

EDUCATION BOARD

Wednesday, 9 October 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Education Board held at Committee Room 1 - 2nd Floor West Wing, Guildhall on Wednesday, 9 October 2024 at 2.00 pm

Present

Members:

Naresh Hari Sonpar (Chairman)	Ruby Sayed
John Griffiths (Deputy Chairman)	Alderwoman Elizabeth Anne King, BEM JP
Caroline Haines	Helen Fentimen OBE JP
Steve Goodman OBE	Adeleke

In Attendance

Catherine McGuinness

Officers:

Deborah Bell	- Community & Children's Services Department
Scott Caizley	- Community & Children's Services Department
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlain's Department
Jack Joslin	- The City Bridge Trust
Chandni Tanna	- Town Clerk's Department
Jayne Moore	- Town Clerk's Department
Anne Pietsch	- Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Kevin Colville	- Comptroller and City Solicitors
Barbara Hamilton	- Community and Children's Services Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Joanna Abeyie and from Ruby Sayed.

These Members sent apologies and observed the meeting online: Alderman Robert Howard, Floyd Steadman.

2. MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations.

3. PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, That the public minutes of the meeting of 14 June 2024 were approved as a correct record.

4. GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The Board considered the report of the Clerk, noting that the proposed appointment of the Board's Chair to the Corporation's Policy & Resources

Committee has been deferred until at least May 2025 due to the Corporation's consideration of the remit and scope of its Committees during the 2025 election period.

The Board noted the upcoming meeting of the Nominations Sub-Committee to appoint an external Member to replace Mary Robey.

No further Board Members agreed to join the Nominations Sub-Committee.

A Member asked for an update on governor appointments at Emmanuel School following recent media interest in the matter. The Board heard that the matter would be investigated and an update provided in due course, as soon as possible.

RESOLVED, That the Board note the CoLAT appointments ratified via the urgency process.

5. **RESEARCH PROJECTS FOR 2024/25**

The Board considered the report of the Director of Community & Children's Services seeking approval to proceed with two research projects from a list of proposed research projects for the upcoming academic year, noting that the projects align with the new Education Strategy 2024-29, which focuses on achieving the five strategic priorities: Supporting Educational Excellence, Promoting Personal Development, Reinforcing Safety, Health & Wellbeing, Improving Employability, and Embracing Culture, Creativity & the Arts.

Members noted that each proposed project is designed to contribute to the strategic goals by fostering innovation, collaboration, new learning and evidence-based practices, and noted the detailed outline set out in the appendix to the report, noting especially the benefits of new research, added value that it would provide, and how such research might fit into the overall corporate plan of the Corporation.

A Member asked whether the Education Strategy Unit (ESU) has conducted research before, and the meeting heard that the proposed projects are a new initiative on the part of the ESU whose remit now has a greater focus on new research and new knowledge and insight. The meeting noted that the four proposals stem from areas of concern following feedback from stakeholders during the consultation around the recently approved Education Strategy, and that the four proposals were extracted from a broader set of areas of concern.

A Member asked whether the proposed projects constituted research (as opposed to fact-finding exercises). The meeting noted that the proposals have been delineated to ensure that, as shorter pieces of research, they are able to offer value and insight into important areas and to potentially act as a catalyst of ideas that can be further explored, noting the interest in the CoLC being more responsive to developing concerns and ideas.

Noting the £10K cap on the cost, a Member sought clarification on the opportunity costs of conducting the research. The Board heard that the cost is from the existing budget, that the opportunity cost may involve staging fewer events that do not have a measurable impact, and that the research proposals may offer greater insight and knowledge to the educating communities in London and across the UK.

In response to a question on why the CoLC should be undertaking the research and the extent of the commitment of the CoLC family of schools, the meeting heard that the CoLC is uniquely placed (because of its close relationship with the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and its wider interests in art and culture) in respect of option 3 (music education) noting, in particular, the DfE's publication in May 2024 of the School Music Development Plan. The meeting heard that there is no expectation of involvement on the part of CoL schools as the focus in the schools is on the operational delivery of excellent education, and that the views of the CoLAT executive would also be sought.

The meeting noted that contact has been made with a CoLAT governor who is a high-profile expert on music in education.

Members commented that more detailed selection criteria would be welcome (to include intended audience, expected impact, and existing knowledge gaps), noting also an apparent lack of clarity on the reason for the selection of the topics of the projects that the Board was being asked to sponsor. The Board heard that the intended audience is schools, Government, and researchers and that the expected impact includes the sharing of new knowledge and insight in the name of the CoLC.

Members noted that option 2 (on the 'post-truth era') offered an opportunity for the City of London Corporation (CoLC) to contribute a new perspective to an innovative area of study arising from the civil unrest during summer 2024.

A Member noted the merits of opting for option 4, particularly for the purposes of teacher retention issues and the CoLC's broader strategy.

Members asked for further details of the proposed projects to be circulated with a response required by Friday 18 October 2024, ahead of the Awayday on 21 October 2024, so that responses can be collated with a view to those responses informing a decision via delegated authority of the Town Clerk on the matter, in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

6. EDUCATION STRATEGY - ACTION PLAN 2024/25

The Board reviewed the report of the Director of Children & Community Services presenting Members with the list of actions selected from the City of London Corporation's new Education Strategy 2024-29, for implementation in the 2024/25 academic year.

In response to a Member request that each meeting agenda item be linked to an element of the Strategic Plan, the meeting heard that each agenda item would be linked to its relevant strategic point.

A Member asked whether measures of success and/or impact could be built into the actions set out in the paper. The meeting noted that a measurement matrix with KPIs was shared with the Board at the June 2024 meeting.

A Member commented that some priorities appeared to be the responsibility of schools, particularly 'Educational Excellence', and that the CoLC can deliver added value to other priorities, especially around engaging the whole CoLC in playing a part in improving employability and improving life chances, referencing in particular section 11 of the report.

The meeting noted that 'Educational Excellence' areas of strategic action and outcome specify the CoLC's input potential rather than encroaching upon schools' areas of responsibility.

Referencing section 9 (funding), a Member asked for an update on the involvement of the City Premium Grant (CPG) on the strategy actions. The meeting noted that initiatives are under way at CoLAT to ensure that the CPG application process is more systemised and better rationalised and optimised to generate efficiencies and additionality via the newly created partnerships co-ordinator position at CoLAT.

Members noted that the CPG is partly needs-based and that some schools have asked whether there should be a metric that recognises the increasing number of EHCPs in a school, noting that LA-funding for EHCP children does not cover the cost of handling those needs and is not provided in a timely manner, and that schools that acquire a reputation for excellence in special needs tend to experience rising demand for those services, thereby incurring further costs and eroding schools' capacity to deliver additionality. Members noted that any alteration to CPG scope and remit would involve revisiting the Tomlinson Review.

The meeting noted that no activity would be eligible if it is not aligned with one of the priorities as set out.

Members commented on the urgency around the need for the CoLC to co-ordinate a joined-up strategy focussing on City-based employers providing more opportunities for students. The meeting noted that conversations are ongoing within the CoLC to convene key entities into delivering better opportunities for City school children through a more focussed centralised initiative, including work placements and that the issue has been live for many years with little clear progress being made so far for a range of reasons, though good work is under way to deliver significant improvements in that space.

A Member commented on the potential benefits of asking Common Councillors to bring forward a relevant business contact for those purposes, and suggested that there is merit in arranging for students to spend time in a workplace while

doing school work or undertaking work-related activities as a way of experiencing the workplace in a different way.

A Member thanked the executive for organising such a successful Leavers' event in spring 2024.

7. **UPDATE ON WORK UNDERTAKEN BY SIR ALAN WOOD CBE**

Members received the report of the Director of Community & Children's Services updating Members on the work undertaken by Sir Alan Wood CBE and noted the summary outcomes set out as an Appendix. Members noted that Sir Alan Wood was invited by the Town Clerk to work with the City of London Corporation, City of London Academy Trust and the four independent schools on the current risks and opportunities presenting within the educational landscape.

A Member asked whether more detail on the work completed was forthcoming, commenting that the information appeared quite sparse. The meeting noted that no further information is available, and that the Chief Town Clerk is aware of the report.

8. **LCF UPDATE**

The Board heard that the London Careers Festival 2025 will run from 03 February to 14 February, the in-person festival being during the first week.

The early booking facility for some sessions that was successfully trialled in 2024 is being rolled out for the 2025 iteration and has been met with success, and further updates will be brought to the December 2024 meeting of the Board.

Members noted that a key objective is to expand partnerships with Square Mile businesses as part of a suite of opportunities for businesses to engage with the CoLC's educational offering.

Members discussed ways to engage Square Mile businesses in partnership work around the educational offering, and a range of suggestions was made including: asking all CoLC members to submit one employer name, and calling on the services of CoLC-related experts in the field.

A Member asked what impact analysis has been made of the 2024 event over and above the evaluation provided at the June 2024 meeting. The meeting noted that a refresher on the impacts of the 2024 event would be provided for newer Members.

9. **BUDGET MONITORING REPORT P3**

Members noted the report of the Director of Community & Children's Services presenting Members with the budget monitoring update for Period 3 (P3), noting that the current forecast indicates that the budget for 2024/25 is projected to be fully utilised as anticipated.

A Member asked where the budget was shown for the research projects proposed at item 5 of the meeting. The meeting heard that the finances for that is within the 'Education Strategy' line.

A Member sought clarification on why Aldgate School was incorporated into the plans. The meeting heard that the school is part of the Family of Schools and has access to the CPG (partnerships, and strategic).

10. THE CITY EDUCATIONAL TRUST FUND (CHARITY NO. 290840) GRANT RECOMMENDATION AND MANAGEMENT UPDATE

The Board received the report of the Managing Director of the City Bridge Foundation noting that the City of London Corporation is the sole corporate trustee of this Charity: the City Educational Trust Fund (CETF) (Charity No. 290840).

The Board noted that it had agreed, at its April 2024 meeting, to award a £3,649,998 grant to A New Direction (Charity No. 1126216) to deliver Primary Arts.

Acting collectively for the City of London Corporation as Trustee of the City Educational Trust Fund (CETF) (290840) and being satisfied that it is in the best interests of the charity to do so, Members noted the evaluation of the pilot of the Primary Arts programme funded by the CETF, and noted the update of the work-to-date of the rollout for the full-length Primary Arts programme funded by the CETF.

A Member sought confirmation on the extent to which consideration has been given to the sustainability and longevity of the project once the Primary Arts project is completed. The Board heard that visits are under way to ascertain what has been embedded in schools from the project, noting that feedback so far suggests that activities and structures arising from masterclasses are being rolled out in schools.

A Member commented that there is merit in more extensive linkage of the programme with the CoLC's cultural and heritage assets, noting the involvement of Tower Bridge and the Guildhall Art Gallery among others.

On the target to reach out to under-served schools and children, a Member asked for progress on how that recommendation has been implemented. The Board heard that a selection matrix has been devised for completion by schools that includes criteria such as EHCP, EAL and PP numbers.

11. SCHOOL VISITS FUND REPORT 2023-24

The Board considered the report of the Director of Community and Children's Services presenting Members with key information relating to the impact of the

School Visits Fund in the academic year 2023/24, noting also that the administration of the fund was transferred into the Education Strategy Unit, from Culture Mile Learning.

RESOLVED, That the grant quantum be adjusted so that visits on Tuesdays, Wednesday and Thursdays attract grants of up to £275 and visits on Mondays and Fridays attract grants of up to £325.

12. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE BOARD**

There were no questions.

13. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Board received an update on the Ethical AI in Education City Schools Conference that took place on 01 October 2024 at Merchant Taylors' Hall.

The event convened 100+ school teachers and leaders alongside a range of IT professionals and educational charities to discuss ethical issues around AI and education, with a keynote address by Dr Claire Malone.

Members noted that the event was received very positively, and commented that more work on all aspects of AI in education was merited.

14. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

RESOLVED – That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

15. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**

RESOLVED, That the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

16. **FINANCE UPDATE – 1. THE CITY EDUCATIONAL TRUST FUND (CETF) (290840) & 2. CITY OF LONDON CORPORATION COMBINED EDUCATION CHARITY (CEC) (312836)**

The Board considered the report of the City Bridge Fund & Charities Finance Director.

The Board noted that the City of London Corporation is the sole corporate trustee of the City Educational Trust Fund (290840 – CETF) and the City of London Corporation Combined Education Charity (CEC) (312836).

The Board noted both charities' draft Annual Reports and Financial Statements for the most recent year ended 31st March 2024 and the update on the charity's financial position in the period to date (5 months to 31 August 2024), a forecast for the remainder of the financial year to 31 March 2025 and longer-term budgets for each charity as well as cashflow for each charity.

RESOLVED, Acting collectively for the City of London Corporation as Trustee of the City Educational Trust Fund (CETF) (290840) and the City of London

Corporation Combined Education Charity (CEC) (312836) in relation to each decision, being satisfied that it is in the best interests of the charity concerned and its beneficiaries, the Board agreed to:

- i. Note the contents of the report and appendices, including the draft Trustee's annual report and financial statements for each charity which are now ready to be reported to Finance Committee for approval and are due for submission by the 31st January 2025;
- ii. Note the update on the timetable for the approval of the annual report & financial statements; and
- iii. Note the CETF & CEC's financial position as at 31 August 2024 and the latest cash flow forecast for the 7th months to 31 March 2025, including confirmation that no investments drawdown has been required to support cash flow.

17. THE CITY EDUCATIONAL TRUST FUND AND COMBINED EDUCATION CHARITY RISK REGISTER

The Board considered the report of the Interim Managing Director of City Bridge Foundation.

The Board reviewed the Risk Register.

RESOLVED, That, acting collectively for the City of London Corporation as Trustee of the City Educational Trust Fund (CETF) (290840) and Combined Education Charity (CEC) (312836), the Board confirmed that the Risk Register satisfactorily sets out the current risks facing the charities, and that appropriate measures are in place to mitigate those risks.

18. COLAT SCHEME OF DELEGATION AND STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-28

The Board noted the report of the Clerk setting out the updated CoLAT Scheme of Delegation and Strategic Plan 2024-28, both approved at the CoLAT Board of Trustees meeting of 18 July 2024.

19. 2024 UNVALIDATED RESULTS DATA FOR THE FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

The Board received the report of the Director of Community and Children's Services setting out the unvalidated results across the City's Family of Schools.

The Board congratulated CoLAT and the family of schools on a good set of results, noting in particular the positive Progress scores at CoLAT schools.

20. AWAYDAY AGENDA

The Board noted the agenda in respect of the Awayday on 21 October 2024.

Members commented that it would be beneficial to discuss these topics:

- CoLC's relationship with CoLAT and expectations of that relationship in the future;

- income generation;
- educational policy direction in the context of the new Government (including apprenticeship levy policies);
- funding streams; and
- how the education strategy fits in with other City strategies.

21. NON PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE BOARD

Members sought further clarification on the consultation exercise undertaken by Sir Alan Wood and asked these questions:

- What was the cost of the exercise?
- Was value for money achieved?

The Board noted that the consultation was commissioned by the Chief Town Clerk when he joined the organisation in order to assess the education landscape, its parameters were also set by him, and the outline of the work had been submitted to the Board.

The Board noted that no information is available on the cost.

Members were advised to ask the Chief Town Clerk for a summary of the objectives and outcomes.

22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE BOARD AGREE SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

The Board received an update from the Headmaster of City of London Freemen's School (Roland Martin) on the independent schools within the City Family of Schools.

The Board noted the following points:

- The biggest issue at present is the imposition of VAT on school fees that is presently expected to be imposed as of January 2025;
- The consequences of that imposition have been challenging for the schools; and
- Some divisive comments are being made by parents around transformational bursaries and partnership work.

A Member asked whether any strategies were available to support upfront payments to avoid incurring additional costs as a result of the VAT imposition. The Board noted that an advance payment scheme was introduced in April 2024 that was taken up by some parents, and that while some instalment payment facilities are available, there are negative aspects to arranging lines of credit.

The Board noted that some of the consequences of the VAT imposition have been very negative for the students involved.

A Member commented that some leading independent schools appeared to not be suffering any negative impact as a result of VAT imposition.

The Board thanked the CoL independent schools for continuing with their partnership work, noting that other independent schools have withdrawn from that space.

The Chairman welcomed the Chief Commoner to the meeting.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Jayne Moore
Jayne.Moore@cityoflondon.gov.uk