

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes

Friday 31st January 2025

9.30 am

Held at Landscope House and via TEAMS online

Attended: Ben Thorne (Chair)
Nicola Dunford (CEO)
Cheryl Mathieson
Paul Waterworth

In Attendance: Matt Matthew (DCEO)
Louisa Taylor (Finance Manager)
Charlotte Roe (Governance Professional)

Minutes: Nicol Bush- Clerk to the Trust

No	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome and apologies were accepted from Christopher Norman.	
2.	Declarations of Business Interests There was no new business interest brought to the meeting.	
3.	Any Other Business There was no other business brought to the meeting.	
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting The Trustees noted that amendments were needed for the previous minutes. After making the necessary corrections, the Trustees approved the minutes as a true record, and they were signed electronically.	Clerk
5.	Matters Arising from meeting held on 12th December 2024 (not on agenda) There were no matters arising brought forward to the meeting.	
6.	<p>Finance (Reports circulated via email before the meeting)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6.1 Financial Performance to 31st December 2024 – Month 4 The Finance Manager presented the Director's Data Dashboard for the month ending Dec 24. She summarised the financial performance and highlighted the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ The reforecast budget indicated a year end deficit of £187k. However, the current forecast was showing a deficit of £65k at the year end, an improved position and the FM explained the reasons for the variance included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ The original forecast had not allowed for a second instalment of the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant/Teachers' Pension Employer Grant (TPAG/TPEG) covering the period Apr – Aug 25 as there was uncertainty over whether it would be paid by the new government. However, the current guidance indicated that this would be paid in May/June. ▫ The FM shared that there hadn't been significant changes but explained that Diptford had seen increased electricity charges and that the backdated pay rises for Littleham, Wolb, Bhembury, Farway, Bscombe and WS had negatively impacted the budget. ▫ Overall, the FM explained that whilst it was an improved position the emphasis remained on continued month end scrutiny of the financial position. <p><i>The Trustees asked why in some of the schools the nursery income was higher?</i> The FM responded that at the time of the budgets it was based on previous year or the information held at the time and then if extra children joined or had extra sessions etc it would take the income higher. The FM added that the nurseries that did well, helped to offset the nurseries that were struggling.</p> <p><i>The CEO asked how had the deficit been reduced?</i> The FM explained that the deficit had been reduced primarily because nursery income was higher than forecast along with EHCP funding. The approval process for EHCP funding was a very lengthy time and we were now starting to see additional funding that had not been</p>	

	<p>budgeted. The FM noted that she had removed the £32.5k in PTFA donations from the document, as these funds had not yet been spent, and it would be unfair to show it as extra income. The FM raised that other extra income included: £56k additional SEND funding, £45k extra nursery income, £51k catering income, and £32k trip income.</p> <p><i>The CEO asked whether that situation was likely to change and if there were any items that would subsequently be spent, she asked if, for example, the additional SEND funding might necessitate hiring extra TAs, and whether that would impact the £65k figure.</i></p> <p>The FM responded that catering and nursery income fluctuated month to month and trip income would be spent on trip cost. The FM added that she could provide a summary at each meeting, if necessary, the meeting agreed that would be useful.</p> <p><i>The Chair asked if there were any other potential issues or opportunities in the background that could have either positive or negative implications.</i></p> <p>The DCEO reminded the committee of the impending increase in National Insurance with the government promise that it would be fully funded but that we were still awaiting guidance on what that would look like. He noted that these factors would impact the budget for the next year.</p> <p><i>The Chair said it would be useful to have a thought on if it was funded, how much would that be?</i></p> <p>The FM said she would investigate further.</p> <p><i>The Trustees questioned the spend on supply costs and additional hours and whether it was directly attributed to staff sickness?</i></p> <p>The CEO responded that there were a number of long-term illnesses but added that the Trust had used floating teachers where possible and had been doing the best they could.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-year forecast including KPIs. <p>The FM shared the multi-year scenario comparison summary and explained the comparison of the two columns. Both columns showed the expected 2.8% pay rise for teachers and 2% for support staff but compared the figures if it was fully funded and if it was not. The FM added that the reasons behind these figures were due to drops in pupil numbers and the staffing costs increasing.</p> <p>The CEO raised that it would take Trust leadership and changes in order to make the level of difference the Trust needed to make.</p> <p>The CEO said the KPI summary sheet made it clear that staffing costs needed to be investigated further.</p> <p>6.2. Admissions forecast September 2025/2026</p> <p>The DCEO shared the latest admissions data from the local authority following the 15th Jan 25 deadline along with current school year group data. Overall it reflected a reduction of 65 pupils</p> <p>6.3 Progress of Deficit Recovery Programme.</p> <p>Part II was taken.</p>	<p>FM</p> <p>CEO</p>
7.	<p>Property</p> <p>The DCEO updated the meeting on the Tedburn roof issue and said it was in hand.</p> <p>The DCEO shared that before Christmas, DCC had received £1.8 million in devolution funds for Torbay and Devon, intended for local businesses and community infrastructure projects valued between £5k and £50k. The DCEO reported that the Trust had submitted seven proposals before the deadline (three for PV panels and four for whole school LED replacements). The DCEO shared that the Trust had successfully secured funding for four LED replacement programs, which would be implemented over half term and possibly into Easter.</p> <p><i>The Trustees inquired about the value of the work and whether the Trust needed to contribute any costs.</i></p> <p>The DCEO reported that the schools receiving the replacements would be Wolborough, Cheriton Bishop, Landscope, and Moretonhampstead. Moretonhampstead, being the largest project, was valued at £17k, while the costs for the other schools were around £5-7k each. Nil Trust contribution would be required.</p>	
8.	<p>Due Diligence</p> <p>The DCEO said there were no updates available for the meeting.</p> <p>The CEO requested that Due diligence be brought forward for discussion at the Board of Trustees/Directors meeting.</p>	GP/Clerk
9.	<p>Human Resources</p> <p>The meeting agreed that Human Resources had been covered within item 6. of the agenda.</p> <p>The CEO updated that there were some safeguarding issues being managed by the DCEO. However, due to the confidential nature of these matters, they could not be discussed.</p> <p>The CEO added that a summary of the results of the recent staff survey would be shared at the Full Board meeting.</p>	
11.	<p>Health & Safety</p>	

	There were no comments brought forward to the meeting.	
12.	Data Protection There were no comments brought forward to the meeting.	
13.	GIAS The GP confirmed that she updated the GIAS at the beginning of each term and that all was up to date.	
14.	Risk Register 14.1 Trustees to review and discuss the current monitoring process outlined by the Audit Committee. The Trustees discussed the Risk Register and explored ways to enhance its utilisation at school level also. The GP highlighted that risk registers were a focus on every LAC governor school visit note template. She added that LACs had expressed they did not understand the Risk Register and had requested training on it. The Chair suggested that the Risk Register might be positioned incorrectly on the agenda and that risks should inform other discussion points on the agenda. He proposed moving the Risk Register item to the first agenda point after Matter arising item on the agenda. The GP agreed to schedule future agendas accordingly and to implement this change across other committee and board meetings agendas as well. The Trustees highlighted that it would be useful for the committee Chairs to be notified of the red and amber risks as this would allow the Chairs to inform the meeting about the specific risks. 14.2 Trustees to review report on the following risk register categories: The Trustees reviewed the risks, and the following comments were made. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ The CEO recommended that the ceiling issue at Tedburn be addressed and advised that the school be contacted to ensure this matter is added to their risk register. ▫ The CEO said that in terms of Growth and Capacity- the Trust were only going to take on schools that were either good or outstanding in their Ofsted and that the Trust needed to look at those schools that came with special measures, adding that those were big risks that needed to be scrutinised. The Trustees suggested that this risk be added to the S&C agenda, as it pertains to overall Growth and Capacity. ▫ The CEO raised that another large risk was succession planning, as she would be retiring in July 2025. 	GP/Clerk
15.	Strategy Plan Trustees to update on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial strategy and control There were no updates brought forward to this meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estate management There were no updates given due to the absence of CN at the meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth and Capacity Financial Strategy and Control and Estate Management 15.1 Update on 2024/2025 (Deferred from previous meeting on 27.09.24) There were no updates brought forward to the meeting.	
16.	ESFA Bulletins and Returns The CEO noted that there was nothing to report on the ESFA Bulletins but raised that she had received an email from the DfE requesting a meeting to discuss the forecast deficit for 25/26 reported on the BFR. The CEO had responded with her available dates for a meeting.	
17.	Policies 17.1 Fair Processing Notice 2025 <i>The Chair commented that all individual schools were listed in the policy, along with their contact details, and asked whether the Trust would have to update the policy to include all the latest schools for every new school that joined, or if a reference could be included on the Trust website.</i> The Trustees discussed how best to address the issue and agreed that a coverall should be added for any new schools joining the Trust within the year, as the policy was reviewed annually.	GP
18.	Evaluation of governance impact – Principle 2: Leadership The Trustees agreed the meeting had good value.	

The meeting ended at 10.40am

Signed by the Chair of the Committee..... on 21st March 2025

