

The Link Academy Trust  
**Finance & General Purposes Committee**

**Minutes: Friday 7 May 2021  
9.30am - F&GP 3 /21**

*The meeting was held online using MS Teams due to Covid restrictions and was also recorded*

**Present:** Mr Roy Gillard (Chair)  
Mrs Nicola Dunford  
Mrs Cheryl Mathieson  
Mr Paul Waterworth

**In attendance:** Trust Business Manager - Mr Matt Matthew  
Clerk – Rachel Hill

**Welcome:**

The Chair, Mr Roy Gillard, welcomed all to the meeting.

**Absent without Apologies:** Mr Mike Fisher

**Declaration of Business Interests:** The CEO is a Trustee of South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust (SDMAT) and also a Trustee for the Bearnas Education Foundation. Mr Roy Gillard is a Director of Labyrinth Accountancy Limited. Mr Michael Fisher is a Foundation Director of Bailey Partnership LLP, Amethyst Property Ltd, and Adorn Development Ltd, property consultancy and management companies.

1. **Minutes of previous meetings**

The minutes of 26 March 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.  
The minutes of 26 April 2021, the Digital Learning Strategy & Vision meeting, were approved as a true and accurate record.

2. **Matters Arising**

Item 2.2. SRMA self-assessment tool. The TBM advised that the SRMA return had been submitted on 15 April 2021, with no issues raised.

2.2 Item 3.2. Budget Assumptions and Schools Wish Lists. The Schools Wish List has been circulated to the committee for their information. The TBM will now cost the list. For Budget Assumptions please see item 3.2 below.

**Action TBM**

2.3 Item 4. Digital Learning Strategy and Expenditure meeting held 26.04.2021. The TBM reported. The strategy was presented to the Standards & Curriculum committee who approved the document. The strategy will form an agenda item at the Board of Trustees on 25 May 2021. The draft Digital Learning Strategy Part II which concentrates on Teaching and Learning will be taken to a future Standards & Curriculum meeting.

**Action CEO/TBM  
Agenda Item**

2.4 Item 5. Stoke Gabriel multi-use games area. The proposal is with South Hams District Council. Their funding commitment is required before further action will be taken.

2.5 Item 8. Risk Register. It was agreed that the CEO would make changes to all areas that are the responsibility of the F&GP committee and email the Chair for his comments once completed. Risk Register to be an agenda item at the next F&GP meeting.

**Action CEO  
Agenda Item**

- 2.6 Item 6. Business Plan. Conversion of Morchard Bishop and Due Diligence process. The CEO reported. The conversion is going to plan and should take place on 01 October 2021. There could be some conditions attached to School House. The due diligence process is still to take place but no issues are anticipated at present.

### 3. Finance

- 3.1 Financial Performance to 31 April 2021 – month 8. The TBM advised that the month eight accounts are still in preparation and will be placed in the Directors Dashboard once ready.

The TBM reported on the financial performance to 31 March 2021 – month 7 which had been circulated to the committee. Bearnas, Hennock and Yeoford are slightly down on income. This is largely due to a decrease in pupil numbers in Preschools owing to Covid. Some schools are showing a slight overspend on staffing. This is due to a change in staffing since the budget was set last year and the impact felt from Covid. Curriculum spend is all within limits. Hennock is slightly over with their Other expenditure commitments. It was noted that central costs have increased since budgeting. The cumulative position for the Trust is predicted at £1.3 million with a £1.4 million reserves carry forward to next year. These figures are dependent on the outcome of CIF bid contributions, planned ICT spend and possible summer projects.

The TBM requested the committee's approval to update current delegations and advised that some elements could be delegated downwards to the HR and Finance Officers. The TBM proposed a spend limit of £300. *PW asked if the administration were happy with the personnel.* This was confirmed. The committee approved the TBM's recommendation but asked for caution to be taken when new personnel are employed.

**Agreed**

TBM to make changes to the Finance Handbook to reflect this.

**Action TBM**

A comfort break of fifteen minutes was taken at this point in the meeting.

- 3.2 Draft Budget 2021-22. The draft outline budget and key assumptions for 2021/22 had been circulated to the committee prior to the meeting. The aim is to have the final version ready for the F&GP meeting on 6 July 2021 and to be presented to the Board of Trustees on 12 July 2021.

The draft budget is based on key assumptions from ASCL as this is the only form of information available to academies.

In summary, the key assumptions are:

- GAG income 1% (22/23), 1.8% (23/24) and 1% increase into future
- Teacher pay awards and pension grants now rolled into GAG statements
- Teachers pay awards –0% (21/22), 3% (22/23) and 2% increase into future years
- Support staff pay awards -0% (21/22), 0.87% (22/23), 1.87%(23/24)and 1% increase into future years

Forecasted reserves do not take into account any possibly successful CIF bids, the announcement is now delayed until June 21, or in year projects (ICT, property) to be carried out over the summer holidays.

The five year Trust cumulative budget was reviewed together with revenue balances, pupil numbers, MAT growth, the overall summary of individual Academy budgets and key recommendations.

*CM noted that staff costs are increasing and pupil numbers decreasing. PW sought clarification on how the GAG funding works and asked what pupil numbers the figures were based on.* The TBM explained how GAG funding operates. It was noted that

Drakes, Otterton and Moretonhampstead need to increase pupil numbers where they possibly can. *PW asked when a school no longer become viable.* The Chair advised that the financial position in schools can change for the better quickly. Closing a school is the very last option for the Trust. Increasing pre-school numbers, capturing the children of people moving into the area and marketing are key strategies for increasing numbers and are currently being worked on by the schools and Trust.

4. **Property**

4.1 CIF bids: scheme of implementation. The TBM reported that results will not be out until June 2021. This will impact on future budgeting and spend for the summer term.

4.2 The Ilslington project is progressing well and should be completed by the end of July.

5. **Business Plan**

5.1 Financial Strategy and Control. The CEO reported on the changes to the RAG ratings for sensitivity work (now amber), auditors (now green) and expertise on board (now amber) Better automation remains at red as work has yet to be done on this aspect.

5.2 Central Business and Property. The CEO reported that as catering provision is progressing it is now RAG rated overall an amber. Income generation is working well. CIF bids will impact on estate improvement and the Trust is still waiting for CIF bid results. The Ilslington project is on time. It was noted that the building company has performed extremely well. Central business remains on track to be achieved by the dates stated. It was agreed that the Chair would update the Board of Trustees on the Business Plan at their May 24 meeting. CEO to email her updated plan to the Chair.

**Action CEO/Chair**

The TBM was asked to send a letter of thanks to the building company.

**Action TBM**

6. **Internal Audit**

6.1 The TBM reported that another internal audit report was due in the Summer Term. The TBM agreed to book a date with Griffin Accountants.

**Action TBM**

7. **Risk Register**

7.1 Please see 2.5 above.

8. **Human Resources**

The CEO reported that staffing for next year has been reviewed. Any changes can't be actioned as yet. The HR Officer has been working on reference requests. The Executive Improvement Team has been reviewing CPD and how to make this clear to incoming staff and how it can be budgeted.

9. **Health & Safety**

There were no issues for discussion.

10. **Data Protection**

There were no issues for discussion. A Subject Access Request has been received. *CM noted that this can be charged for.*

11. **ESFA Bulletins**

There were no issues for discussion.

12. **Policies**

12.1 Professional Development. The CEO advised that she had added a bullet point about mandatory training. The Professional Development Policy was recommended to the Board of Trustees for approval.

**Approved**

12.2 Travel and Expenses. The TBM advised that he had made minor changes to the policy. *CM asked if the figures in Table 2 were reasonable.* The TBM advised that mileage is taken from HMRC. *PW suggested that Table 2 should be checked annually to be realistic.* The TBM agreed to do comparisons with other Trusts and bring his findings back to the next F&GP meeting or they could be agreed via email.

**Action TBM**

13. **Any Other Business**

**Future Meetings**

*PW asked if there was a policy as to how the Trust was going to conduct meetings in the future.* It was agreed that all F&GP meetings would be held online until the end of July 2021. From July onwards it was proposed that the F&GP continue to meet online on Teams unless there were items that required discussion by all. If this were the case then the committee would meet in person. It was recommended that the same policy be used for the Remuneration committee.

**Agreed**

14. **Dates of Future Meetings**

Tuesday 6 July 2021