

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board held remotely via Webex on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 5:30 pm

Present:

Mr J Cliff, Chair
Ms C Barenbrug
Mr R Barlow
Mr A Blount
Mrs J Brinkley, CEO
Ms K Hawker
Mr D Okafor
Miss R Punter, from minute 4
Mr R Taylor, Vice Chair, from minute 4

In attendance:

Mrs C Sheehan, CFO
Mrs V Bolton, COO

Clerk: Miss K Crossley

1. Apologies for absence

1.1 No apologies for absence had been received. The meeting was quorate.

2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

2.1 None.

3. Board Business

3.1 Directors were referred to the Trust and Local Committee membership (appendix 1). It was noted that C Lees had stepped down as a Member of the Trust with effect from 29th June 2020.

3.2 The draft Trust meeting schedule 2020/21 (appendix 2) was approved, subject to minor amendments.

4. Minutes of previous meeting

4.1 The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting of 18th May 2020 (appendix 3) were approved by Directors and would be signed by the Chair at the earliest opportunity. **KC to action.**

4.2 Directors were referred to the matters arising report (appendix 4) detailing actions which had been completed and the status of outstanding actions.

4.2 Directors noted that the deadline for some actions had been postponed due to prioritisation of C-19 work and asked whether the Trust was confident that the revised timeframes for completion were achievable. It was confirmed that this was the case, although the timeframe for the action on HR policies may be affected by the outcome of support staff restructuring.

4.3 Directors asked about the effectiveness of C-19 control measures following the re-opening of schools from 1st June 2020 and were informed that arrangements had run smoothly, with no near misses or staff concerns reported. A revised risk register had been compiled to reflect government guidance from September 2020, see minute 5.3.1.

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

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4.4 Directors ratified the following approvals made at recent remote meetings, noting that due to exceptional circumstances, it had not been possible to obtain the written approval of all Directors.

- the resumption of support staff restructuring from 8th June 2020
- the risk assessment for wider re-opening of schools from w/c 1st June 2020.

5. Executive team reporting

5.1 COO report

5.1.1 Outcome of CIF bids

5.1.1.1 Directors were referred to the COO report (appendix 5) and were pleased to learn that the Trust had been successful in its CIF bids for fire compliance work at LPS and HPS, and for external safeguarding improvements at MPS. These projects had a total value of c£935k with the Trust committing to contribute c£90k.

5.1.1.2 It was noted that there had been significant delays to the CIF process in 2019/20, leaving insufficient time for the Trust to review bid writing services before the next cycle (which would begin in September 2020), as had been intended. Directors approved the retention of RPT Consultants for a further year, with bid writing to be reviewed in spring/summer 2020/21. **VB to action.**

5.1.1.3 In response to questions from Directors, it was confirmed that the fee of 9% of the project value for successful CIF bids was standard across the industry and, in addition to bid-writing, covered significant project management work and liaison with the Trust, schools and contractors up to completion of the project.

5.1.1.2 Directors noted the lack of visibility of the impact of the quality of bids on outcomes. It was reported that a number of factors positively affected the outcome of bids, including the level of financial contribution from the Trust and compliance. As feedback was only provided on unsuccessful bids, it was not possible to determine which factors had successfully influenced bids, but it was confirmed that the scores received on unsuccessful bids last year (which were also written by RPT Consultants) did not imply that these projects were marked down as a result of the content of the bids.

5.1.2 Digital update

5.1.2.1 Directors thanked the COO for the comprehensive papers and spend request for the Digital Strategy (appendices 6 and 7). The request sought ratification of the purchase of pupil devices (already agreed in principle by FARCO to enable the Trust to benefit from a time-sensitive group procurement deal), as well as approval for the purchase of charging trolleys, cable adapters and staff devices, funding for which had been earmarked as part of the long-term Digital Strategy.

5.1.2.2 Directors asked about the anticipated lifespan of the equipment and were informed that it was c4/5 years for devices, with the trolleys expected to last longer. In response to a follow-up question about budgeting for future digital needs, it was reported that the number of devices for pupils and staff would increase going forward in line with the commitment to the digital learning as an integrated part of the curriculum. This would be funded through remaining reserves earmarked for the Digital Strategy, as well as with funds allocated in

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board held remotely via Webex on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 5:30 pm

annual budgets as part of a rolling replacement programme. The Trust hoped to use historic brought-forward pupil premium funds to increase the number of devices as part of a rolling replenishment programme

5.1.2.3 Directors asked whether the Trust was confident that the purchases aligned with the original intention of the Digital Strategy and it was confirmed that this was the case. The commitment to the roll-out of the Google platform was particularly critical at this point in terms of preparing for further lockdown situations, which was of significant relevance to disadvantaged pupils, some of whom had little or no access to devices for home learning. A survey of access had been undertaken and consideration was being given to how to ensure that the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers did not increase further as a result of home learning, including the possible use of schemes to subsidise pupil devices for use at home.

5.1.2.4 The request to purchase 160 pupil Chromebooks from LGfL at a cost of c£29.3k was ratified. The requests to purchase 6 charger trollies (at a cost of c£5.1k) 70 multiport adapters (at a cost of c£3.8k) and 59 staff Chromebooks (at a cost of c£14.3k) were approved.

5.1.2.5 Directors were also informed that research was underway into the leasing of further interactive flat panels, the need for which may soon become pressing in some schools. Funds for these additional panels had been included in the school budgets. Directors asked why the panels would be leased rather than purchased and were advised that leasing generally offered better value. A spend request for these panels would be prepared and circulated to the relevant Directors for email approval as soon as possible in order to allow the panels to be installed over the summer break. **VB to action.**

5.1.3 GDPR update

5.1.3.5 There were no questions from Directors on the GDPR update in the COO report.

5.2 CFO report

5.2.1 Financial reporting

5.2.1.1 With close scrutiny at the Farco meeting 30th June 2020 there were no further questions from Directors on:

- the CFO report
- consolidated managements accounts, April 2020
- consolidated cash flow forecast, April 2020
- consolidated balance sheet, April 2020
- consolidated budget report, April 2020
- PE grant 2020/21 comparison
- SEND grant 2020/21 comparison
- TSPT restricted and unrestricted reserves 2019/20
- Consolidated budget 2020/21 (appendices 7-15).

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board held remotely via Webex on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 5:30 pm

5.2.2 Approval of budget 2020/21

- 5.2.2.1 Directors were informed that the budget had been compiled on a pooled funds basis, which was beneficial in terms of comparison of strategies for use of pupil premium, PE and SEND funding at different school and would support the transition to a standardised curriculum. The budget had been prepared using worst-case scenarios and school level funding would be positively affected following the completion of support staff restructuring in 2020/21. The budget had been reviewed in detail at the FARCO meeting on 30th June 2020 and recommended for approval by Trust Board. The 2020/21 budget was approved.

5.2.3 Insurance contract

- 5.2.3.1 An indicative quote of £46k had been received for the renewal of the insurance contract and was competitively priced based on the cost in 2019/20. The final cost was not likely to increase from the indicative quote. Directors approved spend of up to £50k for the renewal of the insurance contract for 2020/21. Further approval would need to be sought if the quote exceeded £50k.

- 5.2.5 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 9.1.

5.2.6 Consider and approve any spend requests over £20k

5.2.6.1 CPS EYFS classroom refurbishment

- 5.2.6.1 The spend request for EYFS classroom refurbishment at CPS (appendix 16) had been reviewed at the recent FARCO meeting and recommended for approval by Trust Board. The request was approved.

5.2.6.2 Digital Strategy

- 5.2.6.2 See minute 5.2.1.4.

5.2.7 Approval of revised Scheme of Financial Delegation

- 5.2.7.1 The revised Scheme of Financial Delegation (SoFD, appendix 17) had been reviewed at length at the recent FARCO meeting and recommended for approval by the Board. The SoFD was approved, subject to standardisation of thresholds for school and Trust expenditure above £20k. **CS to action.**

5.3 CEO report

5.3.1 Updated C19 Risk register

- 5.3.1.1 Directors were referred to the revised risk assessment and C-19 (appendix 18). The document had been re-written to make it easier to understand and would be shared with staff and trade unions before the end of term. Some helpful feedback had already been received from staff. The document would be revised again to reflect changes to arrangements for September 2020. **JB to action.**
- 5.3.1.2 Directors asked whether a separate risk assessment was in place for Tree House and it was noted that the measures for mainstream schools and specialist provision were both drawn from the public health England system of controls and measures for all settings

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board held remotely via Webex on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 5:30 pm

were incorporated into the risk register. It was suggested that consideration be given to referencing arrangements for pupil transport (taxis), use of PPE, individual pupil risk assessments and small rooms in Tree House. **JB to action.**

5.3.1.3 The risk assessment was approved.

5.3.2 Equality update

5.3.2.1 There were no questions from Directors on the update on Equalities in the CEO report. The Board thanked A Blount for his offer to work with the CEO to further develop the Equalities action plan for the Trust.

5.3.3 DRIS/CPS amalgamation update

5.3.3.1 There were no questions from Directors on the proposed amalgamation of DRIS and CPS, which had been covered in the CEO report.

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

6. Trust Committees

6.1 HR

6.1.1 This minute was deemed to be confidential, see confidential minute 9.3.

6.2 FARCO

6.2.1 Minutes of previous meetings

6.2.1.1 There were no questions from Directors on the minutes of the FARCO meeting on 31st January 2020 (appendix 20) and the record of remote meeting, 1st April 2020 (appendix 21).

6.2.1.2 The final unadopted minutes of the FARCO meeting on 30th June 2020 would be circulated as soon as possible. **KC to action.**

6.3 ACC

6.3.1 Minutes of previous meetings

6.3.1.1 The final unadopted minutes of the ACC meeting on 23rd June 2020 would be circulated as soon as possible. **KC to action.**

6.3.1.2 The Chair of the Achievement and Curriculum Committee summarised discussions at the recent meeting as follows:

- review of pupil numbers, which were steady, especially in Y6; all pupils with EHC plans had been invited to return to school, but not all had accepted
- Maintenance of close contact with pupils on a child protection plan or pupils considered to be vulnerable
- Home-learning, which the Committee considered a strength

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board held remotely via Webex on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 5:30 pm

- A fall in the number of pupils entering Reception at HPS in 2020/21, which was attributed to movement of families out of the borough
- Lockdown had enabled work on the centralised curriculum to progress at pace
- Strategies in place for pupil and staff wellbeing

7. Policies

7.1 External Communications Policy

- 7.1.1 The External Communications Policy (appendix 22) was approved.

7.2 Complaints Policy

- 7.2.1 Directors asked whether the Trust held a central record of complaints was informed that the executive team maintained appropriate oversight and documentation. It was agreed that it would be helpful to compile a central electronic log of complaints and other procedures as a means of identifying concerns and potentially averting formal action. **VB to action.** The Complaints Policy (appendix 23) was approved.

7.3 Reserves and Fund Pooling Policy

- 7.3.1 The Reserves and Fund Pooling Policy (appendix 24) had been revised following discussion at the FARCO meeting on 30th June 2020 and was approved by Directors, subject to minor amendments. **CS to action.**

8. AOB and date of next meeting

8.1 AOB

- 8.1.1 Directors were referred to documents supporting the proposed letting of the HPS site to Munchkins for summer camps (appendices 24 and 25). The Trust had a good relationship with the provider, who had submitted a solid risk assessment. Control measures would be monitored by spot checks by the CEO. The letting would generate income for the Trust.
- 8.1.2 R Taylor declared that his family had a friendship with the owner of Munchkins.
- 8.1.3 Directors noted the difference between compliance with controls in school and through a third party and asked whether the Trust was confident that Munchkins would comply with controls such as social distancing. It was confirmed that for pupils, controls applied to bubbles not individuals; staff were expected to socially-distance from each other and pupils by 1 metre. The decision to proceed with the letting had been informed by weighing the risk of short-term illness against the long-term risk of damage to pupils through lack of social contact and opportunity for safe play. The CEO and Senior Business Development Officer had arranged to meet Munchkins regarding planning and expectations.
- 8.1.4 Directors approved the letting, subject to:
- revising the standard letting agreement to include provision for C-19
 - the Trust obtaining specialist confirmation of the suitability of the 'bubbles' plan
 - the Trust checking written confirmation of its liability for external lettings
 - the Trust checking its public liability insurance. **JB/CS to action.**

THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST

Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trust Board held remotely via Webex on Thursday 9th July 2020 at 5:30 pm

- 8.1.5 Directors asked whether lettings agreements included general provisions for health and safety and safeguarding and it was confirmed that this was the case and that lessees were required to sign to confirm that they had read and would abide by the agreement.
- 8.2 It was noted that due to current restrictions for conferencing providers, it had not been possible to hold the meeting at The Warren. It was hoped that the next meeting on 16th September 2020 would be held at The Warren, by which time the central team would have fully moved in to the new office space.
- 8.4 The meeting closed at 7pm.

Signed: Date:
John Cliff, 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.

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