

## **THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

### **Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019**

#### **Present:**

Mr C Lees, Chair  
Mrs J Brinkley CEO  
Mr R Barlow (for minutes 1-2 and from minute 3.1.3)  
Mr J Cliff  
Mrs L Falk  
Ms K Hawker  
Mr J Martin  
Ms M Mina  
Mr D Okafor  
Miss R Punter

#### **In attendance:**

Mrs C Sheehan, CFO  
Mrs V Bolton, COO

**Clerk:** Miss K Crossley

#### **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from C Barenbrug and R Taylor.
- 1.2 Directors were satisfied with the reasons given for absence and accepted the apologies.
- 1.3 The meeting was quorate.

#### **2. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests**

- 2.1 No pecuniary interests were declared.

#### **3. Board Business**

##### **3.1 To note changes to the Board and remaining terms of office**

- 3.1.1 Directors present unanimously agreed to co-opt R Barlow to the Board with immediate effect.
- 3.1.2 Directors welcomed C Barenbrug and M Mina and, who had been appointed by the Members for a four-year term of office from 27<sup>th</sup> February 2019 and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2019 respectively.
- 3.1.2 The terms of office of all Directors were noted.

##### **3.2 Trust and Local Committee membership**

- 3.2.1 Directors were referred to, and approved, the updated Board and Committee membership (appendix 1).

#### **4. Minutes of previous meeting**

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 (appendix 2) were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair.
- 4.2 Directors were referred to the matters arising report (appendix 3) and asked what checks were undertaken to ensure that schools were adhering to the Supporting Pupils with

## THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

### Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019

Medical Conditions Policy. Directors were further concerned to ensure that procedures were in place so that medicines, as well other essential operational information (including grab boxes), were available if schools were inaccessible. It was reported that spot checks had been undertaken and agreed that formal checks would be added to the standing Quality Assurance list. An update would be provided at the next meeting. **JB to action.**

#### 5. Chair's report

- 5.1 Directors were referred to the Chair's report (appendix 4). It was confirmed that neither the borough nor the DfE were liable for the damage to the hall at DRIS, and that the Trust would be responsible for the repairs. Directors asked about the risks associated with the damage to the hall and were advised that whilst there was no immediate risk to pupil safety, the state of the hall was a major inconvenience to the school and was not appealing to prospective parents which would therefore have a further impact on falling pupil numbers.

#### 6. Executive Team Reporting

##### 6.1 CEO report

##### 6.1.1 Strategic/political developments

- 6.1.1.1 Directors were referred to the CEO report and its appendices (appendices 6-8). With several new and recently-appointed Directors in attendance, the CEO took the opportunity to summarise the development of the Trust, including:

- Spring vision and values
- Trust governance structure
- The development of the Trust from a single maintained to a 6-school multi-academy trust, including consistent assessment and reporting systems, business, finance and HR functions and strategic planning
- Trust commitments ('Big 6' school improvement initiatives)

- 6.1.1.2 A discussion followed on the Big 6 initiative on staff training and career development. The CEO described how in order to avoid losing NQTs two or three years into their careers, an 'NQT+1' programme was planned, in which teachers remain with the same team with which they had completed their NQT year. Directors asked about the reasons for NQTs leaving and were advised that these included:

- moving to the private sector, where the demands of marking and planning are considerably less
- a Staff Wellbeing Action Group (SWAG) had been established to address teacher workload issues and an update will be provided at the next meeting. **JB to action.**
- local housing costs

- 6.1.1.3 Directors asked whether strategic plans were shared with staff, parents and community stakeholders. It was reported that increased capacity had enabled communication to be enhanced through TSPT parent and staff newsletters and an improved on-line presence, and that the next step would be to address the consistency of communication.

- 6.1.1.4 In response to a question as to whether the data was consistent and accurate, it was confirmed that previous issues had been resolved. KPIs were now being regularly monitored, including EYFS, KS1 and KS2 data, updated school improvement plans and risk

## **THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

### **Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019**

registers, which would be a valuable reporting tool. In time, foundation subject data would also be included; plans were in place to identify expertise in foundation subject and create leadership across the Trust to deliver training and monitor progress. Science would be the first subject to be launched, and the other subjects would follow. Directors asked about resources for subject coordinators and was advised this had not yet been consistently established across the Trust, but that teachers had flexibility, for example by teaching a subject such as history through an art lesson.

#### **6.1.1.5 Outdoor play and learning**

Directors were informed that HPS had reported that pupil behaviour incidents had reduced by 50% since OPAL had been introduced. All schools record behaviour incidents using the management information system or equivalent software. Audits had been undertaken at most schools and loose parts were carefully managed; pupils had been taught how to play sensibly and safely with objects such as tyres and pieces of wood. Directors asked how risks associated with loose parts were managed and were informed that training had been delivered to midday supervisors to enable them to monitor play effectively so that they knew when and how to move play on or intervene. Pupils had more space in which to play and playtimes were more peaceful. Directors asked whether the number of accidents had increased and were advised that this was not the case.

6.1.1.7 Directors asked about the prospects of growth for the Trust and were informed that there had been a change in the criteria for sponsoring schools, and that sponsoring now only applied to schools in special measures, which were rare. Almost all schools in Bromley were already members of MATs. The CEO was continuing to explore opportunities with professional networks, including the Regional Schools Commissioner, Ofsted inspector colleagues and leaders in other boroughs.

This sentence was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 13.1.

## **6.1 CFO report**

### **6.2.1 Financial and audit reporting**

6.2.2.1 The Board was referred to the CFO report, the consolidated management accounts and financial statements (appendices 8-12). The CEO highlighted concern as to the financial situation at LPS and advised that this related to the high cost of agency workers. Directors asked about the degree of confidence that the situation could be reversed, given the level of supply agency fees and the difficult recruitment market. It was reported that there were currently two vacancies for teachers on the 2019/20 staffing structure, and that some new recently appointed staff would join at the beginning of the summer term, so agency costs were expected to begin to tail off. A spending freeze had been imposed and was being rigorously applied by senior leaders. There was a high level of unfunded SEND need and applications for funding were being prioritised, although this was time-consuming. Recruitment was underway for a substantive Head of School to be in place from September 2019.

6.2.2.2 Directors were concerned to ensure educational and financial sustainability at LPS. However, with the systems and procedures put in place by the EHT (monitoring, assessment, behaviour, performance management, training etc) now well established, there was a sense that the school was beginning to settle down after its difficult recent past.

6.2.2.3 A discussion followed on the 2019/20 budgets which were challenging for the whole education sector. It was reported that every school would be in deficit if the 2018/19

## **THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

### **Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019**

budgets were mirrored on a like-for-like basis in 2019/20, and that the HoSs and HTs would have to make decisions in order to balance their budgets. The Management Group had met to ensure maximum efficiency through Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning and various scenarios were under consideration. A zero-budgeting approach would be used, starting with the core provision. In some cases, such as the purchase of reading schemes, it may be possible to negotiate price reductions through economies of scale if all six schools were in agreement.

6.2.2.4 Directors noted the deficit for the central Trust, with c£50k brought forward from 2017/18 and a further c£20k forecast for the current year. It was explained that the deficit had arisen out of a desire to minimise the top slice and because the budgeted income had not been generated. The deficit would be eliminated through the use of unrestricted reserves apportioned on a per pupil basis. However, this would leave the Trust unable to accommodate any unplanned projects or investment.

6.2.2.5 The Board discussed how the status of unrestricted reserves was understood across the Trust. The Board was advised that further work was being undertaken to ensure a consistent approach.

### **6.3. COO report**

#### **6.3.1 GDPR and litigation update**

6.3.1.1 Directors were particularly concerned to ensure that the Trust was meeting its obligations in respect of GDPR. Directors were referred to the COO report and the report from the Data Protection Officer (DPO) report (appendices 13 & 14). An update on risks in relation to data previously identified at one of the schools was provided, and it was confirmed that substantial progress had been made by the school (redaction of personal information on display, installation of locks and safer cupboards) in response to the concerns raised by the DPO. Consideration was being given to how to improve the security of reception desks. Improvements relating to GDPR would continue to be monitored by the Local Committee, and the DPO would be making a further visit to the schools in June 2019. Directors requested that a report of the visits be brought to the Trust Board meeting in July 2019. **VB to action.**

6.3.1.2 Directors asked whether there had been any breaches other than those mentioned in minute 6.3.1.1 and in the DPO report, and it was confirmed that there had not.. All breaches had been dealt with by the DPO, and some referred to the ICO, and all cases had now been closed. A meeting at one school with the COO and DPO to identify areas for improvement appeared to have been effective.

6.3.1.3 Directors noted the policy excesses in the event of unsuccessful outcomes in three on-going cases could total over £11k. It was possible that this could have an impact on the Trust's insurance premiums although this contract was currently going through a procurement process.

#### **6.3.2 Digital strategy spend requests**

6.3.2.1 Directors were referred to the spend requests for cabling infrastructure and Wi-Fi improvements at LPS (appendix 15). The COO thanked D Okafor for his feedback on and validation of the upgrades, which had been incorporated in the spend request. The spend request was agreed and the all elements of the work would be awarded to Blue Fox Systems at a total cost of £13,804.

## **THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

### **Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019**

#### **6.3.3 Health and safety reporting**

- 6.3.3.1 Directors were keen to ensure there was effective, efficient and comprehensive management of the Trust's estates. Consideration was being given to allocating a specific director to oversee this area.

From an operational perspective, planning had begun on the creation of an estates management plan. The first steps would be to spend time with the facilities teams to develop a site team network, to speak to the HoSs and HTs about their priorities for school sites and to bring these strands together through the Management Group. In response to a question from Directors, it was confirmed that relevant site audits had been conducted as part of preparation for CIF bids and external reports had been received for each school.

- 6.3.3.2 Directors were concerned at the list of fire safety issues identified in the report for the CIF bid at HPS and were advised that on further questioning of the bid consultants it had been clarified that the list related to recommendations, and did not include any issues which required immediate attention. In response to a question as to whether fire risk assessments had been conducted at the school, it was confirmed that this was the case and that the majority of issues identified would be rectified by the work proposed in the CIF bid. If the bid was unsuccessful, consideration would need to be given to funding a schedule of work internally.

#### **6.3.4 Preparations for SATs 2019**

- 6.3.4.1 Following the successful monitoring of SATs last year, Directors wanted to ensure this was repeated in 2019. It was confirmed that leaders were reviewing the new guidance on the administration of SATs, and that training on the updates would be delivered to all staff involved in administering SATs. Timetables of the test would be sent to Local Committees for monitoring visits to be arranged.

### **7. Report from FARCO**

#### **7.1 Overview of key issues**

- 7.1.1 This matter had been covered in minute 6.2.1.

#### **7.2 Minutes of FARCO meeting, 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

- 7.2.1 There were no questions from Directors on the final unadopted minutes of the FARCO meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019 (appendix 15).

#### **7.3 Scheme of delegation v2.6**

- 7.3.1 Directors were referred to proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation (appendix 16), as outlined in the Chair's report. The changes were approved.

### **8. Report from ACC**

#### **8.1 Overview of key issues**

- 8.1.1 Directors thanked K Hawker for agreeing to Chair the Achievement and Curriculum Committee. The next meeting of the Committee would be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2019.

## THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

### Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019

#### 9. Report from HR Committee

##### 9.1 The Chair of the HR Committee provided a verbal update on recent activity, including:

- Gender pay gap (GPG) reporting: the Trust GPG had widened slightly on the previous year due to turnover in the male population, with a decrease in male employees on low pay grades and an increase in those on higher pay grades.
- Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic reporting: the Committee was considering means of gathering data in order to be able to meet the reporting requirement once it came into effect.
- Staff wellbeing survey: the Committee had welcomed the establishment of the SWAG and had requested more information from exit interviews in order to be able to understand the reasons behind resignations and identify any trends. In response to a question from Directors, it was confirmed that consistent staff turnover data was not yet available due to lack of capacity, but there would be a push to add this data to the KPIs.
- Equality and Diversity Scheme: the Committee was keen to strengthen provision for staff and other stakeholders and had considered means of encouraging applications from candidates with different backgrounds.

#### 10. Safeguarding

##### 10.1 Overview of key issues

- 10.1.1 It was reported that an incident on a school trip had highlighted the need for trust-wide systems and procedures, including a training programme for volunteers accompanying groups of pupils on trips. In the first instance, an audit of existing practice at all schools would be undertaken and an update would be provided at the meeting in July 2019. **JB to action.**

#### 11. Policies

- 11.1 There were no policies due for review.

#### 12. AOB and date of next meeting

- 12.1 It was noted that the Budget Forecast Return Outturn (BFRO) needed to be submitted before the next Trust Board meeting. It was agreed that the BFRO would be circulated by email for review by Directors and would be considered approved by a majority decision. **CS to action.**
- 12.2 The meeting closed at 8:55pm. The next meeting would be held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2019 at 7pm at Hayes Primary School.

Signed: ..... Date:.....  
Clive Lees, Chair of Directors

Minutes might be confidential for the following reasons:-

## **THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

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- a) information relating to an employee or office holder, former employee or applicant for any post or office, or a pupil or their family;
- b) the terms of, or expenditure under, a tender or contract for the purchase or supply of goods or services or the acquisition or disposal of property;
- c) negotiations or consultation concerning labour relations between the Trust and its employees;
- d) any issue relating to legal proceedings which are being contemplated or instituted by or against the Trust;
- e) action being taken to prevent or detect crime to prosecute offenders;
- f) the source of information given to the Trust in confidence; or
- g) any other matter which, in the opinion of the Chair, is confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Trust's functions.