

## **THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**

### **Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors held at Hayes Primary School at 7.00pm on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

#### **Present:**

Mr C Lees, Chair  
Mr R Taylor (for minutes 5 & 7 and from minute 8.1)  
Mrs J Brinkley CEO  
Mr J Cliff  
Mr D Okafor (from minute 7)  
Ms K Hawker  
Mr J Martin

#### **In attendance:**

Mrs C Sheehan, CFO  
Mrs V Bolton, COO

**Clerk:** Miss K Crossley

#### **1. Apologies**

- 1.1 Apologies had been received from R Punter and L Falk.
- 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 It was confirmed that I Raitt had resigned from Trust Board, but would remain as a Local Committee member at SMCPA. Directors thanked I Raitt for his valuable contribution as a Director and Chair of ACC.
- 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).
- 3.2.2 Directors approved the renewal of the term of office of P Reddin as a Local Committee Member at HPS for a further two years to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2021 on the basis of the value of her skills to the Trust.

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

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> December 2018 (appendix 2) were approved by the Board and signed by the Chair.
- 4.2 There were no comments or questions from Directors on the matters arising report (appendix 3).

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#### 5. Chair's report

- 5.1 Directors were referred to the Chair's report (appendix 4) and considered succession planning for the role of Chair. Directors who were interested in standing for Chair from September 2019 were invited to meet informally with the CEO to discuss the role.
- 5.2 A discussion followed on means of recruiting a Chair in the event of no interest being expressed by Directors, including external recruitment, appointing a Chair Designate for a set period or an interim Chair. Directors were mindful that the appointment of an external Chair Designate would require some lead time.
- 5.3 The Board expressed thanks to the Chair for the time, effort and skills he had devoted to the Trust, which would be greatly missed.

#### 6 Trust development

##### 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 5-7). Directors considered the options and risks associated with the structural issues regarding the hall at DRIS (appendix 7). In the short term, all possible options to fund repair work were being or had been explored, including an insurance claim, potential liability on the part of previous contractors, a loan from the borough and emergency funding. Directors asked about the impact of the hall being out of use, and were advised that the school had access to a neighbouring hall and that the education of pupils was not being compromised.

6.1.1.2 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 16.1.

##### 6.1.2 Update on Big 6 priorities

- 6.1.2.1 Directors were updated on progress towards the 'Big 6' priorities (appendix 6). A Director asked how the priorities aligned with the annual and three-year plans, and with individual school improvement plans, and was informed that from September 2019 a single Trust improvement plan would be drawn up, incorporating the Big 6 priorities, which would be monitored by Trust Board and relevant committees. As the Trust had grown and developed, accountability systems had become more sophisticated, with regular compilation of hard and soft KPIs. Senior leaders had been given responsibility for actions plans relating to specific elements of the Big 6, one example of which was the HT at HPS leading on wellbeing for the Trust.
- 6.1.2.2 In response to a question about the priority for shared pedagogy, it was reported that there had been significant progress towards standardising data tracking systems and establishing a consistent pedagogical culture across the schools. All schools were now using the same assessment systems for termly tests, including the use of Target Tracker Multi and PiXL software. The next step would be to establish a new assessment baseline. Careful consideration was being given to the most appropriate format for reporting academic data to Directors, and this would be agreed at the next ACC meeting (April 2019). **JB to action.**
- 6.1.2.3 A Director inquired about the missing data points in the table summarising the impact of the OPAL project. It was explained that the rollout had been postponed at SMCPA to allow time for the new leadership team to settle in. Not all criteria at all schools had been

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measured on this occasion, but this would be the case going forward. Information of this nature enabled the Trust to demonstrate that it understood and responded to the challenges facing children, and would be incorporated in the Trust offer for inclusion in future induction packs, presentations to parents and marketing materials. **JB to update for next meeting.**

#### **6.1.3 Schedule of key issues**

6.1.3.1 The Directors were referred to the Schedule of Key Issues (appendix 6), which was considered a useful means of keeping track of issues across the Trust. A discussion followed on the need to define 'critical' and it was agreed that a critical issue would be one which constituted a risk. It was suggested that commentary on the issues should be included in the reports by the CEO, CFO and COO (as appropriate, and not as a separate report) to Trust Board so that overall Directors were presented with a clear picture of each school (and central Trust). **JB, CS, VB to action.**

#### **6.1.4 Equality**

6.1.4.1 The Equality Plan had been drafted and would be reviewed at the HR Committee meeting in February 2019 with a view to being brought for approval at the next Trust Board meeting. **JB/RP to action.**

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

#### **7.1 Key issues update**

- 7.1.1 Directors were referred to the minutes of the FARCO meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 (appendix 8). The Chair of FARCO had identified that not all staff were aware of at least one policy and the Board requested that a procedure be established to ensure all policies were implemented effectively. Directors were advised that the auditors had already been requested to review the position as part of their next internal audit visit. In addition, the HR Committee would be asked to consider means of emphasising the importance of policies, such as staff induction packs for new joiners and annual inductions for all staff. **JB to action.**
- 7.1.2 The Chair of FARCO reported that at the most recent meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the Committee had agreed that the EHT and the HTs of HPS and CPS/DRIS would attend the FARCO meeting in June 2019 to present their respective budgets for 2019/20; the budget for the central Trust would be presented by the CEO. All budgets would be expected to be balanced, with the understanding that there would be no use of reserves to fund operational expenditure. Requests for use of reserves to fund strategic requests would be considered in the context of informed discussion and the scope for increased revenue generation.
- 7.1.3 Further to a point raised by the auditors, it had been agreed that the list of recognised suppliers would be brought to the Committee for annual approval. It had been further agreed that the approval of the Committee would be sought for any requests which would exceed the relevant budget approved at the beginning of the year. The Financial Scheme of Delegation had been updated to reflect these changes.

### **8. CFO Report**

#### **8.1 Review management accounts and KPIs**

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- 8.1.1 Directors were referred to the CFO report, the consolidated financial report, management accounts to December 2018, the balance sheet and cash flow forecast (appendices 9-13).
- 8.1.2 Directors asked whether the spending freeze at DRIS was part of a broader strategy and were informed that spending was being strictly monitored to ensure that the school remained on track to end the year without going into deficit.
- 8.1.3 A discussion followed on the financial risks associated with low SEN/D funding and high agency costs at LPS, and it was acknowledged that investment was required to drive school improvement. Work was ongoing to submit applications for funding where appropriate.
- 8.1.4 Directors had identified a case where a related-party transaction had not been identified and treated correctly. They were concerned to ensure that information on pecuniary interests was appropriately collated and made available to the finance team to enable related-party transactions to be identified before any transactions were completed. It was agreed that the new supplier form would be revised for this purpose. **CS to action.** It was noted that from April 2019 there would be a requirement for related-party transactions to be reported online to the ESFA.
- 8.1.5 The Chair had discussed minor queries on the management accounts with the CFO. There were no further questions from Directors on the management accounts and report.
- 8.1.6 In response to a question on the autumn term KPIs (appendix 14), it was explained that the persistent absence figure at LPS (27%) related to a child who had left the school but not yet been off-rolled.
- 8.1.7 Directors noted the variance against the original budget for average staff costs at some schools, and the CFO undertook to investigate.

#### Post-meeting note:

Following the meeting, the CFO looked into the decrease in average teacher cost and noted that due to a change in budgeting software, the original budgeted teacher average cost included the cost of casual/supply teaching staff whereas the new budgeting software only includes contracted permanent teaching staff. This will be made clear on the KPI report which will be brought to future meetings. **CS to action.**

- 8.1.8 It was agreed that commentary on outliers would be provided for future KPI reports, and that glossaries would be added on separate tabs for how calculations were made and definitions. **JB to action.**

## 8.2 Monitor budget

- 8.2.1 Directors were referred to the five-year forecasts (appendices 15-16) and noted the impact of increased contributions to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. The Trust had responded to a government consultation on the increase, welcoming the move to support recruitment and retention that the pension increase represented, but expressing concern as to impact of the increase on staffing costs, which would only be part-funded by time-limited grants. Directors voiced concern that schools had no control over the cost of the increase and that it would be an on-going rather than a one-off cost which may lead to educational standards being compromised. It was explained that the Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning project was expected to identify savings, and that an away day was planned for the HoSs/EHTs to explore the potential impact of this approach on the Trust's finances.

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8.2.2 The Business Development Reports for 2017/18 and autumn term 2019 (appendices 17-18) were received for information.

**8.3 Review 'must' requirements of the Financial Academies Handbook**

8.3.1 Directors were referred to the paper listing examples of the 'must' requirements of the Academies Financial Handbook and the steps taken by the Trust to ensure compliance (appendix 17). Directors accepted the CFO's assurance that she was satisfied that all staff were aware of and adhering to all requirements.

**8.4 Consider and approve any spend requests over £20,000: server**

8.4.1 An update was provided on Trust's Digital Strategy (appendix 19). Directors were satisfied with the measures taken to address concerns raised at the previous meeting, as outlined in appendix 19. Directors noted that the segregation of responsibilities between Platform 365 and TSPT had been agreed and signed in addition to the contract already in place for the trust-wide IT support provision. Directors accepted the Trust's recommendation for the server to be purchased from Datek as a cost of c£10k, which was in line with previous costings, and approved the request.

**9. COO Report**

9.1 Directors were referred to the COO report (appendix 20). In response to a question, it was confirmed that health and safety audits were undertaken twice a year at all schools by the Local Committee member assigned to health and safety, and that the Health and Safety Accountability Group met three times a year. The outcomes of these meetings would continue to be fed back to Trust Board. **VB to action.**

9.2 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 16.2.

**10. Report from Achievement and Curriculum Committee**

**10.1 Overview of key issues**

10.1.1 Directors were referred to the minutes of the ACC meeting in January 2019 (appendix 21), at which there had been detailed discussion about the uniformity of collection of data. There were no questions from Directors on the minutes.

**11. Report from HR Committee**

**11.1 Update on staff retention and wellbeing**

11.1.1 The next meeting of the HR Committee was scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019. An update of staff retention and wellbeing would be provided at the next meeting of the Trust Board in April 2019.

**12. Safeguarding**

12.1 There was nothing to report on safeguarding.

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**13. Health and Safety report**

13.1.1 Health and safety had been covered in the COO report (minute 9.1).

**14. Policies**

**14.1 Admissions Policy 2020-21**

14.1.1 The Admissions Policy 2020-21 (appendix 22) was approved following a period of consultation. In response to a question from Directors, it was confirmed that a new appeals process would be in place by the end of February 2019.

**14.2 Behaviour Policy**

14.2.1 Directors were informed that amendments had been made to the Behaviour Policy (appendix 23) to improve interpretation of behaviour and understanding of needs. Training had been arranged in this regard and an update would be provided at the first meeting of the summer term (May 2019), including how schools are implementing behaviour procedures and confirmation that school procedures reflect the Trust Behaviour Policy. **JB to action.**

**14.3 Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy**

14.3.1 It was confirmed that defibrillators would be in place at all schools by the end of the academic year.

14.3.2 Directors advised that all medicines including Epipens and inhalers must be labelled with pupils' names and dates of birth. **VB to action.**

14.3.3 In response to a question as to provision for medicines, Epipens and inhalers in the event of school evacuation, it was agreed that the policy and business continuity plans would be revised and staff trained to ensure that the 'grab box' contained these items. **VB to action.**

14.3.4 In response to a question as to whether indemnity insurance was in place to cover administration of medicines by staff, it was confirmed that this was the case and that in these cases medicines were administered by trained members of staff to named pupils.

14.3.5 Directors asked what procedures were in place to cover changes to pupils' conditions and/or admission of pupils with new conditions. It was reported that information on medical conditions was collected from parents and uploaded to SIMs. Going forward, the data held in SIMs would be cross-checked against the list of conditions covered by the insurer to determine whether additional cover was required. **CS to action.**

14.3.6 The policy was approved, subject to completion of actions in minutes 14.3.2, 14.3.3 and 14.3.5.

**14.4 Allegations of Abuse against Staff Policy**

14.4.1 The Allegations of Abuse against Staff policy (appendix 25) was approved,

**14.5 EFYS**

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14.5.1 The EYFS policy (appendix 26) was approved, subject to inclusion of reference to formal staff supervision (EYFS statutory guidance, p21, 3.21).

**15. AOB and date of next meeting**

**15.1** The meeting closed at 8:45pm. The next meeting would be held on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 at 7pm at Hayes Primary School.

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

Minutes might be confidential for the following reasons:-

- 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.