

The Spring Partnership Trust
Final adopted minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Members
of the Spring Partnership Trust held at The Warren, Croydon Road, Hayes, Kent BR2 7AL
at 6 pm on Monday 24th January 2022

Present:

Mr J Cliff, Chair
Mr S Bhalla
Mr S Narracott
Mrs J Nelson
Mr I Stealey
Mr D Terry

In attendance:

Mrs C Sheehan, CFO
Mrs J Brinkley, CEO

Clerk:

Miss K Crossley

1. Apologies for absence, constitution of the meeting

1.1 There were no apologies for absence. The meeting was quorate.

2. Pecuniary Interests and Register of Persons with Significant Control

2.1 No pecuniary interests were declared.

2.2 Ms Boaden had resigned as a Member in October 2021. GIAS records had been updated accordingly.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the Members' meeting of 12th July 2021 (appendix 1), which had previously been approved by email, were ratified as an accurate record of the meeting and signed by the Chair.

3.2 A Member asked whether the Trust intended to arrange Challenge Partner visits for academic scrutiny and was advised that the Trust subscribed to Challenge Partners and that the CEO had taken part in MAT review visits.

3.3 A Member asked about the outcome of an issue at the end of the summer term 2021 relating to the redundancy of a member of staff, which had been the subject of concern on local social media. The CEO outlined the Trust's response, including the circulation of a Q&A document. No further concerns had been raised.

4. CEO report

4.1 Members were referred to the CEO report (appendix 2), which had been written jointly with the CFO to reflect her role as Acting CEO during the absence of the CEO. Members acknowledged the volume of work which had been undertaken during this period. Workload remained high, however times were still challenging but the executive were working on turning the tide and finding solutions to challenges.

4.2 Following the disruption to schooling over the past two years, the Chair had undertaken a series of visits to schools to explore ways to reduce pressure on staff and re-establish connections. Two recently-appointed Trustees with relevant skills were providing support in this regard.

4.3 A member asked about the impact of lockdown and restructures on education and was advised that there had been a significant increase in the number of pupils with high levels of needs, which related in part to lack of nursery education during the pandemic. The Trust was

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also keen that pupils admitted with high levels of SEND would be fully supported and that their needs would be fully included in the curriculum. Pupil Support Leads (a new role created in the restructure) and SENDCos were monitoring the situation, with additional support going into attendance. Funding had been received to fill gaps in learning, and the Trust had appointed staff on fixed-term contracts. In order to provide the additional support to schools given the need to fill gaps, it would mean a temporary increase to the staffing cost to income ratio before eventually reducing to the 75% to 78% in future years.

5. Review of Trust Board composition and governance

- 5.1 Members were referred to the composition and of the Board (appendix 3). Miss Punter, who had intended to step down as a Trustee at the end of summer 2021, had continued in her role as Chair of the HR Committee. Mrs Cartwright was expected to Chair the HR Committee in due course. Miss Punter had expressed an interest in the Member role and would be an asset to the group. Ms Hawker had resigned from the Trust at the end of the summer term 2021, and had been replaced on ACC by Mr Terry, a Deputy CEO at a primary trust in Kent.
- 5.2 Local Academy Council membership was strong at all schools, apart from LPS, where there were two members, both of whom were actively engaged in their roles. Trustees were considering how to increase engagement at LPS and would explore increased use of remote meetings as a means of boosting accessibility.

6. Receive TSPT annual accounts for the year ended 31st August 2021

- 6.1 Members were referred to the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st August 2021, the Audit Findings Report, and the Internal Checking Report Annual Summary (appendices 4 – 6). The external audit process had been conducted in person and had run smoothly. The auditors were satisfied that the appropriate levels of controls were in place. Unrestricted reserves had decreased due to investment in the digital strategy, and restricted reserves had increased during lockdowns. Strategies had been agreed to allocate the accumulation of restricted reserves, which related in part to historic build up from schools joining the Trust. Members asked about the nature of the spend and were informed that Heads had various projects in mind, such as the refurbishment of a bus as a library on the EWPS site and the use of additional staff to run interventions for PPG pupils.
- 6.2 Members asked whether the internal review of transactions which were not fully compliant with the financial scheme of delegation (SoD) had been completed. It was confirmed that the SoD had been revised to reflect current practice.
- 6.3 In response to a question about the Paws.B mental health programme, it was reported that this was embedded to differing degrees at Trust schools. Funding had been received for staff training, including training trainers, however there had been some issues linked to the pandemic. The CEO undertook to provide an update to Members. **JB to action.**

7. Approve reappointment of auditors UHY

- 7.1 Members approved the re-appointment of UHY as external auditors. A member raised the partner rotation requirement and the CFO explained that UHY have a robust review system in place to check the reviews by the current partner.

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7.2 Members noted the requirement for independent internal scrutiny. The Trust had engaged Baxters and Co for internal auditing.

8. AOB and dates of next meeting

8.1 There was no other business.

8.2 The next meeting would be held on Monday 11th July 2022 at 6:45 pm in person at The Warren.

8.3 The meeting closed at 6:45 pm.

Signed: Date:
John Cliff, Chair, Board of Trustees, The Spring Partnership Trust