



TOVE LEARNING TRUST

Minutes

GOOGLE HANGOUTS MEET VIDEO CONFERENCE

Meeting	Trustees
Date	28 th April 2020
Attendance & Apologies	
Trustees	
Christopher Watt (Chair) CW	P
Jamie Clarke (JRC)	P
Tim Foster (TF)	P
Trust representatives	
Sue Wagstaff (CFO) (SW)	P
Trustees	
Jo Chitty (JC)	P
Thomas Schilling (TS)	P
Duncan Nicholson (DN)	P
Trust representatives	

(key: P=Present, Ap=apologies received, A=absent)

In attendance: Katie Fell (Clerk) (KLF)

No.	Item	Action
1.	Apologies and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees met via Google Meet video conference due to Covid-19 social distancing. There were no apologies. 	
2.	Declaration of Interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No interests declared. 	
3.	Minutes and Matters Arising from 23rd March 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees reviewed minutes from 23/03/20 and agreed they were a true reflection of the meeting. Corrections to amend in the minutes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sarah Conway finished as Chair of the Lord Grey AIB on 27th March 2020 (not the end of July 2020). Face to face LGBs meetings have been postponed but will continue virtually. Matters arising: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SW to follow up separately with Crowe re late filing of LAT annual accounts. The minutes will be signed electronically by the Chair due to the meeting being online. Chairs Actions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TLT Lone Worker policy was implemented between Trustees' meetings in response to the Covid-19 situation and staff needing to make visits to vulnerable students. DECISION: Trustees ratified the TLT Lone Worker policy. Jennie Cronin has stepped up to become Chair of Lord Grey AIB. She will be a great addition to the team. DECISION: Trustees ratified the appointment. 	SW
4.	Safeguarding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No issues to report. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jo Chitty (JC) advised Trustees that LGBs at Sponne and EWS are implementing appropriate safeguarding support in response to school closures. Sponne and EWS have submitted a safeguarding audit for NCC (copies available in the Trustees' classroom). Trustees were reassured that safeguarding is being managed at a distance after an update from the CEO. 	
5.	<p>Estates Manager Report (TR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TR submitted a report updating Trustees about Health & Safety compliance across the MAT. Trustees raised concern about the Fire Alarm system at GAD but were advised this has been an ongoing fault with the panel since installation. ACTION: SW to take back to TR for follow up. The Estates Manager report provided an update on the SCA funding received, which was less than anticipated (deficit of £108,004). 2015 census data was used to calculate the final allocation which may account for the shortfall received, TR is investigating. TR recommended a revised capital scheme of works with the reduced SCA funding, and asked Trustees for approval on the final project allocations. Revisions to the reinforced concrete spending (RAAC) was advised to free up £80k to be reallocated to SCA projects, and other amendments were suggested. ACTION: Trustees requested the original Option 3A to be re-presented with revised figures to enable a more meaningful comparison before committing to the final SCA allocation. 	<p>SW/TR</p> <p>TR</p>
6.	<p>CEO Report (JRC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JRC presented a summary report to Trustees, providing an update on current school closures and the impact on students and staff. the trust is following guidance from ESFA and only a small proportion of staff who are not covered by GAG funding have been furloughed. Generally, staff have responded very well to a rapid pace of change and have adjusted to the shift from face to face teaching to delivering online learning. Google classroom has been a huge enabler. The MAT has been engaged with this for a while prior to school closures which has meant a faster response and adjustment than in other multi-academy trusts. Pupil engagement is a big concern, with the probable performance gap for disadvantaged students appearing to increase. Students from more privileged backgrounds are better engaged and often have access to devices to enable this. Public exams for Year 11 and 13 have been cancelled. Schools are working to collate Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) by 30th April, which will be internally reviewed and scrutinised by TLT before subject based rankings are submitted to exam boards at the end of May. Schools are continuing to recruit at a distance and interviewing virtually via video link, but the usual teacher observations are not possible and therefore the quality of new recruits will be monitored in different ways. Managing a remote workforce is challenging for leaders, with staff wellbeing and balancing home, and professional, life a particular challenge for colleagues with young families. The re-opening of schools is highly unlikely before June 2020 and will require careful planning with regards to social distancing, split classes, phased returns for certain year groups etc. There is still a lot of uncertainty and we will be guided by government policy. There will be no pupil achievement data reported for this academic year due to Covid-19, nor will Ofsted rely on 2020 performance data for inspections. However, Ofsted inspections will return at some point in the future and we still expect Rushden and Lord Grey to be inspected as 'new schools'. Pupil data and expected intake numbers for 2020 were shared with Trustees, noting there is a downward trend in demographics for reception children in the NCC region. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rushden Academy has appointed a new School Business Manager (Lisa Barratt) who is assisting SW with the nursery finances, and budget planning. CW thanked JRC for all the work he is putting in to support the Covid-19 response. 	
7.	<p>Reports from LGBs/AIBs and Governance issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DECISION: Trustees ratified the appointment of Jennie Cronin as Chair of Lord Grey AIB. The AIB will transition to an LGB during the summer term, ready for parent governor elections in September. DECISION: Trustees ratified the appointment of Ian Baker as Chair of Grace Academy Solihull LGB. The AIB has transitioned to an LGB this term. Ian Baker has been a member of the AIB and also Chair at Grace Academy Darlaston, and Trustees are delighted to have him in post. John Burton was thanked for his role as Chair of the AIB and Trustees are grateful he will be staying on as a member of the LGB. Further appointments to the governing body include: Grant Kearns, Phil Leivers, John Loach, Kirsty Barlow, and Nadeem Bashir. Trustees discussed the need to ‘morph’ remaining AIBs to LGBs in the coming academic year. Rushden AIB to become an LGB in September 2020, and Tim Foster will raise it as an agenda item at 5th May meeting. Further governor recruitment is needed from local community, staff and parent governors. DECISION: Implement a shadow LGB after May half term, to become a full LGB from September. JRC to work with Chairs of AIBs, and current LGBs, to ensure governance is fit for purpose. Trustees discussed the ongoing statutory requirements of the Audit committee: to ensure governance, compliance and financial scrutiny are maintained. However, it was agreed to pause Audit committee meetings during school closures, with Responsible Officer visits and reports not being possible at the present time. DECISION: All agreed. 	
9.	<p>CFO updates (SW)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SW presented updated management accounts for March 2020. Amendments to the consolidated TLT management accounts were discussed, with some revised forecasts being made due to changes in budget and actual spend as a result of Covid-19. Savings are expected to be made, which will result in an overall zero budget for the year. Areas of concern reported include the lack of a School Business Manager at EWS since October 2019. Staffing figures at EWS have been higher than anticipated this year, and the lack of a baseline staffing budget has been an obstacle in controlling expenditure. However, there are cost savings expected associated with the School Business Manager role, and the IT Network Manager role, plus lower costs and income for the Willison Centre during closure. EWS PAN is expected to rise with up-front additional funding from the council to enable larger intakes. There will be some repurposing of buildings to take on more students at North and South sites. SW recapped on the 2020/21 budget setting process and deadlines. Draft budgets will be submitted for review 4th May, and presented to Trustees at the next meeting 18th May. This gives time to go back to schools and LGBs in June, before final sign off by Trustees 1st July. 	
10.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustees discussed anecdotal evidence that feeder primary schools for EWS were experiencing lower intake numbers. Anecdotal feedback suggests parents are not happy with the improvements at EWS and are not aware it is part of the same MAT as Sponne. Chair of Trustees confirmed that EWS had received strong positive comments in recent parent surveys, and have been working hard to promote the changes and improvements in the school to the local community. It takes a long time to change the public perception of a school, and work has already progressed with the headteacher at EWS and the local community. JRC will continue to work with the head on this. Trustees asked about EWS budget concerns and when remedial investigations started? 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFO and Principal Accounting Officer visited EWS in February to investigate reasons for discrepancies at a 6-month review. Monthly staffing costs were identified as an issue in the management accounts, and deeper investigation has been completed. EWS have been overstaffed in some areas this year due to some roles being recruited in the summer term which were not accounted for in the budget planning. EWS situation has been compounded by a series of unsuccessful School Business Manager appointments combined with the challenges of a split site and ongoing change at the school. • ACTION: SW to present an explanation at the next board meeting on how the EWS staffing budget overspend occurred and report a revised plan to Trustees. • CFO to work with School Business Managers in September to review staffing budgets compared to the outline plan completed in June. • Trustees were reassured that a monitoring process is in place, accountability is clearly defined and the trust is looking at lessons learned. 	SW
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Meeting ended 6:25pm

Next meetings:
Monday 18th May 2020 5pm

ACTIONS from this meeting		
ACTION	BY WHOM	BY DATE
Present revised SCA funding allocation (Option 3A) to Trustees before committing to the final SCA allocation.	TR	05/05/2020
Report to Trustees on EWS staffing budget overspend and revised plan.	SW	18/05/2020



Signed by: _____ Chair of Trustees

Date: 18/05/2020