



TOVE LEARNING TRUST

Minutes

Meeting	Trustees		
Date	21 st September 2020		
Attendance & Apologies			
Trustees	Trustees		
Christopher Watt (CW) (Chair)	P	Jo Chitty (JC)	P
Jamie Clarke (JRC) (CEO)	P	Thomas Schilling (TS)	P
Tim Foster (TF)	P	Duncan Nicholson (DN)	Ap
Trust representatives			
Sue Wagstaff (SW) (CFO)	P	Tracy Routledge (TR) Estates Manager	P

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

In attendance: Katie Fell (Clerk) (KLF)

No.	Item	Action
1.	Apologies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologies were received and recorded for Duncan Nicholson (DN). 	
2.	Declaration of Interests or Conflicts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. 	
3.	Estate Manager Report (TR)	
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TR reported that H&S visits have been rescheduled during September due to a change of consultant at Ellis Whittam. TR will therefore submit a report to the next Trustees meeting or provide an interim report, whichever is preferred. Trustees were updated on the School Capital Allocation (SCA) schemes, reporting that all summer schemes had gone well; some minor issues were being sorted out; but otherwise all successful. £457K of SCA funding had not yet been allocated from the first round of bids, and TR outlined the following options for Trustees to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GAD replacement of fire alarm panel £18K. This was not previously a known expense, and has been covered with school funds so far. TR supports this project. Sponne had sought £122K for science extension but has been able to secure LA funding direct and able to finance via other ways. Requesting to divert this funding. SW has prepared a paper requesting £85K plus another £52K in order to get to planning stage. Seeking approval in principal. TR recommended an Invest to Save Scheme for LED lighting installation in MAT schools. Proposal is to support schools with a contribution of at least 15% to be able to be successful in bids for this energy saving programme. Would like to be able to support schools this way either through a loan or some form of payback. The proposal includes enlisting a project manager FOC to start the scheme. TR is 	

	<p>seeking an agreement in principle to support this carbon neutral scheme. TLT will need to submit carbon returns and this could be a really good mechanism to start on this journey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ £289,016 would be left in the pot or could be allocated out to other schemes later on. ● Trustees asked about the mechanics of the Salix scheme and asked TR to confirm the rules about retaining SCA funding. ● <i>TR explained each school would need to submit their own bid for a Salix loan, and they would be considered individually. There is no deadline or expiry date on the Salix loans. SCA funding can be retained until the next financial year. The next round of SCA funding will be started in October, and TR advised Trustees that it could be prudent to release some of the 2019-20 funding now to address specific issues, before looking at the next tranche.</i> ● It was confirmed that there were no SCA schemes currently under review at Water Hall or Knowles primaries. JRC confirmed that the DfE allocated c.£250K for capital works as part of the rebrokerage deal. ● SW confirmed that the fire alarm panel was previously an unknown need at the outset of SCA bidding, and had it been known it would have been flagged as a priority compliance issue. JRC agreed with the rationale, but asked that this be made clearer in the request for funding allocation presented to Trustees, and requested further work be completed to ensure an open and transparent process of assessing need is completed. ● CEO asked TR to ensure that other MAT schools had been asked if there were other priority projects that still required funding and all parties are given fair and equal access to any remaining funds. ● Trustees were supportive of the Salix loan / carbon neutral scheme based on the information shared so far, but agreed further detail was required to inform a final decision. SW advised that we seek a consultant's report and hear their recommendations on how good, bad or indifferent schools are currently rated, seek advice on the length of repayment for schemes and assess their cost effectiveness. ● ACTION: It was agreed that further work was required to consult with schools, assess priorities for the SCA funding and then re-present a ranked priority list to Trustees for consideration. ● JRC, SW and TR to meet, review the SCA strategy and work up a more robust process to present to Trustees. CW offered to oversee the process and it will be delegated to a team to finalise the decision. 	<p>JRC, SW, TR</p>
<p>3.2</p>	<p>Rushden Children's Centre (TR)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TR presented a paper outlining a proposal from NCC. Following a service review the Children's Centre located on Rushden Academy site will shortly become surplus to Council requirements. An expression of interest has been sought from the school with regards to taking on responsibility for the building. ● The Children's Centre building is landlocked by the Academy site and therefore it is felt this proposal offers a good opportunity for the Academy to safeguard users on its site, increase usable and profitable space and support a viable pre-school provision for the local community. Sure Start Centre funding requires the space to provide minimal 0-5 years provision during the week, which is achievable. ● Rushden LGB are supportive of the proposal. ● DECISION: Trustees agreed unanimously to the proposal and requested TR to feedback to the School Business Manager. ● Thank you to TR for attending. TR left the meeting. 	

4.	<p>Governance matters (Clerk)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Clerk circulated annual updates to be completed for skills audits, declaration of interests etc. in the classroom. ● Trustees were asked to confirm they had read and received the latest safeguarding KCSIE 2020 documents and to receive a school safeguarding briefing at an LGB. 	
5.	<p>Minutes of previous meetings 1st July and 22nd July 2020</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Minutes from 1st July – all actions completed, confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair. ● Minutes from 22nd July – amend to state that DN had submitted apologies in advance of the meeting. Confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair. 	
6.	<p>CEO Report (JRC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● JRC presented highlights of the full CEO report shared with Trustees. ● September has seen the return to full opening in 100% of our schools. Pupils are very positive in all sites, and staff are adapting remarkably well to new ways of working. ● Attendance is largely good across the MAT. Attendance at WPS dropped due to seasonal coughs and colds and parents being cautious, which is impacting overall figures. Staff attendance was reported as good too. ● Operating student bubbles for different year groups is a huge logistical operation, largely falling to headteachers and senior teams to plan and manage. It is taking time and taking its toll. Communications and parental engagement is hard work and takes time and effort. CEO informed Trustees we need to be cautious and aware of what else school leaders aren't able to do whilst their focus is diverted onto this. The ongoing scale of this is vast; we need to focus on the most vulnerable students; yet need to develop a sustainable approach. ● <i>Trustees thanked JRC for flagging these concerns, and asked what else can Trustees be doing to support leaders and maintain their resilience. Trustees were interested to be kept informed about any additional ideas and schemes or to support staff.</i> ● It was anticipated that further challenges would arise if there are rota based year groups or the reintroduction of remote learning for groups of students self-isolating. Childcare issues are a concern for staff too. ● Local PHE advice and guidance varies depending on local risk factors and therefore responses vary across the MAT schools. ● TLT has established a Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) with unions which has been a helpful and constructive mechanism for progressing the MAT's policy development. Due to the size of our MAT unions are allocating national negotiators and senior personnel to engage with us. ● Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) from summer exams were discussed. Trustees were informed these are grades generated on the evidence that we had prior to lockdown – they are not exam grades, and are not necessarily representative of what students can do. ● CEO has requested that LGBs do not use these as progress. The CAGs cannot be used as a barometer of outcomes or performance. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The two new primaries joined TLT in September and the TLT growth plan will be updated accordingly. Water Hall holds its first AIB meeting later this week. ● Richard Cahill has joined as a School Improvement Lead; he is already making a good impact. ● We are advertising for a central HR Manager to lead on the people strategy and be a liaison between school HR teams and EPM our HR service provider. ● The management accounts for July are showing a surplus of £630k forecast for the trust overall in 2019-20. Given the complexity of year end, the August accounts are not yet finalised. There are no surprises in these accounts but worth noting that EWS in-year deficit is projected to be £371k (budget was a deficit of £148K) and Rushden deficit is forecast to have reduced to £38k (budget was £197k). ● Future agenda item: MAT improvement plan and horizon scanning. ● Trustees expressed their appreciation to CEO and school leaders during these unprecedented times. 	KLF
7.	<p>Reports from AIB/LGBs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trustees approved the following governor appointments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water Hall Primary School AIB: Jo Chitty (Chair), Sarah Matthews, Fiona Newitt ○ Knowles Primary LGB: Lucy Abbott (Chair) others yet to be appointed 	KLF
8.	<p>Safeguarding update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No major safeguarding issues to bring to Trustees. We manage safeguarding well and take care of children well across the MAT. Some issues have arisen which have come about due to the pressures of lockdown and increased volume of disclosures during this time. ● Nigel Handyside, previously VP at Lord Grey, will be conducting safeguarding audits across the MAT over the next year. Each school will receive a report, and a summary report will be presented to Trustees late spring / early summer. Nigel is very experienced and well connected in safeguarding networks, and involved in local community projects. ● Trustees asked whether there was a standard safeguarding template, and does this feed into the remit of the Audit Committee? It was confirmed that KCSIE provides all the guidance for this, and that JRC does them as part of his Ofsted work. Safeguarding will be revisited as an emerging risk as part of the risk register reviews – especially in the event of another lock down. 	
9.	<p>Finance Update (SW)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● July management accounts were circulated during the summer holiday and August accounts came out today. ● £630K surplus reported in July, which has now gone up to £780K in August, but final adjustments for accruals and prepayments will make a difference on the final outcome. ● SW gave reassurance that the trust is in surplus and there are no concerns, but explained that monies have been spent on furlough and we might end up giving that money back to schools since DfE will not reimburse it. There will be lots of adjustments and consolidation for preparation of final accounts. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The timeline of dates for the preparation of annual accounts and year end were shared. ● EWS Financial management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SW reported that Caroline Proctor started as School Business Manager (SBM) at EWS on 1st September. Her expertise is not accounting finance, but she is able to hold people to account for managing budgets. SW is providing a detailed induction into the finance operations and visiting weekly to give practical support initially. ○ SW is meeting with 2 EWS governors to go through budget and reports in more detail, to provide a deeper understanding and enable governor to hold the school to account and provide better scrutiny. 	
10.	<p>Trust Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● TLT Pay Policy 2020 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TLT will adhere to the nationally negotiated rates for Support Staff, which will be backdated to April. ○ DECISION: Trustees approved the new support staff pay scales. ○ Teachers pay and conditions are still being consulted on. It is proposed to have a 5.5% uplift to the bottom of the pay spine, with 2.75% for the rest. ○ DECISION: Trustees agreed to delegate the Pay Policy approval to the Pay Committee as long as it is finalised by parliament by that date. 	
11.	<p>AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trustees asked if JRC was confident all trust academies (including new MK primaries) have appropriate measures in place to successfully deliver virtual learning should this become necessary again. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>JRC confirmed TLT is well placed. We became well practiced at this during lockdown. The largest challenge will be managing a mixed economy of teaching students in school and delivering remote learning for those at home self-isolating. Reassurance was given to trustees that all MAT Heads have been asked to prepare for this.</i> ○ It was noted that access to PCs and laptops at home was a potential barrier to remote learning. There has been a 2nd tranche of DS laptops made available, the request has been submitted and delivery awaited. ● Trustees agreed to invite Carl Salt (Director of Secondary), Jamie Nairn (Director of Primary) and Richard Cahill (Lead School Improvement Director) to future meetings this year. ACTION: KLF to add to meeting schedule for the year ahead. ● Thanks were expressed for the volume of work covered and the consistent quality. 	KLF

Meeting ended: 6:10pm

Date of next meeting: 22nd October 2020 (Finance Committee)

ACTIONS from this meeting		
ACTION	BY WHOM	BY DATE
Further work required to consult with schools, assess priorities for the SCA funding and then re-present a ranked priority list to Trustees for consideration for 2019-20 funds. (JRC, SW, TR to meet to review this)	JRC, SW, TR	November 2020
Invite Carl Salt, Jamie Nairn, Richard Cahill to attend a Trustees meeting this year.	CW/KLF	November 2020
Future Agenda Item to note: MAT improvement plan and horizon scanning	KLF	November 2020

Signed by : 

Chair of Trustee

Date: 07/12/2020