

The Link Academy Trust

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes: Friday 24 September 2021

9.30am - F&GP 5 /21

Held online using MS Teams

Present: Mr Roy Gillard (Chair)
Ms Nicola Dunford
Mrs Cheryl Mathieson
Mr Paul Waterworth

In attendance: Trust Business Manager - Mr Matt Matthew
Clerk – Sue Howard

Welcome:

Welcome by Roy Gillard, Chair of Finance & General Purposes Committee

Absent without Apologies: None

Declaration of Business Interests: The CEO is a Trustee of South Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust (SDMAT) and also a Trustee for the Bearnas Education Foundation. Mr Roy Gillard is a Director of Labyrinth Accountancy Limited.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of 6 July 2021 were approved as a true and accurate record.

2. Matters Arising

2.1 Item 4.3. Investigation of forecasting software options

The Chair and TBM are due to attend an online meeting to look at a new software programme being run by an individual known to the Chair. There may also be an opportunity to approach Ben Thorne, current external auditor with Bishop Fleming. Ben is leaving BF and as part of his new job, maybe able to do some consultancy work for the Trust within his expertise. The Committee agreed that it would be favourable to have someone who knows the Trust, but a tender process in accordance with the Trust's financial procedures is best practice. The Chair will update the committee at the next scheduled meeting.

Action Chair

2.2 Item 5.1. CIF Appeals

The TBM had an online call with the DfE team leader for CIF. He gave very clear feedback on their process, from which they said they would relook at our bids. Appeals have been submitted for Diptford and Hennock and results are due to be announced in September, no news received to date.

The CEO was then invited to a feedback session earlier this week to discuss Landscope and Hennock bids submitted year on year with no success and the DfE were offering to assist with our applications to make us more successful. The advice given is already thoroughly undertaken by the Trust, so was felt to be more of an exercise by the DfE to engage with schools. The CEO and TBM feel the CIF process is floored. The TBM has instructed a new consultant to assist with CIF bid submissions and he and the CEO have since been invited to an online meeting today with the Regional Schools Commissioner and will update the committee further.

Action – CEO & TBM

3. Governance

The committee reviewed and discussed the Constitution and Terms of Reference and agreed on amendments to:

6.3 – to add that the Members also have to approve the audited financial statements

6.4 – to amend Local Governing board to Executive/Academy Head regarding requests to revise individual school budgets

Action - Clerk

4. **Finance**
 - 4.1 Financial Performance to 31 August 2021 – month 12.

The TBM provided a report to reflect the schools budgets at year end to 31 August 2021. The Trust is in a healthy position and there are no real schools of concern. It was noted that there is an ongoing query with South West Water following an excessive bill received for Otterton School. The TBM gave thanks to the central team for their work in readiness for the external audit starting w/c 27 September 2021. The CEO expressed her feelings regarding any excessive reserves and that they must be used for the education of our children and the impact for them and the schools. The TBM said the outlook for schools is challenging and he is advising that the Board await the Audit results, to confirm any carry forwards and then an EOM is held regarding the Trust's reserves and to investigate further projects. The committee asked the TBM to provide a report of Trust expenditure spent so far on projects and projected costs for forthcoming projects in need.
 - 4.2 Teaching and Support Staff Pay Awards 2021-22.

The TBM had provided the committee with a paper regarding the latest guidance on national pay awards. There is no definitive advice given at present. He proposes the Trust waits for further guidance before approving and applying any pay awards. Any pay awards will be back dated to 1 Sept 21.
5. **Property**

This item was summarised at 2.2
6. **Human Resources**

The committee were advised that all staff have been made aware of the Employee Assistance Programme introduced this year and relevant promotional material and guidance provided in abundance. Reminders will be done via the termly Wellbeing bulletin as well. The HR Officer was asked to update the committee at the next meeting of any take up of the programme by way of managerial reports she is able to access.

Action – HR Officer
7. **Health & Safety**

The TBM informed the committee that Hennock recently had their 3 yearly Health & Safety Audit carried out by Devon County Council. Fire Protection issue was picked up again, but they were satisfied that the current alarm provision is managed efficiently and effectively for the safety of the pupils and staff, until such time as a more substantial system can be installed.
8. **Data Protection**

The CEO advised the committee that there was an issue around key staff who are absent from work on sickness related matters, not accessing emails personally and a third party checking on their behalf. She added that this has been addressed with the Trusts IT provider and forwarders will be set up to monitor work emails in these instances. The committee requested that the Data Protection Officer provide a brief summary on GDPR to ensure Trustees are fully aware of Trust procedures, kept up to date and comply. CEO to incorporate into Trustee training module.

Action - CEO
9. **ESFA Bulletins**

There were no issues for discussion.
10. **Policies**
 - 10.1 Draft Admissions 2023-2024 **Agreed**
 - 10.2 Capital and Revenue Reserves – The committee has agreed to carry forward to the next meeting in relation to item 4.1 and 4.2 **Action - Clerk**
 - 10.3 Fundraising **Agreed**
 - 10.4 Write Off/Asset Disposal Procedures **Agreed**

11. **Dates of Future Meetings**
26 November 2021
04 February 2022
25 March 2022
06 May 2022
01 July 2022