

MINUTES
of the Full Board meeting of Directors of Teignmouth Learning Trust
Thursday 1 February 2018 at 6.00 pm in the Library, Exeter Road.

Present: Jason Beardmore (Principal, ER) Sarah Minty-Dyke
Tony Gray (CEO) Katy Quinn (Principal, ML)
Pat Henchie Sarah Schooling
Pip Kerr Gaby Willis (Clerk)
Mark Moore (Chair) Scott Deeming (Co Sec)
Vic Millard (Vice-Chair) Jon Newman (Leadership)

Apologies: Andrew Flanagan Mike Stean

Absences: None

Action

Meeting opened at 6.06 pm.

01.02.01 Apologies for Absence: AF and MS – accepted. SMD not yet present.

01.02.02 Declaration of Interests: None

01.02.03 Appointment of a Director: Deferred to next meeting as unable to attend due to illness. MM and APG have spoken to Jack Spicer who is interested in HR portfolio. Also the Clerk has received a declaration of interest from a SVP at another school so [MM will catch up with that person shortly.](#)

MM

01.02.04 Minutes of Previous Full Board Meeting (14.12.17): Minutes accepted as true record of the meeting. *(SMD joined the meeting.)*

01.02.05 Matters Arising: MM asked APG if he had received the requested expressions of interest around the reformulated board? APG - not overwhelmed with people wanting to leave local structure. 2 Trustees have indicated would be happy to sit on Trust Board: VM and AF; and PH has said she will sit wherever. Still some vacancies on the MAT Board in terms of functional structure. At Member level probably secure, one of the governors from Kenn has indicated he would be a Member which would satisfy the requirements of the Diocese of Exeter. Graham Bond and Martyn Cox are happy to continue as Members. Indirect approaches have been made to the Earl of Devonshire and this is being furthered with direct contact. Diocese to notify of another person for a vacancy. APG would sit as a Trustee. There is a particular skills gap around Estates and HR. Still a couple of gaps but hopeful these will be filled. KCSIE signature page circulated for those who have not yet signed.

01.02.06 Chair's Remarks: Need to think in line with APG restructures. [MM to come back with some suggestions.](#) Would welcome any ideas. TCS Strategic Intentions meeting on 20 January was very positive. [3 outstanding summary sheets need to be returned to MM please.](#)

MM

All

01.02.07 Papers for Urgent Matters Arising Only (electronically distributed in advance):
Finance: Key report – VM read from a document he had prepared:

“I have deliberately prepared my wording for this element of the report due to my view as to its importance and that I ensure that the minutes are recorded precisely.

The context is

- (a) The unforeseen overspend to budget last year and its impact on our reserves.
- (b) The subsequent recommendations made by our auditors – Francis Clark.
- (c) The commitments to savings from this year's budget to recover (at least in part) last years' overspends, made by leadership at a meeting on 7th December 2017. This was further discussed and logged at the finance committee of 17th January 2018.

- (d) Concern as to adequacy and effectiveness of budget management procedures, arising from the finance committee and from subsequent meetings/information supplied to VM and AF by JN.
- (e) The board's responsibilities as outlined in the Academy Finance Handbook.

Firstly, I think it important to remind the board of its collective responsibilities as specified in the Academy Finance Handbook. I would note that, in referring to these responsibilities, the handbook emphasises the use of the word 'should' (indicating where something is recommended as good practice) and 'must' (indicating just that – and that boards have no option but to comply):

The clauses relevant to this in the handbook are :

2.2.4. The board of trustees, and any separate committee responsible for finance, MUST:

- **ensure good financial management and effective internal controls.**
- **ensure sufficient rigour and scrutiny in the budget management process to understand and address variances between the budget that has been set and actual income and expenditure.**

With the above clearly in mind I inform the board as follows :

The meeting (to assess and plan for savings) of 7th December agreed a target of achieving circa £100k of savings from this year's budget. (this to include the £9k left remaining in reserves). In the last few days Jon has completed the considerable task of a detailed forecast for the full year - which indicates a saving of only £30k which, when added to our current reserves, gives only a circa £40k carry forward for next year. **I highlight this to the board as I suggest a decision is required as to whether this significant indicated reduction is acceptable.**

The above facts link to the ongoing concerns (d above) as to budget management controls within the academy. This has been the subject of much discussion between JN/AF and VM in the last two weeks. I would wish to note that the non- staff members of the committee (AF, MM and VM) are fully appreciative of Jon's commitment to achieving the degree of control we (and the auditors) feel necessary, and his strongly expressed view that there has always been a certain level of control in place. However, finances are such that I, as Chair of that committee, believe we cannot continue a moment longer without more specific, consistent, written control processes in place. Processes that we are sure are fully understood by all budget holders as to their responsibilities, accountabilities and methodology. Jon has advised that he is in dialogue with Francis Clark for their assistance in rapidly setting up this enhanced control structure, and AF and I are fully involved in this also. **I recommend to the board that we set a deadline of 4 weeks from now to have these controls understood and in place – bearing in mind we are already at period 6 of the year. Further that Jon is authorised to apply whatever resources necessary to achieve this.**

I would add my view that the shortcomings identified and the challenges that are now presented are a collective responsibility of the board and senior leadership. Jon has worked diligently and extremely hard in increasingly difficult circumstances. I believe he should have the board's total support for whatever is required to achieve the essential outcomes."

VM - 2 recommendations – the targeted savings - in the Leadership and Management meeting in December we agreed circa £100k but trends and forecasts now indicate only £40k. Believe Board need to decide whether this is acceptable or not. PK – what is the impact this year on it not being £100k? VM – reserves will not recover to

anything like what we were aiming for when first decision was made in December. If things continue as they are, it will only recover £40k. Mismatch between what we thought was reasonable to achieve £100k and what figures are telling us. Can't judge at this point whether this is because we are still not expressing the controls that we need to, or whether there are other factors that mean the December estimates were way out. Impact is we have historically had £150-200k reserve target. Even that level has been questioned as too low and relative to many other schools and academies it is low. We now have £9k. Board need to be aware at the end of the year savings will be £40k not £100k. Should more pressure be brought to bear on budget lines or is the Board accepting that £40k is all we can hope for?

MM - budget set for this year saw overspend in reserve in any event. Are you saying savings are making an extra £30k plus we are not overspending by a planned £30k so aiming to come in end of year having spent around £60k less? JN - yes. MM - if we approve a change of course then we will end up with £40k in bank at the end of the year. JN - forecast says this, predicting budgets is not exact and changes on monthly basis. Margins are incredibly tight. JB - from JN's perspective do you feel spending patterns have changed over time markedly? JN - less income has caused the squeeze. In the past we had additional income for some things; that is now hard to get. JB - some costs have risen more than we would have predicted, like employer contributions? JN - we know that in the last financial year employer contributions of NI and pensions rose by £200k. Staff costs planned to spend £60k less than last year. JB - We are in a period of austerity, and have had a very deliberate and proactive process of reducing staffing costs since September 2016. We are talking of individual people's hours, not replacing people, redeploying one person to another place. Also have staff doing more cover lessons at ER than before in order to cut costs. Since Christmas the external supply spend is one fifth of the previous spend. This is affecting individuals and teams very significantly. Would like to know what more we could do with cutting staffing budget. Lost senior members of staff which have amounted to a huge in-year saving and we have absorbed those roles internally. JN - looking at larger class sizes at KS3 next year. JB - if you are confirming we are not spending any more extravagantly? JN - if anything we are spending less. Had no improvements other than successful SIF bids. Repairs and maintenance paired right back. Discussions taking place at both sites. JN - taking opportunity as staff leave not replacing like for like. KQ - JN and JB articulated very well in terms of the projection JN is looking at. Considerable in-year saving. Probably need to look to next year. Agree with JB, not sure what else we can do this year. MM - JN or VM - talk about forward projections. If we agree £40k for this year, what is the following year looking like as schools expand and funding lags. JN - always positive at this time of year, things in mind can make some curriculum decisions now. Can reduce breadth of year 12 curriculum going forward. Reduce KS3. Net result £120k extra funding for extra students in year 7 and Sixth form. Optimistic about setting a balanced budget. Last year was the hardest I have ever had to set. ML having had growth over last 5 years redistribution of funds means ML may do slightly better than average due to student profile. If Trust expands we are a bigger entity. 3 well run schools are coming into the Trust well afloat. MM - APG please talk about the state of the other schools joining in terms of cash. APG - always been tight. In the past we looked at ways of increasing income with catering, Alive, outsourcing our services and doing things internally wherever we could caretaking, cleaning, catering. Both schools are attracting more students and bucking the trend. Concerns are there is a limit as functions have to be met and there may not be enough staff to do it. One reason it is important to get financially sound schools to join is we can make the most of economies of scale in terms of staffing and resources. Indications are good, and we have instructed 2 firms of accountants to do due diligence on us, one is not our own. JN had a meeting with finance people, indicates they are sound. C/f each £60k and we have indicated we will ring-fence that for them. MM - any more questions before we move to vote? VM

– just pointing out between December and now the objective has moved from £100k to £40k. Not yet, as Chair of Finance Committee, satisfied that we have sufficient controls in place for us to be planning what our saving will be rather than reacting to what saving comes at the end. Have seen a plan of savings from ML, haven't see plan for ER. Duty bound to say this. JN has done great work in the week providing forecast. Acknowledge difficulties faced by all schools. Not sufficiently controlled budgets. MM – first proposal is you would like to set a 4 week deadline for some sort of turnaround. Second – we collectively make clear as a Board we would want the necessary resources to be put to that, whatever is required. APG – necessary now to change objective? VM – fair point, but objective of £100k clearly won't be met unless more cuts are put in. Has to be proactive to get from forecast of £40k to nearer £100k. Not recommending pressure on Principals to make more savings, but worried rather than planning we are reacting. VM – I (supported strongly by AF who is not here tonight) believe we have to have control mechanisms where every budget holder in the academy has the same clear guidelines, what is left, what are the rules. PK – what is in place for those budget holders? JN – They would be allocated their budget. Many are relatively small. Degree of autonomy as to when they can spend it over the year. They would receive information every 1-2 months as to where they are and also keep record themselves. 25 budget holders at ER. At ML just KQ. APG – history of overspend? JN – actual curriculum £110k over year. If they go over they lose money off their next year's budget. Only time we write off is if there is a new head of department so they don't inherit an overspend. Sometimes departments save up. APG – it is predictive over the year. Unless you halt expenditure you know what it will be. System in place with repairs and maintenance. APG – tightening controls on budget holders isn't going to result in a saving. JN - only way is to not allow them to spend the money they have. More problematic costs are unseen such as licences. MM – helpful discussion. 2 really important things VM said tonight. 1. You don't feel we have the right level of control in place and 2. We don't yet have clear savings plan. Request we look as a Board to have those things in a 4 week period. If it doesn't come back to VM and AF we need to meet again as an extraordinary meeting to find out why not. This is one of our primary responsibilities. JB – agree, but think worth saying I have been saying for a long time, yes addressing but will be in the same situation in future unless we look at a much larger scale. Less money and greater expenditure. Have to cut our cloth differently on more permanent basis. Talked many times that reserves are too low. Costs like staffing in terms of benchmarking too high. Talked for a long time about improving budget holder training and responsibility. Need to make money go much further, like other schools have to. MM – action needed now and long term things to be picked up in portfolios and Finance Committee. JN – in terms of making things clear to budget holders we can see a way forward and take action fairly quickly. Meeting with VM and AF next week. Wider plan is collective wisdom to look at doing things differently. MM – SLT discussion at each site. JB – collectively is a healthier way. JN – can reforecast after month 5 and 6. MM – [set a 4 week deadline around getting controls in place to the extent that VM and AF are satisfied. Should include clear savings plan for whole school, and Board will approve any resources necessary including extending hours for staff in office and possible off site.](#) VM proposed, PK seconded. All in favour. **AGREED.** MM reiterated Board recognise fully the massive effort and JN and others are putting in here.

JB/KQ/JN/
VM/AF

Performance on a Page: MM – Performance report to come to next Full Board. Any feedback by email please unless urgent. MM talked through various spreadsheets which had been issued electronically in advance. ML performance on a page is pretty much live data due to how the primary site functions. This data has addressed Ofsted comments that Board didn't understand at a granular level where issues are. Sheet also shows ML performance against other local primaries in reading, writing and maths. Discussed ER figures, encouraged focus on red figures. Lot of work done around KS3 and predicting where people should be at given point in time. MM has

- been in school and looked at Maths performance this week. Feel as Directors this sheet should focus on what we should be looking at. Invited questions. VM – terminology “bucket”? JB – fairly standard language in school now. [Glossary to be provided for Directors](#). Inspection Data Summary Report (IDSR) national comparative piece. Shows how well we are performing against other schools and in isolation. [Looking to discuss a couple of things with JB re Humanities and Sixth Form data as a separate discussion](#). MM
- 01.02.08 Safeguarding:** SS talked through termly safeguarding data collection from ML. SMD talked through ER figures. Working very hard to reduce FTE with various support put in place. SS met with SMD, KR and GWW. Due to work load SMD has not had time to put together the ER document. Invited questions. MM noted is a requirement that we scrutinise these figures once a term – [SS to carry forward to next meeting](#). Last minutes mentioned Single Central Record and a slight inconsistency between procedures at ML and ER which SS confirmed will be brought in line. SS – KR has obtained a short webinar from Babcock that can be sent to new directors or any that haven’t so far had training for Level 1 and 2. Will also work for staff arriving mid-term to keep on top of this as can be done at home and a certificate printed off. MM/JB
- 01.02.09 Principal’s Report Mill Lane:** KQ presented the report which had been circulated electronically in advance. It was noted it is only 4 school weeks since last reported. From September KQ has been asked by PixL to pick up some regional leadership for South West. Looking at developing the presence in the South West for schools which will help school improvement. Noted ML signed up to be a Mind to be Kind school, keeping students and staff emotionally well. Work to comply with new GDPR is well underway with the introduction of a new electronic signing in system that photographs the visitor and prints a badge. Current indication of reception intake next year is 51. SS – how many classes in each year? KQ – almost a 2 form entry. Only year split at the moment is year 4, year 4/5 and year 5. No other questions. MM stated both Principal’s go through mass of information and Directors don’t ask much which reflects really useful updates that give what Directors want to know. SS
- 01.02.10 Principal’s Report Exeter Road:** JB presented the report which had been distributed electronically in advance. Looking to strongly evidence good Ofsted criteria. Marketing communication discussions ongoing with KQ, a lot of which will revolve around the website. GDPR – need to make sure ER connect with ML regularly. To clarify for those who don’t know, GDPR is General Data Protection Regulation which changes for large UK establishments in May. Schools have to do quite a bit to update data protection processes. Decisions needed about how this is to be handled, through school or MAT basis. JB referred to a survey sent out electronically to Directors to identify focus areas needed with a view to possibly putting on training for Directors in April. [Responses requested by Monday please](#). JB showed Directors a new middle leader’s handbook that is ongoing and being added to all the time. Simple Principal’s blog has started. New Year 7 parents indicated they would like more connection with school. Showed new style Principal’s newsletter. Maths challenge to take place with feeder primary schools in the summer. KS5 tables published recently and at A Level we were second in the County. Meeting next week in marketing and communication group to discuss putting message out on bigger scale. VM – on new approach newsletter is this coordinated with ML? KQ – have discussed at length and there is a shared approach wanting to get parent communication in a more modern way. ML very much looking at a school app which will be free for parents to download. JB - may end up sharing this, need to factor in costs. Newsletter going out via email. Wavelength magazine may be replaced with a new direction. Discussed new parents evening for Year 9 which was successful with good attendance and positive feedback. [Peer led internal review reports available if Directors wish to look at them](#). Let JB know. VM – question on Sixth Form action plan. Can’t see anything about the website. JB – was brought up in SLT today. GME already mentioned to JB a while ago, she will be attending the first marketing and communication meeting with view to updating the action plan on this very thread. MM – is there anything you would like Directors support All

AII/JB

- and attendance at? JB - welcome to attend all. PK – is the careers convention like a stand event? JN – in excess of 35 different groups are attending. Higher education and employers, apprenticeships. Local businesses come in and do mock interviews in Year 10 and sixth form.
- 01.02.11 CEO report:** Report submitted electronically in advance. APG confirmed the consultation period of primary schools ends tomorrow. Boards of governors will see findings of parent consultation, with a view to future decision. Private trust leases the land to Local Authority at Kenton which requires more work. Conversion date now set at 1 May 2018. PK - have the schools had many questions from the parents? APG – meetings were very well attended. Type of question was will we have to wear the same uniform as TCS, ethos, will we retain our own identity as a school. Does it mean we can get our children into TCS more easily? The answer to that is no as we can't change the admissions criteria. Alignment of holidays and times of school day, etc. Nothing critical. Staff ones were concerns about conditions of service, pension rights, accrued length of service. Unions attended the staff meetings. PK – is the cost of all the surveys being met by us? APG – no, once academy orders are granted each school is allocated £25k. Funds awaited - being administered from here. Solicitors, land transfer fees, etc. If for any reason the process stops the schools don't have to pay the money back but anything left must be returned so there is no risk there to us.
- 01.02.12 Portfolio Reports: Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment** – Apologies from SMD for not presenting a report. It was noted that SMD has been really busy with PC and safeguarding work at ER, and that this is no reflection on Rebecca Mullins who made herself readily available to meet but SMD could not fit it into her day. MM reiterated the need for a restructure taking into account the time people can give and the need of each portfolio.
- Human Resources:** Report submitted electronically in advance. MS unable to attend meeting so MM proposed [hold over to next meeting](#), which was agreed by all. **MS**
- Physical Resources:** Discussion around new structure for this portfolio which is to be subsumed into finance and picked up at the next Finance Committee. APG – for necessity it is the place I think health and safety is covered. Would like to emphasise this is a significant portfolio to keep. VM - are you suggesting it shouldn't sit in finance? APG – remember a time it did and was felt there was good reason to separate it. We are a site with lots of trees, etc. MM – we have taken the decision already it will sit with Finance as Resources. [Can look before next Board at how we can structure this.](#) **VM/MM**
- Anything for Board attention around site developments? KQ – tree causing concern at ML. JN – working on fire policy and procedure. SMD – 2 fire alarms this week at ER. [JN to bring this to next Finance Committee meeting.](#) **JN**
- 01.02.13 Directors' Training and Feedback:** Noted VM and PK did some safeguarding training at Saturday 20 January Directors meeting (thanks to SMD for hosting this). [MM requested that all outstanding Strategic Intentions information be sent to him asap.](#) **All**
- 01.02.14 Part II – Pay Policy:** All Trust employees left the meeting at 7.56 pm. [VM to minute from this point and pass sealed minutes to Clerk.](#) **VM/GW**