



**Minutes**  
**24<sup>th</sup> January 2023**  
**6.00pm**

Please note: This meeting was held in person at Lanscove School Hall with some attendees joining the meeting via TEAMS

**PRESENT:**

**Members:** The Ven Douglas Dettmer (DD) Gary Kinchin (GK)  
 Peter Bethel (PB) Isabel Cherrett (IC)

**Trustees:** Cheryl Mathieson (Chair) Dominic Course (DC)  
 Nicky Dunford (CEO) Graeme Scott (GS)  
 Christopher Norman (CN) Kate Evans (KE)

**Local Board Chairs:** Max Thomas (Woodleigh) (MT)

**Minutes:** Charlotte Roe (Governance Professional) (GP)

No		Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome and apologies</b>                      The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. The following apologies were received and <b>accepted:</b> Paul Reisbach, Sarah Cox, Paul Waterworth, Ben Thorne, Fiona Walters, Rebecca Sear</p>	
2.	<p><b>Declarations of interest</b>                      Isabel Cherrett has a family member who is the Trust Inclusion and Improvement Hub Manager. Peter Bethel is a trustee of Totnes Elizabethan Museum, Member of Totnes Rotary Club and Totnes Town Council Sergeant. Douglas Dettmer is a director and trustee of Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd and Exeter Diocesan Trust and a trustee of Church College Hostel Trust and Tranquillity House Trust. The CEO is a Trustee for the Bearnas Education Foundation. Dominic Course is Chair of Governors at South Dartmoor Community College and a Director of DACORS Ltd. Fiona Walters is a director of Devon Opera Ltd and of LCP Harlesden Ltd, and a Trustee of Devon Opera. Graeme Scott is an employee and Executive Chairperson for educational software company, The Mario Framework. Chris Norman is Director of CANE Properties Ltd. Kate Evans is Director for Education of The Good Shepherd MAT. Ben Thorne is Director and Trustee at Tor Bridge Academy Trust.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Any other business</b>                      There was no any other business to consider.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Approval of meeting minutes</b>  <b>For approval:</b> Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022 (attached)                      The minutes were <b>approved</b> as an accurate record of the meeting. The Chair signed them accordingly.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Matters Arising from Minutes held on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2022</b></p>	

	<p>5.5.7.3 Analysis of Members’ Role. There were two matters arising from this paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair explained that with the change of the Clerk, the recommendations could now be addressed and the following would be sent to the Members by the Governance Professional:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) CEO report to Trustees for each Board of Trustees Meeting</li> <li>(b) Agreed budget for current year</li> <li>(c) Previous year’s final accounts</li> <li>(d) External reports (such as Ofsted, SIAMS)</li> <li>(e) Board of Trustees Minutes</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>The Chair invited the Members to let the Governance Professional know if there was anything further that would be helpful. Peter Bethel asked about the different reports from the Local Boards – The Chair said they would be presented in the summer meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanism of the risk register – one of the recommendations in the paper was for a mechanism to be added to the Risk Management Policy so that any score on the risk register which goes above an agreed figure is reported to the Members together with mitigating actions. The Chair commented that the new online risk register system was still being developed but the Audit Committee will consider with the DCEO at its next meeting in May the appropriate level at which to set the trigger.</li> </ul> <p>IC asked how the new online system was progressing and had it helped to embed the processes at school level as well as Trust-wide? The Chair explained that it had recently been the subject of an Internal Audit review and that the Audit Committee were working on the recommendations. DC added that further guidance had been offered by the Internal Audit to link the individual academy risk registers for a more cohesive approach whilst reducing the number of risks that were reported to Trustees to ensure that the overall Trust risk register remained strategic. The Chair added that the format of the school risk registers was to be standardised as well.</p>	
6.	<p><b>External Audit Service</b></p> <p>It was explained that a tender exercise was agreed by the Audit Committee (outlined in Audit Committee minutes 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022) and a recommendation for the appointment of external auditors for FY’s 22/23 to 24/25 would be made in the Audit Committee Meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023 for final approval by Members at the Members Review End of Year meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2023.</p> <p>IC raised a concern that the approval of the External Auditor would not be until July 2023 questioning that if there was a change of auditor, would it provide enough time for familiarisation before the audit starts in August? The Chair explained that though the tender exercise did start in Autumn 2023, the closing date was 27<sup>th</sup> January 2023 with subsequent interviews afterwards. The meeting recognised that the timing could be problematic if there was a change of auditor. After discussion, it was agreed by the meeting that, in order to expedite the process, the Audit Committee would make their recommendation to the Board of Trustees on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2023 and thereafter a recommendation would be circulated to the Members for approval by email. Subject to being provided with robust documentation on each of the tenders, the Members agreed to approve the appointment by email unless further discussion was needed in which case an online meeting would be held in late Spring. It was noted in future years any tender process should start earlier to fit in with the dates of the December Board meeting and the January AGM.</p>	GP
7.	<p><b>Finance</b></p> <p><b>7.1 Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2022 (attached).</b></p>	

	<p>The Chair confirmed that the financial statements and audited accounts for year ended 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022, in accordance with the Academies’ Financial Handbook, had been lodged with Companies House and was now available on the Trust’s website.</p> <p>The Members confirmed that they had reviewed them. IC commended the Trustees on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the care of pupils and families both in and out of school during the continuing pandemic arrangements</li> <li>• The educational outcomes - whilst not complacent with the Link’s position in relation to national attainment, staff and pupils had clearly worked very hard to overcome the disruptions since March 2020</li> <li>• The short-term investment accounts while the Trust is holding significant reserves.</li> <li>• Trustees with their excellent attendance record at Board meetings during the year.</li> </ul> <p><b>7.2 Summary of 2022-23 to date</b></p> <p>Update of current financial position. The paper from the CEO was circulated before the meeting.</p> <p>IC asked whether on the Environmental Strategy 2021-26, there was a programme for PV panels and gas boiler replacement. The CEO reported that all the lighting across the Trust was being changed to LED. There were bids for boiler replacements for 3 schools under the Decarbonisation Strategy – the Trust would need to pay a nominal amount towards them. Solar panels had been put on Diptford foundation stage’s roof. A company was looking at all the schools to highlight the most appropriate ones to be added to the Trust’s rolling capital spend programme and included in future CIF bids for solar panels. The condition report had been received for all the schools and the D1s were being addressed speedily with the larger projects being considered in the future. The CEO added that the Trust had received additional funding from the Energy Efficiency Fund – approx. £11,000 per school – this would be used to upgrade the schools towards being more energy efficient. GK asked if the allocation of £11,000 was ring-fenced to the school. CEO said it was not so could be used across the Trust on a needs basis.</p> <p>DD commented that the Church schools were the biggest part of the Church’s zero carbon footprint. DD asked about the changing SIAMS framework and commended the vision booklet on the website. The CEO said that the vision and values were individualised to each school which kept them unique however still maintained the Trust’s overarching vision. The CEO added that the Church schools had been a focus in the Trust and along with the non C of E schools were working in line with Confederation of School Trusts reflecting on their civic duty. The Church schools did reflect their Christian duty. The Chair added that she understood the new SIAMS framework required Trustees to be able to articulate how the Christian values were embedded across the whole school in all areas of the curriculum. The Diocese would be providing some training in this regard and the Trust was asking Sharon Lord (Trust RE &amp; SIAMS Lead) to provide further guidance to ensure that the Trustees understood what was required. DD added that he felt the values were already embedded in the school, so preparing for the new SIAMS framework would not be such a huge leap. DD added that it would be fascinating how the children articulate the Christian values. The Chair added that the Christian values were also felt in the non C of E schools which was a strength of the Trust.</p>	
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<p>Peter Bethel asked about the Trust data around reading, writing and maths. The CEO said that the KS2 SATs results were received in December 2022. Reading across the Trust exceeded national average. Writing was in line with national average with Maths a little below. The CEO added that the Executive improvement Team (EIT) focussed on this across the MAT. A highly skilled Maths practitioner had been released to develop and lead Maths across the Trust. The KS1 data was approximately in line with national average. The CEO explained that the results had not given too much concern for the Trust though the Trust could do better. She added that the results were down from 2019 as a direct result of relying on parents to home school during COVID. The Trust focus was disadvantaged children – particularly oracy, phonics teaching, relational behaviour. The CEO said that she felt the interventions in these areas were having a positive impact on the pupils’ learning. KE asked for clarification of how the Trust compared nationally with reading, writing and maths combined. The CEO said that the national average was 59% down from 65% (2019) and the Trust results were a little above this at 60%.</p> <p>GS asked about the physical, social, and emotional development of the Trust’s pupils following the pandemic as he felt these were as equally important as the learning. The CEO agreed and added that pupils’ personal development was a strength across the Trust and was often an EIT focus with the academy heads. The Trust used schemes such as Jigsaw and Lyfta. The CEO explained the different interventions in place to support the pupils with their SEMH. The CEO added that in the last OfSTED inspection of a school, the family atmosphere and children’s inter-relationships was judged as strong. The CEO explained that the Inclusion Hub worked closely with the schools supporting around SEND, working with families and sharing therapeutic approach practice; this had also been positively commented on in the recent OfSTED inspection</p> <p>DC said that he would like it highlighted the work the Trust was doing around Safeguarding and that Trustees were now getting clear reports. GS said that he had been working closely with the Trust Safeguarding Lead, meeting monthly. The strategies, policies and practices had been developed to ensure that everyone took ownership of keeping the children safe; as well as a more standardised reporting approach across the Trust. The evidence and impact was now being regularly fed back to Trustees as the accountable body. GS added that he felt the safeguarding practices in schools were exemplary.</p> <p>Peter Bethel asked about the difficulty around recruitment of experienced teachers and asked whether employing Early Career Teachers (ECTs) was putting a strain on existing staff. The CEO explained that there was a robust internal training programme for the ECTs resulting in high level practitioners.</p> <p>DD asked about the sustainability and strategy for growth for the Trust. The CEO explained that other trusts had approached her but had not fit well. East Devon had lots of small schools, some of whom had expressed an interest in joining the Trust. The CEO had met with them. These were early days and further discussion would be required if this was to move forward. In the meantime, 2 schools (within the local area) would be joining the Trust by September 2023. DD commented that it was a balancing act between keeping the essence of our current small schools against growth.</p> <p>IC asked if there had been an improvement in the support provided by the local authority with Safeguarding issues since last July 2022? The CEO said that the LA were still in special measures, and it was delaying the EHCP process. A new online safeguarding referral</p>
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	<p>system had been put in place but it was felt that the new interventions by the council had not had an impact as yet.</p> <p><b>7.3 Diptford Capital Spend</b> Peter Bethel asked for an update. The CEO explained the current situation. The CEO went through the Pupil numbers in Diptford; adding that the reception numbers were higher than usual.</p> <p>IC commented that the uncertainty over Diptford had no doubt contributed to the 0.8% premises costs against the benchmark of 1.2%.</p> <p><b>7.4 Reserves and investments</b> The Members were pleased to see that a rolling 3-year Capital Spend programme was being established.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Governance</b></p> <p><b>8.1 Appointment of Members</b> No new Members appointed</p> <p><b>8.2 Appointment/Re-election of Directors/Trustees</b> No new appointments or re-elections of Trustees</p>	
9.	<p>The Chair invited the Members to outline any additional information they required from the Trustees at the AGM. The Members asked for the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial accounts of schools set out clearer</li> <li>• Financial summary from the Trustees on the previous year as well as the year ahead.</li> </ul>	

Meeting closed at 19.13

**Date of the General Meeting**

17 July 2023 at 6.00pm – to be held at Landscope School Hall