

**THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**  
**Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees**  
**held remotely at 7 pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**Present:**

Ms C Barenbrug, from minute 5.7  
Mr A Blount  
Mrs B Brookman  
Ms W Cartwright  
Mr J Cliff, Chair  
Mr D Okafor  
Miss R Punter  
Mr R Taylor, Vice Chair

**In attendance:**

Mrs C Sheehan, Acting CEO  
Mrs G Sesli, EHT  
Mrs V Bolton, COO  
  
Miss K Crossley, Clerk

**1. Apologies for absence**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced W Cartwright and D Terry, who had been appointed on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021 and 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2021 respectively.
- 1.2 It was noted that the term of office of Mr Okafor would end on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2022.
- 1.3 Apologies had been received from Mrs Brinkley, Mr Barlow and Mr Terry.

**2. Declaration of pecuniary interests**

- 2.1 None.

**3. Board Business**

- 3.1 Trustees were referred to the updated Board and Committee membership (appendix 1), and noted recent changes to the Board and Local Academy Council membership.
- 3.2 The Clerk confirmed that all DBS checks for Trustees were up to date, with the exception of Miss Punter, whose application was in progress.  
Post-meeting note: Miss Punter's DBS check was confirmed on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021.
- 3.3 Trustees were reminded to notify the Clerk of any changes to contact details.
- 3.4 It was confirmed that all Trustee details were up to date on the Trust website and Get Information About Schools (GIAS).

**4 Minutes of previous meeting**

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (appendix 2) were approved by the Board and would be signed remotely by the Chair. **KC/JC to action.**
- 4.2 Trustees were referred to the matters arising report (appendix 3) detailing the status of outstanding actions:
  - 4.2.1 Trustees requested more detailed information on actions which had been marked as 'noted'. **CS/VB to action.**

**THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**  
**Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees**  
**held remotely at 7 pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

4.2, 5.6.1 Trustees expressed concern at the ongoing health and safety risks relating to the party wall works at SMCPA and sought to understand how the project could be progressed more quickly. An update was provided on the current status and next steps, including the commission of a tree survey and the subsequent tendering process for contractor quotes for the party wall rebuild. It had been agreed at the FARCO meeting in November 2021 that, considering the risks involved, work would begin without planning permission, which would be sought retrospectively. It was agreed that consideration would be given to any possible additional temporary risk mitigation, such as barriers, as well as ways in which the conclusion of the project could be expedited. A schedule of project dates would be circulated to Trustees by the end of the week. **VB to action.**

**5 Executive report (appendix 4)**

**5.1 Trust SEND review**

5.1.1 Trustees were updated on the Trust SEND report, which had been discussed in detail at the ACC meeting on 9th November 2021. The next step would be to take proposed actions to the ACC meeting in January 2022. It was noted that the report was very thorough and the issues raised were a matter of high priority for schools across the Trust.

5.1.2 In response to a question as to whether schools were preparing for possible closure linked to the spread of the Omicron variant, it was confirmed that, if necessary, the transition to remote learning via Google Classroom would be smooth and immediate, with curriculum plans already in place.

**5.2 Trust external safeguarding audit**

5.2.1 External safeguarding audits had been conducted at all schools and reports were awaited. A draft report had been received by HPS, which would be reviewed by the Headteacher. Heads had found the audits and discussion with the external consultant extremely useful. Recommendations and actions would be taken to the ACC meeting in January 2022. **KC to action.**

**5.3 Monthly management accounts to October 2021**

5.3.1 There were no questions from Trustees on the monthly management accounts to October 2021 (appendix 5), which had been reviewed at the recent FARCO meeting.

**5.4 Annual accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 and audit findings report**

5.4.1 Trustees were referred to the annual accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 and the audit findings report (appendices 6 and 7). The financial audit had gone very well with only a small number of audit points and recommendations for enhancements to controls. The draft annual accounts had been reviewed by FARCO, which had agreed some amendments. In response to a question as to whether pupil premium and catch up funding had been fully allocated in year, it was confirmed there had been a historic brought-forward balance which had arisen due to miscoding (pre-Trust) and more recently, the pandemic. It had been a priority for Heads to develop plans for funding to be fully spent in year. The Board noted the need for vulnerable cohorts to benefit from funding during their time in school. It was confirmed that the issue had been identified during an internal audit in 2020/21, as a result of which the Chair of FARCO had conducted a review of processes, roles and

**THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**  
**Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees**  
**held remotely at 7 pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

responsibilities for restricted funds at one Trust school and was satisfied that these were understood. The annual accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 were approved.

**5.5 Recommendation of appointment/reappointment of auditor**

- 5.5.1 The Board accepted the recommendation from FARCO that Members approve the re-appointment of UHY Hacker Young as the Trust's auditor at the AGM in January 2022. **JC to action.**

**5.6 CIF project applications**

- 5.6.1 Trustees were referred to the proposed CIF bids (appendix 8), which had been considered at the FARCO meeting in November 2021. The outcome of the bids was expected in March/April 2022. The CIF project plans were approved.
- 5.6.2 A discussion followed on the flood remediation work at LPS and Trustees were advised that the Trust was working with the borough as well as exploring the possibility of a resilience project with the insurance company. Discussions with the borough on the reasons behind the succession of floods at LPS had not yet been concluded, and the Chair would attend the meeting at the borough to progress the matter as quickly as possible. Trustees noted the assumed contribution of c£40k to the CIF bid and understood that alternative routes to minimise the financial impact to the Trust were being explored. **VB to action.**

**5.7 LPS flooding update**

- 5.7.1 This matter had been discussed in minute 5.6.2.

**5.8 Consider and approve any spend requests over £20,000:**

- 5.8.1 Trustees were referred to the spend request for the cleaning contract (appendix 9) and noted that the £6k increase against the current contract was acceptable, provided that the level of service was appropriate. Trustees approved the appointment of Lodestar as the new cleaning company from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022 and thanked the COO for her work on the contract.

**6. Trust Committee business**

**6.1 Minutes of HR Committee, 14<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

- 6.1.1 The Chair of the HR Committee provided an update on discussion at the meeting on October 2021, including:
- re-thinking the cost/benefit analysis of improvements to the lunchtime supervision structure
  - approval of the teacher pay award, including the risk of a lack of uplift in 2021/22
  - structure around the awarding of bonuses (policy, evidence, rationale, transparency)
  - expectations around progression to the upper pay scale, including evidence of Trust-wide work, succession planning and performance management
  - wellbeing, including the timing of a survey, the need for rigour in following up the survey, staff engagement, the culture of the Trust.
- 6.1.2 The Chair of Trustees reported that he had visited all schools and sought the views of leaders and other members of staff on current challenges, and had concluded that a clear,

**THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**  
**Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees**  
**held remotely at 7 pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

holistic plan was required, including prompt action to address wellbeing concerns. Trustees were advised that the HR Manager had also visited Wellbeing Leads and a short-term plan would be drawn up to reflect the appreciation of the Trust for the support and commitment of staff (including free tea and coffee, free lunches on INSET days and a Christmas meal for all staff); the plan had been well received. In the longer term, the wellbeing plan would be further developed as part of a wider project. **CS to action.**

- 6.1.3 A discussion followed on the pressures faced by staff and the need to ensure that their voices were heard. Teachers wanted to teach and drive school improvement, but felt they were currently having to undertake non-teaching work due to staff shortages. The Chair thanked the EHT for sharing insight into the situation of schools and acknowledged that this resonated with the conversations he had held with staff during his school visits. The Chair undertook to follow up with EHT. **JC to action.**

**6.2 Minutes of FARCO meetings, 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021**

- 6.2.1 There were no questions from Trustees on the minutes of the FARCO meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021. The focus of the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2021 had been the annual accounts and audit findings (see minute 5.4.1).

**6.3 Minutes of ACC meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

- 6.3.1 The Committee was referred to the minutes of the ACC meeting in November 2021 (appendix 10). Mr Blount summarised discussions, including the thorough SEND review. Recommendations and diagnostics would be brought to the meeting in January 2022. The Committee had discussed wellbeing with the Headteachers who had attended the meeting and had found their perspective highly illuminating.

**7. Local Academy Councils**

- 7.1 Trustees were referred to the notes of recent LAC meetings at EWPS, LPS and MPS and the Trust Academy Council meeting in September 2021 (appendices 11-14).
- 7.2 There had been no opportunity to hold a TAC meeting in the second half of the autumn term. A meeting had been scheduled for early January 2022. Pertinent issues had been identified by LACs which aligned with issues raised during the Chair's school visits, and plans would be drawn up to address these. **JC to action.**
- 7.3 Trustees noted the reference to music provision at EWPS and asked that the Trust-wide music strategy be clarified to staff. **GS to action.** In response to a question about the progress of the conversion of The Cottage at HPS into the Music Hub, it was confirmed that work would begin in January 2022. The Headteacher at HPS would be invited to the next meeting to update the Board on the status of the project and the impact of the music strategy. **KC to action.**

**8. Policies**

**8.1 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

- 8.1.1 Trustees ratified the approval of the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (appendix 15), which had previously been approved by email.

**THE SPRING PARTNERSHIP TRUST**  
**Final adopted minutes of a meeting of the Trustees**  
**held remotely at 7 pm on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> December 2021**

**8.2 Admissions Policy 2022/23 (revised)**

- 8.2.1 The revisions to the Admissions Policy 2022/23 (appendix 16), which had previously been approved by email by the Chair, were ratified.

**8.3 Admissions Policy 2023/24**

- 8.3.1 The Admissions Policy 2023/24 (appendix 17), which mirrored the 2022/23 policy (with the exception of dates) was approved, subject to revising the policy header sheet. **VB to action.**

**9. Revised Trust meeting schedule**

- 9.1 Trustees noted the revised Trust meeting schedule 2021/22 (appendix 18), which included the dates of LAC meetings, and were reminded to notify the Clerk if they wished to observe a meeting.
- 9.2 The attention of the Committee was drawn to an error for the date of the Trust Board meeting in July 2022. The correct date was Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2022.

**10. AOB and date of next meeting**

- 10.1 The next meeting would be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2022 at 7pm, venue tbc.
- 10.2 The meeting closed at 8:15 pm.

Signed: .....Date:.....  
John Cliff, Chair of Trustees