

**LIFE MULTI ACADEMY TRUST
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
HELD ON THE 20TH MAY, 2024 AT 6.00PM**

NON CONFIDENTIAL

COMPOSITION OF THE BOARD

NAME		END DATE OF OFFICE	DESIGNATED ROLE	ATTENDANCE
Liz Warren (LWA)	Trustee	10.01.2025	Chair	Y
Chris Parkinson (CPA)	Trustee		CEO	Y
David Gordon (DGO)	Trustee	28.01.2028		Y - online
David Maitland (DMA)	Trustee (Coopted)	03.03.2028		Y
Sue Dunford (SDU)	Trustee	05.09.2025		Y
Liam McDonagh (LMcD)	Trustee	10.01.2025		Y
Andy Smith (ASM)	Trustee	19.09.2026		Y
Anil Majithia (AMI)	Trustee (Coopted)	03.03.2028		Y
David Gordon (DGO)	Trustee	26.02.2027		Y
Ja Kim (JKI)	Trustee (Coopted)	03.03.2028		Y
Rose Harvey (RHA)	Trustee (Coopted)	03.03.2028		Y - online
IN ATTENDANCE				
Gareth Williams (GWI)			COO	
Nicola Koncarevic (NKO)			Director of Education	
Chris Tweedale (CTW)			Leadership & Governance Development	
Paul Maddox (PMA)			Executive CFO	
Sarah Mayes (SMA)			CFO	
Sian Griffiths (SGR)			Head of Governance	

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

- a. The Chair welcomed all Trustees, and in particular those new to the Board. All attendees provided an introduction/overview of their roles and backgrounds.
- b. The Chair explained the new Trustees status, all, had in the first instance been appointed by the Trust Board and would be Coopted Trustees until such time as the members meet at the AGM in January and the appointments were ratified. As the number of new appointments was 4 but currently the Trust Board had 3 vacancies then RHA's appointment would continue as a Coopted Trustee however this may change as part of the review of the articles of association which would be discussed later in the meeting.
- c. There were no apologies, all Trustees were present, the Chair reminded Trustees that a Trustee would cease to hold office if he/she was absent without the permission of the Trustees from all their meetings held within a period of six months and the Trustees resolve that his/her office be vacated.

2. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

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

3. 1:1 DEVICES – REPORT

The Trustees agreed that the report would be considered by the Infrastructure Committee.

ACTION: SGR/ASM to agree a date for the Infrastructure Committee to meet during this term to consider the report on 1:1 devices.

4. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The non-confidential minutes of the Board meeting held on the 5th February, 2024 were approved and confirmed as an accurate record.

5. 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/MW A	February Board meeting	COMPLETED see action below
Update – MWA to present a report to the February board meeting - now moved to a later meeting tbc. Update – GWI confirmed the report would be available for the March meeting Update - MWA to present a report to the May meeting ACTION: 1:1 devices report to be considered by the Infrastructure Committee in June.					
11.12.2023	7c	SGR to look at how other Trusts evaluate communications between LGB's and stakeholders.	SGR	February Board	ONGOING – SGR to source information from the Key/Governor Hub knowledge and produce a report for the July meeting.
05.02.2024	7b	CTW/NKO to produce a form of words around the admission of children outside their normal age group.	CTW/NK O		COMPLETED SGR drafted and included in the 3 Trust Admissions Policy
	7a	CHE/MWA to lead on the 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.	CHE/MW A	Autumn, 2024	ONGOING – see update below
Update – MWA had contacted 2 companies with a view to redesigning the Trust Website and then each School, this would allow the central IT team to have visibility across the 10 Schools but allow each School to retain its own brand. ACTION: MWA/CHE to produce a report for the Infrastructure Committee in June.					
	12b	SGR to place Top Slice on the agenda for the May Board meeting. SMA/PMA to produce the paper	SGR SMA/PM A	May, 2024	COMPLETED - moved to July Board Meeting
	12c	SGR to place pooling on the agenda for the May/July Board meeting SMA/PMA to produce the paper	SGR SMA/PM A	July, 2024	COMPLETED

04.03.2024	4	LWA to make contact with PRY to gauge his appetite for waiting until September and then the Trustees could consider what that may look like.	LWA	ASAP	REMOVE
------------	---	--	-----	------	--------

6. BOARD MEETING 18TH MARCH, 2024 PAPERS

The Trustees were provided with an opportunity to consider the papers which had been prepared for the postponed meeting of the 18th March, 2024. The Trustees noted and welcomed the information shared regarding celebrations.

From the CEO report from that meeting:

Q: Has attendance at Braunstone Frith improved?

A: (SDU/CPA) There's been a lot of turbulence at the School a lot of movement within the pupils, EAL (English as an additional language) and trauma had also impacted but the ongoing work undertaken by the School had been recognised by Ofsted, there was a particular focus on the pupils with 90/95% attendance.

7. CHAIRS UPDATE (LWA)

The letter from the RSC (Regional Schools Commissioners) regarding Ashby had been shared and noted by Trustees. CPA asked that NKO, Executive Headteacher's hard work be recognised congratulated her on behalf of the Trust for a successful judgement at Ashby.

8. DRAFT TRUST PLAN REVIEW

The Trustees received an update prior to the Strategy Day, the plan had been shared via Governor Hub. CPA provided a brief overview –

- The trust was established in 2016 and whilst the values and missions which were set out at the time remain unchanged it was recognised that the context maybe different. How could those values be reframed for 2024 - by creating schools that prioritise developing all learners agency personally, locally and globally by paying first attention to our most vulnerable learners and creating the conditions for them to thrive.
- The big themes for 2024 onwards - developing appropriate, personalised and innovative modes of teaching, curriculum and assessment which break down barriers between schooling and the world beyond in order to facilitate better learning for all our children and enable all learners to flourish. Understanding and responding to intersectionality: realigning our focus of accountability to wider outcomes and future progression (through agency) for our most vulnerable learners - defined as those with SEND, our socially disadvantaged, those struggling with their mental health and our minoritised groups.
- Looking at how we translate this into the immediate short term, and then medium term, and then long term aims, this was still a work in progress. Discussions had taken place in a school improvement team meeting and following further meetings/discussions a presentation would be made to the board in the Autumn term.

9. GOVERNANCE

a. Scheme of Delegation Review

LWA provided an overview, explaining that a session would take place with LGB Chairs at the Strategy Day to receive their views, CPA would also be attending and leading a part of this. The Trustees appreciated the pressures on LGB's in terms of the workloads created by panels to consider complaints, exclusions and suspensions. The LGB's needed to be reassured that the work they do is valued within the Trust. Issues had arisen around how the finance roles and responsibilities had changed and communicated. The message on the Strategy Day would be the Trust recognises their value, work was also ongoing to join governance up between Leaders and Governors.

b. Annual Board Effectiveness Review incl. Trust Board Self Evaluation and annual review of the Chair and individual Trustee contributions.

SGR explained that there was a new survey from CST which may be an alternative to the self evaluation used in past years. LWA suggesting sharing both review templates with the Trustees.

ACTION: SGR to share the new template (CST) and the template used in previous years for Trustees to provide feedback on which one they would want to complete, SGR would also share the Chairs 360 review for completion by the Trustees.

LWA confirmed would be in touch with each Trustee to arrange the annual conversation/review of how the board was working.

ACTION: LWA to share dates/times with Trustees to arrange annual conversations.

Articles of Association, SGR explained that there had been a misconception relating to the adoption of the DfE model articles, CTW advised the DfE had requested this during the academisation relating to the Schools in the NFH (National Forest Hub) but at the time it was agreed that this would involve a significant piece of work. As the Trust were now looking to increase the number of Trustees it was felt that the Trust would need to look at moving to the model articles. SGR was undertaking a piece of work to compare the current with the new model articles, to date there was very little change, but legal advice would be sought. The process required the Trust to convene a meeting of the full board of trustees, where the trustees would need to agree the proposed amendments by a majority vote. At this stage it would also be important to consult with the members as their approval would be needed later so any concerns they may have could be taken into account. The approved changes and the reasons for them would be sent to the DfE for written consent. Once consent has been obtained, the amended articles must be presented to the members of the trust, for approval. Agreement must be reached by special resolution which needed the support of 75% of those voting, in order to pass. The amended articles and a copy of the special resolution would need to be registered with Companies House the DfE.

10. COMPLIANCE

- a. The Trustees received an assurance that admission arrangements for the years 2023 – 2026 have been published on the Trust and School Websites. SGR explained there had been some confusion with the LA as despite receiving confirmation from both their admissions and legal sections that the policies were compliant the legal department had now asked the appeal manager to reference the previous non compliant policies at appeals hearings.
- b. The Trustees received and noted the Gender Pay Gap Report March 2023, CPA had also produced a supplementary report which had been uploaded into the folder on Governor Hub.

Q: (RHA) The statement says that the Trust has an active gender equality working group and that the action plan is available on the trust website. But I had a look and I can't find that document. So I just thought I would flag that but also the LiFE positive recruitment and time management strategy, similarly, is not available on the website. So I just thought I would flag that?

ACTION: SGR to move Gender Pay report to policies.

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

- a. The Trustees noted the following visits had been undertaken since the last meeting –

Drop in session between the CEO & Trustees - JKI, AMA and ASM had all attended. LWA explained that moving forward SGR would send out the invites for those sessions.

Bosworth - AMA had undertaken a visit and also met with CPA, AMA felt the visit was insightful and helpful to provide an overview of the Trust and the challenges which it faced.

CPA confirmed that Trustees did not have to wait for their DBS to be returned before they undertook a visit to the Schools as long as they were accompanied during the visit.

- b. The Trustees noted that there had not been any communication from LGB's regarding any action points, recommendation and assurances. SGR advised she had received an email from the Chair of the LGB at Ibstock who would come back with further information in time for the July meeting but with the option of communicating any issues earlier to SGR/LWA. LWA had mentioned at the Chairs Group the LGB's could opt to message LWA at any point in between meetings.

The Trustees were advised that 3 Chairs maybe stepping down in the next 12 months. One Chair was stepping down at the end of this Academic year.

- c. To arrange for Annual Trustee Conversations – considered above.
- d. Trust Contribution Record work, LWA explained the process whereby each Trustee was allocated a trust contribution record, in previous years Trustees had spoken to a Chair to gauge how they felt the year had gone and how they felt the School and Trust were working together. LWA felt that this year it may be preferable to leave these calls until after the Strategy Day. The Trust now had enough Trustees to have one who would pay particular attention to a School, but LWA was mindful of not moving towards a Link Trustee position where there was an expectation that Trustees would attend LGB's. Trustees would be expected to pay particular attention to 1 School. Trustees were asked if they would be happy with this arrangement.

Q: How would that work?

A: (LWA) Trustees could look at the particular Headteacher Report and go into a bit more depth, with all Trustees having access to all the Headteacher Reports.

Action: LWA to allocate focus schools to Trustees

12. COMMITTEE UPDATES

- a. The Trustees noted the Chairs Group draft minutes of the 6th March and the 25th April, 2024.
- b. To confirm or clarify the ratification process of elected LGB Chairs. Considered above
- c. The Trustees noted the Finance draft minutes of the 23rd January, 2024 (the 7th May, 2024 meeting had been cancelled), the meeting had scrutinised budget reports and ensured budget setting work was on track.
- d. Infrastructure, 14th May, 2024, the Chair of the Committee in the absence of the draft minutes provided an update and confirmed that the estates report which had been presented to the meeting was now in a more readable format.
- e. The Trustees noted the Audit & Risk draft minutes of the 16th April, 2024.
- f. School Improvement, the Chair of the Committee in the absence of the draft minutes provided an overview. The meeting scheduled for March had been cancelled due to the Ofsted at Braunstone Frith. The meeting which took place last week reviewed and agreed the meeting dates for next year which would align with the data cycle to avoid causing any additional work. Admissions across all Schools were good. Lara Hall had not been available for last week's meeting but Amelia Smith had presented data and explained there had been a significant increase in collaboration which had impacted positively on the outcomes. Ben White reported that pupils at 2 Schools were taking GCSE's for the first time. Work was ongoing to improve networking across secondaries with their use of data and good practice and cross-core moderation. The level of support for SENDCO's from the central team had increased. A request had been made for the committee to receive information around Year 11 destinations - where do the pupils go go to, not just about education.

Q: (CPA) Did you ask for the information?

A: (SDU) Yes I asked SGR to email a request I've had the NEET data but the rest of the data isn't available until September, we think it's important to see outcomes.

A: (NKO) I'd suggest you make contact with Emily Gillespie Director of Careers, the data comes from the LA's Post 16 system.

Action: NKO to provide contact details for Emily Gillespie to SDU

13. FINANCE

- a. The Trustees received the CFO's Report s including the Period 7 Budget Monitoring Report and headlines of the draft budget for the next financial year. PMA provided an overview, the deficit figure of £1,739,000 was a worst-case scenario, the format for the report covered non education, primary and secondary with a consolidated set of management accounts.

Q: In February, £2,100,000 consolidated YTD expenditure is slightly excessive?

A: (PMA) We now have a deficit of £1,739,000 we reduce the level of prudence as we near the end of the period but we always put in worst case scenario.

LWA was reassured by the figures Trustees were receiving and asked SMA to provide some background triangulation of those figures. SMA confirmed that staffing was stable within the team and the new finance software package had been implemented, there was some work to do with the team as certain areas had been identified which required change. SMA was currently covering the Hub Leader vacancies which was helpful as she was seeing first hand what if anything needed to be changed. PMA advised that the level of detail produced by the team far exceeded information which he had seen presented in other Trusts, the staffing budget system was almost live. The previous management information provided to Headteachers was correct but further work had been undertaken including an overview at last week's meeting and transposed to the information the Headteachers have received.

Q: What is the main reason for the £1,700,000 deficit?

A: (PMA) The level of funding is never sufficient to support age range change and the new Schools we took on, (CPA) age range changes requires you to have reserves to fund, the problem is the Schools brought in a level of reserves which was too high and the DFE would not give us sponsorship, the costs were in the region of a couple of million, Ivanhoe cost the best part of a 66% of the £1,500,000, the challenge we have is if we keep the 5% reserve we always knew we'd burn through it. We have to find 89 (no. of pupils) x £6,000 to support the children we have in the school. We will go back to the DFE and ask for in year funding. The NFH (National Forest Hub) will have a slight deficit, this is a 3 year process and next year is year 3. The Schools in the NFH joined the Trust 3 years ago but the age range change didn't start until after year 1. As a Trust we were asked to do this as Bosworth was seen as a good manager of age range change.

Q: What do the DFE expect you to do?

A: (CPA) I have a meeting with Teresa Philipson, Operational Delivery Lead, ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) the ATH (Academy Trust Handbook) doesn't have a specific level but the ESFA would make contact if they see reserves below 5%.

Q: Are there any key risks which could trip us up?

A: (PMA) I don't think so, staff costs is the biggest one but we are forecasting in real time, we may need to tweak as we move nearer the resignation deadline.

Q: For the new software have you planned an audit around integrity?

A: (PMA) I have spoken to auditors (external) who will undertake cross checks.

DMA confirmed this was an area which would be reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee after the issues relating to IT had been addressed.

CPA explained that a couple of schools were hoping to restore some surpluses, other Trusts were in a similar position and nationally there was an expectation of a rise from 50% to 60% of Trusts setting a deficit budget.

- e. The Trustees noted the schools resource management self-assessment checklist (SRMSAC) has been completed and submitted by the 15th March, 2024. Moving forward the checklist would be considered at the Finance meetings.

ACTION: SGR to include on the annual agenda planner for the Finance Committee.

14. POLICIES

The Trustees considered the following policies, all of which have been available for comment by Trustees via Governor Hub –

- a. Reserves Policy - PMA provided the rationale for changing the policy which was to allow the Trust to open a dialogue with the DFE. LWA commented that she had sent over 3 comments and a number of queries, see below -

Para 5.1 - Could there be a paragraph or sentence on the rationale for the range of 5-8% reserve. It is presumably something like "the DfE wants 5% and above so we need some flexibility but we don't want to go higher than 8% as this would mean we would not be spending current funding on current pupils"? This will also help Trustees decide whether to agree that this is the right range in inflationary times.

Para 5.3 - The establishing of a pooled, Trust-level reserve means that every school has potential access to a much larger reserve if needed than was or could ever be the case when each individual school had (or sometimes did not

have) its own individual reserve. This strengthens the financial position of every school within LiFE Multi Academy Trust.”

By using present participles, it could sound as if we are still in the process of persuading, rather than stating policy? I wonder if something like the following might sound more established, as we agreed pooled reserves a while ago.: “Our pooled Trust-level reserve allows every school potential access to a much larger reserve than its own. Therefore every school’s financial position is strengthened by the policy.”

Para 6.1 - How do we differentiate ‘running a deficit budget’ from ‘applying to use central reserves’?

Is there a different process for agreeing a deficit budget for a school when the Budget is set and when a new or revised deficit mid-year is agreed?

Is the CFO report to the Finance Committee or the minutes deemed as Committee agreement or does it need to be voted on?

Can the policy clarify whether it is the school or CEO who approaches the Finance Committee to make use of central reserves please?

It could be helpful to have a proforma in the appendix, to include the information needed by the Finance Committee to make an informed decision.

Q: Could we include non financial investments as well?

Q: How does it help our strategic priorities?

Q: Do we have a benchmark?

A: (CPA) There’s a maximum reserve level of 10% then the ESFA will query.

A: (PMA) I can share the link to KPI’s.

Q: What does 8% equate to in terms of running costs which is what most companies work to/in?

A: (CPA) More for a benchmark, the government wouldn’t want to let Trusts fold.

RESOLVED: the Trustees approved the policy subject to the adjustments listed above.

- b. Complaints (School) Policy (para for clarity) SGR explained that the DFE had asked for clarity around 2 paras in the policy one related to confidentiality and sharing of the documents and the other related to retention of the papers within the School. The policy had been amended and recirculated following a Chairs action in March, 2024.
- c. Complaints Policy (Trust) Policy (new policy) SGR explained this was a new policy which related to complaints from Parents regarding the Trust/Central Team and/or members of the Trust Board.

Q: Can Parents move a complaint from the School to the Trust process if they’re unhappy with the outcome of the School process?

A: (SGR) No we would be really clear about which policy we were following and once the process was concluded there would be no further option, thanks to NKO/LHA who are now speaking to parents when the initial complaint comes in as this has deescalated situations and the level of complaints have started to reduce.

- d. Trustee & Governor Visit Policy - as this was a new policy there was a requirement to review after 1 year, SGR advised there were no changes needed. Trustees were asked to approve the policy and extend the review period for 2 years unless guidance required changes.

RESOLVED: the Trustees approved the policies listed b. to d. above.

SGR confirmed the Parental code of conduct would be ready for the Trust Board to consider and approve in July.

The Trustees received the Trusts Gaza statement which had been available on Governor Hub prior to the meeting. LWA/CPA advised Trustees that the DfE consultation on draft update to relationships, sex and health education (RSHE) guidance was taking place.

ACTION: SGR to share link to the DFE RHSE consultation with Trustees via Governor Hub.

15. DATE & TIME OF THE BOARD & COMMITTEE MEETINGS for 2023 - 2024

The Trustees noted the date and times of the meetings for the remainder of the year as listed below -

MEETING DATES 2023 – 2024

DAY	DATE	START TIME	MEETING
Wednesday	05.06.2024	All Day	Strategy Day
Tuesday	11.06.2024	6.00pm	Audit & Risk
Monday	01.07.2024	6.00pm	Trust Board

16. MEETING DATES - 2024 – 2025

The Trustees noted the dates and time of the meetings during the academic year 2024 – 2025 the dates for Pay & People would be agreed at a short meeting in June. The dates for School Improvement had been agreed on the 15th May, 2024 by the committee. The Exec CFO and CFO would review the dates for the Finance Committee to agree whether the dates align with the budget reporting/monitoring cycle. LWA asked if Trustees were happy to move the start time of the board meetings to a slightly earlier time. The Trustees agreed to a 5.30pm start for the Trust Board meetings.

DATE	START TIME	ONLINE/IN PERSON	MEETING
Tues 27 Aug 2024			TERM STARTS
September Date TBC at July Board meeting (Monday)	5.30pm		Trust Board
Wed 18 Sep 2024	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Chairs Group
Tues 1 Oct 2024	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Infrastructure
Weds 9 Oct 2024	4.00 pm	Online - zoom	School Improvement
Tues 15 Oct 2024	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Finance
Mon 21 Oct 2024 - Fri 25 Oct 2024		Mon 21 Oct 2024 - Fri 25 Oct 2024	HALF TERM
Wed 6 Nov 2024	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Chairs Group
TBC			Pay & People
Tue 26 Nov 2024	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Audit & Risk
Mon 9 Dec 2024	5.30 pm	Online - zoom	Trust Board
Mon 23 Dec 2024 - Fri 3 Jan 2025		Mon 23 Dec 2024 - Fri 3 Jan 2025	XMAS
Tue 14 Jan 2025	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Chairs Group
Wed 15 Jan 2025	4.00 pm	Online - zoom	School Improvement
Tues 21 Jan 2025	5.30 pm		Members - AGM
TBC			Infrastructure
TBC			Finance
Mon 17 Feb 2025 - Fri 21 Feb 2025		Mon 17 Feb 2025 - Fri 21 Feb 2025	HALF TERM
TBC			Pay & People
Tue 4 Mar 2025	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Audit & Risk

Thu 13 Mar 2025	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Chairs Group
Wed 19 Mar 2025	4.00 pm	Online - zoom	School Improvement
Mon 31 Mar 2025	5.30 pm		Trust Board
Mon 14 Apr 2025 - Fri 25 Apr 2025		Mon 14 Apr 2025 - Fri 25 Apr 2025	EASTER
Mon 5 May 2025		Mon 5 May 2025	BANK HOLIDAY
Thu 8 May 2025	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Chairs Group
Tue 20 May 2025	4.00 pm	Online - zoom	School Improvement
TBC			Pay & People
Mon 26 May 2025 - Fri 30 May 2025		Mon 26 May 2025 - Fri 30 May 2025	HALF TERM
			Infrastructure
			Finance
TBC - June			Trust Strategy Day
Tue 10 Jun 2025	6.00 pm	Online - zoom	Audit & Risk
Wed 18 Jun 2025	4.00 pm	Online - zoom	School Improvement
Mon 30 Jun 2025	5.30 pm		Trust Board
Tues 8 Jul 2025		Tues 8 Jul 2025	SUMMER BREAK

The meeting closed at 8.09pm following the conclusion of the confidential business