

**Board of Trustees**  
**Minutes: 10 February 2020**  
**Landscope House, 4pm**  
**T/24/20**

**Trustees:**

Isabel Cherrett – in the chair

Nicola Dunford (CEO)

Jason Hayward-Jones (JHJ)

Mike Fisher (MF)

Cheryl Mathieson (CM)

Roy Gillard (RG)

Jane Collings (JCO)

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

**Welcome and apologies:**

Apologies from Peter Bethel and Fiona Walters were sanctioned. The Chair welcomed all present. There were no declarations of interest.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting, Parts I and II, held on 11 December 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chair as an accurate record.

2. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising that were not formally on the agenda.

2.1 **Item 2 – 2018-2019 Annual Report and Financial Statements**

Trustees noted these had been signed by the External Auditors, Bishop Fleming LLP, and submitted to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Companies House and had been circulated to the Trust's Members.

2.2 **Item 4.3 – Income Generation Vacancy**

The CEO reported this matter had been discussed at the Finance & General Purposes committee meeting held on 7 February 2020. The CEO described how the three income generation layers of bronze, silver and gold had been restructured. At bronze level the PTFAs have been upskilled through two training days. The CEO continued that historically income generation above £10,000 had been the responsibility of the TBM and CEO. They had explored the possibility of employing a consultant or keeping this work in house. The TBM and CEO had then looked at whose portfolio this work would fall under if it was kept in house. The F&GP Committee had previously discussed appointing a qualified Accountant who would line manage the Finance Team and also undertake other Trust work. This would release the TBM to focus more fully on income generation.

It was agreed to defer this matter and discuss at the next meeting of Trustees in May.

**Agenda Item for the 18 May 2020 meeting of Trustees**

### 2.3 Item 6.3 Condition Improvement Bids

The TBM advised that an outcome on the Condition Improvement Bids would be received on 27 March 2020.

### 3. Conversion

Illington, Moretonhampstead and Widecombe-in-the Moor Primary Schools were welcomed to the Link Academy Trust. Work undertaken to date together with capital funding received for Illington Primary has been well received and demonstrates the values of the Link Academy Trust.

### 4. CEO's Report

The CEO spoke to her report which had been circulated prior to the meeting. A copy is appended to these minutes. The CEO asked for any questions from Trustees.

#### *School Improvement*

JCO asked how the Link Academy Trust was supporting the newly appointed School Improvement Advisors within the Academy Trust Improvement Team, and whether a training programme had been drawn up to bring them into their roles? The CEO responded that the Academy Trust School Improvement Lead had undertaken extensive training, including NPQH. The Academy Trust School Standards and Educational Outcomes Lead's expertise had been identified as outcomes driven. The Academy Trust Data & Standards Lead had been working with Scomis and upskilling. They were all being supported in their roles.

#### *Pupil Attendance*

The CEO reported that she had looked in greater depth at absence and persistent absence with Academy Heads. It is clear that actions put in place following this discussion has made a positive difference; however, there remains an issue with parents taking their children on holiday during term time. The main concern with attendance lies with Otterton, Drakes, Widecombe and Moretonhampstead schools. The Attendance Policy has been thoroughly reviewed. It is also apparent that there is a variation in skills amongst the Education Welfare Officers. The Chair asked the CEO if she was confident that Academy Heads were following the Attendance Policy procedure fully? The CEO replied affirmatively.

JCO commented that the strategies being undertaken to improve attendance were most helpful and asked whether GDPR within the documentation was being observed? The CEO advised that strategies and GDPR procedures had been put in place within the Attendance Policy.

#### *Coronavirus*

JHJ asked how the Link Academy Trust will react to the Coronavirus? The CEO replied that the Chair has asked for a Risk Assessment from all Academy Heads. Guidance received from the DfE has been sent to all Academy Heads and had appeared on some school websites. Trustees asked for the CEO to send a cautionary note to all schools stating that if parents travel to any of the five countries identified by the World Health Organisation as unsafe due to outbreaks of Covid-19, to not bring their children back to school for 2 weeks.

**Action CEO to send a cautionary note to all schools regarding the coronavirus, travel and return to school**

The Chair asked that if there were any incidents for the Board of Trustees to be advised.

### 5 MAT Review

The Chair reported that the date for the annual MAT review with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) has been postponed for a second time and is now set for 1 June 2020

## 6 **Business Plan**

The Chair updated on **Vision, Culture & Ethos**. A written report was circulated prior to the meeting and is appended to these minutes.

- There will be an Away Day on 28 February 2020 at Dartmoor Lodge. The CEO is currently writing the programme. The Limbtec representative will be present for IT 0365 training. The CEO advised that the Limbtec representative also attends all Academy Head meetings. The CEO reminded the Board that use of personal email addresses presented a possible breach of GDPR and all Governors and Trustees **must** use their Link email addresses. . RG suggested that it would be beneficial for delegates to receive advice as to how to access the 0365 system. To this end all delegates are requested to bring their laptops, tablets and phones to the Away Day.

**Action CEO to request all Away Day participants bring their tablets, laptops and/or phones for training on how to access SharePoint and the One Drive.**

The CEO updated on **Growth & Capacity**. A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting and is appended to these minutes.

- The capacity of the Link Academy Trust schools is improving year on year and objectives are being met.
- The Link Academy Trust continues to be promoted and further growth considered. The Trust has been asked to respond to expressions of interest submitted by a number of schools. If the Link Academy Trust is selected, following an expression of interest, the Link and the Academies then enter into a due diligence process. The Link will only consider Academies requesting expressions of interest that fit with the Link Academy Trust vision, values and ethos. Trustees can at any time request that the Link Academy Trust withdraws from the due diligence process. The Chair hoped that schools and academies seeking to join any Trust recognise the time taken to prepare an EoI and they should not be requested spuriously if the Governing Body has a preferred partner. However, if this were the case the EoI could be used as a working document and some information used again. The CEO confirmed that the Link Academy Trust wishes to grow steadily. There are a number of options which will be managed as they arise.

**The meeting moved to Part II minutes**

**The meeting returned to Part I minutes**

CM the Academy's HR specialist updated on **Workforce**. A written report had been circulated prior to the meeting and is appended to these minutes.

The Chair commented that she was reassured by the work undertaken to improve the recruitment process to ensure more rigorous and consistent procedures are in place across the Link Academy Trust. It was confirmed that the Remuneration Committee will monitor equality statistics now gathered as part of the Recruitment process and will report on diversity.

At the May meeting of the Board of Trustees it was agreed that MF would update on **Central Business and Property**; JCO to update on **Governance** and RG on **Financial Strategy and Control**.

**Action MF/JCO and RG to update on the Business Plan at the May meeting of Trustees**

It was agreed that the Chair would provide a template for these reports.

**Action Chair to provide a template for the above reports**

**7 Risk Register**

The Quality and Reputation page of the Risk Register was reviewed by Trustees present. This matter had also been discussed at the Finance & General Purposes meeting of the 7 February 2020. The Chair advised that she had made some amendments to the Risk Register's headlines in order to give a clear review cycle. Following discussion the amendments listed below were agreed by the Board of Trustees:

**Risk Register Quality and Reputation section**

- Q&R1 - Poor relationship with parents. RP to remain at three. Add to comments line 'and deal with one off incidents personally. CEO to be involved'.
- Q&R2 - Poor student recruitment. Add a note to review after the 2020 census.
- Q&R5 - Poor relationship with Department for Education. RP to change from three to two and RI to change from nine to seven.
- Q&R6 - Poor relationship with the Regional Schools Commissioner. RP to change from three to two. To add next review February 2021.
- Q&R7 - Poor relationship with Devon County Council. RP to change from three to two.
- Q&R8 - Poor relationship with schools in the region. RI to change from six to five.
- Q&R9 - Schools seeking academy status not wanting to join the trust. RP to change from four to three. RI to change from nine to seven. Add note to review February 2021
- Q&R10 - Schools joining trust having a negative impact. RP to change from four to three and RI to change from nine to eight. Add note to review February 2021.

It was agreed that the Chair would amend the Quality and Reputation section of the Risk Register as per the above bullet points.

**Action Chair to amend the Q&R section of the Risk Register**

CM questioned whether a line should be added regarding social media? It was agreed that the Chair would address this in the Risk Register.

**Action Chair to address social media within the Risk Register**

JHJ asked whether due diligence was undertaken internally or externally? It was noted that much was carried out internally but all legal issues were completed by the Link's advisers.

After discussion, it was agreed that the Chair would alter the controls within the Risk Register to show elements contracted out by the CEO.

**Action Chair to alter the controls within the Risk Register to show elements contracted out by the CEO.**

**8 Audit Committee**

The Board received the draft minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 2 January 2020.

It was noted that there are two vacancies on this committee and that the Terms of Reference state that the committee is quorate if two Trustees are present at the meeting. Membership

of the committee is not less than three. It was agreed that the Clerk would amend the minutes of 22 January 2020 to reflect this.

**Action Clerk to amend the Audit Committee minutes of 22 January 2020.**

MF noted that the Risk Management Policy had been updated by the Chair following the Summer Term 2019 Trustee meeting. The Chair has now sent a copy of this amended Policy to the Clerk with the updated scoring.

**The Risk Management Policy 2020 was approved by the Board of Trustees.**

## 9 Finance & General Purposes Committee

### 9.1 Oral update from Chair of F&GP/1/20 meeting held on 7 February 2020

As the draft minutes from the above meeting were not yet available the Chairman updated Trustees as follows:

- At present the payroll is outsourced but the level of service, though improving, was below an acceptable standard. Consideration was being given to bringing the service in-house but no change would be made before the next tax year starts on the 5 April 2020. The committee had discussed the benefits of trialling new digital software and this could be done within this tax year. The F&GP committee will keep the Board updated on the matter.
- There are no significant problems with the financial performance of the Link Academy Trust for this year; income and expenditure levels were as expected at month 5.
- The Trust Risk Register will be an Agenda Item for the next meeting.
- Health & Safety. The committee had asked for a report on the security of school sites to ensure children could not leave their school as well as keep them safe from intruders. The CEO will look at what safety measures might be required through Academy Heads.
- Monthly meetings between the CEO, TBM and Chairman had been re-instated.
- Key Performance Indicators are being reviewed.
- The Committee will review Benchmarking.
- The Committee had talked about recruiting an accountant.

### 9.2 2019-2020 Finance Performance,

The TBM reported that a monthly set of financial reports are compiled into a data dashboard. This is RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rated. The data dashboard had been circulated prior to the meeting for Trustees to review and was an agenda item for the Finance & General Purposes Committee. This report was also projected onto the screen for the Trustees present to view. The TBM advised that there were no significant problems with financial performance for this year. Schools will be receiving a credit in the near future as costs funded by the Teaching Capacity Fund (TCaF) activities were now underway. The Board received and noted the financial data.

**The Board of Trustees received and noted the financial data presented.**

### 9.3 Property

As minuted under item 2.3 above, the TBM advised that an outcome on the Condition Improvement Bids would be received on 27 March 2020.

## 10 Standards & Curriculum

The Board received and noted the draft minutes of the Standards & Curriculum meeting held on 29 January 2020. The Chair reported as follows:

- The Local Boards are fundamental to the committee. The question of how the committee communicates back to local boards was discussed. It was hoped that the Standards & Curriculum committee could encourage each Hub to come to their meetings.
- The Academy Trust School Improvement Lead (ATSIL) had informed the committee about school improvement mapping.
- Progress around vulnerable groups had been reviewed.
- The Chair reported that Standards & Curriculum committee encourages each school to be individual and yet adhere to the central systems.
- The practice of scrutiny has improved. This is a group that the ATSIL runs.
- The Chair of Trustees confirmed that the Audit will confirm that the role of a Trustee is a strategic one. Individual Trustees oversee a functional activity, such as finance, property, HR etc and this complements Governors in their role as links to individual schools within their respective hubs. The triangulation provides a check and balance and ensures that Trustees are not duplicating the work of Governors.
- The Chair confirmed that the Standards & Curriculum committee scrutinises the outcomes of Ofsted visits. [The Chair of Trustees asked that the Committee prepare a table of all recommendations made in Ofsted reports in late 2018 to date and monitor progress made in meeting these recommendations. The table should describe what the issues are, what actions have been taken and by whom and what progress is made and the target completion date..](#)
- It was agreed that training for the Hub clerks would be beneficial in order to encourage consistency of minutes.

**Action HR/CEO/TBM to action minute taking training for the Hub clerks.**

## **11 Inspections if occurred**

Ofsted 2019-2020 – two day inspection at Landscope Church of England Primary School on 28 and 29 January 2020. This had been reviewed in the Chief Executive Officer's Report. The Ofsted Inspection Report does not reflect the time and detail spent on the Inspection by the staff, pupils and governors.

The Board of Trustees recorded their thanks to Jill Ryder, Cat Radford and all the staff and pupils at Landscope Primary School for their support during the Inspection.

All questions raised by the Inspectors were noted and have been typed up and circulated to all schools by the CEO.

## **12 Local Boards**

### **12.1 Woodleigh Local Board: 4 December 2019**

The Chair asked what tree training was, noted on the draft minutes.

The Chair asked whether the Staff/Parent and Pupil survey mentioned on Page 4 had been undertaken. It was agreed that the CEO will add this to the Academy Head's (AH's) Agenda for the 19 March 2020.

**Action CEO to add the Survey to the Academy Head's March Agenda**

The CEO confirmed that the Safeguarding and Prevent training mentioned on Page 1 had taken place and a Safeguarding Visit Report for all local boards to complete has been developed.

Woodleigh and Totnes are trying to standardise their Safeguarding visits between schools.

### 12.2 Newton & Teign Local Board: 18 December 2019

The Board noted the Minutes and Newton and Teign Hub's wish that the three new schools will join their Hub.

### 12.3 Totnes Local Board: 12 November 2019

The appointment of Cat Radford as the Totnes Local Board Chair was confirmed by the Board of Trustees. It was noted that Nanya Coles is the designated Safeguarding Lead for the Totnes Local Board. It was noted that three members of the Totnes Local Board will reach the end of their terms of office at the end of March. It would be beneficial if a delegate from Landscope Primary School could be elected to this Board.

### 12.4 Raleigh Federation:

The CEO reported. She has visited to assist with setting up their Boards. They have an Ethos Committee underway and have undergone training.

### 12.5 South Dartmoor

The CEO reported that South Dartmoor would like to change their name and are thinking about calling themselves Moorland. The CEO has attended Moretonhampstead Primary School's LB. All three schools have effective local boards and they will keep meeting for the next two terms. The CEO will organise for the three boards to meet together to revisit the Hub question ready for a September start. The CEO will keep the Trustees updated on progress.

## **13 Safeguarding**

The CEO reported that there are no major Safeguarding issues. Safeguarding support is in place for Bearnas at present. The Standards & Curriculum committee receive a thorough Safeguarding report from the CEO at their meetings.

### 13.1 The Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy

The Chair updated those present.

This policy was bi-annual but has changed to annual upon Babcock's recommendation. It was last ratified by Trustees in November 2019. The Academy Trust Safeguarding and SEND Lead has recently advised of minor changes to the Policy following a meeting with Babcock which have been added. The Safeguarding Lead details for the 3 new schools have also been added to the Policy. Chair's Action was taken to approve these changes.

**The Board of Trustees agreed to the changes made in the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy.**

## **14 Health and Safety**

The CEO reported. The Trust has been looking at ways of keeping children safe. To this end an external review had been undertaken through the insurance system that the Trust buys into. Some issues have arisen from this review. On the ground Health & Safety is good but the reporting lines are not clear enough. It was agreed that the TBM and CEO would review this further and also seek input from Academy Heads.

**Action TBM/CEO to review Health & Safety reporting lines.**

## **15 Governance Review**

The CEO reported. A Governance Review of how Trustees and the Board operate has been undertaken by Bishop Fleming LLB using TCAF money. Trustees will shortly receive an email from Bishop Fleming with questions they will need to answer. The Chair asked if the TBM or the CEO could follow this matter up if parts of the survey were not completed.

**Action TBM/CEO to follow up with Trustees on incomplete sections of the Governance Review.**

**16 Scheme of Delegation**

The Chair referred to the T 24 20 Scheme of Delegation Cover Paper circulated with the draft Scheme of Delegation prior to the meeting.

The Chair asked Trustees for a sense and accuracy check of the Scheme of Delegation. The Chair advised that she would like to sign off on the Scheme of Delegation at the 18 May 2020 meeting of the Board of Trustees. It was agreed that the Clerk would set up a new folder in SharePoint called Scheme of Delegation so that the document can be made accessible for all Trustees to make comments. JHJ advised that Local Boards have requested a summary to enable them to understand their role within the Scheme and that perhaps the Clerk could go through the document and note each time a Local Board was mentioned. The CEO confirmed that the extant Scheme remained in force until the new Scheme was approved. The Chair asked that all comments on the draft were made by the start of the second Spring term – Tuesday 14 April 2020.

**Action Clerk to set up folder in SharePoint called Scheme of Delegation**

**Action Trustees to make comments on the Scheme of Delegation in the SharePoint folder by Tuesday 14 April 2020**

**Action Clerk to start a document detailing each time a Local Board is mentioned in the Scheme of Delegation**

**17 Appointments**

The Chair reported to Trustees. Academy Ambassadors had found a potential Trustee who had marketing experience. Unfortunately this person has now taken up another role. The Trust is pursuing a governor from the South Dartmoor Local Boards and hopes that by the 18 May 2020 there will be an application for Trustees' approval.

The Chair advised that she will ask Academy Heads to advertise the position in their local Parish magazines and provide a draft advertisement.

Trustees noted that a new Totnes Parent Governor has been appointed.

**Action Chair to request Academy Heads advertise in their local Parish magazines for potential Trustees**

**18 Policies**

**18.1 Recommended by the Audit Committee**

18.1.1 Risk Management Policy. Please refer to Agenda Item 8 above.

**18.2 Recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee**

18.2.1 Data Protection Policy

**The Data Protection Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

18.2.2 Fair Processing Policy

**The Fair Processing Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

18.2.3 Financial Procedures Manual. One amendment was agreed. This was to delete the reference to the minutes being published before they have been formally approved at the next meeting. TBM to advise Clerk where this change is.



**Action TBM to advise Clerk where the reference to the minutes being published lies within this Policy so that the Clerk may delete this sentence.**  
**Subject to the above amendment the Financial Procedures Manual was approved by the Board of Trustees**

### 18.3 Recommended by the Standards & Curriculum Committee

18.3.1 Admissions Policies x 12 schools approved, 3 new schools to be checked.

**HR Manager to add a phrase at the beginning of these Policies defining that parent also means a guardian or carer.**

**Subject to the above amendment the Admission Policies were approved by Trustees.**

### 18.3.2 Attendance Policy

The template letters have been removed from this Policy. It was agreed that the CEO would review the letters separately and then confer with CM.

**The Attendance Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**  
**Action CEO to review attendance letters and then confer with CM**

### 18.3.3 Missing Child Policy

**The Missing Child Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees**

### 18.3.4 SEND Policy

JCO's amendments were noted. The Chair welcomed the focus on Special Educational Needs but asked whether more detail should be included about disability, for example where a child already with the Link became disabled.. CEO to action this in time for the next review.

**The SEND Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees.**  
**Action CEO to discuss SEND Policy with Academy Heads and look at strengthening it in terms of disability.**

### 18.3.5 Curriculum Policy

**Deferred to the May meeting of the Board of Trustees**

### 18.3.6 Safe Collection of Children Policy

**Deferred to the May meeting of the Board of Trustees**

### 18.3.7 Positive Handling Policy

**Deferred to the May meeting of the Board of Trustees**

## 18.4 Workforce Strategy

18.4.1 Staff Wellbeing Policy 2020 and 18.4.2 Positive Mental Health Policy 2020

Trustees welcomed the development of these two policies but would like input from Academy Heads. It was agreed to defer both Policies to the May meeting of the Board of Trustees. CEO to check the Policies with Academy Heads.

**Defer both the Staff Well-being and Positive Mental Health Policies to the May meeting of the Board of Trustees.**

**Action CEO to check the Staff Well-being and Mental Health Policies with the Academy Heads.**

## **19 Job Profiles**

Trustees noted the job profiles for the Academy Trust RE and SIAMS Lead (ATRSL) and the Academy Trust School Standards and Education Outcomes Lead (ATSSEOL).

**The meeting moved to Part II minutes**

**The meeting returned to Part I minutes**

20     **Meeting Dates 2019-20**

The following dates have been agreed for 2019-20; meetings will commence at 4.00 pm, except for the AGM which will start at 6.00 pm.

25/2020	Monday 18 May 2020
26/2020	Monday 13 July 2020
27/2020	Monday 20 July 2020 – Annual General Meeting

Friday 28 February Away Day, Dartmoor Lodge

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IJC/ND/RH