



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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7/12/2022

Minutes
Audit Committee Autumn 2022
Wednesday 7th December 2022 at 9.30am at the Central Office

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Peter Hague (Vice), Jon Sharpe, Steve Tavener

Apologies: Accepted from Graeme Barriball

In Attendance: Will Hermon, Emma Gilbert (CFO), Jo Callow (Ex-Officio), Toni Martin (Governance Officer), Louise Bridgett (Francis Clark auditors, items 1-4 only)

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

None relevant to this agenda.

3. Re-Elect Chair/Vice Chair of FSD

At the full Board in July 2022 due to the re-structuring of committees, reallocation of committee members and nomination of committee chairs. The committee agreed that GB is Chair of the Audit committee and PH is Vice.

4. External Audit

Louise Bridgett from Francis Clark went through the approach to the audit and thanked the An Daras team for their co-operation during the audit. No material issues regarding the risk of fraud. All funds being used with appropriate regularity. Auditors assessed the going concern of the trust by testing the assumptions on which this has been based. Budgets and forecasts have been considered and they concur with the trust board's assessment that the trust is a going concern. Pensions were considered and no concerns. PE funding shows a considerable amount unspent but it was agreed this is not the case and some adjustments to the accounts are required. **It was noted that when pay awards are set at a national level outside of the budget setting window, it is difficult to make the correct assumptions when planning budgets.** The auditors have given advice on the internal assurance programme and how this can be improved.

The point about the Chair of the Trust Board being a member was raised. While the committee, and indeed the trust board, are not in disagreement with the concept of separating layers of governance, the current articles dictate that the Chair is also a member. It is feasible to change the articles but as the process is costly, the funds are better spent on the children's needs. Perhaps in future if the trust expands and the articles are altered, this can be done at the same time.

The auditors noted their independence as auditors. The auditors were asked if they do other checks on handbook compliance other than regularity? It is usually focussed on the must dos not the good practice. With regard to the benchmarking figures, is the data shown including secondary, if so this isn't a helpful comparison? LB confirmed that the data compared with other primary and secondary schools that are Francis Clark clients. The committee agreed this benchmark is of limited value.

EG thanked the auditors for their help and approach. LB left the meeting at 9.50am.

5. **Confirm minutes of Audit Summer Meeting (22nd June 2022) and Matters Arising**

Once suite of cyber security policies are issued, ensure the Business Continuity policy is in line with these (WH). *Complete, see item 17.*

No actions from confidential minutes. Committee agreed the minutes and the Chair signed a copy.

6. **Confidential Matters**

None.

7. **Review Risks**

a. **MAT Risk Register**

Up to date risk register provided to committee. WH noted that staff absence due to illness has become more prevalent which puts more pressure on other staff. **Is the absence generally stress related and can we do anything about that?** WH confirmed no and that it is more long-term medical conditions. The impact of good attainment and progress on Ofsted inspections is less than it used to be, it's much broader now with a wider look at the curriculum and broader aspects of education. The successful Ofsted at CG was noted. It was agreed that Ofsted risk may be able to be downgraded slightly now the requirements are more certain. It was noted that children are not resilient to 'every day' germs and therefore genuine absence is an issue at present. **Full risk register to be reviewed at Spring audit to re grade some items on the risk register.**

b. **Oversight of risks at each school**

School top 3 risks have been updated at this term's LGB meetings. Nothing that is not expected and in line with the current overall trust risks.

c. **Cyber Security Audit**

Apologies for glitches in CS training. WH noted no breaches known. WH made committee aware of the Cyber security incident management plan. It is a template that is partially populated and is currently being finished. Approved by committee. **On page 3 , bullet point 6 it says "An Daras Trust maintains a patch management policy that aims to install all critical and high severity updates within 14 days of release" – should this not be ICT4's responsibility and should it not say "will" rather than "aims to" or else it could drag on?** WH will investigate and amend.

d. **PREVENT Self Assessment Tool from the DfE**

WH noted the latest guidance on Prevent duty. **Action: Completed self-assessment tool will be shared with committee in Spring term.**

8. **MAT Improvement Plan**

Reviewed by early stages of work. Key performance indicators. WH briefly discussed progress in attainment & progress, writing, subject leader development, Ofsted readiness, curriculum development, climate change/sustainability, safeguarding, SEND, local governance, cyber security and potential GAG pooling.

WH noted the 3-year plan for IT, focussing on the last stage regarding WHA IT suite. This has been looked at along with an ipad package for NP&W to obtain quotes. Quotes were made available to the committee. **Can this be covered from the budget allocated to IT?** For this year, it can be covered from what has been budgeted but then it would need to be reviewed. **Do we have everything we**

need and is it future proofed over 3 years? As a lease, it will be renewed and updated in 3 years. Subject to clarification on the quotes and information regarding the cost against the existing IT budget, recommended that full Board make decision on the IT contract. C/F to full Board.

9. Management Accounts

EG briefly discussed the latest management accounts. Early days in the financial accounts and nothing significant report.

10. Review Debt Report

EG reported to the committee on debtors, of which it is minor.

11. An Daras Trust as a 'Going Concern'

Discussed in item 4 and will be assessed and recorded at the full Board on 12th Dec 2022.

WH noted the unplanned staffing costs due to national pay awards. Support staff pay was being evaluated anyway but this has now been superseded by the national pay awards. National minimum wage is now £10.42 but Cornwall LA has stipulated this should be £10.50 and is also backdating an inflationary award to April 2022. It was previously decided not to do this. But the situation and cost of living has changed since that decision was made. WH noted that anyone below the new national minimum wage would be increased to this, but anyone above that level will not change apart from PM related awards. The committee agreed that going above national living wage to Cornwall rates at £10.50 will not involve significant costs and will be more positive for retention and recruitment of support staff. **Action: Refer the decision to increase minimum wage to £10.50 and approve support staff pay policy to full board.**

Teacher's pay – announced national pay award of 5%. New set of pay scales submitted.

It was confirmed that wage increases is in excess of £50K with no further funding. ESFA have said that reserve can be dropped down to 5% in order to pay for the rises. But will be other inflationary costs to be dealt with. WH noted that SoS for Education announced that funding levels for schools will return to 2010 pre austerity levels. This will probably be staged but may allow us to pay for some of the additional pay rises in future.

12. Three-Five Year MAT Strategic Growth Plan

As well as this, the trust has to have a 3-year IT plan, a 3-year estates and premises plan, and a sustainability plan. WH noted that it would be more coherent to put these plans into one joined up plan. The committee agreed this is sensible. WH gave an update on possible expansion plans and possibilities are recorded at confidential minutes.

13. Internal Audit

Two quotes received and were compared for value for money and quality. After discussion and evaluation, the committee made a recommendation to the full Board that Griffin is chosen as the internal auditor for 2023. This is already on the full Board agenda.

14. Prevention of Fraud and Theft

None detected through the external audit process. The latest Cornwall LA cyber security risks have been issued to staff and the committee. Appropriate controls and policies against the risk of fraud, theft and irregularity are in place.

15. Visible Learning

Currently a partner VL academy and working towards Certified Schools Status which makes the trust unique as the only accredited Trust in the UK. The committee will be updated on progress.

16. Review External Documents

a. Academies Handbook

Issued June 2022 (BoD notified in Jul 22).

Check list of musts from AH was shared with committee and full Board.

b. Funding Agreement Changes

No changes.

c. Latest ESFA or Other Guidance

None.

17. Policy Review

Business Continuity (WH) – approved.

Teachers Pay (WH) – approved.

Support Staff Pay (WH) – C/F to full Board for approval pending decision.

Data Protection (SC) – approved.

18. AOB

Future plans for WSC to install proper toilets rather than using portaloo were mentioned. Project manager believes this can be done for around £18K and will allow the space to be rented out.

Engineering and construction insurance is up for renewal. Committee agreed to renew.

19. DONM

Next meeting confirmed on Wednesday 15th March 2022 at 9.30 at central office.

Meeting closed 11.50

TJH Martin

Governance Officer

Distribution List:

W. Hermon – CEO / Director G. Barriball (Committee Chair) P. Hague – Director (Committee Vice Chair) S. Tavener – Director	J. Sharpe - Director E. Gilbert – CFO J. Callow – Ex Officio Observer
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