

**MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**OF THE ACTIVE LEARNING TRUST**

***held on Tuesday 13th December 2016***

***at The Lansdowne Club, London***

**MINUTES**

Directors: Ms L. Adams Mr D. Bateson

Mr J. Beswick Mr C. Bush

Mrs J. Cutchey Mr. G. Hely-Hutchinson

Mr M. Kerr Ms M. Lloyd

Mr G. Peile Mr S. Staite

Ms M. Toft

Members: Mrs H. Capron Mr R. Dool

Invited Officers: Mr D. Hilton Mr C. Paskell

Ms J. Steel Mr S. McAlpine (External Auditor)

Invited Headteachers: Mrs R. Aldous (Westwood Primary School)

Mrs A. Hall (Grove Primary School)

Mr A. Redman (Lowestoft Hub Lead)

**9.** **WELCOME & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Ms Adams welcomed all present. There were no apologies for absence as all directors were present. Introductions were made. No new declarations of interest were declared.

**10. AUDITORS REPORT & ANNUAL ACCOUNTS**

Mr Stephen McAlpine took directors through his report of the Audited Accounts for the period ending 31st August 2016. Directors confirmed they had received the accounts prior to the meeting. Mr McAlpine made particular reference to the following:

* The process undertaken for audit
* Five schools have been visited, in addition to the Trust central office
* 95% of assets have been reviewed and verified
* 90% of debtors have been assessed and verified
* Cash at bank has been verified
* 94.74% of 62m income has been verified
* Expenses have been verified
* Internal Audit reports have been checked, including policies for appropriateness
* The Findings Letter shows a dramatic positive turnaround from last year, with only a few issues - adjustments made were explained (details in Findings Letter)
* Reference made to dedicated and skilled staff
* The appointment of a second Finance Officer reflects growth of Trust, and allows Trust to meet obligations
* Next year’s audit will focus on new schools and Cambridgeshire

The Board expressed concern that an issue raised by the auditors regarding VAT seems to be a query with the accounting package PS Financials. Mr Paskell confirmed that he has a meeting scheduled to discuss this with PSF (finance package providers).

Mr Hely-Hutchinson queried why control account reconciliations, particularly payroll, had been raised in the audit. Mr Paskell stated that month end processes have been tightened to combat this and school finance staff will be advised of requirements.

***Directors confirmed that they were happy for the Audited Accounts for the period ending 31st August 2016 to be presented to members at the Annual General Meeting, with a recommendation that they be approved for submission.***

Ms Adams thanked Mr McAlpine for his attendance. He left the meeting at this point.

**11. REPORT & PRESENTATION FROM GROVE & WESTWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND THE LOWESTOFT HUB LEAD**

Directors confirmed that they had reviewed the Headteacher Reports that Mrs Hall and Mrs Aldous had provided prior to the meeting. Both were asked to highlight areas of particular note:

**Mrs Hall: Grove Primary School**

* Mrs Hall has been at Grove Primary School for 4.5 years
* Classes are intentionally small, with staffing levels purposely higher than normal
* Budget is managed well with a good surplus
* Attendance has improved
* Mobility numbers have increased over the last year
* SEN provision is a strength of the school
* Pupil Premium students do well at Grove – above national average
* The DfE visit in March resulted in a good report
* Staff understand data and where improvement is needed
* School Development Plan is embedded in all aspects of school
* School very close to being ‘outstanding’
* Current Year 6 are a risk as 37% are SEN, however progress measures should be OK

Ms Adams asked whether fining parents for taking holidays in term time has an effect on improved attendance. Mrs Hall is not convinced, although term time holidays have reduced over the past year. Mr Peile informed directors that this area is difficult for the Trust (and therefore schools) to manage as Cambridgeshire and Suffolk both take a different view, resulting in unavoidable inconsistency across the Trust.

Mrs Cutchey asked for further information about class sizes. Mrs Hall replied that Years 1-4 have 24 students or less, with Years 5 & 6 being slightly higher. Each class have a teacher and at least one teaching assistant. This is only affordable because staff are not at the top of the scale.

Mr Dool asked about teaching standards. Mrs Hall stated that 40% of teaching is consistently ‘outstanding’, and a further 52% is consistently ‘good’.

On behalf of the Board, Ms Adams thanked Mrs Hall for her work at Grove, and wished her the very best for her new role as Head at a large school in Ipswich. Mrs Hall concluded by saying that it has been a privilege to work at Grove.

**Mrs Aldous: Westwood Primary School**

* Mrs Aldous has been at Westwood for 4.5 years
* Westwood has become a popular school in Lowestoft, with only 8 places currently available across the whole school
* Mobility is high at 20%
* High rate of pupil premium students, with 44% entitled to free school meals
* Absence figures have reduced dramatically, with persistent absence for pupil premium students being halved – on track to meet attendance target of 96%
* Budget is stable with £15k carry forward
* Strong data in EYFS (above 80%)
* All aspects of KS1 data above national average
* KS2 data in Writing, SPAG and Maths strong – 4 pupils did not meet national average expectations in Reading
* Year 6 Phonics data is currently lower than national average due to cohort or 22 children continuing 6 with SEN
* 100% of teaching is considered ‘good’ with 60% of lessons ‘outstanding’
* SMSC is a strength, with low income families accessing enrichment
* Areas for development identified by Ofsted included Handwriting, Marking & Feedback – all have been improved since visit, showing clear impact and enhancing learning
* Good collaborative working throughout Hub

**Mr Redman: Lowestoft Hub Lead**

Mr Redman was asked to present on current working within the Lowestoft Hub. He gave an informative report on initiatives developed and his role as Hub Lead. A cover paper was distributed, with the following areas highlighted:

* A recent DfE visit was very positive about work within the Hub
* Much work has been done to retain staff, which is essential in the area, working with NQTs, NQT+1, and NQT+2. Staff move between ALT schools
* The Standards Group – led by identified lead practitioners - is a success
* Schools lead on projects for whole Hub, eg Talk for Writing at Pakefield, Sports Programme at Red Oak – all are impact based
* Mr Redman provides formal and informal support on a daily basis, always looking forward, eg realigning SLDG, developing deputy heads, retention of staff at all levels
* Trust support includes challenge and support meetings, Headteacher self-evaluation, and reflecting on professional standards
* Governor training continue to be powerful
* PiXL & Early Excellence (introduced by Trust) have been well received
* The appointment of a Director of Primary Standards has improved provision
* Next steps will include impact of Trust within the wider community

Mr Redman concluded that he is proud and excited to be part of Hub work within Lowestoft. He believes Hub clusters are real strength of ALT and knows that all headteachers value the Trust’s work.

Mr Bush stated that it is important the Board recognise the transformation of trust schools in Lowestoft, and the contribution The Trust, Headteachers and Mr Redman have made.

Ms Adams thanked Mrs Hall, Mrs Aldous and Mr Redman for their attendance. Mrs Hall and & Mrs Aldous left the meeting at this point.

**12.** **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 4th OCTOBER 2016**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2016 were accepted as a true record, with the addition of Mr Bateson’s attendance at the meeting. There were no matters arising.

**13.** **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

***Finance & Audit Committee (04.10.16)***

The Minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting that was held on 4th October were accepted by directors.

**14. LITTLEPORT UPDATE**

Mr Bush updated the Board on the current position of the Littleport project. He referred to a written report, that had been previously circulated, that outlined the background of how ALT came to be the sponsor.

He advocated the unique and special opportunity afforded by the project, with the ALT secondary and special schools sitting alongside a community leisure centre and early years facility on the Campus. A timeline for completion is on track and pupil places have been allocated for September 2017. LECA will be funded for 120 Year 7 pupils, with approximately 100 students anticipated in the first instance. Transition visits are planned with Neale-Wade Academy

Senior staff have been appointed and project meetings are regularly taking place. Staff will be shared over both schools, eg there will be one SENCo and one Campus Manager. Resources such as one canteen and social spaces will also be shared. A Shadow Governing Body has been established, with members having experience from all stakeholders.

Ms Lloyd asked if any delays are expected and if building work for housing has started. Mr Paskell is confident that the building will be available on time. He also confirmed that some housing has already been built in Littleport and the school would be meet existing need locally.

Ms Lloyd asked if there would be a possibility of using SEN expertise to support over local schools. Mr Bush replied that Highfield schools are very willing to support others.

Ms Adams asked for confirmation that the arrangement with the leisure centre is not a cause for concern. Mr Bush replied that he is confident that any problems can be overcome – the leisure centre set-up is being completely restructured and the new chair understands the requirements of ALT.

Mr Peile informed directors that the Regional School Commissioner has stated that a strength of ALT is the development of provision and work on new facilities.

**15. CHAIR’S ACTIONS**

Ms Adams updated directors on three items that she had approved under the urgent action process since the last meeting. Details and reports had been circulated and the following were noted and agreed.

***Restructure of Highfield Ely Academy Senior Leadership Team***

To the restructure the SLT at Highfield Ely in accordance with the paper presented.

***Change to Scheme of Delegation***

Amendment to the Scheme of Delegation as per the report presented.

***Proposal to support Malting Cottage Project***

Approval granted, in principle, to progress a project to support Highfield Ely Academy with a work experience project for senior pupils.

**16. TRUST BUSINESS PLAN**

Mr Peile presented the Trust Business Plan for 2017/18 to 2019/20. He explained where amendments had been made and that the Board is responsible for a three-year plan for the Trust. The Plan has been updated considering points made by Board members at the last meeting, and having reflected on the Regional School Commissioner’s comments regarding the number of schools to be supported. He asked directors to note that there is increasing pressure from the DfE on MATs to take on more schools, with some Trusts (with 30 schools or more) becoming National MATS. Mr Peile recommends that ALT remain as a Regional MAT, staying at 29 schools or less, although alternative provision may be considered if a need is proven. The Plan recommends that ALT only sponsor or lead good or outstanding schools or those with capacity to improve, and aim to establish a teaching school, so that current schools do not suffer from financial resources being diverted.

Ms Adams echoed Mr Peile’s previous comment that the Regional Schools Commissioner has been wholesome in his praise of the development of schools within ALT.

Mr Bateson asked directors to note that the pressures on special schools is massive, with implications for main stream schools. He also stated that, in Law, no school can legally be ‘full’ and there may be pressures on schools to move above PAN in future.

***Directors confirmed that they wished the Business Plan for 2017/18 to 2019/20 to be submitted to the Annual General Meeting, with a recommendation that Members approve the Plan as presented.***

**17. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

Mrs Jarvis asked that the Board consider that the renewal of Board membership for four directors whose terms of office expire during 2017 be automatically renewed. All four directors have been contacted and have expressed their willingness to continue. They are David Bateson, Jeremy Beswick, Mark Kerr and Marion Lloyd.

***The Board approved the renewal of those directors listed above as and when their terms of office become due.***

**18. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**

***Remuneration & Personnel (04.10.16)***

The Minutes of the Remuneration & Personnel Committee meeting that was held on 4th October were accepted by directors.

**19. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER’S REPORT**

Mr Peile referred directors to his confidential report. All confirmed they had received and reviewed it prior to the meeting.

**20. NEXT MEETING**

To confirm the date of the next meeting as 21st February 2017.

Future meetings were confirmed as 2nd May & 11th July 2017.