

01/03/2023

Minutes

Finance, Resources & Staffing Committee Spring 2023
Wednesday 1st March 2023 at 9.30am at central office

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Jon Sharpe (Chair), Steve Tavener (Vice), Peter Hague, Claire Paul, Will Hermon

Apologies: Ian Wilkinson (accepted due to work)

In Attendance: Emma Gilbert (CFO), Jo Callow (ex-officio), Toni Martin (Governance Officer)

2. Declarations of Interest/Pecuniary Interests relevant to this Agenda

None declared.

3. Minutes of previous FRS Autumn (12th October 2022) and matters arising

- School Resource self-assessment tool – carry forward to spring term (EG). *See item 6*
- Suite for WHA needs updating now and committee agreed that lease quotes for this work should be obtained, rather than expenditure on new equipment. Decision on lease for WHA IT suite (WH). *Process followed ICT4 chosen to provide this capability.*
- One action from confidential minutes regarding review of hours for specific staff member (WH). *Recorded at confidential minutes.*
- One action from confidential minutes regarding pay review (SC). *Recorded at confidential minutes.*

Committee agreed the minutes were accurate and the Chair signed a copy.

4. Confidential Agenda Items

Staff matters recorded at confidential minutes.

5. MAT Improvement Plan

Review priorities relevant to FRS: WH raised the subject of GAG pooling. This has been considered with various options such as not GAG pooling at all, partial GAG pooling (hybrid) and no GAG pooling. The directors discussed the options and pros/cons in details. The proposal was that EG and JS will formalise the hybrid model that the trust already uses. **Discuss at full Board in summer term.**

6. Review Current Finance

a. Income and Expenditure Against Planned Budget

Ensuring compliance with overall financial plan including finance management accounts, budget variance and cash

WH noted the increase staff costs due to national pay awards, and a few other financial matters that were being chased up. Overall, so far, it is considered that the trust will likely break even or have an overspend of about £50-60K. **Do we know what future pay rises will likely be from the**

government and how much will this affect our budget? WH noted that any further rises need to be funded by the government as it won't be financially viable otherwise. **Figures for staffing at WHA and SEND costs at LT were questioned** and WH noted that these are specific issues with context behind them. It was noted that the dashboard produced is a useful tool for the directors to consider the current financial management of the trust.

b. Measure Budget Against Financial KPIs

It was agreed that there are no significant fluctuations. EG noted some detail. Committee content that all is as it should be.

c. Virements and other transactions in accordance with the MAT Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation

The Chair noted that the use of codes on the virement list are not helpful to the committee. In future it was agreed that a brief explanation in the form of a couple of words and date will also be provided. All completed within the financial scheme of delegation. The committee discussed the delegation figures for virements and expenditure, and this is already due for annual review at the full Board on 22 March 23.

d. Approval of Expenditure of Sums over agreed Financial Regulations

All expenditure over is for CIF projects and monies owed this time have been paid to the trust in a more timely manner.

e. Finance Director's Report

The finance director provided a comprehensive report to the committee.

With GAG funding being slightly under budget and other government funding being over, the overall income budget is sitting at 0.2% over. Staff expenditure is 34.9% but this will be more when the teachers' pay is fully accounted for within the current year due to government awarded pay rises. There are no significant school variances; WHA is 1.62% over budget, CG is 1.5% under and the centre is 0.26% over currently. The consolidated budget at P4 is 0.8% over budget (£52K). Around £16K of this is 10% over-spend on maintenance of premises. No changes to current financial delegations, mini bus costs were brought to directors even though this was under WH's delegation. Finance staff suitably qualified, apprentice is now employed and going through AAT, and a new payroll officer is now employed which is good for resilience and succession planning. Re trust priorities, there is evidence that funds are being applied to Learning Standards which is a first priority with additional funding also going to catch up tutoring. Despite lack of in year full funding, CFO confident of the trust's ability to maintain a suitable level of reserves.

PH raised the possibility of forecasting software as at the moment, it is possible to estimate a forecast but having software will enable this to be more accurate. WH noted that there are cost implications to this and the committee discussed the utility and benefit of it against the projected costs. Committee agreed to defer the decision until the FRS autumn term where information is required on costs and cost breakdown, including first year costs and then annual costs. **Action: Forecasting software to autumn term FRS**

f. School Resource self-assessment tool

Due at end of March 23. Will be presented to **full Board on 22 March 23**.

7. Future Finance and Finance Compliance

a. KPIs

Keep KPIs as they are going forward.

b. **Benchmarking**

It was noted that the benchmarking data produced from the audit is again not comparable and therefore of limited use.

8. **Staff Structure and Budgets**

Review Central MAT and individual school for following academic year; completed for the trust and little movement required in general. CG deficit has improved above the last couple of years but pupil numbers are very low this year. CG is reduce from 3 classes to 2 classes from September 2023. OS will move to Princetown to cover HoS roll and is likely to then move elsewhere after Princetown for career development.

9. **Staff Performance Management & Pay**

CEO/EHT (Senior Leaders) Performance Management outcomes and recommendations. **Completed at the Full Board 12 Dec 2022** (recorded at confidential minutes).

10. **Premises & Infrastructure**

a. **Utilities Usage and Providers**

WH noted the central office costs. Further consideration has been given to using the pre-school building for central team, but there are a number of issues with this. New costs have been received for the current central office space at a 5% increase in cost which is considered very reasonable in the current climate. The offer is for a 6 year lease with the option to review at the 3 year point and a further option of a get out clause at that time. **Committee approved.**

Committee reviewed current utilities providers and agreed that as contracts are renewed, this would be streamlined. **Is the economy of scale if we purchase as a MAT?** Yes, but we need to await for contract renewals to allow that to happen.

b. **School Meal Contracts and Kitchens**

EG and WH talked through the pros and cons of the two new potential catering contractors. **Do we have references from other schools?** These will be sought. **Will a new company invest in equipment?** Awaiting that detail. **Will we ensure there are performance penalties in place for not delivering to the contract?** This will be looked at, and the staffing issues in the catering and hospitality trade were discussed. This will be followed up further and fed back to directors.

11. **Policy Review**

- a. Business Purchase Card (MB) – approved.
- b. Charging & Remissions (MB) – approved.
- c. Investment (EG) – Check committee references, approved.
- d. Staff Leave & Absence (SC) – approved.

12. **AOB**

None.

13. **DONM**

Summer Term – Monday 12th June 2023 at 9.30am at central office. This will be followed by a brief from Neil Swait on school inspection process and Ofsted framework at 11.30am. All directors welcome to attend.

PH gave apologies for next meeting as he will be away.

Meeting closed at 11.10

TJH Martin
Governance Officer

Distribution List:

J. Sharpe – Director (Chair)
S. Tavener – Director (Vice)
P. Hague – Director
C. Paul – Director
I. Wilkinson - Director
W. Hermon – CEO Director
E. Gilbert – CFO
J. Callow – Ex Officio Observer