

**Minutes of a Meeting of the STEP Board of Trustees**  
**Held on Wednesday, 30 March 2022 at 3.00pm at Phoenix Academy,**  
**Hailsham, East Sussex**

Name	Position	Attendance
<b>Trustees</b>		
Ben Bartlett (BB)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present
Kate Chhatwal OBE (KC)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present (for items 1- 12)
Mark Ducker OBE (MD)	Executive Trustee - CEO	Present
Angela Farrell (AF)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present (for items 1- 12)
Ross Gardner (RG)	Non-Executive Trustee (Vice Chair)	Absent (apologies accepted)
Peter Lilford (PL)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present (via Zoom for items 1-7)
Rory Nath (RN)	Non-Executive Trustee	Absent (apologies accepted)
Ursula Norbert (UN)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present (via Zoom)
Navdeep Sanghara (NS)	Non-Executive Trustee	Absent (apologies accepted)
Shelley Stuart (SS)	Non-Executive Trustee	Present (for items 1- 12)
Rama Venchard (RV)	Non-Executive Trustee (Chair of Trustees)	Present
<b>Attendees</b>		
Jennese Alozie (JA)	Director of Effectiveness and Performance	Present (via Zoom)
Paul Glover (PG)	Deputy CEO (CEO Designate)	Present
John Halliwell (JH)	Executive Director of Primary	Present (via Zoom)
James Hooper (JH)	Director of Operations	Present
Philippa Jackson (PJ)	Senior Governance Clerk	Present
Ben March (BM)	Chief Finance and Operations Officer	Present (via Zoom) (for items 1- 12)
Tim Mills (TM)	Executive Director of Primary	Present
Malcolm Trobe (MT)	Consultant – Confederation of School Trusts (observer)	Present (for items 1- 12)

<b>1</b>	<p><b><u>Welcome, Apologies and Housekeeping</u></b></p> <p>The Chair (RV) welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly MT who would be observing the meeting as part of the STEP Governance Review. Apologies were received and accepted from NS (work commitments), RG (work commitments) and RN (illness).</p>
<b>2</b>	<p><b><u>Quorum</u></b></p> <p>The Clerk declared the meeting quorate.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b><u>Review of Pecuniary and Conflicts Interests</u></b></p> <p>Prior to the meeting, RN declared that ECI (his employer) held an interest in Zenergi. Although RN was not directly involved in the contract with ECI he would not be involved in discussions in relation to the Trust’s energy procurement. There were no pecuniary or other potential conflicts of interest declared.</p> <p>Trustees confirmed they had updated their personal and pecuniary interests on the Trust Governor system.</p>
<b>4</b>	<p><b><u>Minutes</u></b></p> <p>The minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting held on 15 December 2021 were approved. The Chair confirmed he would sign a copy of the minutes at the end of the meeting.</p>

<b>5</b>	<p><b><u>Matters Arising from the Minutes</u></b></p> <p>Trustees noted the actions from the previous meetings as set out in the agenda.</p>
<b>6</b>	<p><b><u>Trustee Appointments</u></b></p> <p>The re-appointment of NS as a STEP Trustee for a further 4 year term was ratified.</p>
<b>STEP First – We are all one team</b>	
<b>7</b>	<p><b><u>Chief Executive Officer’s Report</u></b></p> <p>The CEO Report for the Spring term was noted and the following updates provided.</p> <p><u>STEP Standard</u></p> <p>Trustees considered the STEP Standards Heat Map, which showed the Academies’ performance against the Trust’s performance standards.</p> <p>Q: What was the reason for the finance score going down at Angel Oak Academy?  A: This related to the budget and the concern around a Year 2 pupil’s SEND plan which had impacted the overspend. Angel Oak Academy had healthy financial resources and we would suggest that this score moved back up to 2 next term.</p> <p>Q: What were the catering challenges that you referred to?  A: KPI’s had been set around catering services in relation to cost per plate and there had been some fluctuation in this throughout the year.</p> <p><u>STEP First</u></p> <p>PG had met with SS to discuss the communications strategy and the proposed Head of Communications and Fundraising role. They had established the requirements for the role and how these could be addressed along with the scope and level of the role required.</p> <p>Q: What was the need for the role?  A: Someone was required to handle external communications, to support internal communications and to look at future fundraising opportunities and how best to raise funds. The role would ensure that the Trust responded to external pressures. By combining the two roles, candidates were expected to have a charity background rather than commercial experience.</p> <p>PG explained that there was a need for internal and external communications support within the Trust to manage stakeholder engagement, responses to the media, digital presence for external recruitment and managing the website. The communications aspect of the role was strong but someone with fundraising experience was also required. The role would also be developed to respond to the need of the Academy Committee Chairs who required support for communications and engagement at local level.</p> <p><u>STEP Way</u></p> <p>Trustees noted the STEP Way Statements. Trustees were encouraged to ask how the schools had been using the statements in the community as part of their academy visits.</p> <p>Q: In relation to cyber security, was there sufficient internal capability to manage this in house or did we need external support?  A: We had a good blend of support to manage cyber security. The Head of ICT was involved in this with LGfL and had a good awareness of the early risks. The Trust’s systems were built on best practice. We could look into an external audit.  <b>Action: Consider whether an external audit of the Trust’s ICT system was required. (Director of Operations)</b></p> <p>Q: Was a cyber-attack included as part of the internal audit review?  A: Yes.</p> <p>Q: Did we have insurance specifically against cyber-attack?  A: We had commercial insurance. We did review whether it was necessary to have cyber insurance but felt that this was not required due to what we currently had in place.</p>

	<p>Q: The current financial pressures would impact the Trust’s lowest paid staff. When would pay be reviewed and how would the increased living costs and inflation be factored in?  A: It would not be possible to increase pay to cover the 8% increase in living costs and there had been no pay increases in education. When the funding statements came through, the cost of inflation was expected to be less than 2% and we would look to mitigate this. Support staff had been awarded a 1.75% increase in pay. STEP was one of the few Trusts that were a Living Wage employer and we adhered to the national agreement for support staff and teachers’ pay. We could make a decision to pay more than the national agreement but that would mean employing less staff. Trustees could consider whether it would be advantageous to do this. Currently 88% of funding goes on staff costs.</p> <p>Q: Could the Finance and Operations Committee look at the lowest paid staff and consider whether an increase in pay rates could be affordable for them?  A: This could be considered but it may impact the other benefits that this group of staff had access to. It was advantageous to be paid at a particular level for some staff so it would not affect other benefits they were entitled to.  <b>Action: Finance and Operations Committee to look at the lowest paid staff and consider whether an increase in pay rates could be affordable for them. (Head of HR)</b></p> <p><u>STEP Ahead</u>  Claire Majumdar had been internally appointed as the Director of Quality Assurance, Data and Governance. An Executive Headteacher for New Addington had been appointed externally and would start in the new academic year. Both of these roles formed part of succession planning to build capacity for the Trust.</p> <p>Q: If the accreditation of the Teaching School Hub was successful would this impact ITT?  A: If the Ambition bid was unsuccessful, STEP would then be free to seek accreditation as an ITT provider in the next accreditation window, using the existing STEP PGCE materials as the basis for an application. This would enable us to continue the franchise to deliver with Buckingham University and to offer more widely to our own academies. If we did not get the accreditation we would move to another franchise model or link with a university.</p> <p>Q: In relation to the resource provisions, would we look at SEND provision in each hub and build on specialism in each hub? Do we need to prepare for how we would meet increased demand within the Trust? What does housing the resource provision look like?  A: We would need to consider a STEP Way for this. We would look at this further when we discuss the papers on Park and Turnham Academies.</p> <p>Q: Could we consider including reputational opportunities and risks within the CEO Report?  A: Yes, this could be included in future reports.</p>
8	<p><b><u>Safeguarding</u></b></p> <p>Trustees noted the termly safeguarding report. JA reassured Trustees that detailed discussions had been held at the Education Committee on Persistent Absence in specific academies and an external review of SEND. More national data on Persistent Absence was expected next term.</p> <p>Q: A host of practices were in place across the Trust and within the academies to ensure safeguarding, how do we know that they were happening?  A: We rely on the systems in place within the academies and the Headteacher role to oversee this. CPOMS is used as an on-line tool to record safeguarding concerns. From a Trust wide perspective, Executive Headteachers are in place to oversee the process and termly safeguarding evaluations carried out by the Executive Directors of Primary. Academy Committees have safeguarding responsibilities and any concerns are filtered up to the Education Committee and summarised to the Trust Board. We have many layers of safeguarding assurance in place. We also discuss safeguarding with pupils and parents which ensured compliance at academy level.</p> <p>Q: Are we confident in the safeguarding discussions held at the Education Committee?  A: A summary was presented to the Education Committee at each meeting when the STEP Standards were reviewed. Detailed questions were always asked and an explanation presented on specific academies where required. We had talked about persistent absence in detail and the detailed checks in place within the specific academies which really tested the oversight of safeguarding. There was good triangulation from all angles of governance.</p>

<b>9</b>	<p><b><u>Compass Priorities 2022/23</u></b></p> <p>PG and BM summarised the STEP Compass Priorities for 2022/23. The priorities for the next academic year would mainly focus on wellbeing and a more consistent process for performance related pay progression.</p> <p>The following questions were raised:</p> <p>Q: Do we have a STEP Way for inclusion already in place? A: We do, but we would look to build upon this.</p> <p>Q: Equitable funding was raised at the Education Committee and Trustees felt that it would be helpful to have a summary of the educational impact to ensure the provision is not impacted. It would also be useful to have a comparative summary of how the school performed when not under equitable funding. Had there been a similar request from the Finance and Operations Committee? A: The summary for the Finance and Operations Committee would be different as it would be linked to the budget. It would also be helpful if we record the best level of funding to deliver the best quality of education to show whether the schools had the optimal level of funding.</p> <p>Q: In relation to the equitable funding, were the schools being supported enough to make requests to spend the money? What could be done to further support the Headteachers? A: Regular monthly meetings took place with budget holders. It comes back to what was really missing within the schools and that was always the number of staff. Some high level information such as exit interview feedback may be useful to support this. The STEP Standards show the scores and high level information was always provided to contextualise the scores.</p> <p>Q: In terms of the STEP Compass, there was nothing in particular on the curriculum, specifically reading, RSE issues, harmful sexualised behavior, safeguarding and foundation subjects. A: Thanks for raising these points. I will consider these in the development of the STEP Compass. <b>Action: Consider Trustees comments in the development of the 2022/23 STEP Compass Priorities. (DCEO)</b></p> <p>Trustees felt that it was important to evaluate how the Trust measured success. Trustees and the Executive Team should collectively agree on how to measure success and the criteria for doing this. It may be worth considering formal feedback from the budget holders to compare the outcomes before and after the equitable funding model. PG added that it was also important to consider the impact of lost pupil numbers and the use of reserves and how we built these back up.</p>
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**STEP Way – We agree to do things like this**

<b>10</b>	<p><b><u>Policies and Procedures</u></b></p> <p>Trustees reviewed and approved the following statutory policies and procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Modern Slavery Statement</li> <li>• Parental Leave Policy</li> <li>• Sabbatical Leave Policy</li> <li>• Teacher and Support Staff Capability Procedure</li> <li>• Attendance Policy</li> </ul> <p>Trustees ratified the following policies approved by the Finance and Operations Committee on 22 March 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Expenses Policy</li> <li>• Lettings Policy</li> </ul> <p>Trustees ratified the following policies approved by the Education Committee on 28 March 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rights Respecting School Policy</li> </ul>
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<b>11</b>	<p><b><u>Admissions</u></b></p> <p>The decision to reduce the PAN at Turnham Academy was ratified.</p>
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**STEP Up – We all succeed together**

**12 Financial Management and Monitoring**

STEP Management Accounts

The STEP Management Accounts for Period 6, 2022, the high level summary on STEP's in-year financial position as at 28 February 2022 were noted.

2020/21 Budgets

The 2021/22 Budgets for Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven Heights Academies were approved.

2022/23 Budget Planning

The 2022/23 Budget Planning Report was noted.

Significant Items of Expenditure

There were no significant items of expenditure to approve as recommended by the Finance and Operations Committee.

2020/21 Return

It was noted that the August 2020/21 return had been submitted to the ESFA by 25 Jan 2022 and accounts added to the Trust website by the 31 January 2022 deadline.

Update from Finance and Operations Committee

The Finance and Operations Committee was held on 22 March 2022 and the minutes would be circulated to Trustees in due course.

*KC, AF, SS, BM and MT left the meeting.*

**13 Educational Standards and Performance**

BB provided a brief update on the Education Committee meeting held on 28 March 2022. The minutes would be circulated to Trustees in due course.

At the meeting, the STEP Standards document had been reviewed with specific discussions on persistent absence in specific academies. The Committee had also asked for an evaluation of the impact of equitable funding on educational outcomes.

**14 Academy Engagement**

The schedule of Trustee academy visits was noted for Spring 2022 to Autumn 2022. Academy visits were underway and feedback would be provided in due course.

Feedback on the Board's tour of the Hailsham Academies was provided. Trustees were reassured to see the successful journey of the schools and to speak to the staff and children in person. The Chair has also visited Telscombe Cliffs and Peacehaven Heights Academies this term and had spoken with the Academy Committee Chair, staff and pupils. Consistency in teaching the curriculum and leadership support was in place in both schools and staff had valued the CPD support from the STEP Teaching School Hub.

**STEP Way – We agree to do things like this**

**15 STEP Governance**

STEP Financial Handbook/ STEP Scheme of Delegation (SOD)

An updated SOD and paper setting out the proposed changes was noted. The SOD has been reviewed and updated to reflect the changes within the Master Funding Agreement as necessary, as well as to reflect the recommendation of the Internal Audit reviews and best practice. Trustees would be asked to review and approve this by email.

***Post meeting note: Trustees approved the updated SOD by email.***

Governance Review and Chair 360

The external governance review and Chair 360 was underway. The final report was due early in the Summer term.

	<p><u>STEP Members</u> The resignation of Jan Hilary as STEP Member as of 24 January 2022 was noted. The minutes of the annual STEP Members meeting held on 21 February 2022 were noted.</p> <p><u>Academy Committees</u> The minutes of the Spring term Academy Committee meetings (available on TTG) were noted. The proposal on Academy Committee pairings from September 2022 was noted. The AC pairings had been corrected following the previous meeting.</p> <p>The STEP Governor appointments were noted. Trustees would be asked to review and approve the appointments by email. <b>Post meeting note: Trustees approved the STEP Governor appointments by email.</b></p> <p><u>Training</u> Any feedback on the STEP governance training session held on 26 January 2022 would be provided to the Clerk. The next AC Chairs and Trustees forum had been moved to 24 May 2022. The next STEP governance training session would be held on 15 June 2022.</p>
16	<p><b><u>Complaints</u></b></p> <p>No complaints were currently being dealt with at Stage 3 across the Trust.</p>
<b>STEP Ahead – We invest in our future</b>	
17	<p><b><u>Risk</u></b></p> <p>The Trust’s Risk Profile report for the Spring term was noted.</p>
18	<p><b><u>Signing of Legal Documentation</u></b></p> <p>The following legal documents had been signed by the Company Secretary/CEO/CFOO/Chair of Trustees since the previous meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beddington Park – Licence to Occupy Children’s Centre</li> <li>• University of Buckingham Contract – extension to July 2023</li> <li>• Master Funding Agreement with PFI Clauses</li> <li>• Supplemental Funding Agreement – Peacehaven Heights</li> <li>• Supplemental Funding Agreement – Telscombe Cliffs</li> <li>• Transfer Agreement – Peacehaven Heights</li> <li>• Transfer Agreement – Telscombe Cliffs</li> <li>• School Agreement – Peacehaven Heights</li> <li>• Principal Agreement – Peacehaven Heights</li> <li>• School Agreement – Telscombe Cliffs</li> <li>• Principal Agreement – Telscombe Cliffs</li> <li>• Final Deed of Confidentiality – STEP and ESCC</li> </ul>
19	<p><b><u>Correspondence to the Chair/ Chair’s Actions</u></b></p> <p>A letter from the RSC had been circulated to Trustees for information providing an update on the changes being made in the Department for Education from 1 April 2022 as part of the future DfE programme. No other correspondence had been received by the Chair since the previous meeting.</p> <p>The following actions had been taken by the Chair since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The re-appointment of Nav Sanghara as a STEP Trustee for a further 4 year term (Appointment term: 28/3/2022 – 27/3/2026)</li> <li>• The approval of the reduction in PAN at Turnham Academy following consultation</li> </ul>

<b>20</b>	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>The Chair thanked JA on behalf of Trustees for all of her hard work and the significant contribution she had made to the Trust since she had joined on 2016. JA would be leaving STEP to become CEO of University of Chichester Academies Trust (UCAT). JA had been a valued member of the Executive Team, had strengthened the leadership of education across the Trust and played an instrumental role in improving the educational outcomes of the STEP children. Trustees wished her all the best in her new role.</p> <p>JA thanked Trustees and the CEO for their on-going support which she had greatly valued. She felt that they had really shaped her leadership skills and their support was critical to the success of the Trust. She had enjoyed her journey at STEP and was proud of what the organisation had become.</p> <p>There were no other matters of business to report.</p>
<b>21</b>	<p><b><u>Date of Next Meeting</u></b></p> <p>The next Board of Trustees meeting would be held on Monday, 18 July 2022 at 5.00pm at Turnham Academy.</p>
<b>22</b>	<p><b><u>Confidential Matters</u></b></p> <p>Confidential discussions on Academies and the Trust's Growth Strategy were recorded in the confidential set of minutes.</p>

<b>Action List</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>
Consider whether an external audit of the Trust's ICT system was required.	Director of Operations
Finance and Operations Committee to look at the lowest paid staff and consider whether an increase in pay rates could be affordable for them.	Head of HR
Consider Trustees comments in the development of the 2022/23 STEP Compass Priorities.	DCEO

<b>Signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting</b>	
<b>Chair's signature</b>	
<b>Chair's name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	