



**MINUTES of a Meeting of the Directors of the Academy Trust, held via video conference on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021 at 7.00 pm**

**Present:**

Simon Bamford (SB)	Neil McIntosh (NM)
Alan Broomhead (AB)	Sarah Parish (SP)
Linda Burton (LB)	Lucy Phipps (LP)
Ken Coveney (KC)	Catherine Roche (CR)
Jesse Cleverly (JC)	Jan Seal-Roberts (JSR) – Chair
Alan Dunstan (AD)	Annie Temple (AT)
Jean-Francois Fava Verde (JF)	Clive Watts (CW)
Vicki Hamilton (VH)	Graham Webber (GW)

**Apologies:**

Claire MacVicar (CM)  
Linda Burton – arriving late

**In attendance:**

Karen Barker (KB) – School Business Manager  
Jo Cundy (JC<sub>u</sub>) – Clerk

*Governor challenge is shown in red*

**1. Introduction**

- Quorum was confirmed.
- Apologies tendered were accepted.
- SB noted Financial Management Governors' Review (FMGR) as an AOB.
- No governor declared a material interest in any agenda item.
- As the first point of the meeting JSR asked governors if they were in agreement that his meeting could be held remotely – this was agreed by all governors.

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## 2. ATB meeting, 7<sup>th</sup> October 2021

2.1. Minutes which had been circulated were approved as an accurate record, and were signed by JSR. These will be dropped into school for filing.

2.2. Review of Actions/matters arising: Unless otherwise discussed, assigned actions had been completed. Matters arising not covered by the current agenda were considered:

- Complete Prevent and GDPR training (item 2.2) – This is almost complete by JC

**Action:** JC

- Ofsted Inspection Framework informational sessions will now take place in the spring of 2022
- SB is meeting with a potential new governor at the end of term (Kirsty Rogers). JSR will follow up if appropriate.
- The school nurse is leaving after Christmas, there is no knowledge yet of a replacement – disappointing..
- All teachers have confirmed that they have read KCSIE 2021; JC, KC and NM are yet to confirm this. **Action:** JC, KC and NC to confirm they have read KCSIE 2021
- It was agreed that NM's request to discuss curriculum offer would be deferred to the January FGB meeting due to time pressures of the agenda.

## 3. Formal AGM of the Langtree School Academy Trust Co Ltd

As per the Langtree Academy Trust Co Ltd Articles of Association, it is now expected that the Members of the Trust should hold an Annual General Meeting at least every 15 months. It seemed the most efficient use of time to hold this within a regular FGB meeting – and all Members had confirmed in advance that they were happy with this approach.

a) Approval of Langtree School Academy Trust Accounts to 31 August 2021. The accounts were presented by auditors Cooper Parry to the Finance and General Purposes committee at the 16th November 21 meeting. These accounts, along with the External Audit Findings, were subsequently made available for all governors to view in the FGB Google Drive. AD reported that there were no issues identified with key risk in the Accounts. The following items were noted:

- There were a small number of minor accounting adjustments amounting to a financial impact of £11,000 increase in revenue funds. The net operation surplus for the year is £215,000.
- Overall, on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021, the operating reserves were £389,000, which equates to approximately 1.4 months of current operational expenses (NB: the benchmark level for academies is 1 to 2 months – so this accords well).
- Accounting practices are appropriate for the sector; however, an adjustment to the depreciation of land of £205,000 is necessary to the net book value of fixed assets.
- To cover staff expense authorization more clearly, the Financial Procedures Manual requires updating.
- ESFA expect schools to undertake annual internal scrutiny audits to ensure financial security is maintained. The lack of evidence in Langtree's Internal Scrutiny Annual Report was considered a weakness in the governance process.
- All the above issues will be addressed by KB's team and overseen by the FGP committee.

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- In conclusion, Langtree's financial position is sound and the accounting systems are properly maintained. Both AD and KB recommended the accounts for approval.

**Are there any concerns, or anything further that should be drawn attention to?** AD replied that there were not. The 31st August Accounts were subsequently approved by the FGB.

- b) On the recommendation of KB and AD, Members agreed to re-appoint Cooper Parry as Langtree School's auditors for the coming year.
- c) A list of Governor appointments and re-appointments for the period January – December 2021 had been circulated. JSR noted these to the governing board. Governors also agreed to the appointment of KB as Company Secretary.

KC and CR joined the meeting at 7.25pm

- d) The Current Members of Langtree School Academy Trust are JSR, AB, LB and NM. With the recent resignation of Geoff Braham, JSR proposed that both VH and AD be appointed as Members. Governors unanimously agreed this.

**Action:** KB to update the Articles of Association.

The AGM closed at 7.30pm

#### **4. Headteacher's Section: SB presented the report which had previously been circulated. Discussion raised the following points:**

- Before October half term Langtree had experienced a significant covid outbreak with 123 students and 8 staff isolating - it had been a very difficult period, and there had been a great deal of pressure on staff. SB wished to minute his sincere thanks to all staff for their fantastic work during this period.
- After half term the cold weather also provided issues. With the windows wide open to improve ventilation it was felt wasteful to have the heating on. However, with the arrival of the O2/CO<sub>2</sub> monitors, and temperature tests now being carried out, staff are now able to be more strategic with opening windows, and the heating is therefore now turned on – at no additional cost.
- The in-school vaccination day went ahead successfully with about 65% of parents consenting to their child being vaccinated. VH noted how well behaved the students were – the best by far of all the five schools she had visited.
- Student achievement data generally shows that there has been no major drop-off due to covid effects, although there are underlying issues with some individuals who require additional support. There is a small group of Year 7 children with very low ability. An English graduate has been employed as a full time Learning Coach to help with interventions, mainly in Year 7 but also across the school. This is expected to be paid for by Covid Recovery funding. **How do you feel pupils' attitude towards their school work is, considering the amount of time spent out of school due to Covid lock-downs?** Staff are constantly providing positive feedback regarding the Year 11 students. Fortunately, Langtree hasn't had to resort to remote or blended learning yet this school year, so the students are in a better place compared with many others nationally. However, a lot of students lack confidence and have insecurities about whether exams will go ahead - there is a lot of angst. The school is doing the best it can to support these students. **Is it correct that there is a 6-week waiting list to see the school nurse about anxiety issues?** Quite possibly yes, and the nurse herself has also been isolating. But there is a triage system so if anything is deemed urgent it will likely be much quicker than 6 weeks.

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- CW recently conducted a Health & Safety walk around with KB, Standard Operating Procedures and Risk Assessment of the openness of the site were also reviewed. It was generally a positive review.

LB joined the meeting at 7.55pm

- The already-stretched Teaching Assistant team remains depleted due to an ongoing health issue and the resignation of a TA at half term. SB expressed his thanks to the TA team for all their sterling work.
- **CW noted that, while the slight relaxation of the school uniform is an improvement, non-logo polo shirts would be preferable for many parents. SB said that there is an option to wear a non-logoed collared shirt** which could be bought from high-street shops. A retendering process for the contract to supply branded items takes place on 12<sup>th</sup> January with a branded tie Governor involvement, particularly parent governors, would be welcomed.

**Action:** Governors to let SB know if they would like to be involved.

- Pupil Placement Planning: This 2021 Report has finally been received. The Woodcote area currently has relatively little building work scheduled and low projected demographic growth, so population numbers are fairly stable compared to other areas. Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge (CE) can be seen as a threat to Langtree's viability – but a recent conversation between SB and the CE head suggested that they are tending to target the Reading area for their pupil intake – but this needs ongoing review. Another threat was the limited Langtree Open Evening which had to be scaled down due to covid. On the positive side, Langtree has a very strong reputation in the area. **How strong is Langtree's connection with the feeder primary schools?** Pre-Covid, SB would regularly meet with all of the local primary school Heads, and also organise drama / music events. These meetings dropped off during covid but are now beginning to start up again.

## 5. Pupil Premium (PP) review 2020/21, and strategy for 2021/22

Due to Covid restrictions and school lockdowns, a lot of the PP 2020/21 plans were unable to come to fruition. The recommended strategy includes three areas:

- teaching priorities in the classroom,
- targeted interventions,
- and whole school strategies.

Learning gaps are continuously assessed. The strategies put in place will continue to be measured for impact. JF noted that PP children are four more times likely to suffer from mental health issues and that this should be addressed on the plan. AT said that there is a general action on the 2021/22 PP plan with regards to mental health.

**Action:** AT and SB to discuss the mental health action and inform CR and JF

## 6. Governor update

- The Accounts to 31 August 2021, School Audit Report and Risk Register were discussed earlier during the AGM meeting.
- Annual Safeguarding Audit Report. VH informed governors that this report is an OCC document which schools have to complete. Within the report there were a few references to the first person, and governors questioned who these referred to. VH will look into this.

**The report notes that the Single Central Record is checked by the governing body – but is it?** GW reminded governors that while it is the responsibility of governors to ask

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questions of the school to ensure that the necessary checks are being carried out, it is not governors' responsibility to physically check the record. **Have you any concerns on the Safeguarding Report?** No, it's a fair reflection of the current situation. There were some issues noted but Sarah Burman is dealing with them in a timely manner.

- Governor effectiveness: Senior governors met in November to give more thought to governor development. This is still in discussion and will be reported in due course. It was agreed that FGB meetings should continue take place 6 times a year and for two hours – although we may suggest additional meetings from time to time – e.g. for Ofsted briefings. The approval of statutory policies was discussed; there seem to be about 13 statutory policies which, according to the DfE documentation, could be delegated to committee level approval rather than FGB as is the current practice, resulting in a time saving for everyone. **Governors agreed to the delegation of any statutory policies to committees, where this is allowed.**

**Action:** JCu to update the policy schedule

- Staff Christmas thank yous: Last year VH made 72 cupcakes for staff. Do governors want to do something similar this year and, if so, any ideas? Senior governors agreed to write Christmas cards to staff, and other ideas were invited. **Action:** JSR to obtain staff list and divide allocation / circulate to senior govs for action. Written cards to be dropped into school **by Tuesday 14 Dec please.**
- Governor monitoring/visits into school: VH informed governors that there is a newly created document saved in the 'Governors' Google Drive named 'Formal School Visits'. This document is to help plan in advance any questions to be asked, and to think about tying visits in with the School Development Plan. There is also a document to record any training sessions which are undertaken.
- The open morning has been scheduled for 7<sup>th</sup> February 2022. School meals will be discussed, but this will not be the only focus of the day.

## 7. Committee reports

- **Finance and General Purposes:** Minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> November had been circulated.
  - The following policies were approved: **Teachers Pay, Staff Grievance, Staff Whistleblowing.**
  - AD noted that there was a major ongoing issue with the current pipe work and with the roof for a significant part of the school. Langtree has been working with two professional bid companies on a 'no win/ no fee' basis and are hoping to submit two bids by 15th December 21. One bid will be for the pipework and the other for required roof work. Both projects are critical but the pipework is deemed to be slightly more urgent. The estimated costs are £400,000 for the pipe work and £250,000 for the roof work, but KB is waiting for a final price from surveyors. If the bids are successful, the school would have to contribute a percentage of the cost: the higher the contribution, the more likely the bid will be successful. AD recommended that Langtree's commitment should be capped at £150,000. A lot of discussion ensued. **What is the likelihood of achieving both bids, would it make more sense to submit just one bid for the more critical project?** The bids are assessed independently, probably by different people. Both bids are considered high priority. The chances of achieving a bid are not reduced because two are submitted. **Has a tender process been followed to ensure best price?** School has received three quotes, an independent report must take place which includes the tendering process. **A contribution of £150,000 is nearly half of the reserve fund. Would it be possible to see a one-page**

**business plan to articulate the rationale?** KB noted that the projection for this year's current accounts is to increase the reserves by £144,000 which would almost pay for the contribution. AB said that there is a need for the project and a need to contribute a sizable amount - but there is a concern that the reserves were helping to balance the books in 3-5 years out where the budget currently shows a deficit. And of course, it's impossible to predict what decisions the DfE will make in the future. **Is the project urgent?** A lot of money has already been spent on the pipework, and it IS urgent: the pipes could burst any time, causing disruption and greater cost to the school.

Governors asked AD to circulate a one-page business plan for review asap, and agreed to provide their feedback by EOB on Monday, 7 December. **Action:** AD to circulate business plan.

*NB: AD subsequently advised on Monday evening, 7 Dec 21:*

*"I am delighted to confirm that governors, with one exception – a non-responder - have responded positively to the F&GP recommendation that we should submit both bids with a contribution from reserves of 20.1%. Simon's proposal that we should consider a contribution cap of £180k for these combined bids has received wide support, so we will respect this concern about unlimited contributions."*

**Action:** AD and KB to action the CIF bids.

- **Curriculum and Standards:** Minutes of 17<sup>th</sup> November had been circulated.
  - GW advised that the main thrust of the meeting had been to review the achievement data in some detail. The job now is to keep an eye on those groups, such as the year 7s with low reading ages, and to continue to monitor and be aware of the interventions that have been put in place.
  - The content of the Careers Programme was finalised and agreed.
  - The **Exam Policy** was approved.
- **Pastoral & Community:** Minutes of 16<sup>th</sup> November had been circulated.
  - Other than the points already raised, a main focus of the meeting had been to discuss the careers programme and how governors can help facilitate. Also discussed was CR's paper on the national mental health situation and what Langtree is doing in this area. There is a possibility of benchmarking Langtree's experiences with other schools: SBU and CR are looking into this. There will be two more well-being surveys, one for staff, students (and parents) in the spring and one for students later in the year.
  - The following policies were approved: **Relationships and Sex Education, Complaints.**
- **Drama Studio update**
  - JC and AD had met up with the architects (Hayworth Tomkins) who are globally renowned, and they have kindly agreed to be the face of the fundraising project – great news! The architects will work on the pitch which will be ready for June 2022. JC is already working on some text.
- **Approval of statutory policies**
  - The Behaviour Policy had been reviewed by the Pastoral & Community Committee, but VH asked to defer the policy until the January FGB meeting.

- The **Complaints Policy** was presented by the Pastoral & Community Committee. The policy is unchanged. VH asked for the number and nature of complaints to be shared with governors, SB said that he would share this data with the P&C committee. **Are you happy with the policy and recommend it for approval?** Yes. The policy was subsequently ratified by the Full Governing Body.
- **Sex and Relationships Education** was presented by the Pastoral & Community Committee. Is it fit for purpose? Yes. The policy was approved by the FGB.
- **Staff Grievance procedure** – was presented by the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The policy is unchanged. Governors approved the policy.
- **Any Other Business – presented by SB**
  - The FGMR is an audit of a school's finance and governance, instigated by the DfE. We had to produce numerous documents for the auditor. The verbal report had been received today. There had been some minor issues raised, but generally this was a clean report with only 8 mandatory issues which will be easily resolved.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 27th January, 7:00pm

Finally, JSR thanked all governors for their time and input, and closed the meeting at 21:30

#### **ACTIONS LIST from FGB meeting, 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021:**

Minute	Action	By whom?	By when?
2.2	Complete online Prevent and GDPR training and confirm when complete	JC	ASAP
2.2	Confirm KCSIE has been read and understood	JC, KC and NC	ASAP
2.2	Ofsted Inspection Framework informational sessions to take place in the spring	SB	Spring
2.2	Confirm read KCSIE 2021 to VH	JC, KC, NM	ASAP
2.2	Aspects of the Curriculum to be discussed at January FGB	JSR/NM/SB	January
3.4	Update Companies House, etc. with new Members	KB	ASAP
4.7	Let SB know if would like to be involved with uniform retendering process	All	ASAP
5.0	Discuss mental health action with the 2021/22 PP plan	AT/SB	ASAP
6.3	Update the Policy Schedule for statutory policies delegated to Committee level	JCu	ASAP
6.4	Divide/allocate staff list to senior governors for Christmas card signing	Senior governors	14 December

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7.2	Circulate business plan articulating case for bid contribution	AD	6 <sup>th</sup> December
7.2	Action the CIF bids	AD/KB	15 <sup>th</sup> December
5.5	Approved Policies to go on school website: Complaints Policy, Sex and Relationships Policy	JCu	ASAP
	Include Drama Studio update as standing item on FGB agendas	JCu	

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