


Finance & General Purposes Committee
meeting minutes
Friday 30th January 2025
12.15pm

Held at Landscope House with some online participation via TEAMS online

Invited:  Ben Thorne – **Chair** (Online)
Cheryl Mathieson
Paul Waterworth (Online)

In Attendance: Rachael Sharpe - **CEO**
Charlotte Roe- **Governance Professional**
Matt Matthew- **DCEO**
Louisa Taylor - **Finance Manager**

Minutes: Nicol Bush- **Clerk to the Trust**

| No | Item | Action |
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| 1. | Welcome and Apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome to Trustees. There were no apologies received. | |
| 2. | Declarations of Business Interests There were no new declarations of interests brought to the meeting. | |
| 3. | Any Other Business There was no other business brought to the meeting. | |
| 4. | Minutes of the previous meeting for approval: Part I minutes- These minutes were approved as a true record and were signed accordingly. | |
| 5. | Matters Arising from meeting held on 21st November 2025 (not on agenda) There were no matters arising brought to the meeting. | |
| 6. | Risk Register The Chair noted that while some risks were assessed as green, the key concerns were the red and amber risks relating to infrastructure investment, estate maintenance, ongoing financial uncertainty, pupil recruitment, and the reserves policy The Chair said the meeting would later reassess the risk ratings to determine any required updates. | |

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| 7. | <p>Finance The Chair raised that the Trust had reviewed its current MIS system and decided to run a formal tender because the three-year contract value exceeded procurement thresholds. The MIS market was known for legal challenges, so to reduce risk they chose to use the Kent County Council framework and appoint an external procurement specialist. Two quotes were received, and PHP Law offered the lower cost. They were awarded the work to manage the tender process.</p> <p>7.1. Financial Performance to 31st December 2025 The main dashboard was reviewed, and it was noted that there had been no significant movements since the previous month. It was also noted that some sports grant expenditure and curriculum resource costs were still outstanding, meaning the current forecast remained slightly optimistic due to the way the IMP forecasting system operated. Part II was taken</p> <p>7.2. Admissions forecast September 2026/2027 The FM explained that she had added the September 26 admissions as requested at the previous meeting in column X. That information had been correct at the time the figures were produced, although it might have changed slightly. The DCEO explained that the admissions portal had officially closed on the 15th of January. All schools were able to view the portal, which showed their first, second and third choices. He added that there could be some late admissions or families who had changed their mind. Therefore, between that point and the official publication date in April, there might be some changes, although the Trust did not expect large numbers. Part II was taken</p> <p>7.3 Progress of Deficit Recovery Programme Part II was taken</p> <p>7.4 AAR 24/25 - Confirmation of submission The DCEO confirmed the submission of the AAR.</p> | |
| 8. | <p>Property The DCEO said there were no major issues to report. Some schools were experiencing problems caused by poor weather, including leaking roofs, but these were being managed carefully, particularly in schools that had already received significant investment. Three CIF projects had been submitted, and the Trust was awaiting outcomes. The Wolborough nursery project was progressing well, although it was running about a week behind due to supply delays, but overall work was on track.</p> | |
| 9. | <p>Due Diligence There were no issues to report.</p> | |
| 10. | <p>Human Resources It was agreed that HR should be removed from the F&GP agenda, as it was now under the Remuneration and People committee agenda.</p> | |
| 11. | <p>Health & Safety There were no issues to report.</p> | |
| 12. | <p>Data Protection Part II was taken</p> | |
| 13. | <p>GIAS The GP said that the Trustees' information was fully up to date. She had requested confirmation from the Clerk's, regarding recent governance changes, so that section was not yet fully updated.</p> | |
| 14. | <p>Finance and Operations strategy plan The DCEO said that the finance and operations self-evaluation, produced following the TEF, was a substantial document, but the key priority was strengthening transparency and accountability across the finance team, the accounting officer and academy heads. Additional training had been introduced to support this.</p> | |

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| | <p>He explained that part of the planned actions involved updating the finance system and considering IMP as both a forecasting tool and a wider finance management package. The CEO added, due to the workload associated with the MIS procurement and implementation, and because the MIS contract ended on 31 August and required renewal for September, the team had decided to delay any changes to the finance system for a further year. The finance system could be changed annually, whereas MIS required a three-year contract, so it was sensible not to implement both major system changes simultaneously.</p> | |
| 15. | <p>ESFA Bulletins and Returns There were no updates available for the meeting.</p> | |
| 16. | <p>Policies 16.1 Central Funds, Reserves and Investment Policy 2026- The Trustees approved this policy. 16.2 Discretions Policy 2026- The Trustees approved this policy.</p> | |
| 17. | <p>Risk register The Chair said that the committee had reviewed the risk register and confirmed that the major risks had been covered through the agenda. Nothing had changed significantly in terms of impact or likelihood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance remained rated red, as keeping it at that level ensured continued focus while plans were still being implemented. • Recruitment also continued to be a concern. • Reserves remained amber, as the impact of getting them wrong would be significant. | |
| 18. | <p>Evaluation of governance impact The Chair said that it had been a positive and focused meeting. The decisions were not only about finance, but about supporting schools, pupils and educational outcomes. Every agenda item had been considered in terms of how it would benefit children and make the best use of available resources.</p> | |

The meeting ended at 1.45pm

Signed by the Chair of the Committee.....on 20th March 2026.