

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST
Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Directors
Held at Castlecombe Primary School at 7.00pm on Monday 19th September 2016

Present:

Mr C Lees
Mr R Taylor
Mrs J Covill
Mr I Raitt
Mrs J Tagg
Mr M Gibbs
Mrs J Brinkley, CEO/EHT
Mrs J Nelson
Mrs B Simpson

In attendance:

Mrs C Sheehan, Trust HR/Finance Manager (FM)

Observing:

Dr B Magrath, Chair of Castlecombe (CC) Local Committee

Clerk:

Mrs V Bolton

1. a) Appointment of Chair of the Board

- 1.1 It was confirmed that one self-nomination had been received for the position of Chair of the Board for the period of one year. The re-appointment of Mr C Lees was approved by the Directors, effective immediately.

b) Appointment of Vice Chair of the Board

- 1.2 Mr R Taylor was re-appointed as Vice Chair of the Board for the period of one year, effective immediately.

2. Apologies for absence, acceptance of absence, absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr K Colville. Dr B Magrath was welcomed to the meeting as an observer on behalf of the Local Committee of CC.

3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

- 3.1 There were no pecuniary interests declared.

4. Complete Pecuniary Interests Register

- 4.1 It was requested that the Directors complete and return the form supplied in order to allow the register of pecuniary interests to be compiled.

5. Minutes from the Board meeting held on 12 July 2016

- 5.1 The minutes from the Board meeting held on the 12 July 2016 were approved and signed subject to one minor amendment.

6. a) Matters Arising

- 6.1 The Directors were referred to the matters arising report (see Appendix 6a) and were informed that the role being performed by V Bolton had been developed to take on additional administrative support for the CEO and the Trust, as well as the project management of the due diligence process previously undertaken by Mrs K Partridge.

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- 6.2 *6.33 (meeting date 17.3.16) Risk Register working party*
It was confirmed that a date had been set for the first meeting of the risk register working party in October. The Directors would be informed of the progress made by the party at the next meeting of the Trust Board. **JB to action.**
- 6.3 *6.21 Summary of HR issues*
It was confirmed that there were no employment or HR issues identified as part of the TUPE process at CC or Dorset Road Infants School (DRIS) and therefore no HR report had been required.
- 6.4 *13.2 Draft ICT Policy*
It was confirmed that work in this area was continuing and that a finalised ICT policy would be brought for the attention of the Directors at a meeting later in the year. It was requested that the Trust ensure that references to cyber-attacks be included in the policy. **VB to action.**
- b) Chairs Report**
- 6.5 The Directors were referred to the Chairs report (see Appendix 6b) and a discussion took place on the best way to facilitate communication from the Trust Board to the member schools as the Trust expands. It was suggested that a Link Director could be assigned to each school.
- 6.6 The Directors heard feedback from Dr Magrath on the CC experience of joining the Spring Partnership. It was confirmed that a scheme of delegation is in place for the Trust which clarifies accountability at the different levels of governance, although the governance review that is due to take place later in the year will allow the understanding of this scheme of delegation to be further understood and adapted as necessary. The priority for governance at this point in the expansion of the Trust is to develop relationships across all member schools. An initial informal discussion session will be taking place on Thursday 22nd Sept at 6pm at the Trust offices to which all Headteachers and Chairs of Governors have been invited. Directors were encouraged to attend if they were able.
- 6.7 Following a query regarding lines of accountability it was confirmed that the DfE ultimately hold the Trust Board, Members and CEO to account. It was agreed that in the early days of Trust expansion it was important to develop in an organic way that allows decisions to be made that are right for the Trust rather than adopting a dogmatic approach.
- 6.8 It was confirmed that the Commercial Transfer Agreement for DRIS contained indemnities that the local authority would cover all costs to ensure the site meets health and safety ,fire safety and electrical standards . A full Health and Safety review is being carried out this term at DRIS and at other member schools to allow site developments to be identified and prioritised. It is anticipated that some site issues at CC will be addressed as part of the planned school expansion.
- 6.9 The Directors were informed that there had been some issues with the work carried out by the Trust solicitors over the summer holidays. It was agreed that there was still a need for the transfer of Leeson and Midfield to be carried out using legal advice, and therefore that the Trust would continue with VWV for this process.

7. Trust Development

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- 7.1 The Directors were referred to the CEO/EHT Report (see Appendix 7a) and it was confirmed that it was not anticipated that there would be any impact on the Trust from the government decisions regarding grammar schools.
- 7.2 A discussion took place on whether to commit to incurring costs for the due diligence process at Midfield Primary School in advance of the final decision by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to allow the school to join TSPT. The necessary costs would total approximately the same as the amount of GAG funding that would be lost should the transfer be delayed by a month, i.e. around £5,000. It was stated that there was no reason to expect that the RSC would not approve Midfield joining TSPT. The Directors agreed to commit to the initial spend required to make a start on the due diligence process in order to aim for the planned transfer date of the 1 November. It was agreed that, from a financial management perspective, it would be preferable for both prospective member schools to join TSPT on the same date.
- 7.3 The Directors considered the position of Leeson's Primary School and the possibility that complications may emerge as a result of the school needing to extricate itself from its current Trust, William Willett Learning Trust (WWLT) including a resolution of a dispute between themselves. The financial audit process will cover this issue whilst the CTA will clarify what assets will be transferred. It was suggested that it would be worthwhile for TSPT to approach Leeson's and WWLT regarding ways to expedite the removal of Leeson's from WWLT to avoid possible delay to the transfer deadline. **CL and JB to action.**
- 7.4 It was stated that J Brinkley had been invited to attend regular meetings of the new Partnership Working Board group to represent TSPT alongside leaders of other MATs from the surrounding area.
- 7.5 A discussion took place on the integration of operations across the Trust and it was confirmed that a Business and Finance network would be put in place following the transfer of Leeson's and Midfield. The HR/Finance Manager has a good working relationship with these staff in all schools and has set up meetings with representation from each school in order to start the administrative coordination of financial systems across the Trust. Work is also being done with Liberata on the longer term restructuring of the Business and Finance function across the Trust to allow it to be as efficient and cost effective as possible and to facilitate possible further expansion in due course.
- 7.6 The Directors requested that the peer-led review timetable being carried out by J Brinkley be circulated for information purposes. **VB to action.**
- 7.7 Consideration was given to the Health and Safety appendices and it was confirmed that the full report, including a review of common areas and staff/office areas, will be circulated once site visits to all schools had been completed. P Reddin and J Brinkley are to carry out visits to Leeson's and Midfield over the next two weeks to allow the findings to be considered as part of the due diligence process. It was confirmed that the Cottage had undergone a full fire risk assessment and legionella testing over the summer holidays. The Directors thanked P Reddin and the HPS Facilities Senior C Morris for the work carried out on the H&S review system which was a notable improvement.
- 7.8 The Directors acknowledged the success of the transfer of CC and DRIS into the Trust and a discussion took place on whether there was sufficient time to carry out the process in order for Leeson's and Midfield to join the Trust on the 1 November. It was stated that in order to make this deadline the DfE would require a first draft of the CTA by the 6th October, and that delays may be incurred with Leeson's as a result of them needing to separate themselves from their current Trust. It was stated that Directors would require all due

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diligence information (to include appropriate building condition surveys) and legal papers by the 1st October in order for reports to be prepared and circulated for the TB meeting on the 13th October. It was agreed that although the timescale was restricted it was still the intention at this point to aim for the transfer of both schools on the 1st November.

- 7.9 The Directors were informed that a due diligence checklist would be circulated, as used for the transfer of CC and DRIS, which would indicate which areas of responsibility had been assigned to which Director and what papers should be received. It was pointed out that Directors should be pro-active in ascertaining whether they feel sufficient information had been provided in order to allow a full understanding of their area of responsibility, and should communicate directly with the Trust if more information is required.
- 7.10 It was confirmed that a review of ICT Security would take place as part of the due diligence process for Leeson and Midfield, and that a similar review would take place at CC and DRIS during the course of the year. **JB to action.**
- 7.11 It was confirmed that there were currently no known issues at Leeson and Midfield that could prove to be contentious, although there were some additional factors to be considered as part of the extrication of Leeson from WWLT. There had been one HR issue at one school but this was stated to be resolved. The Directors heard that both prospective schools were full and were expanding.
- 7.12 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the July ACC meeting and Trust data overview sheet (see Appendix 7e) and were provided with a verbal account of the data available for both current and future member schools. Both attainment and progress data was considered and a discussion took place around floor standards. Where floor standards in attainment were not met, floor standards for progress were considered. Both are important measures.
- 7.13 It was confirmed that overall progress sits above floor standards for all current Trust schools. The data for the schools who are hoping to join the Trust was looked at and discussed in terms of risk and action. The detail of the data would be considered in greater depth by the ACC and the Local Committees.
- 7.14 A discussion took place on the need to improve pupil attendance levels across the Trust, particularly with disadvantaged pupils, and the impact that this would have on pupil data. It was stated that the HT and other staff members from SMCPA had been making house calls to poor attenders every morning to encourage them to go to school which had resulted in attendance levels reaching their highest recorded point of 97% for week 1. The Directors requested that Mr Lowing ensures that an appropriate risk assessment for this exercise is in place, and that systems are in place to make sure that no staff members are put at risk. Consideration was given to the possibility that further investment may need to be made across the Trust to improve pupil attendance, for example, additional use of Educational Welfare or Inclusion Officers.
- 7.14 An external visitor to SMCPA had advised the school on its SEF. The school and the Trust leaders would discuss the aspirational and realistic ambitions for the school as part of their School Evaluation Form (SEF) review following the visit.
- 7.15 It was confirmed that CC were expecting an imminent Ofsted inspection which would take the form of a Section 8 1 day visit with a focus on Safeguarding and Leadership and Management. The Directors were referred to the basic strategic plan for CC (see Appendix 7c) and were informed that a full plan is in place which contains a timeline in order to prioritise actions at CC. It was stated that the Local Committee members at CC had been

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assigned specific responsibilities in order to prepare for inspection, and that safeguarding audits were being carried out at all schools over the next few weeks by J Brinkley and I Raitt.

- 7.16 The Directors looked at projected data for the Trust based on in-house assessment. It was stated that the academic picture presented does not reflect the number and quality of initiatives that have been or would be put in place at all schools in order to improve attainment and progress, and the added value that would be gained by the schools working collaboratively over the next academic year.
- 7.17 The Directors agreed that thought should be given to how data should be presented by each school for consideration by ACC, and therefore what top level information would be presented to the Trust Board. This would be discussed at the next ACC meeting. **BS to action.**
- 7.18 It was confirmed that J Brinkley would continue to be the substantive HT at DRIS. The Directors requested that a strategic report for DRIS be prepared for the next Trust Board meeting. **JB to action.**
- 7.19 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the July FARCO meeting and the June management accounts for HPS and SMCPA (see Appendices 7f). A discussion took place on the need for SMCPA to increase their pupil numbers over the next three years in order to maximise funding and to continue to be viable. It was confirmed that the number of pupils in EYFS in the Sept intake had now increased to 26. This item was discussed further under minute 9.2.
- 7.20 Other points of discussion from FARCO were summarised as follows:-
- the GAG contribution for schools joining the Trust part way through the year had been agreed at 3%. It was confirmed that this would not be the case for later joiners in future;
- the audit committee will be requesting that the auditors focus initially on the new member schools for internal audit;
- further consideration will be given to how to enhance transparency of budgeting and funding of Trust services;
- Directors noted the deficit of approximately £20k at SMCPA at July 2016;
- the Business and Finance team would be restructured following the Trust expansion while the modelling of the Site management services would take place at a later date;
- work was continuing on the ICT Security policy and the actions identified by the review that was carried out.
- 7.21 The Directors thanked C Sheehan for the organisation of the management accounts and the financial function. It was confirmed that in future the Trust Board would receive consolidated accounts for member schools.
- 7.22 It was stated that there had been no changes to the audit requirements regarding the accounting policies for the annual accounts other than to include the new FRS102 (Charity SORP 2015). The Directors therefore agreed to continue using the accounting policies that were in place last year updated as stated.

8. Administration

- 8.1 It was confirmed that the committee chairs would be continuing with the roles carried out last year. The Directors approved the appointment of Sally White as Chair of HPS Local Committee.

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- 8.2 The Directors approved the re-appointment of V Bolton as the Company Secretary and Clerk to the Trust Board for 2016-17.
- 8.3 The Directors were referred to the Local Committee terms of reference and Scheme of Delegation document (see Appendix 8d) which is now in use for all four member schools. It was agreed that the Chair would finalise some minor details and recirculate the document for information purposes. **CL to action.**
- 8.4 It was agreed that, following the closure of the Governor Services department at Bromley, the Trust would sign up to the training package offered by Bexley LA. All Directors and Local Committee members would be able to access the training sessions provided for a total of £564 until the end of the Spring term 2017. **VB to action.**
- 8.5 The Directors requested that the possibility of signing up for an online training package be considered in addition to the Bexley training. **VB to action.**
- 8.6 It was confirmed that the Trust continue to be members of the NGA which provides advice and articles online. Directors access the NGA website directly to arrange their own log in information.
- 8.7 The Directors were referred to the risk register items which included the risks deferred from the last meeting (see Appendix 8f). It was stated that a working party were meeting in the next few weeks to begin the project of developing and updating the register to make it applicable to all schools. The risk register items were agreed with one minor amendment. **VB to action.**

9. Reports from Local Committees

- 9.1 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the June SMCPA LGB meeting (see Appendix 9a) and were informed that a successful whole school self-development session had taken place at the recent INSET day. The outcomes of this session would be fed into the school development plan.
- 9.2 The Directors were reminded of the context and financial situation at SMCPA and the importance of increasing pupil numbers to maximise funding. This could be achieved in various ways, such as the development of a SEN unit or expanding the site. In the 2019-20 school year, SMCPA will no longer have a bulge class and school funding will reduce significantly.
- 9.3 Staff retention was good in 2015-16, but there were a few key staff who had been considering their position. It was stated that retention was an issue across the Trust which reflects the national picture. It is hoped that initiatives may be able to be introduced across the expanded Trust that will further improve support and time management for staff.
- 9.4 The Directors were referred to the minutes of the June HPS LGB meeting and the strategic plan for HPS (see Appendices 9c and 9d) and were informed that staff development opportunities had been put in place for Assistant Headteachers and new SLT members.
- 9.5 It was stated that the school were dealing with an ongoing complaint case for which legal advice had been sought. This issue would be dealt with by the CEO.

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10. LGB/Director school visits

- 10.1 This item would be discussed at the next Trust Board meeting. **CL to action**

11. Health and Safety

- 11.1 There were no items to discuss.

12. Safeguarding update (if any)

- 12.1 The Directors were informed that there had been one safeguarding item at SMCPA. The staff involved had been working closely with the social services to ensure the safety of the staff and pupils concerned.

13. Policies - Complaints

- 13.1 The Directors were referred to the Complaints Policy (see Appendix 13) and approved the minor amendment.
- 13.2 It was agreed that the coordination of policies across the Trust would be addressed over the course of this term by taking the following actions:-
- a) prioritising statutory policies;
 - b) most policies will be trust wide;
 - c) redrafting some policies as a set of principles to which schools can add additional procedural information as an appendix;
 - c) posting policies on each schools' website. **CL/VB to action.**

14. AOB and date of next meeting

- 14.1 The Directors were informed that SMCPA were continuing to pursue the development of the Duke Centre but that work was progressing slowly with the LA. J Covill was continuing to apply for possible additional grant funding.
- 14.2 The Trust Board thanked C Lees for his dedicated and time consuming work over the summer holidays which allowed the successful transfer of CC and DRIS on the 1 September.
- 14.3 The next meeting of the Trust Board will take place at 7pm during the w/c 31st October 2016 at Dorset Road Infant School. The date will be circulated once confirmed.

The meeting closed at 10pm.

Signed:
Clive Lees, Chair of Directors

Date:.....