

## Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes: Friday 7 February 2020

9.30am, Landscope House

**Present:** Mr Roy Gillard, Chair  
Mrs Isabel Cherrett (IJC)  
Ms Nicola Dunford, CEO  
Ms Cheryl Mathieson (CM)

**In attendance:** Clerk – Mrs Rachel Hill  
The Trust Business Manager (TBM) – Mr Matt Matthew

### **Welcome and Apologies:**

Mr Gillard welcomed all to the meeting; there were no apologies.

### **Declaration of Business Interests:**

There were no declarations of business interests.

The Chairman clarified that if a Trustee has more than a 20% shareholding in a company it should be declared on the Related Interest Form. It was noted that Mr Gillard is a Co-Director of Labyrinth Accountancy Ltd. which has a number of clients for which he provides Company Secretarial and Directorship roles. The CEO is a Trustee of Bearnas Education Foundation.

### **1. Minutes of the previous meeting**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2019 were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record.

### **2. Matters Arising**

#### **2.1 Item 7 - Data Protection**

[The Chair asked what training the Data Protection Officer \(DPO\) had undertaken?](#)

The CEO responded that at present this had been online. A checklist for schools has been created. The first task is to ensure that the Link Academy Trust is visually compliant. [IJC asked if the schools were accepting the DPO's advice.](#) The CEO responded affirmatively.

The CEO clarified that the main GDPR concern is that Trustees are using their own personal email accounts rather than their Link Academy email address. Some Trustees have not yet managed to access SharePoint and are not accessing paperwork as a result of this. Martin from Limbtec will attend the Away Day on the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020 to work with Trustees on access to Office 365. All Trustees are asked to bring their tablets, laptops and phones to the Away Day to facilitate this.

#### **2.2 Item 2.1 - Payroll Provider**

The TBM updated the Committee. The service has improved but not to the extent required and that the quality monitoring reports require checking. The Provider has now acknowledged that there are issues. On the 26 February 2020 the Provider has an Access Customer Day in Exeter. The TBM will lodge a complaint at this event if issues are not resolved. In the longer term payroll may come in house, but the software needs to be resilient. The Chair suggested trialling payroll software. It was agreed that the Link Academy Trust requires a system that can expand and that is able to talk to the finance system.

**Action Chair to investigate alternative payroll software.**

#### **2.3 Item 2.2 – Constitution and Terms of Reference**

It was noted that the Board of Trustees had approved the amendments to the Finance & General Purpose (F&GP) Constitution and Terms of Reference at their meeting in

December 2019. The Committee received the updated version. IJC advised that it states within the Financial Procedures Manual that the F&GP committee has the responsibility for Insurance and to bear this in mind when planning the business of the committee for the year. It was agreed that at the March/May meetings of the F&GP committee Trustees would review the Insurance policies and that the Clerk would add this to the annual cycle of business.

**Action Clerk to add the Agenda Item Insurance to the March/May meetings and the annual cycle of business.**

### 3. **Financial Year 2019-2020**

#### 3.1 **Financial Performance 31 Jan 2020 – month 5**

A copy of the Link Academy Trust Directors Data Dashboard (DDD) was tabled and projected onto the meeting room screen by the TBM. A Copy is appended to these minutes.

The TBM advised that by the end of January, each school should be at 42 percent or over for income. Most schools were at this level. Some schools had joined part the way through the year so were displaying pro rata figures. For staffing, the majority of schools were at 42 percent or under. Broadhempston Primary School is higher than where they should be. Landscope Primary School has increased their After School Provision.

The major concern is Cheriton which has over committed on their curriculum budget at 99 percent. The curriculum budget is four percent of the total budget. It could be that the TBM has under-budgeted and he will discuss this conversation with the Executive Academy Head (EAH). The Chair suggested that the TBM may need to look at how they are forecasting.

The TBM advised that recharges for the central element have not been taken back from the schools as yet. The majority will be covered by the Trust Capacity Fund (TCaF). Claims have been made for software, legal costs and training for the new schools.

The debtor's line was reviewed by Trustees and the reasons behind it discussed.

The TBM advised that the Cashbook balance at month end was taken from the current budget for the 15 schools. The CEO advised that the Bishop Fleming update had been useful. A greater majority of Multi Academy Trusts are using two months as their reserve. The CEO recommended that the Link Academy Trust should remain at 6 weeks for its reserve.

The TBM advised that each school has access to their RAG rated budget and the Finance Officer goes through this with them and indicates where the outstanding amounts of expenditure are.

The TBM advised that a full set of Benchmarking is undertaken when budgets are drawn up. The Link Academy Trust will receive a visit from a School Resource Management Advisor.

The Chair agreed to review the Key Performance Indicators. The CEO suggested looking at pupil to staff ratios would be helpful. The Chair agreed to discuss this with the CEO and TBM.

**CEO/Chair and TBM to discuss Key Performance Indicators**

The Academies Benchmark Report for 2020 and a copy of the Benchmark Data for the Link Academy Trust from Bishop Fleming were tabled. The Chair agreed to look at Benchmarks for next year.

**Action Chair to review Benchmarks for the next financial year.**

#### 3.2 **Income Generation Vacancy**

The CEO updated the Committee. The CEO and the TBM have met about this matter. Schools continue to work at the lower bronze level. The TBM and CEO had reviewed the higher gold level of income generation and agreed that at present the capacity is not there for either of them to undertake this work and that a planned position for September is required.

**The meeting moved to Part II minutes**

## **The meeting returned to Part I minutes**

The CEO explained that the Link Academy Trust is currently investigating options to support the Central Business Unit and School Improvement for 2020-2021. Outline costings to do this are required. It was agreed that the TBM would provide these costings.

**Action the TBM to provide costings to support the Central Business Unit and School Improvement for 2020-2021.**

The Chair and the TBM talked about Charitable giving. This could be an area that would be of benefit to the Link Academy Trust. It was agreed that the Chair and TBM would discuss this further.

**Action Chair/TBM to discuss charitable giving as a means of income generation.**

### **4. Property**

School sites' security (fencing, public access etc.) was discussed as well as how children could leave school without permission.

The CEO suggested asking each Academy Head to RAG rate their security standards and also ask the children how they would get out of school. The Committee agreed that Safeguarding and Health & Safety issues are important, as was measuring the level of risk. Parents and staff require educating on a safeguarding focus. How children could potentially get out of schools could also be placed on the Risk Register.

IJC asked if the Committee could have a summary of cost effective measures that could be put in place to stop children getting out of schools and could these measures be rag rated? It was agreed that the CEO would provide this and for the matter to be an Agenda Item for the May meeting. The CEO confirmed that how children leave school is an Academy Head's responsibility.

**Action CEO to provide a rag rated summary of cost effective measures that could be put in place to stop children getting out of schools.  
Security Standards to be an Agenda Item for the May meeting.**

### **5. Business Plan**

#### **5.1 Financial Strategy and Control**

The Chair reported that he had reviewed the Financial Strategy and Control with the TBM and confirmed that he supported the document. They had also reviewed actions to be taken. Dates for meetings between the TBM and Chair have now resumed. It is recommended that the Audit Committee reviews Due Diligence.

With regards to financial expertise on the Board and within Trustees, the Chair confirmed that the possibility of additional accounting staff would enable him to focus on the top level strategic financial issues, within the Link Academy Trust.

The CEO will amend her Trustees' CEO report to reflect this.

**Action CEO to amend her Trustee's Report to include the Chair's comments on Financial Strategy and Control.**

IJC reported that Academy Ambassadors had been seeking a qualified accountant for the Board of Trustees. A delegate had been put forward, but this person has now taken up another post. IJC suggested asking Academy Heads to write editorial for Parish magazines seeking retired, qualified accountants as Trustees.

#### **5.2 Central Business and Property**

The CEO reported. An update meeting with the TBM had taken place. A report from this meeting would be included in her CEO's report for the Board of Trustees.

## 6. Trust Risk Register

### 6.1 Review of F&GP and ES&A sections

IJC suggested that anyone who makes an amendment to the Trust Risk Register document dates the amendment. The central document will be amended at Trustee Board meetings. The Board will look at particular sections during the year. This is to be added to the annual cycle of business. It was agreed that the Chair and TBM would meet and pencil in amendments which would then be confirmed at Trustee Board level.

**Chair and TBM to pencil in amendments to the Risk Register for confirmation at the Board of Trustees meeting in May.**

It was agreed that a Risk Management Folder would be created on SharePoint.

**Action Clerk to open a Risk Management folder on SharePoint.**

### 6.2 Due Diligence South Dartmoor Academy

The Due Diligence report for South Dartmoor Academy was reviewed by those present.

IJC raised the following questions:-

- **Page 4 - persistent absence at Moretonhampstead and Widecombe - is this being managed with an improvement forecast?** The CEO advised that her report for the Board of Trustees will have a breakdown of current attendance at each school. The matter will be discussed as a Trust at the next Academy Heads meeting. The CEO is also reviewing how much the Link Academy Trust pays for Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) as there would appear to be a discrepancy in service levels. The possibility of a Link administrator having EWO duties attached to their job description was discussed.
- **Page 5 - all three schools show a forecast deficit in three years – can any light be shed on this?** The TBM advised that he did not see any issues with their budgets.
- **Page 6 - Moretonhampstead has 15 hours for 'Premises' - is this a role across the three schools? Is there any opportunity for commercial lettings at Widecombe?** The TBM responded that the 15 hours for premises relates to the Moretonhampstead cleaner and is particular to them. There is not an opportunity for commercial lettings at Widecombe.
- **Page 7 - asbestos in premises - will you be preparing a timetable for removal? For Ilstington, can this be done at the same time as the new build?** The TBM replied that if it can be done through the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) it will
- **There's a high proportion on Senior Leadership at Moretonhampstead (19%) - is there a particular reason for this?**

**The meeting moved to Part II minutes**

**The meeting returned to Part I minutes**

- **Page 8 - all three schools require an IT update – what is the timetable for this?** The CEO advised that there was a £25,000 grant from outgoing to cover this. The TBM has purchased interactive white boards. The Admin. Server has been renewed. There will be a requirement for new laptops and it might be worth looking at business sponsorship and PTAs to cover these costs.
- **Page 9 – The HR Manager is scheduled to do a lot of checks after 20 January - could we hear about any issues of concern and a plan to offset?**

The CEO added one of the main issues that required addressing was staff illness.

## 7. Draft Scheme of Delegation

The Committee recorded their thanks to IJC for all her work on this document. IJC reported that the Scheme of Delegation was approved two years ago and that she had been working on updating this document. It has been circulated to the Board of Trustees. At present it does not include financial delegation and this will need to be updated once the Financial Procedures Manual has been updated. Item 5.3 Talent Review and item 5.2 Benchmarking were highlighted as Agenda Items for the next F&GP meeting. IJC hoped

the full Scheme could be signed off at the May meeting of the Board of Trustees. It was agreed that the Management Structure would form an appendix.

**Draft Scheme of Delegation to be an Agenda Item for the next F&GP meeting, in particular items 5.2 and 5.3.  
Management Structure to be an appendix of the Scheme of Delegation.**

**It was agreed that all following Agenda Items will be placed on the Agenda at every F&GP meeting. Action Clerk.**

**8. Internal Audit**

The TBM advised that the last report from Griffin Chartered Accountants is in SharePoint.

**9. Human Resources**

The Workforce Strategy Group have continued to meet. Two new Policies will be going to the next meeting of the Board of Trustees. The importance of Mentoring and Wellbeing was discussed. Exit interviews and the Welfare Policy have been reviewed. Current capacity to provide mentoring was discussed.

The TBM advised that the HR Legal Advisers contract is due for renewal. Since this began the number of schools within the Link Academy Trust has grown. A quote has been received from them to continue the service. This is in line with the previous cost.

The TBM recommended working with Wolferstans HR Legal Advisors for a further 12 months. The F&GP committee approved this for one year commencing from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020.

**10. Health & Safety**

The CEO advised that Health & Safety line management within schools required clarification and work needs to be undertaken to resolve this issue. IJC commented that the lines of reporting were clear in the Policy. [Is it time to revisit Health & Safety policy?](#)

**It was agreed that the TBM/CEO would review maintenance in all schools**

**11. Data Protection**

The CEO advised that there were no data protection breaches to report, however a level of vigilance needs to be kept. The CEO stressed again that the Link Academy Trust email addresses must be used.

**12. ESFA Bulletins**

IJC queried the Early Year Foundation Stage forthcoming reforms? The CEO advised that this was curriculum based and that some schools might have gone for an early adoption. IJC recommended that the Standards & Curriculum committee follow this matter up if required.

**13. Policies**

**13.1 Data Protection Policy**

Further to a slight amendment to the first paragraph of the Policy is was agreed to add this Policy to the list for the Board of Trustees approval at their next meeting.

**13.2 Fair Processing Notice.**

**13.3 Financial Procedures Manual**

The Chair proposed that the F&GP Committee accepted changes written by IJC but to review it again when the Link Academy Trust structure changes. It was agreed that the Clerk would find the up-to-date Related Interest Form and insert into the Manual.

**Action Clerk to insert the up-to-date Related Interest Form into the manual**

**14. Dates of Future Meetings**

27 March 2020

1 May 2020

3 July 2020

Drafted: 20.02.2020

SharePoint: 24.02.2020

RH/RG