



Excellence - Collaboration - Respect

**DRAFT MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TRUSTEES OF  
CONNECT ALLIANCE TRUST  
HELD AT SCHOOL  
ON 15<sup>th</sup> JULY 2025  
COMPANY NUMBER 08698831.**

**Trustees Present:**

David Allan (DA) Chair  
Karen Walkden. (KW)  
Kate Dean (KD)  
David Kennedy-Pitt (DK-P)  
David Cundy. (DC)  
Mark O'Keefe (MO'K)

**Apologies:** Pauline Black (PB).

**Also in attendance:** Alison Knowlson Governance Professional  
Liz Hardy CEO. Connect Alliance Learning Trust  
Tina Smith CFOO Connect Alliance Learning Trust

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**The meeting was quorate and commenced at 5pm.**

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**PART ONE – NON-CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

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<b>1</b>	<b><u>INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b>  The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting under the new Connect Alliance Trust name, there were apologies received and accepted from Pauline Black.
<b>2</b>	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST and AOB</u></b>  Trustees were asked to declare any potential pecuniary or conflicts of interest that may occur during the course of the meeting.  The following conflicts of interest were declared by DK-P. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. He cannot participate in any discussions or vote on issues related to BNY or its subs/affiliates.</li><li>2. DK-P cannot vote on or make recommendations about any specific individual managers, funds or securities.</li></ol>

	<p>3. His advice should be limited to macro decisions about investment strategy, such as asset allocation and types of investments the portfolio should invest in.</p> <p>4. He must report any situations where he has received material, non-public information to BNY Compliance.</p> <p><b><u>AOB</u></b></p> <p>There was no AOB raised for the end of the meeting.</p>
3	<p><b><u>MEMBERSHIP</u></b></p> <p><b>Trust Membership.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is the last meeting for Mark O’Keefe, who is resigning and not transferring to the CAT Board. Mark’s significant contribution as a Trustee was formally acknowledged. He has served throughout the life of the M20 Trust, including being the FOAR committee chair. The attendees noted the progress made under Mark’s leadership and his generosity with time and support.</li> <li>• Thanks were also recorded to Pauline, who has served as an LGB representative and provided a key communication link over the past year.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q: Will Pauline continue in any governance role?</b>  <b>A:</b> It is hoped she will remain involved, though no formal role was specified.</p> <p><b>LGB Membership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was reported that following the departure of a staff governor (Paris), with no immediate changes would be made to the Local Governing Body (LGB) membership at this stage. There are plans for a natural review of numbers over time in alignment with the terms of reference (ToR) for each board.</li> </ul> <p>The existing ToR state that the Trust is responsible for issuing information and organising elections. Historically, this function has been carried out by the Governance Professional on behalf of the Trust.</p> <p>The governance lead (Joan) will now oversee these processes, for transparency and segregation of duties, election documentation (staff and parent governor elections) will be prepared by Joan. The headteachers will distribute materials, but it will be issued on behalf of the Trust.</p> <p><b>Q: Will we still allow Governing Boards to appoint their own co-opted governors?</b>  <b>A :</b> Yes, the Trust may delegate this responsibility, and this is currently the arrangement in place. However, moving forward, there will be a clearer separation between Trust and school-level processes to ensure integrity.</p> <p><b>Q: Are we expecting changes to governance membership soon?</b>  <b>A:</b> Not immediately. Any changes will occur through natural turnover and will be used as an opportunity to align with new structures.</p> <p><b>Trustee Representation at LGB Meetings</b></p>

	<p>It was confirmed in the ToR that trustees will attend LGB meetings at each school for the 2024–25 academic year. Each trustee would be linked to a school and attend four meetings annually. The model will allow rotation after one year to ensure equitable trustee engagement across schools.</p> <p><b>Q: Has a trustee been identified to attend Beaver Road?</b>  <b>A:</b> This will be determined at the start of the academic year in September.</p> <p><b>Communication Between LGBs and the Trust Board</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed that improving two-way communication was a key objective.</li> <li>• Trustees will report back on issues raised during LGB meetings and the shared minutes.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q: How will questions from LGBs be addressed?</b>  <b>A:</b> Trustees attending LGBs will help answer questions during Part 1 and escalate issues where needed.</p> <p><b>Q: Will LGB minutes be shared with the Trust Board?</b>  <b>A :</b> Yes, LGB Part 1 minutes will go up to the Trust Board, and Trust Part 1 minutes will be shared with the LGBs to maintain transparency.</p> <p><b>Meeting Practice and Headteacher Reports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns were raised about the amount of time Beaver Road governors spend reviewing lengthy headteacher reports during meetings.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q: Will headteacher reports still be included in the meetings?</b>  <b>A:</b> Yes, but going forward, these will be sent in advance, so governors have time to read and prepare questions.</p> <p><b>Q: Will this reduce opportunities for presentation and discussion?</b>  <b>A:</b> No. Governors will still receive the same depth of information, but meetings will be more efficient and focused on questions rather than walkthroughs. This is a shift in style, particularly for Beaver Road, where reports have historically been more detailed and discussed in full during meetings.</p> <p><b>Support for Clerks and Meeting Consistency</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The governance team is exploring training and coordination of school clerks to improve consistency across minutes and agendas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q: Will LGB minutes follow a standard format?</b>  <b>A:</b> Yes, the goal is to ensure all minutes are clearly structured and easy to read across all schools</p>
4	<p><b><u>PART ONE MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</u></b></p> <p>The Part One minutes of the meeting of the M20 Learning Trust held on <b>25<sup>th</sup> March 2025</b> were <b>confirmed</b> as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.</p> <p><b>Matters Arising:</b>  There was nothing raised for Matters Arising.</p>

	<p><b>Action Log</b> All the actions have been completed.</p> <p><b>Q: Where does IT governance sit?</b> <b>A:</b> It was agreed it should sit under the FOAR Committee and also SI&amp;S.</p>
5	<p><b><u>CHAIR'S ACTION</u></b></p> <p>There have been no Chair's actions since the last full Trust Board meeting. The Chair did notify trustees that he had attended the following school events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shakespeare Project (Year 4):</b> Children performed The Tempest with Northwest Drama; it was well received.</li> <li>• <b>Sports Day (Years 1 &amp; 2):</b> He commended the staff for the organisation and inclusivity of the event.</li> <li>• <b>Year 6 Lion King Production:</b> The production was of a very high quality and extremely enjoyable. The teachers were praised for extra effort and support for putting on such an event.</li> </ul>
6	<p><b><u>PART ONE REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND TRUSTEES WITH SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.</u></b></p> <p>Mark O'Keefe gave an overview of the <b>FOAR Committee meetings on the 9<sup>th</sup> May and 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee looked at the financial benchmarking and reviewed the 3-year budget.</li> <li>• Internal audit (payroll procedures): clean report overall, minor issues flagged.</li> <li>• Update on unsuccessful CIF bids.</li> </ul> <p><b>Q: Why did the CIF bids fail?</b> <b>A:</b> The funding preference is for urgent structural needs (roofs, windows); the mechanical bids which we submitted were considered a lower priority.</p> <p><b>School Improvement and Standards 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2025.</b> Kate Dean updated the trustees on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The committee received two lengthy presentations:</li> <li>• One from Lucy on SEND, and one from Rahula providing a curriculum overview.</li> <li>• It was noted the presentations were detailed, with the presenters' enthusiasm and passion for their subjects.</li> <li>• The committee reviewed achievements for the 2024–25 academic year and data predictions for upcoming outcomes.</li> <li>• Rahula also covered the quality of teaching, detailing ongoing training, support, and intervention strategies.</li> <li>• The committee reviewed and approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Anti-Bullying Policy.</li> <li>○ The Educational Visits Policy.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A SEND and Safeguarding reports were received, again primarily through Lucy.</li> </ul>

- The committee also looked at staff wellbeing, which was reported as encouraging given the challenges and potential uncertainties ahead.

LGB minutes

- The minutes from the 28<sup>th</sup> April 2025 were in the backing papers.

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**FINANCIAL MATTERS**

TS updated the trustees on the following:  
**BR Budget for 25-26**, TS highlighted to the trustees the key assumptions taken into account when preparing the budget for 2025-26.

**Staffing Structure 2025-26**

- The trustees reviewed the staffing for Beaver Road for 2025-26.
- Temporary staffing model extended due to delays in Northernden School’s academisation.
- Ruth Byrne continues as Interim Head until formal appointment can occur.
- Recruitment of permanent Head to launch in September.
- Deputy model and structure review will follow Headteacher appointment.

**BR - Three Year budget report – 2025-2028**

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28
In Year Surplus / (Deficit)	1,794	16,563	-84,407
Surplus / (Deficit) Brought Fwd	324,678	326,432	342,995
Cumulative Surplus / (Deficit) C/Fwd	326,432	342,995	258,588

- **Total reserve:** £326,000 (approx. 4.98%)
- £100,000 revenue moved to capital (toilets, boiler, IT equipment, playground).
- Executive team and central costs excluded; separate central trust budget to be finalised post-merger.
- 8% top-slice removed.
- 4% teacher and 3.2% support staff pay rises included; support staff award currently rejected by unions.
- £30k contingency built in to adjust if pay awards change.
- PTA funds and reserves to be reviewed post-merger for investment optimisation.
- Forecast shows surpluses in years 1 and 2; year 3 shows potential £84k deficit.
- Conservative assumptions used: low inflation, EHCP funding cautious, 1.5% increase in future funding.

- Adjustments likely once confirmed EHCP and SEND funding is received.

### **M20LT Management Accounts**

- The budget up to Period 8 for Beaver Road Primary School shows an in-year surplus of £183k.
- Period 9 accounts will be published and sent to trustees tomorrow.
- The bank balance as of 30th April 2025 was £562,771.01.

### **The 2024/25 budget outturn forecast**

In year surplus / deficit:	-10,925	-70,790	-70,548
Brought forward from 2023-2024 - Beaver Road:	-253,888	-253,888	-253,888
Carried forward into 2025-2026 - Beaver Road:	-264,813	-324,678	-324,436
Central Trust in year surplus / deficit:	-3,200	-3,200	-3,200
Brought forward from 2023-2024 - Central Trust:	-72,011	-72,011	-72,011
Carried forward into 2025-2026 - Central Trust:	-75,211	-75,211	-75,211
Carried forward into 2025-2026 - Total:	-340,024	-399,889	-399,647

## **8 PREMISES and HEALTH and SAFETY**

- No GDPR subject access requests.
- Reception, Year 2 and Year 3 toilets to be modernised over the summer holidays.
- Additional intervention and meeting spaces to be created through remodelling.
- Discovery of a large safe in the corridor, a contractor was engaged to open and remove it.
- A new Estates Manager role is planned, and once appointed, will take responsibility for co-ordinating and standardising risk assessments and health and safety procedures across all schools in the trust.
- A unified Risk Register template is being developed for the trust to ensure consistency across all schools. Some schools currently lack a full risk register.
- The intention is to create both individual school-level risk registers and a higher-level trust-wide risk register.

## **10 PART ONE CEO'S REPORT AND MATTERS ARISING.**

LH updated trustees on the following provisional data:  
The Year 6 cohort had experienced high levels of transience.  
There are eleven Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in place, which is a relatively high number. Despite concerns about potential lower results, outcomes exceeded expectations

## Provisional Key Stage 2 Outcomes – Beaver Road

Subject	Expected Standard (%)	Greater Depth (%)
Reading	Significantly above target	Exceeded
Writing	Exceeded expectations	Exceeded
Maths	Exceeded expectations	High proportion
Grammar, Punctuation, Spelling	80%	61%
Science	82%	N/A
Combined (R/W/M)	Highest ever	Exceeded

- Combined results at greater depth were the highest the school has ever achieved.
- Significant improvements noted in writing, which has been a long-term school target.
- Strong correlation between targeted booster interventions (lunchtime clubs for borderline pupils) and performance improvements.
- Liz emphasised that curriculum breadth was maintained, with no narrowing of the curriculum or "teaching to the test".

### Phonics & Early Years

- **Phonics Screening Check (Year 1):** 88% pass rate
  - Above expected national (around 80–81%)
- **Early Years Foundation Stage (GLD):** 74%
  - Consistent over recent years; considered accurate for the cohort.
- **Multiplication Tables Check (Year 4):**
  - Provisional data shows fewer 100% scores than last year.
  - Liz requested additional breakdowns (e.g. % achieving 80% or 90%) for fuller analysis.

### Northern Primary School:

- **Reading:** 87% expected, 50% greater depth
- **Writing:** 77% expected, 10% greater depth
- **Maths:** 80% expected, 27% greater depth
- **Combined:** 67% expected

Results at Brookburn, Barlow Hall, and Cavendish schools were also reported as positive, supporting a strong start for the new trust.

The trustees **congratulated** LH and the staff team on the very good results.

### Attendance

- Attendance has been a challenge this year, particularly around persistent absenteeism.
- The school is below its target but still performs well compared to national and local benchmarks.

	<p><b>Key Statistics:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Overall attendance:</b> Approx. <b>95.8%</b></li> <li>• <b>Target:</b> 96%</li> <li>• <b>Persistent absence:</b> Under review, concerning patterns among certain demographics</li> <li>• Persistent absentees are often: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ From the most deprived families</li> <li>○ Children who have been rehoused far from school (often 2–3 buses away)</li> <li>○ Families experiencing mental health challenges, unemployment, or chaotic home circumstances</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The school partnered with Global Policing to address attendance issues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This was not effective, partly due to the key contact having left.</li> <li>○ Global Policing has offered a free trial year with a new lead officer.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The school is withdrawing temporarily from the existing arrangement and will review alternative strategies for next year.</li> <li>• <b>Steph</b> has created a geographical and socio-economic mapping of persistent absentees.</li> <li>• Staff have engaged directly with some families, encouraging them to consider local schools where attendance may be easier to maintain. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Families often refuse, citing school quality, peer groups, and attachment to the community.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• These are multifaceted, sensitive issues requiring compassion and creativity in response.</li> </ul>
11	<p><b><u>CONNECT ALLIANCE TRUST STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN (SDP) for 2025</u></b></p> <p>LH is preparing the School Development Plan and will present it to trustees in the autumn term.</p>
12	<p><b><u>TRUSTEES TRAINING</u></b></p> <p>With the establishment of the new Connect Alliance Trust Board, a consistent and strategic approach to trustee and governor training will be required across the five schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trustees agreed on the importance of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Developing a formal training policy</li> <li>○ Setting expectations around mandatory training (Safeguarding).</li> <li>○ Maintaining central CPD records</li> <li>○ Embedding training into the annual governance cycle</li> <li>○ Trustees agreed to continue maintaining individual CPD logs until a collective system is in place.</li> <li>○ A training policy will be drafted.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The training in September will be on Safeguarding TS to send trustees a link to the training. <b>Action</b></li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Once the CAT is established the trustees will action a skills audit in the autumn term.</li> </ul>
14	<p><b><u>TRUST BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETING DATES.</u></b></p> <p>The dates for <b>2025-26</b> meetings.</p> <p><b>Connect Alliance Trust Board</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>23<sup>rd</sup> September 2025</li> <li>9<sup>th</sup> December 2025</li> <li>24<sup>th</sup> March 2026</li> <li>14<sup>th</sup> July 2026</li> </ul> <p><b>Financial Oversight, Audit and Risk Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7<sup>th</sup> October 2025</li> <li>4<sup>th</sup> December 2025</li> <li>10<sup>th</sup> March 2026</li> <li>7<sup>th</sup> July 2026</li> </ul> <p><b>School Improvement and Standards Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18<sup>th</sup> November 2025</li> <li>24<sup>th</sup> February 2026</li> <li>9<sup>th</sup> June 2026</li> </ul> <p><b>Remuneration Committee</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25<sup>th</sup> November 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>AGM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11<sup>th</sup> December 2025</li> </ul> <p><b>CEO Performance Management</b> Monday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2025</p>
15	<p><b><u>AOB</u></b></p> <p>There was no AOB raised at the beginning of the meeting to discuss.</p>

The meeting moved to Part Two

.....Chair

.....Dated