

The Spring Partnership Trust
Final adopted minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Members
of the Spring Partnership Trust held at Hayes Primary School
at 6 pm on Monday 25th January 2021

Present:

Mr J Cliff, Chair
Mr S Bhalla
Mrs V Boaden
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 No apologies for absence had been received. The meeting was quorate.

2. Pecuniary Interests and Register of Persons with Significant Control

2.1 There were no changes to the Register of Persons with Significant Control.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

3.1 The minutes of the Members' meeting of 13th July 2020 (appendix 1), which had previously been approved by email, were ratified and would be electronically signed by the Chair. **JC to action.**

3.2 All matters arising had been completed.

4a. CEO report including major strategic developments

4.1 The Committee was referred to answers provided by the CEO to questions on the CEO report (appendix 2) submitted by Members in advance of the meeting (appendix 3). The impact of increased collaboration between the executive and Trustees on strategy and direction for the benefit of pupils was pleasing. Funding pressures had focussed attention on the need for clear strategy and direction, and significant progress had been made in refining systems and processes by using pooled funds more effectively.

4.2 Members asked whether funding pressures were a national issue or specific to the Trust, and whether the Trust had received any specific funding to address issues arising from the pandemic. The Trust had been successful in securing just under £9,000 funding but had not been eligible for any further funding. With regard to funding pressures, these pre-dated the pandemic and had forced schools to reconsider their focus. The Trust was fortunate to have received funding of c £0.5m from the local authority to cover the cost of unfilled places at two schools which had expanded to 2FE, however this was now starting to reduce by approximately £100k per year. A 3-year plan was being drafted, including a target of 75% of funding on staffing costs. The executive team was working closely with Heads to consider how to ensure that maximum impact was achieved from front-line staff, particularly those working with vulnerable pupils, using the funds available.

4.3 Members were pleased to note that the Trust had been able to allocate devices for home learning to all pupils who did not have access at home. In response to a question as to how the Trust had ensured that eligible families received free school meals, it was reported that a mix of vouchers and food parcels were being used for the current period of school closure. Various methods had been used in previous closures, including collection of parcels from

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school gates and home delivery in cases where schools wanted to make contact with pupils. Most schools had links with local foodbanks to which it signposted families in need.

- 4.4 Members asked about urgent and ongoing school improvement priorities and were advised that the current focus was on upskilling staff to deliver remote learning and ensuring high levels of pupil engagement. The Trust had established registers of pupils of concern and was very proud of the efforts made by Heads to keep in touch with families.
- 4.5 A discussion followed on the barriers to reducing costs in uncertain times. The Trust always kept in mind its core business of supporting pupils and parents with a curriculum based on mind, body, spirit, community and planet through achievable and sustainable structures and joined-up, holistic thinking. Initial work had begun on establishing a Spring Foundation, an income-generation initiative to offer holiday provision on school sites offering wider opportunities for pupils, such as outdoor play and life skills and economics. Feedback on the plans had been sought from Local Advisory Councils
- 4.6 The Chair reported that the CEO, EHT and Heads had responded extremely well to the challenges of the pandemic. The remote education offer had developed significantly since the closure of schools in March 2020, and live events such as on-line assemblies were now taking place. The quality of remote education was monitored through senior leader drop-ins. Senior leaders also maintained regular contact with staff and had opportunities to provide feedback, such as through small group meetings and 'Talk to the CEO' sessions.
- 4.7 The Trust had worked with a leading social housing provider to obtain funding for training in mental health and mindfulness programme, including self-awareness and emotional wellbeing for pupils and staff. The programme is called 'Paws B'. Members welcomed the initiatives put in place, which had been informed by the staff wellbeing survey. During school closure, Heads kept in touch with all members of staff.

5. Review of Trust Board Composition and Governance

- 5.1 Members were referred to the Board and Committee membership (appendix 4). It was confirmed that the vacancy for a Trustee with HR experience had been filled by Mrs Brookman, which had strengthened the HR Committee. The Chair was confident that the combined skill sets of Trustees covered all aspects of governance and that there was a high level of challenge from the Board.
- 5.2 The Board had approved the new Local Advisory Council structure for all schools at the start of the autumn term. The Trust was disappointed that four former Local Committee members had resigned without waiting to see how the new structure would develop, but was comfortable with the overall composition. Consideration was being as to how to maintain contact between Trustees and Local Advisory Council Members (LACMs) during school closure. The CEO and EHT were delighted at the way in which LACMs were finding ways to preserve the unique character of schools within a centralised curriculum. They had also provided helpful feedback on the music curriculum, which would now be taken forward with support from the central team.

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6. Receive TSPT annual accounts for the year ended 31st August 2020

6.1 There were no questions from Members on the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31st August 2020 (appendix 5) and the Audit Findings Report (appendix 6).

7. Approve reappointment of auditors UHY

7.1 Members accepted the recommendation from Trust Board to reappoint UHY Hacker Young as auditors to the Trust for a further year.

8. AOB and dates of next meeting

8.1 Members asked whether there were any teachers who were home-schooling their own children, and were advised that this was unlikely to be the case, as teachers were classed as key workers and their children would be offered school places. In response to a follow up question as to whether more pupils were attending school than in the previous lockdown, it was thought the parents had been cautious about sending their children back to school due to the high number of cases in the borough and most appreciated that staff were putting themselves at risk for the benefit of pupils.

8.2 The next meeting would be held on Monday 12th July 2021 at 6 pm, venue tbc

8.3 The meeting closed at 6:45 pm.

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