investment and also looking at how the project will be delivered.
- A review on tendering procedures has been completed and recommendations made. RG added that on the basis of these recommendations the Trust had now signed off on financials and applied for funds from County for the section 106 funding.
- A pre-commencement of project meeting has been held this week with the Bearnas contractor. A start date of 25 May 2020 has been proposed but there could be a one week delay. An asbestos survey needs to be carried out.

Jane Collings (JCO) updated on **Governance**.

- Trustees agreed that they had expected the Bishop Fleming Governance Review to be more in-depth and were disappointed that there were a number of gaps and inaccuracies. The CEO asked if she could follow this up with Bishop Fleming and request for more work to be done on the Review. This was agreed.

**Action CEO**

- JCO asked for clarification on the key role of a portfolio holder. The Chair agreed to draft a description.

**Roy Gillard (RG) updated on Financial Strategy & Control**

- RG advised that it had been agreed at the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) meeting held on 01.05.2020 that the CEO, TBM and Chair of the F&GP committee would meet to discuss the matter. This meeting has now been deferred to post Covid-19. With respect to preparing the new Plan for 2020-21, the CEO agreed to hold online meetings with portfolio holders to discuss ideas for the next year

**Action CEO**

## 6 Risk Register

- The Chair advised that at the Audit Committee meeting held on 13.05.2020 it had been agreed that she would make changes to the Regulation and Statutory Compliance Section as discussed and share these changes with the committee.
- The Chair has updated the Quality & Reputation & Governance Sections following the 10.02.2020 meeting of Trustees as agreed.
- Other sections of the Risk Register require identification for discussion. The Chair asked Trustees to make space to discuss this at committee meetings as it was important to update the Risk Register on a cyclical basis.
- The CEO advised that she had updated the Safeguarding section for the Standards & Curriculum committee.
- JCO suggested that the Health & Safety section required updating. The Chair added that the F&GP had agreed to update this but no changes have been made as yet. The possibility of appending an existing Health & Safety Risk Register (which could be adapted) based on qualified knowledge was discussed.
- JHJ raised the issue of e-learning and risk and questioned whether there was existing documentation that could be adapted for the Risk Register. The CEO agreed that this should be actioned.

**Action All**

## 7 Audit Committee

Oral update from the Chair of the Audit committee meeting held on 13 May 2020.

- Dominic Course was welcomed to the committee.
- The internal and external auditors have confirmed that the audit function can take place remotely and online.
- Health & Safety and Safeguarding have picked up on a new risk – online safety.
- A review of asbestos management regulations needs to take place.
- The Whistleblowing Policy, now called the Public Interest Disclosure Policy, sits within the remit of the Audit committee.

## 8 Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Board received the draft minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on 16 March 2020 and 01 May 2020.

### Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2020

- Payroll software was discussed. This will be an Agenda Item for the September meeting.

**Action Clerk**

### Minutes of meeting held on 01 May 2020

- Insurance and risk protection arrangements have been discussed to ensure that the Trust is covered in respect of Covid-19.
- The overall financial performance of the Trust is healthy.
- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) had provided guidance on how to pay suppliers during school closures.
- Budgets for 2020-2021 will be ready to discuss at the July meeting of Trustees.
- The TBM shared the Trust data dashboard, a document detailing the financial performance of schools against their outline budget as at 1 May 2020, on screen with Trustees. The Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) required that Trustees receive this information six times a year and it was agreed the data provided for F&GP Committee could be sent to remaining Trustees.

**Action TBM/Clerk**

- It was agreed that the TBM would provide a summary at the end of the data dashboard.

**Action TBM**

- It was noted that Moretonhampstead, Widecombe and Ilsington Primary School budgets had been inherited from South Dartmoor Academy.
- The TBM offered to meet with any Trustees wishing for a greater understanding of the accounts.
- Debtors and creditors have been listed. All are within reason.
- Budget assumptions for next year were:
  - Teachers' Pay – 3 pc increase 2020-21 to 2022-23 to meet the Government's target of a £30k teacher starting salary. 2pc would be applied from 2023-24
  - Support Staff Pay – 3 pc increase for 2020-21 to reach the targeted £9.30 living wage and 2pc thereafter
  - Pension grant will continue until 2022-23
  - Pay grant in 2020-21 then ends
  - Local Government Pension Scheme and Teachers' Pension Scheme employers' contributions would remain at current levels
  - A collaborative MS Teams meeting with Executive/Academy Heads will now take place to discuss these.
- A 3 year budget projection has been undertaken. This does not take into account any carry forwards from previous years.
- The cash position is currently within budget; new Covid-19 related equipment costs were offset by other planned expenditure not being spent.
- JHJ suggested that it would be useful for Trustees to receive a plan on how to programme reserves at the next meeting. The TBM reminded Trustees that schools should manage within their income and operational costs should not be covered by Reserves. The Trust had committed a higher percentage of contribution if the result of CIF bids was successful; taking six weeks' costs for reserves did not leave a significant sum for capital investment, though the Trust continued to work towards this. The TBM added that the Trust looks at the cumulative position not individual schools.

**Action TBM/RG**

**At this point of the meeting the Board of Trustees took a 5 minutes comfort break.**

**9 Remuneration Committee**

A confidential report from the Remuneration Committee had been circulated to Trustees prior to the meeting.

**The meeting moved to Part II minutes**

**The meeting returned to Part I minutes**

- JCO advised that a representative from the Standards & Curriculum Committee should sit on the Remuneration committee as this was standard practice. FW added that she would like to put her name forward for the position but added that it was the CEO's responsibility to do what was best for the operational aspect of the Link Academy Trust. The Chair agreed this would be discussed at the next Remuneration Committee

**Agenda Item for Remuneration Committee on 3 July 2020**

**10 Standards & Curriculum Committee**

- The Board received the draft minutes of the Standards & Curriculum meeting held on 29 April 2020.
- The committee had focused on vulnerable children attending the Hubs, safeguarding of the children and the education of SEND children.
- The issues of online safety and safeguarding with the current online learning had been discussed.

- The Chair responded to DC's point on PPE at the meeting and advised that she has asked the TBM to provide a definitive statement that cleaning contractors provide PPE for their staff. DC added this may need to be extended to the caterers. The TBM replied that he had already done this and that an order for PPE to cover school staff has recently been placed with delivery expected this week.

## 11 Inspections

The Chair advised that Ofsted have now published their report for Landscope C of E Primary School and asked whether an audit grid could be drawn up detailing all the recommendations that have come through Ofsted reports, whether they had been actioned, by whom and when. It was noted that the first five Ofsted reports were carried out using a different framework. It was agreed that the audit grid should commence with Landscope Primary School but that a summary showing whether recommendations had been actioned under the old framework should also be drawn up. The CEO agreed to ask E/AHs to compile these reports which would be overseen by the Senior Leadership Team and monitored by the S&C Committee.

**Action CEO**

## 12 Local Boards

### 12.1 Woodleigh Local Board: 26 February 2020

The Board noted the Minutes. Tedburn St. Mary had raised a query about who would be in charge in the event of fire if the Academy Head was not present. The CEO advised she would make sure that this point was checked. It was noted that the Chair of Woodleigh Local Board had advised at the Standards & Curriculum meeting that this matter had been resolved.

### 12.2 Newton & Teign Local Board: 12 February and 22 April 2020

The Board noted the Minutes.

### 12.3 Totnes Local Board: 13 February and 16 April 2020

The Board noted the Minutes. Totnes LB were thanked for their comprehensive and useful response to the Scheme of Delegation.

### 12.4 Raleigh Federation:

It was noted that minutes had not been received from the Raleigh Federation. Corinna Tigg, Chair of the Raleigh Federation had attended the Standards & Curriculum committee meeting.

### 12.5 The Moorland Schools

It was noted that minutes had not been received from the Moorland Schools. DC advised that the main issue was that they did not have a clerk.

## 13 Safeguarding

Trustees received the Safeguarding Summary Sheet for all schools for the Spring term 6 January to 27 March 2020. The CEO reported that there were no major Safeguarding issues at present. Safeguarding support is in place for Bearnas. The Standards & Curriculum committee receive a thorough Safeguarding report from the CEO at their meetings.

## 14 Health and Safety

The TBM reported that pre-project planning meetings for building works had taken place. The appointment of a Health & Safety Officer would be helpful going forwards.

## 15 Governance Review

### 15.1 Bishop Fleming Governance Review

- As agreed under item 5 above the CEO will follow up with Bishop Fleming on key matters not listed in their Governance Review. Trustees agreed that the report was weak for the cost.
- The Chair advised that Peter Bethel has been appointed as a Trustee of Bearnas Educational Foundation and, in this role, has been invited to become a Member of the

Link Academy Trust. The vacancy from the Totnes Deanery Synod, arising from Julian Ould's retirement, remained unfilled/

- The reasons for Trustees to engage in Flash Training, as suggested in the Review, were discussed. JHJ added that he was currently taking part in more robust and in depth Governors' training which would take 12 months to complete.
- The Chair suggesting asking Bishop Fleming for a 15 minute Flash Training session in school performance data before the next meeting.
- JHJ added that through his Governor's training he had secured some excellent paper resources from the Ambition Institute which he was keen to share with other Trustees. The CEO asked JHJ if this was something he could deliver? It was agreed that Trustees would pick an item for the Autumn meeting of Trustees that JHJ could deliver on. Resetting the vision at this meeting was also mentioned.

**Action JHJ**

### **Agenda Item for 13 July 2020 meeting of Trustees**

#### 15.2 Succession Planning

- A discussion paper written by the Chair of the Standards & Curriculum committee had been circulated to all Trustees prior to the meeting. JCO spoke to this paper and a detailed and in depth conversation ensued.
- The models of Co-Chairs, rotating Chairs, Vice-Chairs and distributed leadership was discussed.
- RG suggested that the paper could be the start of a series of succession planning meetings.
- JHJ added this was an important issue to address and a good structured process of succession should be put in place for the future.
- The CEO asked if there was a Trustee willing to look at the role and what the timeline was.
- The Chair advised that, in accordance with the Articles, nominations for Chair and Vice Chair were invited at the end of May to early June with the outcome announced at the AGM at the end of July.
- The Chair advised that she would stand down when asked but was willing to continue in the role of Chair until December 2020 if that was helpful.
- JCO suggested that if the Board of Trustees decided they wanted one Chair then this person should come forward this term so they could be coached over the Autumn term.
- It was agreed to defer the election for the Chair of Trustees until December but that the succession planning discussion should continue in the meantime.

**Action All**

#### 15.3 Scheme of Delegation (SoD)

- The Chair reported. The Totnes Local Board had given the Scheme of Delegation considerable attention at their meeting which had been most useful.
- The latest version of the SoD is now on SharePoint for the attention of Trustees.
- The CEO and ATSIL have agreed to work on points about Local Boards and their membership in order to achieve consistency but be adaptable for the number of schools in each hub
- The Chair asked for Trustees ratification of the Scheme of Delegation as it stands on the proviso that the Local Board section is taken as a work in progress. This was agreed.
- It was agreed that the Chair and CEO would have a further conversation on the matter once the Local Board section had been evaluated.

**Action CEO/Chair**

## **16 Appointments**

### 16.1 Trustees

16.1.1 JHJ as Vice-Chair took the Chair to seek Trustee ratification for the re-appointment, agreed ex-committee, of Isabel Cherrett as a Foundation Trustee for a second term of four years from 08 March 2020.

**Proposed FW/Seconded RG  
Ratified**

16.1.2 The Chair sought Trustees' ratification of the appointment, approved ex-committee, of Dominic Course as a non-Foundation Trustee for the period 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2024.

**Ratified**

DC was welcomed to the Board.

16.1.3 The Chair sought Trustees approval for the re-appointment of Mrs Fiona Walters, Foundation Trustee, for a second term from 02 May 2020 to 01 May 2024.

**Approved**

The value of FW's Diocesan link role was acknowledged.

16.2 Governors

16.2.1 Trustees approved the appointment of Sue Roach, co-opted Governor to represent Stoke Gabriel on the Totnes Local Board for four years from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2024.

16.2.2 Trustees approved the appointment of Janet Watts, co-opted Governor to represent Diptford on the Totnes Local Board for four years from 01 April 2020 to 31 March 2024.

16.2.3 Trustees supported the appointment of Allie Beaumont, Primary Science Consultant, as a Governor to join the Totnes Local Board should a vacancy arise and the Totnes Board felt the appointment was appropriate. CEO to take this matter forward.

**Action CEO**

**17 Policies**

17.1 Recommended by the Audit Committee

17.1.1 Minibus Policy.

**The Minibus Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

17.2 Recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee

17.2.1 Gifts & Hospitality Policy

**The Gifts & Hospitality Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

17.2.2 Nursery Admissions Policy and Oversubscription Criteria

**The Nursery Admissions Policy and Oversubscription Criteria was approved by the Board of Trustees**

17.3 Recommended by the Standards & Curriculum Committee

17.3.1 Covid-19 Safeguarding Policy 2020

17.3.2 Covid-19 Safeguarding of Vulnerable Children during Covid

17.3.3 Covid-19 Schools First Aid

17.3.4 Covid-19 Safer Working Practice

**The above four Covid-19 Policies were approved by Trustees**

17.3.5 Online Safety Policy

**The Online Safety Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

17.4 Workforce Strategy

17.4.1 Staff Wellbeing Policy

**The Staff Wellbeing Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

17.4.2 Positive Mental Health Policy

It was noted that this Policy relates to both staff and pupils.

**The Positive Mental Health Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

17.5 It was agreed that draft Admission Statements would be received by the F&GP committee in September and approved by Trustees at their February meeting.



**18**     **Dates of Future Meetings 2020-2021**

The Clerk had circulated future 2020-2021 meeting dates for Local Boards, committees and Trustees prior to the meeting. These were agreed for the time being.

**20**     **Meeting Dates 2019-20**

The following dates have been agreed for 2019-2020; meetings will commence at 4.00 pm, except for the AGM which will start at 6.00 pm.

26/2020           Monday 13 July 2020

27/2020           Monday 20 July 2020 – Annual General Meeting

Version 1 issued 26 May 2020 to CEO/TBM, version 2 issued to IJC 01 June 2020, version 3 issued to Trustees and SharePoint 02 June 2020