



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & PREMISES COMMITTEE

Wednesday 15 November 2023 at 6.00 pm

Venue: Large Conference Room, Fambridge Road

Present:

- Mr T Bailey (TB) Trustee, Chair of Finance & Premises Committee
- Mrs E Crees (EC) Trustee
- Mr M Howell (MH) Trustee, Health and Safety Link
- Mrs K Mehrtens (KM) Trustee – *left the meeting at 7.15 pm*
- Ms S Milward (SM) Trustee
- Ms S Robinson (SR) Trustee
- Ms L Smart (LS) Trustee, Chair of HR Committee – *by Teams*

In attendance

- Mr T Baster (TBA) Joint Head of Academy
- Mrs R Clark (RCL) Joint Head of Academy
- Mrs K Redmond (KRE) Clerk to Trustees (Governance Professional)
- Mr R Scott (RSC) Director of Finance & Premises

Apologies:

- Ms J Ellum (JE) Trustee
- Mrs D Gray (DG) Trustee
- Ms L Marshall (LM) Trustee
- Mrs J Smith (JS) Trustee

This group was quorate for the purpose of resolutions

Item	Topic	Minute
1.	Welcome and apologies for absence	Apologies for absence were NOTED. Trustees welcomed Sarah Robinson to her first meeting
2.	Election of Chair and Vice-Chair	KM nominated TB for the role of Chair, seconded by EC and AGREED unanimously. TB nominated SR for the role of Vice-Chair, seconded by SM and AGREED unanimously.
3.	Minutes of the previous meeting	Minutes of the previous Finance & Premises Committee meeting held on 14 June 2023 were APPROVED unanimously.
4.	Matters Arising	Item 8: Risk Management Policy was in draft form for review by MH and RSC. Item 10a: Trustees RATIFIED the Chair's Action in June 2023 to approve the final changes for the Three Year Budget Plan. Item 10bi: communication had been provided regarding the increased cost in school meals and no negative feedback had been received.

		Item 11b: Trustees RATFIED the Chair's Action to approve the 12 month contract with British Gas from 1 October 2023.
5.	Notification of Any Other Business	1. Appointment of new Trustee. 2. Permanent Exclusion
6.	Declaration of Business Interests	There were no new declarations of business interests and no Trustee recorded any conflict of interest with the items on the agenda or the receipt or giving of any gifts or hospitality since the last meeting.
7.	Approval of the Committee's Terms of Reference including Governance Key Objectives	Trustees AGREED the Terms of Reference and Governance Key Objectives within the Trustees' Handbook.
8.	Summary of actions taken since the summer term	Chair's Actions as noted above. Ongoing development of Audit, Health & Safety and Risk Management Committee.
9	Finance	Trustees NOTED: a) Finance Report and Management Accounts with summary, income and expenditure graphs noting: i. forecast for 2023/24 now predicted a deficit of £40k; the budget had been set with an expected deficit of £250k ii. teachers were awarded a nationally agreed pay rise of 6.5% of which only 3% was funded by government iii. non salary costs were rising in all areas due to inflation iv. the strategic finance meeting takes place weekly v. reserves were currently approximately £411k and the academy continued to focus on good financial management and managing budgets well vi. income was £50k higher than expected as an additional grant had been received for teachers' pensions and catering income had increased. SM queried whether most Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) pupils used their meal allocation. RCL confirmed that they did spend their allocation. RSC advised that the number of those entitled to Free School Meals (FSM) had also has increased considerably. b) Update on Three Year Budget Summary: cost efficiencies were in place to address the predicted deficit of -£130k by 2025/26. c) Aged Debtors: was a much improved picture than previously. d) Audit Update RSC demonstrated the portal used by the external auditors and outlined the planning stage, fieldwork undertaken and completion

		<p>date to ensure the academy was statutorily compliant. The final accounts will be submitted to the Annual General Meeting for approval on 13 December 2023.</p> <p>SR queried whether the same auditors had been used for a number of years and how often did the contract have to be renewed.</p> <p>RSC advised that the same auditors had been in place since 2012. There was a requirement for the senior partner to change every 10 years under charitable law and that had taken place. A recent benchmarking and tender exercise had taken place and their original price was still very competitive.</p> <p>Trustees AGREED that the academy should go to the market for the 2023/24 audit to ensure the prices were still competitive.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action RSC</p> <p>e) Academy Trust Handbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Schedule of Musts: the Responsible Officer had provided a report March 2023 confirming that the academy met all statutory requirements ii. Summary of Changes iii. Letter from Education and Skills Funding Agency to Trusts
10	Benchmarking	<p>Trustees REVIEWED the Department for Education (DfE) benchmarking data based on the academy’s closest local comparators noting that the data was two years out of date and the year out old data will be available soon.</p> <p>Trustees NOTED that it was difficult to make comparisons with other schools due to how the data was entered by schools. The data showed underlying trends and which areas may need to be addressed to make long term savings.</p> <p>Trustees requested that RSC speak with other split site campus schools to understand how they managed their non-classroom support staff – excluding auxiliary staff for the number of pupils per staff.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action RSC</p>
11	Premises Report	<p>Trustees RECEIVED the Premises Report regarding 2022-23 Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids noting that the Mill Road Campus pipework will be completed by the end of summer 2024</p> <p>Trustees AGREED the proposed 2023-24 CIF bids for the Fambridge Road Campus (FRC) main building roof and the FRC sports area changing rooms.</p> <p>Trustees NOTED that a short term solution was being sought to provide additional toilet facilities at FRC including hiring toilets on a short lease which would also mean that external hirers would not have to access the main building. In the long term both new builds will have ample toilet provision and address the current lack of facilities.</p> <p>Trustees NOTED that a new Premises Manager had been appointed following retirement by the previous member of staff and positive feedback was being received.</p>

12	Health & Safety Update	Trustees NOTED the minutes of the Health & Safety Committee dated 28 September 2023. Trustees NOTED that there had been one RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013) reportable incident as a member of site team had fallen from a ladder when working alone; there had been no immediate injuries but the member of staff was off work for more than seven days as a result of the accident.
14	Policy for approval	<i>KM left the meeting at this point</i> Trustees REVIEWED the following policies with minor changes: a) Financial Regulations & Scheme of Delegation b) Gifts & Hospitality c) Investment Policy Trustees APPROVED the above policies for ratification by the Board of Trustees.
15	Any Other Business	1. Trustees APPROVED the appointment of Ms Sarah Robinson as Trustee with immediate effect following an interview process with the Executive Group as proposed by TB, seconded by MH and AGREED unanimously. 2. Trustees NOTED that the academy had taken the decision to permanently exclude a student who was a Looked After Child (LAC). Confirmation will be provided tomorrow of the arrangements for that student and whether or not an Exclusions Panel will be required.
16	Confirmation of confidential items for the minutes	Agenda item 13
17	Date of next meetings	6 March 2024 12 June 2024 <i>Audit and Risk Management Committee: date to be confirmed</i>

Meeting closed at 8.30 pm

Actions

Date of Meeting/ Item number	Topic	Minute
15.11.23 – item 9d	Tender for External Auditors	RSC to arrange for the academy to go the market for the 2023/24 audit to ensure the prices were still competitive.
15.11.23 – item 10	Benchmarking	RSC to speak with other split site campus schools to understand how they managed their non-classroom support staff – excluding auxiliary staff for the number of pupils per staff.