

The Spring Partnership Trust
Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Members of the Spring Partnership Trust
held remotely via Webex at 5:30pm on Monday 13th July 2020

Present:

Mr J Cliff, Chair
Mr S Bhalla
Mrs V Boaden, from minute 4.2
Mrs J Brinkley, CEO
Mr S Narracott
Mrs J Nelson
Mr I Stealey

In attendance:

Mrs C Sheehan, CFO

Clerk:

Miss K Crossley

1. Apologies for absence, constitution of the meeting

1.1 There were no apologies for absence. The meeting was quorate.

2. Pecuniary Interests and Register of Persons with Significant Control

2.1 It was noted that C Lees had resigned as a Member of the Trust on 30th June 2020. Members thanked C Lees for his hard work as a Director and Member, to which the Trust's strength in governance was attributed.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the AGM and Members' meeting of 27th January 2020 (appendix 1) were approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to agreed minor amendments, and would be signed by the Chair at the earliest opportunity. **KC to action.**

3.2, 3.2 V Boaden reported that she had highlighted vacancies for Directorship through an employer volunteering network and had put one potential candidate in contact with the Trust.

3.2, 7.2 It was reported that the actions arising from the School Resource Management Self-Assessment were being monitored at FARCO.

3.2, 9.3 An email account for stakeholders to contact Members had been uploaded to the Trust website. The name of the email account would be changed to reflect that the account was monitored by an independent Member (V Boaden). **KC/VB to action.**

3.3 At the request of the Chair and on the advice of the Trust's auditors, Members agreed to approve draft minutes by email as soon as possible following meetings, rather than at the following meeting. This would eliminate the 6-month lag in publishing minutes. **KC to action.**

4 CEO report including major strategic developments

4.1 Questions were invited on the CEO report (appendix 2). Members asked about transition to new year groups and new schools and were informed that there had been some contact with between Y7 tutors and Y6 pupils. PHSE resources would be used to support transition to secondary school, but it would be more difficult than under normal circumstances. In response to a question about academic records, it was reported that with no SATs outcomes, primary schools were not required to report data, however honest information would be shared with secondary schools. End of KS1 data was available and it was anticipated that secondary schools would assess pupils early in the autumn term. For other year groups, arrangements had been more successful, with teachers making videos to welcome pupils to their new classes, including Reception. In most schools, it had been possible to for all pupils to spend approximately 30 minutes getting to know their new teacher.

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- 4.2 Members asked whether the Trust was concerned about attendance and behaviour and were informed that these would be the main issues from September 2020. The Trust would not rush to test pupils, but would conduct diagnostic assessments in core subjects to inform planning for additional tutoring for pupils who needed to catch up. One of the first hurdles would be to reassure parents and pupils of the safety of returning to school and to establish routines to support wellbeing.
- 4.3 Members asked about planning for a second C-19 spike and were informed that lessons would switch to home learning. The Trust would be better positioned for a second spike, as a centralised curriculum was now in place alongside Google Classrooms which would be used to deliver on-line lessons. A number of pupil devices had been purchased and it was hoped that some may be used for home learning by pupils with no access to technology.
- 4.4 Members asked about the effectiveness of home learning and were advised that it had worked well overall. It was hoped that pupils may not have missed out as much as had been initially feared, thanks to support from parents. The area of greatest concern was the widening of the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers.
- 4.5 In response to a question as to how the Board monitored safeguarding, it was reported that was done through CEO/EHT reports. Safeguarding had accounted for 50% of work since lockdown. The CEO described a range of strategies which had been used to monitor vulnerable families, resulting in the Trust being able to maintain contact with all pupils with safeguarding concerns. Members applauded the efforts of staff in this regard. Governance scrutiny had been maintained through running a full schedule of remote Board and Committee meetings.
- 4.6 Members asked how staff were feeling and were advised that they had risen to the challenge of lockdown. The Chair had been impressed with the enthusiasm of staff he had met on school visits, who had worked hard to support pupils in difficult circumstances.

5. Review of Trust Board composition and governance

- 5.1 Members were referred to the Board and Committee membership (appendix 3). There had been no changes to the Board since the last Members' meeting. The Chair outlined areas of strength in governance and plans to recruit for specific skills and to increase capacity on the Board.
- 5.2 The Board had recently approved a proposal to review local governance. Work had been ongoing throughout the year to streamline reporting and switch the focus of Local Committees from governance to an advisory role on local and community issues. A discussion followed on how the proposal could affect the number of Directors and skills required on the Board. It was confirmed that other than the on-going recruitment mentioned in minute 5.1, the Board was strong and stable. Members asked whether Advisory Committee Members would be expected to attend Ofsted inspections and it was reported that in executive-led MATs, the CEO or EHT would be present, with some local representation. It was noted that Advisory Committees would retain a role as the face of governance in local communities and that consideration would be given to how to maintain links to the Board, such as by inviting Advisory Committee Chairs to attend Board and Committee meetings.
- 5.3 Members were informed about C19-related changes to the timing and procedure for CEO performance management in 2020/21.

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5.4 In response to an action from the Audit Committee as to how the Trust ensured that Members were aware of their responsibilities, it was noted that this was reflected in the minutes of Members meetings. At the previous meeting, a process had been set up for the minutes of Trust Board meetings to be circulated to Members throughout the year, with the opportunity to raise questions with the Chair via the Clerk. In addition, Members reviewed their terms of reference annually and were thus aware of the expectations of their role.

6. Responses to questions raised by Members in advance of the meeting

6.1 Members were satisfied with verbal responses to questions submitted by Members in advance of the meeting (appendix 4), including:

- arrangements for and records of remote meetings during the pandemic
- changes to the Funding Agreement
- self-assessment of the Board, which was planned for 2020/21 and would include consideration of how to increase Directors' engagement with stakeholders. **JC and JB to action.**

6.2 In response to a question on scrutiny of academic performance in 2020/21, it was reported that a robust challenge and support was provided by the Achievement and Curriculum Committee, which comprised three senior educationalists working in different settings. The Board would continue to hold the executive to account on academic achievement through reports from the EHT, which were quality assured by the CEO. A discussion followed on external scrutiny and Members accepted the explanation that this had not been considered for 2020/21 due to concerns about the value for money and accountability of external scrutiny. The matter would be considered at the Trust Board meeting in September 2020. **KC to action.**

6.3 Members asked whether areas of focus for the Board in 2020/21 had been identified and were advised that the 3-5 year strategic plan would be reviewed in the context of C19-related opportunities to operate more efficiently.

7. AOB and dates of next meeting

7.1 There was no other business. The Chair invited Members to contact him with any further questions.

7.2 The next meetings would be held on:

- Monday 25th January 2021 at 6:45 pm at The Warren or remotely via Webex
- Monday 12th July 2021 at 6:45 pm at The Warren or remotely via Webex

7.3 The meeting closed at 6:30 pm.

Signed:Date:
John Cliff, Chair, Board of Directors, The Spring Partnership Trust