



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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12/06/2023

Minutes

Finance, Resources & Staffing Committee Summer 2023 Monday 12th June 2023 at 9.30am at central office

1. Welcome and Apologies

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

Present Virtually: Ian Wilkinson

Apologies: Peter Hague, Jo Callow (Ex-Officio)

In Attendance: Emma Gilbert (CFO), Toni Martin (Governance Officer)

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

None declared relevant to this agenda.

3. Minutes of previous FRS Spring (1st March 2023) and matters arising

- Gag pooling action to full Board in summer term. *Noted for full Board agenda.*
- Forecasting software to FRS autumn term. *Noted for next agenda.*
- School Resource Self Assessment Tool. *Approved by Audit committee and submitted.*

No actions in confidential minutes.

Committee agreed the minutes and the Chair signed a copy.

4. Confidential Agenda Items

Staff matters and Trust matters were discussed and recorded at confidential minutes.

IW joined the meeting virtually.

5. MAT Improvement Plan

Resources, staffing and governance of schools is being covered off. LT's Ofsted inspection was positive with a firm good which was an improvement from the last inspection. Governance has come out well on all inspections so far. GAG pooling will be discussed at full Board.

6. Review Current Finance

a. Income and Expenditure Against Planned Budget

WH noted that finances have been tight this year. The variance of £156K is mostly down to additional teachers' pay set by the government but not funded with additional money. EG discussed in detail the latest management accounts. It was discussed that there have been many unknowns in terms of staff pay rises, up-front costs on other things such as premises and then small amounts of additional funding is received now and then by the ESFA which makes managing the accounts more difficult. It was, however, agreed that despite all this the money has been spent sensibly with good results (noting good outcomes and good Ofsted inspections). **It is important that the reserves are more clearly shown so the board is able to manage them**

more transparently? The committee discussed in detail the difficulties with this and EG will look at this. Nursery funding was discussed in detail, in particular the top up funding. SEND funding was discussed in detail, including the balance of payments between what is received and what is often required to support these children.

TM suggested given that the governor advertising has yielded results previously that it would be a good idea to continue. The cost of £500 for 4 (quarterly) ½ pages in Launceston Life is not recommended this time but the slightly cheaper option of 4 (quarterly) ¼ pages for £300 is fit for purpose. **Committee agreed to this expenditure on advertising.**

TM noted that there are many governors who are not proficient at IT, including using their An Daras email and sharepoint. This takes up a lot of TM's and AC's time. AC has suggested running an IT session for governors to bring in their laptops and have some help setting them up/accessing the An Daras IT. TM suggested that funds are allocated for ICT4 to provide this service. **The committee agreed to this.**

b. Measure Budget Against Financial KPIs

Staffing costs KPI is out due to government directed unfunded 5% pay rise but this is known about.

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

None.

The cost of everything rising and inflationary increases has led to the need to increase the financial limits on the trust Financial Scheme of Delegation. Proposal agreed and will be taken to full board for decision.

d. Approval of Expenditure of Sums over agreed Financial Regulations

Expenditure over £10K in March were Werrington CIF funding of £49,633.07, £55,833.41 and £42,252.54. This was approved by the committee.

7. Review/Discuss Balanced Budget for Financial Year

WH noted some key points regarding the budget for the next financial year. There are some issues regarding nursery costs and staffing costs against projected pupil numbers. The financial security of the nurseries was discussed at length and the committee agreed that the hours need to be reviewed to ensure the trust is offering something competitive in the local area, including the hours they offer for working parents over school holidays. The committee discussed at length various potential options and agreed that work needs to be done to consider the long term plans for the pre-schools across the trust. WH nominated JC to lead this review. **Action: Provide a scope for this pre-school project to the full Board for agreement to begin the review in the Autumn term (JC/WH)**

In attempting to set a balanced budget for next year, a number of assumptions were agreed; teacher pay grant received of 6.25% of teacher salary cost, support pay increases of 2% performance management from September 2023 and 3% inflation from April, and £20K additional income undefined for each school based on previous year trends. The committee also discussed numbers of children and the pre-school provision. The difficulties in balancing the budget were noted but a revised draft budget will be provided to the full Board for approval on 12th July (already a summer standing item on the agenda).

8. **Review 3-year Budget Return**

Committee agreed that the same principles applied to next year's budget will be applied to following 2 years but also acknowledged that much is unknown at this stage. This will be approved by the full Board and submitted to ESFA by 30 July 2023.

9. **Agree Final Staffing Structure**

WH believes that the trust is not over staffed, it is the funding that is not keeping up with the minimum requirements. A couple of matters were discussed in confidential minutes.

10. **Ensure Appropriate Use of Funds**

WH confirmed that all funding is used as per Articles of Association, Funding Agreements, Church Supplementary agreements and Diocesan agreements. This includes Christian foundation delivery.

WH updated the committee on PE funding and the provision that has been in place by Arena – they deliver good services and they provide impacts on their service. PE provision is coming out well on Ofsted inspections and the provision at Woodland Skills centre is also positive.

The renewal contract was presented to the committee. It was noted that there are no other companies that do like for like provision, so no other quotes could be sought at this time.

Committee agreed to continue using Arena as our PE funded sports partnership provider.

IW lost connectivity and left the meeting.

11. **Performance Management**

Governance Officer will have PM interview with WH on 12th July. All evidence of objectives submitted. Date set for CEO/EHT performance management with Chair & External Advisor on 1st Dec 2023.

12. **Premises & Infrastructure**

Contract for gardening services was discussed. Tenders received from 2 contractors, this was discussed by the committee. **The committee decided to select Contractor 1.**

Contract for PSF financial management system was discussed; whether to take on one year or three years. Possible transfers to the trust may affect this and the savings over 3 years for this contract are not significant enough to make this a deciding factor. **Committee agreed to extend the contract by one year only.**

Chair of FRS delegated this decision regarding staff absence insurance to the LSS due to the timing of the decision. WH discussed the current provision and then discussed the various quotes available, and what these involve. Discussion took place on the use of insurance and whether it is value for money? **It was questioned whether we could just put money aside into a pot to pay for cover rather than pay for insurance?** This was discussed in detail, the pros and cons, and the risks of not having the insurance versus having the insurance. The figures for this year are not yet known in detail as some of the claims have not been processed. It was also noted that there are also benefits that come with this cover such as access to GP online consultations, physio and mental health services. **It was proposed that the standard cover is taken this year but data will be collected and then next year compare the data against cost of insurance to make decision on whether to go with insurance or put the money to one side and use to cover staff absence. Committee agreed.**

The FRS committee were content with this decision.

The committee were informed that there is no further expenditure required for the Cyber security action plan.

13. Policy Review

- a. **Staff Expenses & Purchasing** (MB). Approved.
- b. **Finance** (MB). Approved.
- c. **Finance Procedure** (EG). **Can payroll policy be included in this? How is a staff member's pay increases monitored and checked? Is there a method of review to ensure everyone being paid is actually still a member of staff?** Auditors have stated that a separate payroll policy is required that will include these matters. EG noted some of the procedures in place to ensure staff pay is accurate and the committee agreed that the control mechanism needs to be tightened up and included in the policy.
- d. **Reserve** (EG). This was an action from the full Board for the FRS to review this and make a recommendation to the full Board. The policy had been amended to a figure of £600-800K as 8-10% reserve. A drop of 5% was allowed by the ESFA for a year but this won't be allowed to continue. Committee discussed reducing the percentage to 5% and keep just a % rather than a numerical value. It was also noted that if the reserve balance drops, it will need to be justified. **The FRS recommend to the full Board that the reserves policy state the figure of 5% with no numerical value.**

14. AOB

None.

15. DONM

Will be confirmed once the meeting schedule for 23-24 is complete.

Meeting closed at 11.15am

Meeting was followed by a session on Ofsted inspections by Neil Swait to fill some gaps in the Director's previous skills audit.

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