

The Spring Partnership Trust
Final adopted Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Held at Hayes Primary School at 6.45pm on Monday 25th January 2016

Present:

Mr C Lees, Chair
Mrs J Nelson
Mr S Narracott
Mr R Lane
Mr K Osborne

In attendance:

Mrs J Brinkley

Clerk:

Mrs V Bolton

1. Apologies for absence, approval of absence, absence

1.1 There were no absences.

2. Pecuniary Interests

2.1 There were no pecuniary interests declared.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and Matters Arising

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting of Members dated the 13th July 2015 were approved as an accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

3.2 Matters Arising

All matters arising had been completed or were covered during the meeting.

4. CEO/Executive Headteacher (EHT) report

4.1 The Members discussed the recent external Challenge Partners review that had taken place at St Mary Cray Primary Academy (SMCPA) which had concluded that the school was 'good' and on course to achieve 'outstanding' in the future. Challenge Partners was described as a partnership of over 300 schools where senior staff (one of whom is an Ofsted trained inspector) at member schools conduct annual reviews of other member schools in order to provide constructive feedback specifically on teaching and learning. A report is provided which is not published externally. The review process is beneficial for the staff conducting it as well as the school being reviewed. It was confirmed that separate external reviews in other critical areas, such as safeguarding, equalities, behaviour and leadership and management are also regularly conducted.

4.2 It was stated that the July results for both schools had been very strong, with Hayes Primary School (HPS) ranking 3rd out of 65 schools in the borough, and SMCPA (previously ranked as 65 of 65) showing dramatic improvement by ranking 13th out of 65 for 2014-15 with both results on a 'value added' basis.

4.3 The Members were referred to the EHT Report (see Appendix 4) and a discussion took place on the need for the Members to hold the Trust to account by ensuring appropriate external validation is in place. The recent Equalities audit, which ascertains the accessibility of every part of school life for all pupils (an area of strength in the Trust) was discussed. It was confirmed that this report had been shared with the Trust Board and that any areas requiring improvement had been highlighted and would be actioned as appropriate. It was stated that the Directors use external reports such as this to highlight what regulations the Trust should adhere to. This allows the Directors to hold the Trust to account for any areas requiring

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improvement and ensures that satisfactory responses can be provided by the Trust should a decision be taken to not action any issues highlighted.

- 4.4 The Members were informed of the large numbers of statutory obligations expected of Directors and Governors in the current educational landscape and were reassured that there is now much greater awareness across the governance of the Trust of the need to comply with these obligations.
- 4.5 It was agreed that the EHT report had focussed on the correct areas. It was requested that the report include further information on who had conducted the reviews detailed in the report, what impact the review had had and what the next steps would be. It was confirmed that the safeguarding review cited in the report had been carried out externally by a consultant chosen by the Headteacher; the review of systems leadership was carried out by J Brinkley and the Directors commissioned the review of the circumstances resulting in a permanent exclusion at SMCPA which held the school to account in addition to the required exclusion hearing process.

5. Directors Activity and Impact Report

- 5.1 The Members were referred to the Chairs report (see Appendix 5) and no questions were raised. A discussion took place on the status of the Realise Academy Partnership Trust (RAPT) of which the Trust are members, and of its structure and original intentions. It was agreed that the Trust had undoubtedly benefitted from its involvement in RAPT but there had been some difficulties in holding other Headteachers to account as a result of the umbrella structure. It was confirmed that the Regional Schools Commissioners are no longer supporting the establishment of new umbrella trusts for this reason. The Members heard that one RAPT member school had formally left the umbrella trust due to involvement with establishing their own Multi Academy Trust (MAT).
- 5.2 A discussion took place on the Harris Federation and the significant impact it had made on schools it had taken over that required improvement. It was acknowledged that the Federation is structured in a very different way to the Spring Partnership Trust and other small MATs. The development of the Federation will be an area of interest as its schools all approach good or outstanding as its rigid structure may become unsuitable for such schools.
- 5.3 The Directors Activity and Impact report (see Appendix 5a) was discussed and it was agreed that greater emphasis needs to be put on the impact of Directors input, and the fact that the impact required should be driving the activities undertaken rather than the other way around. A discussion took place on the ongoing challenge of sourcing Directors and Governors who are able to offer commitment, time and knowledge at a time of increased expectations in standards of professionalism in governance.
- 5.4 It was highlighted that the Directors must continue to perform at a strategic level, and must scrutinise the actions of the Trust. It was agreed that this is currently an area of strength across the committees and Trust Board. Additional work will be carried out on the composition and remit of the Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) over the next year as the Trust develops.
- 5.5 It was agreed that the Members are responsible for the appointment of the majority of Directors, and that the role of Directors in the Trust will continue to be an area for discussion. It was confirmed that an external review of governance may take place later in the year. The outcome of any review will be brought for discussion at the next meeting of the Members. **CL to action.**

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6. Composition of the Trust Board

- 6.1 The Members were referred to the list of current Directors (see Appendix 6), which in future will include details on the breakdown of how the Directors had been appointed, and further discussion took place on the ongoing challenge of recruiting Directors with the appropriate skills who are also able to invest time in the role. The composition of the Trust Board was considered and it was confirmed that the Articles of Association state that a maximum of 3 Governors can be appointed by Directors as Chairs of LGBs, and therefore this limit would be reached at the point that one new LGB joins the Trust. As the Trust grows it is anticipated that the full-time CEO would be able to take on some of the workload currently assigned to Directors, in particular the Chair of the Board.

7. Receive Annual Accounts to 31.8.15 for TSPT

- 7.1 The Members were referred to the annual audited accounts for the Trust for the year ending 31 Aug 2015 (see Appendix 7). These accounts do not require Members approval.

8. Approve reappointment of auditors UHY

- 8.1 The Members approved the Trust Board recommendation to reappoint the auditors, UHY Hacker Young for the academic year 2015-16.

9. Strategy for 2016 and beyond

- 9.1 A discussion took place on the strategic plan for the Trust (see Appendix 9) which is a working document with ongoing updates. This plan now includes a wider range of areas such as buildings and professional development than it has historically and will shortly be redrafted.
- 9.2 The Members suggested that further work be done on the future goals for the Trust over the next 3/5/8 years in order to lay the groundwork to account for the appetite for risk. It was agreed that education is a currently a rapidly changing landscape but that it would be beneficial to have a plan to adhere to in order to allow effective financial and organisational planning.
- 9.3 It was also suggested that the strategic plan include information on what type of school the Trust is aiming to attract in the future as well as ways to ensure that that the growth of the Trust can allow for retention of key staff whilst continuing to be financially viable. The costs to be paid by new partner schools should be considered as part of the Trust growth strategy.

10. AOB and Date of next meeting

- 10.1 There was no other business.
- 10.2 The date of the next meeting of the Members was confirmed as Monday 18th July 2016 at 6.45pm at HPS.

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