

**LIFE MULTI ACADEMY TRUST
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD ON THE 5TH FEBRUARY, 2024 AT 6.00PM**

**VIRTUAL MEETING
NON CONFIDENTIAL**

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

| NAME | | END DATE OF OFFICE | DESIGNATED ROLE | ATTENDANCE |
|-------------------------|---------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|------------|
| Liz Warren (LWA) | Trustee | 29.06.2024 | Chair | Y |
| Chris Parkinson (CPA) | Trustee | | CEO | Y |
| David Gordon | Trustee | 26.02.2027 | | Y |
| Sue Dunford (SDU) | Trustee | 05.09.2025 | | Y |
| Liam McDonagh (LMcD) | Trustee | 02.09.2024 | | N |
| Andy Smith (ASM) | Trustee | 19.09.2026 | | Y |
| Vacancy | Trustee | | | |
| Vacancy | Trustee | | | |
| Vacancy | Trustee | | | |
| IN ATTENDANCE | | | | |
| Gareth Williams (GWI) | | | COO | |
| Nicola Koncarevic (NKO) | | | Director of Education | |
| Chris Tweedale (CTW) | | | Leadership & Governance Development | |
| Sarah Mayes (SMA) | | | CFO | |
| Paul Maddox (PMA) | | | Executive CFO | |
| Sian Griffiths (SGR) | | | Head of Governance | |

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Liam McDonagh.

RESOLVED: the apologies were accepted.

2. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

The Trustees were asked to declare any potential pecuniary interest or conflict of interest between an individual and the trust board as a whole with the business to be discussed during the meeting. There were no verbal declarations made.

The meeting moved to agenda item 7b.

a. Admissions Arrangements – consultation for 2025 - 2026

The report and supporting documents had been shared with Trustees prior to the meeting, CTW provided an overview of the key areas raised and the recommendations.

The consultation documentation had been made available to 16,000 individuals/organisations, 46 people and the LA (Leicestershire County Council) had responded, 99.3% were content with the proposal.

- i. Ashby School, Ivanhoe College and Ibstock Community College

Recommendation 1 - It is recommended that we go ahead with our proposed change to a list of feeder primary schools rather than defining a catchment area.

Recommendation 2 - To change Moira Infant School to Moira Primary School and to include Ashby Hastings Primary School on the list of Primary Schools.

Recommendation 3 - It is recommended that we keep with this arrangement as each case needs to be considered on its merits and so it would be difficult to fairly create an overarching policy on this matter.

Recommendation 4 - It is recommended that the medical needs criterion remain at priority number 5.

The Trustees noted that recommendation 4 allowed the appeals panel to drill down and review the evidence presented. CPA explained that the Schools within the Trust had not received many appeals as the Schools did not have specialist provision also EHCPs direct where the children are best placed.

Recommendation 5 - It is recommended that Trustees consider carefully whether they wish to retain the criterion prioritizing the children of staff. Should it be downgraded below 'distance' it would be unlikely to have any meaningful impact.

CPA felt this criterion supports the Trust in recruiting the best Staff which ultimately impacts on the quality of education. LWA queried whether this was more of a priority at the Primary Schools.

CTW explained that the Headteacher at Ashby has raised an issue around the admission of children outside of their normal age group. LWA stated that children in Year 6 must transfer to secondary education at the end of that academic year. CPA explained that the law permits parents to make an application, the admission authority makes the decision. NKO advised that some parents make a request where the child is a summer baby (late August), this had not appeared to be an issue, there was an area on the LA portal where parents could make an application and explained the process, the number of applications were low.

CTW recommended that a form of words needed to be added to the current policies.

ACTION: CTW/NKO to produce a form of words around the admission of children outside their normal age group.

The Headteacher of St. Charles' Primary School had requested the school was included as a primary feeder as the school lies between Ibstock and Ashby. The school was in Leicestershire but with a Derbyshire postcode. It was an Academy and part of a Catholic Multi Academy Trust. It was not on the current list of feeder schools.

Recommendation 6 - It is recommended that the executive consider whether it would be appropriate to include St. Charles' Primary School on the list of feeder schools, in discussion with the head of St. Charles' and Leicestershire Local Authority. Following further consultation it is recommended the executive are given delegated authority to address the issue in the final admissions policy statement.

ACTION: The Executive to review recommendation 6 and advise the Head of Governance who would amend the Trust Admission Policy for 2025 – 2026 accordingly.

One respondent wished to see a criterion introduced which gave priority to children eligible for Pupil Premium. This would be unusual and novel for LiFE to prioritise children in this category.

Recommendation 7 - It is recommended that we decline to support this request.

ii. Bosworth

One respondent suggested that the removal of the catchment would leave LiFE vulnerable to needing to accept large numbers of pupils from the new school at Lubbethorpe in the future.

Recommendation 9 - It is recommended that the Headteacher of Bosworth Academy considers this point.

ACTION: Headteacher at Bosworth to consider recommendation 9 and advise the Head of Governance who would amend the Trust Admission Policy for 2025 – 2026 accordingly.

The Headteacher of Millfield Primary School objected to the prioritisation of children attending a LiFE primary school getting a place at Bosworth Academy. He suggested that this would encourage parents to apply for a place at Kingsway Primary School thus to the detriment of children attending Millfield Primary School.

Recommendation 10 - It is recommended that this objection is noted but that no change to the proposal is made.

iii. The Winstanley School

The Trustees noted that the newly revised set of positions also adjusted the position of the criteria for the children of staff and children with siblings already at the school. This change followed the Local Authority preference but ultimately Trustees should determine the priority that children of staff receive and may wish to revise the position of this criterion.

Recommendation 11 – With the above caveat it is recommended that the revised criteria positions are adopted for Winstanley as set out in the table.

iv. Kingsway

The Headteacher of Kingsway Primary School had responded to the consultation and asked for the shared catchment area with three other schools in the Braunstone Town area to be retained for the following reasons.

“Kingsway is in a very unique position in that it shares a catchment area with 4 schools in the Braunstone Town area. These schools are Kingsway, Millfield, Fossebrook and Ravenhurst. This means when a place is applied for in a school in this area, the local authority looks at all four schools places, if a school is full the application will automatically be filled in one of the other schools in the catchment area.

Removing Kingsway from this catchment could have a detrimental effect on the admission numbers as the local authority would be more likely to allocate places in the other schools - as the Fossebrook and Millfield Schools are over-subscribed this would make it easier for the local authority to allocate to Ravenhurst.

The other concern is having the distance to school as the main criteria for admission (rather than catchment) for Kingsway because of its location in the current Braunstone Town Catchment, this would mean that the applications made from Leicester City school admission pupils, (these pupils would live nearer to school than the pupils in the current Braunstone Town Catchment), would have to be prioritised over county pupil applications

The knock on effects to be considered are:

- a. You could have more applications from city pupils as Bosworth's new admission criteria would give them priority to attend Bosworth in the future
- b. City pupil applications would be a priority when they live closer to the school than children in the current catchment (Braunstone Town)
- c. County Schools are given less funding than City schools for City pupils
- d. With no specific catchment area, with the lack of school places in the city and county you could end up with the local authority allocating children from all across the city/county who have no space in their local area.

In summary, Kingsway must retain the catchment area as part of the admissions process and not geographical proximity to the school.”

In order to maintain our move away from catchment areas but to reduce the risks as outlined above it is recommended that the following revised oversubscription criteria are adopted

v. Desford, Dove Bank and Braunstone Frith

The responses to the consultation were uncontentious for these three schools. The Headteacher of Braunstone Frith felt that the published policy, when agreed should address specific 'primary' issues for the four LiFE Primary Schools and

Recommendation 12 - It is recommended that this request is acted upon. For instance the policy should address the age at which young children join the school and the size of classes in the pre-school, reception and infant years.

ACTION: consider recommendation 12 and advise the Head of Governance who would amend the Trust Admission Policy for 2025 – 2026 accordingly.

RESOLVED: the Trustees agreed the recommendations as listed above with the exception of the issues raised and actions required.

6.28pm Chris Tweedale left the meeting.

The meeting moved to agenda item 7a

Website Compliance (in line with *DfE publication requirements. The Trustees received a report from the Trust Operations Manager who provided an overview. Following the completion of the audit last year it had been agreed that Trustees would be provided with an update on the current position. Some detail and compliance within the guidance can be centralised and form part of a MAT-wide policy document and/or process, however, some individual detail was required on each website as this was bespoke and unique to each individual school and the community it serves. Statutory content – there is a high-level of confidence that our schools and central website are, to a high percentage, compliant with the statutory content required by the Department for Education but there was less confidence, the main concern was around the content of documents, particularly the policies which have to comply with legislation and codes of practice. All policies and the majority of other documents which were integrated into the websites, were displayed as PDF versions. This formatting was not readily accessible to all and does not work well with assistive technologies such as screen readers e.g. the Accessibility Policy was a PDF document and was therefore not compliant for accessibility. There was also a requirement that the websites could be readily accessed on any device and navigated using a variety of assistive technologies such as keyboard navigation and screen reading, this needs to be tested but it was unlikely that all will be compliant with this requirement.

The Trust Operations Manager and Head of IT had looked at the options and how the issues could be resolved moving forward -

1. How does the Trust standardise all the websites – Schools and Trust? From the compliance and audit perspective this would be a significant piece of work as a big job. One of the issues would be that the format of policies were not standardised and not written in plain English this had led to issues around literacy and translation and text formatting and wording.
2. The date for the audit report on website compliance should be moved to September so that this was included in any Ofsted preparedness work and the Trust would be assured of compliance for students, parents and other stakeholders for the academic year ahead. Updates could be made to content as guidance changes through the year.
3. Initial and indicative costs from a specialist school website company would be in the region of £1550 (plus VAT) per site for initial setup and build and in the region of £550 (plus VAT) per site ongoing annual maintenance costs. More detailed costs from this quote and other suppliers would be sought prior to contracting. This cost

would include ensuring accessibility and compliance with Department for Education guidance on website content providing a specialist resource to our school IT and Leadership Teams.

4. Development of a mandatory “house style” for policies and documents that were public facing which identifies good practice for accessibility. This would also encompass the requirement for the use of plain English which will also support where documents need translating, standardisation of brand and also will allow for a greater number of templates and template documents to be created, ensuring that legislative compliance was met, . also ensuring that documents were published in HTML format as standard rather than PDF.

Q: The cost to each school is about £1,550?

A: MWA spoke to a company he has worked with before, they are able to undertake a piece of work to clone from the Trust Website and ensure consistency, one issue is we're not sure about the expertise within the team to support his work.

A: (LWA) Can I suggest reporting back in June/July, at the minute the websites don't have a corporate feel about it.

A: (CHE) Corporating the websites would make them easier to manage.

NKO asked if any work included taking the views of stakeholders and also consider whether and how much usage is made by parents or is it only for Ofsted. CHE explained that there would be issues with compliance with the current websites even if they were stripped back.

RESOLVED: the Trustees agreed the work to standardise the websites should take place by September in relation to the requirements to ensure compliance. Surveys to be carried out to gain a better understanding of stakeholders requirements for the non compliance areas of the websites.

ACTION: CHE/MWA to lead on the work to work to standardise the websites to take place by September in relation to the requirements to ensure compliance. Surveys to be carried out to gain a better understanding of stakeholders requirements for the non compliance areas of the websites.

CPA commented that the websites were compliant despite providing documents in pdf format, the DFE provide documents in pdf documents, he felt the priority was to ensure the websites had the best search engines.

6.46 pm Catherine Headley left the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The non-confidential minutes of the Board meeting held on the 11th December, 2023 were approved and confirmed as an accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

The Trustees reviewed and updated the action log from the previous meetings –

| DATE | NO. | ACTION | WHO | WHEN | UPDATES |
|--|-----|--|-----|------|---|
| 04.09.2023 | 6i | Statutory gender pay gap information - to revisit when the Chair of the group has been elected | CPA | ASAP | ONGOING moved to July meeting, see below |
| Update – CPA advised a summary on equality report would be shared at the last Board meeting of the academic year | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|----|--|-------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 04.09.2023 | 8c | The Central SIP Team would look at the 1:1 devices report and GWI would pick this up as line manager of MWA and CHE. | GWI/MWA | February Board meeting | ONGOING see update below |
| Update – MWA to present a report to the February board meeting - <u>now moved to a later meeting tbc.</u> Update – GWI confirmed the report would be available for the March meeting | | | | | |
| 11.12.2023 | 4b | SOD for Executive Team - CTW to check with CPA if he has any amendments, any drafting points will be addressed but any substantive amendments would be discussed with LWA. | CTW/CPA | ASAP | COMPLETED |
| | 4c | Stakeholder Survey - School Improvement Committee to look at the response rates. | SDU | 13.12.2023 | UPDATE – see below |
| Update – SDU confirmed this had been considered at the School Improvement Committee on the 13 th December, 2023 | | | | | |
| | 7c | SGR to look at how other Trusts evaluate communications between LGB's and stakeholders. | SGR | February Board | ONGOING |
| | 11 | Trustee recruitment - LWA/DGO/NKO to meet to agree a way forward to advertise on LinkedIn. | LWA/DGO/NKO | January | COMPLETED |

5. CHAIRS UPDATES (LWA)

The Trustees were asked to note the consultation on non-statutory guidance for pupils questioning their gender remains open until the 12th March, 2024. At the end of last term, the DfE had published a consultation on non-statutory guidance on how best to support pupils questioning their gender in schools and colleges.

See Chairs Action under Item 12.

6. GOVERNANCE (SGR)

- a. The Trustees were provide with an update, an advert had been placed on the Reach website and also with Nurole (recruitment agency) so far 7/8 people had responded via Reach. Pre interviews would take place shortly and it was hoped that the Trust would be able to recruit 3 or 4 Trustees. Iain Kinnis had agreed to sit on the interview panel. LWA explained that all of the new Trustees would need to have a current Trustees to support and mentor.

7. COMPLIANCE

- a. Website Compliance (in line with *DfE publication requirements – considered in the earlier part of the meeting.
- b. Admissions Arrangements – consultation for 2025 – 2026 - considered in the earlier part of the meeting.

8. TRUSTEE WORK, VISITS & COMMUNICATION WITH THE LGB'S

- a. The Trustees noted the Trustee visits which had been undertaken since the last meeting and reviewed any follow up actions, reports had been uploaded in advance of the meeting.

| TRUSTEE | AREA OR ENQUIRY | STAFF MEMBER(S) | STATUS/FOLLOW UP ACTIONS |
|---------|---------------------|-----------------|---|
| LWA | National Forest Hub | NKO | To report at meeting – report in meeting folder |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----|--------------------------------|
| LWA, SDU, LMC, DGO | Trustee update | CPA | None, current status discussed |
|-----------------------|----------------|-----|--------------------------------|

9. AGM

The Trustees noted there were no matters/requirements from the Members from the recent AGM.

10. STEERING WHEEL PROGRESS

- a. The Trustees received an update on progress towards Trust Steering Wheel priorities. The main priorities areas had been ensuring Schools were Ofsted ready and the work relating to finance which had been identified last year.

Q: (LWA) I would find it helpful if we can have a document which covers what we should expect and what will happen next and reference through to different plans e.g. new software, finance and which School is the next in terms of priority for a potential Ofsted instead of using the steering wheel which is an operating model, can we look at this?

A: (CPA) At the start of the year we started to transform our operating model and move to the Trust vision, we'll move our operating model to the new pillar models. We will be looking at this during the Summer Term and move from the steering wheel and use pillars e.g. support for schools with SEND etc this will also include the strategy.

ACTION: new Pillars document to be available and considered at the July Board meeting

11. COMMITTEE UPDATES

The Trustees noted the following minutes –

- a. The draft Chairs Group minutes of the 16th January, 2024
- b. The draft Finance minutes of the 23rd January, 2024
- c. The draft Infrastructure minutes of the 30th January, 2024
- d. The draft School Improvement minutes of the 23rd December, 2023. SDU asked if any Trustees wanted to attend the meeting to get in touch. The one issue which the committee needed to consider was the timing of meetings to align with the cycle of data etc from the Schools. LWA queried whether the committee was causing too much work and to be mindful that the work was at a strategic level. SDU felt the committee provided an opportunity for Trustees to undertake deep dives and believed the challenge was useful.

12. FINANCE

The Trustees noted a Chairs Action as follows - the last Audit report showed another delay in ensuring the fixed asset register was complete. In the Autumn, the Board was asked to consider and approve a £40,000 spend on software and people hours to get this up to date. After the Infrastructure meeting, it became apparent that the finance team believed that it was items at an inventory level which was needed, whereas the missing section was the fixed asset area only i.e. items over £5,000. The audit report showed a delay in processing the fixed asset register because the formulas revaluing the assets with depreciation or appreciation were inaccurate - the content was accurate. The fixed asset register was actually in place but had not converted well during the transition from Microsoft to Google and this had led to the skewing of formulas. In view of this we agreed that the £40,000 funding should be removed.

a. CFO's Report

The Trustees received the report a copy of which had been available on Governor Hub to the meeting. SMA was currently working with PMA on the management accounts for the Schools, this was a significant piece of work. PMA explained that the information included in the reports was from the same source and showed key high level adjustments to take you to the forecast. The budget was set annually, the reports would cover any variances and then reforecast.

Q: (LWA) For the outturn in the CFO have we made any progress to show the changes monthly or half termly and for where there are significant levels of savings or expenditure can we have a narrative?

A: (SMA) This is included in the consolidated reports.

The Trustees thanked PMA and SMA for their work and felt the reports were concise.

- b. Top Slice Statement 2023 - 2024 the CFO explained this was a retrospective approval and the statement for next year would be drafted and brought to the May meeting alongside the budgets. The statement had been considered at the Finance Committee in January.

RESOLVED: the Trustees gave retrospective approval for the Top Slice statement for 2023 – 2024.

ACTION: SGR to place Top Slice on the agenda for the May Board meeting.

- c. The Trustees agreed to move the timing of agreed “pooling” for next year to the Summer Board meetings, to be discussed in May then authorised/approved in July.

ACTION: SGR to place pooling on the agenda for the May/July Board meeting

13. POLICIES

The Trustees approved the following policy which have been available for comment by Trustee via Governor Hub prior to the meeting -

- a. GDPR – Data Protection Policy (amendments highlighted in yellow)

14. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETINGS

The Trustees noted the times and dates of the remaining meeting for 2023 – 2024

MEETING DATES 2023 – 2024

| DAY | DATE | START TIME | MEETING |
|-----------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Tuesday | 27.02.2024 | 6.00pm | Audit & Risk |
| Tuesday | 12.03.2024 | 4.00pm | School Improvement |
| Monday | 18.03.2024 | 6.00pm | Trust Board |
| Tuesday | 07.05.2024 | 6.00pm | Finance |
| Tuesday | 14.05.2024 | 6.00pm | Infrastructure |
| Wednesday | 15.05.2024 | 4.00pm | School Improvement |
| Monday | 20.05.2024 | 6.00pm | Trust Board |
| Wednesday | 05.06.2024 | All Day | Strategy Day |
| Tuesday | 11.06.2024 | 6.00pm | Audit & Risk |
| Monday | 01.07.2024 | 6.00pm | Trust Board |

The meeting closed at 7.32pm following the conclusion of the confidential business.