

Finance & General Purposes Committee MINUTES

Friday 25th November 2022 9.30am

Held at Landscove House

Present: Ben Thorne (Chair)

Nicola Dunford (CEO) Cheryl Mathieson (CM) Paul Waterworth (PW) Christopher Norman (CN)

In attendance: Deputy CEO - Mr Matt Matthew (DCEO), Finance Manager - Ange Hughes (AH)

No	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies	
	No apologies - there was full attendance	
2.	Declarations of Business Interests	
	The CEO is a trustee of the Bearnes Education Foundation. Christopher Norman is a director	
	and shareholder of CANE Properties Ltd. Ben Thorne is no longer a trustee of Tor Bridge High	
	Academy Trust.	
	No new business interests	
3.	Any other Business	
	No other business raised.	
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting	
	The minutes were agreed as a true record, the Chair signed accordingly.	
5.	Matters Arising	
	5.8.1 Solar panels for schools – the DCEO reported that two schools had solar panels in place.	
	Another school had permission to install solar panels on the preschool which would be	
	completed over the Christmas holidays. CM asked when the trust expected to receive a return	
	on the solar panels. The DCEO said that it would be approximately 5 years. PW commented	
	that it used to be 10-15 years. The DCEO added that there would be a monitoring station for	
	the pupils to observe. CM suggested that the Academy Head of the school promoted the solar	
	panels and learning experience within the community. CEO asked which other Trust schools	
	were being considered for solar panels – The DCEO confirmed that there were several schools	
	that were being reviewed. The DCEO added that across the trust, the light bulbs being changed	
	to LED. CM asked if there was funding for solar panels. The DCEO said there was not any	
	available. AH reported that in Cornwall there was a pilot scheme around converting energy	
	sources which would hopefully be rolled out nationwide.	
6.	Finance	
	6.1 Financial Performance to 31 st October 2022 – Month 2. Outline outcome subject to	
	external audit. The October accounts (reports circulated before the meeting)	
	 The following comments/questions were made:- AH explained the dashboard. The budget forecast for the end of the year was a deficit 	
	 AH explained the dashboard. The budget forecast for the end of the year was a deficit of £186,653 	
	The CEO asked for clarification on the brackets used in the reports which raised further	
	questions around the deficits.	
	CN asked about whether catering variance was due to less children having school lunch	
	meals and asked for this to be scrutinised. The DCEO clarified the current catering	
	arrangements. It was added that outsourced catering runs at a loss so when 3 of the	

schools come under the trust umbrella there should be a financial upturn on this budget line.

- The Chair commented that it was difficult to understand exactly the position and provide a clear picture of the cashflow. He said that the profiling of the budget needed to be scrutinised to give a clear position. The DCEO said that as a trust, assumptions for following years considering the government funding needed to be looked at.
- The CEO asked whether the Trust was financially performing better or was it due to system glitches. AH said that the nurseries and schools wrap around care were doing better – however there was an expectation for DCC to clawback some nursery grants. AH said that originally, the income projections from this budget line was cautious. The CEO said that historically the trust forecasted conservatively, and it should be more precise. AH that she had seen an increase on income which had now been factored in. The schools without the nurseries and schools wrap around care the picture was quite stable as there was not as much variation. The CEO asked whether the trust was giving due consideration to income - adding that every year the trust underestimate the income and finish the end the year with larger underspends. The Chair said that currently the budgets were cautious and suggested that there should be two, worsecase scenario and a more balanced one using historical information - The DCEO said that as experience and knowledge improved, the budgets should become more accurate. The Chair suggested that there was an average calculation of income. AH said that she would look at trends. PW said that unexpected events such as recession could affect the trust significantly. The CEO said that the trust was now looking at supporting struggling families due to the cost-of-living crisis – this could have a negative impact on the budget.
- The Chair said that column E 22-23 Forecast against the revised budget should be the focus until the profiling had settled.
- AH went through the report supporting the month 2 financial position outlining the key changes to the year-end forecast.
- It was noted that the government had pledged more funding for education.
- The Chair commented, that reviewing the subsequent years forecasts, that as a trust board, steps would be taken to avoid the forecasted deficits.
- AH asked for an update on the government giving direct to trusts and not through council. The DCEO said this had been delayed until at least 2023-2024.
- PW asked where the estimated pupil numbers was generated from. The CEO said that
 it was using the previous PAN and census information, however added that the
 reception pupil numbers for 2024-2025 was unknown. It was added that pupil
 numbers were a best guess.
- Referring to the cashflow, AH explained the variations. A report was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees asked for clarification on the current position. The DCEO said that he had had a meeting with Lloyds and the trust would put some reserves into a 9-month deposit account, along with some in a 6-month account and then a 1-month sweeping account. An example of the benefits was the trust would benefit from approximately £16,000 in interest from the 9-months investment. The trustees discussed the early repayment penalties. The Chair said the trust would need to factor in future projects to ensure that the deposited money had been released without penalties. The CEO asked about the 6-month account. It was confirmed this would be approximately £7,000 £8,000 accrued interest. The Chair said the only risk was an unexpected significant cost and the trust losing the interest. It was commented that this forecasted interest had not been included in the budget. Following a question from CN, it was confirmed that the deposit accounts had low investment risk.
- The Trustees agreed the revised budget 31 October 2022 for approval at Full Board and confirmed that apart from making the variances colour coded agreed the current presentation. The Chair asked for additional break-down information for individual schools to be available to ensure that the explanations were clear for the trustees. The CEO said that she would like schools with concerns to be highlighted and the option for the trustees to do a deeper dive. The Chair suggested there was an additional budget

ΑH

ΑН

7.	column with percentage variance to clarify the current position of each school. PW asked about the new school joining the MAT and the trustees discussed the current position. The CEO said that the school should join with at least a balanced budget. It was added that there were some concerns however there was current negotiations with the LA to wipe the deficit before the school joined the trust. PW asked about their pupil numbers. The CEO said that it was a strong school with good pupil numbers and the trust were aware of the difficulties and were able to support them. 6.2 Finance Update from DCEO Dealt in 6.1 6.3 Teaching and Support Staff Pay Awards 2022-23. Final Review. DCEO for discussion Dealt in 6.1 reports 6.4 Outsourcing fundraising (raised in Full Board meeting 10.10.22) The DCEO reported that there was currently no spare capacity within the central team to address this initiative. Planned spending of surplus reserves and investing reserves	АН
7.		
	The reports were circulated before the meeting.	
	Referring to the diagram the CEO and trustees made the additional comments.	
	 CM asked about the RPA claim - CM asked for clarification about the outcome of one school. The DCEO said that there was still no news on the current bids. The CEO said that she had concerns about one school's current layout; in her opinion providing a poor learning environment. CM asked where the costings projections had come from for the alterations to this school – The DCEO said that previously an architect had provided them however it was likely the costs would be now more due as the projections were 4 years old. The DCEO informed the meeting that CIF projects were now requiring up to 30% school contribution to score well. CN and CM asked about the progress of the Asset Management Plan (AMP). The DCEO outlined what CIF bids had been submitted, adding that he was hopeful the trust would be successful with at least one. CM asked about any other schools needing attention. The DCEO said that he felt that Diptford needed to be resolved before any other reserves was committed especially in view of the uncertain financial future. The DCEO added that Bailey Partnerships were had offered to do an initial survey on the school in the new year to help with decisions on the way forward. The DCEO added that he felt that there was another school that needed urgent remedial work. It was agreed that as the CIF announcement was expected in April, the trustees should wait for the outcome, however in the meantime begin some feasibility studies in the background 	
	 background. CM asked whether during major works, pupils needing to use an alternative building provision would have a cost implication. The Chair said that he was hoping that by now there would have been a clearer picture on Diptford. PW said that this was an opportunity to be sensible but bold and go ahead with Diptford and the other school, starting with a feasibility study and planning. CN asked about the school with a lot of D1 issues that had high-cost implications and felt that these should also be addressed. The CEO said this should be priority CIF and the trust would apply again for this funding. 	DCEO
	It was agreed to wait for DfE capital response for Diptford and begin planning and feasibility for another school.	
	Following a question from CN, it was confirmed that the central team had authorisation to address the D1 priorities.	
8.	Property	
	The DCEO reported that there were currently 10 bids with CIF - priority building projects with	
	contributions. It was agreed for the DCEO to pull together a grid of the contributions level and	DCEO
1	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	1

	circulate to the trustees electronically for agreement. Following a question from CN, it was	
	confirmed that the trust borrowing money for projects was not allowed.	
9.	Human Resources	
	The CEO updated the trustees on the future staff expansion plans and confirmed that they had	
	been calculated within the budget. She added that over the current academic year, the trust	
	would be reviewing the new staff structure. PW asked whether there were any financial	
	anxieties around the new school joining. The CEO said it was a new school building with no	
	financial concerns. The CEO confirmed that the staff rises had been included in the budget.	
	There were no capability issues and only low-level absences. CN asked about possible teacher	
	strikes. The CEO said that if teachers did go on strike, then the trust would shut the schools to	
	pupils. PW asked about recruitment – The CEO said it was improving – senior teachers were	
	now in post and there were now some floating teachers available to release staff for training.	
	PW asked about TAs – the CEO said though there were a few vacancies this was also improving.	
	CM added that the Workforce Group's focus was to make the trust an 'Employer of Choice'	
	starting with a survey for staff.	
10.	Health & Safety	
10.	·	
11	No issues to report	
11.	Data Protection	
	No issues to report	
12.	Safeguarding	
	Security of Schools – it was felt that it would be prudent that there was a trust wide review of	CEO
	the security of schools along with risk assessments in place. It was agreed for the CEO to	
	facilitate this.	
13.	Risk Register and Strategy Plan	
	The DCCO had availed the two stages to lead at the increase of viels as sisten and at water well-in	
	The DCEO had emailed the trustees to look at their areas of risk register and strategy plan	
	responsibilities. It was added that the internal auditors had visited, with the report expected	
	next week. The DCEO said that he was happy to support the trustees with this focus. It was	
	added that the auditors were going to provide training for the trustees as well. The CEO	
	reported that the Internal Audit had highlighted inconsistencies across the trust schools. Some	
	schools' trust registers reflected more depth than others. The CEO added that she would be	
	asking the academy heads to address this in her next meeting with them.	
	CM added that there was still some work needed to ensure that the school risk registers link	
	better with the Trust risk register and to ensure that Trustees were comfortable with the new	
	system.	
14.	ESFA Bulletins	
	No points to raise	
15.	Policies	
	15.1 Charging and Remissions	
	The trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the policy. With minor changes, the policy was	DCEO
	approved by the trustees.	
	15.2 Accounting	
	The trustees confirmed that they had reviewed the policy. With minor changes, the policy was	DCEO
	approved by the trustees.	
	The Chair asked that in there was mid year report on the PE and Sports premium at the next	GP
	meeting.	

Dates of Future Meetings
Friday 3rd February 2023
Friday 24th March 2023
Friday 5th May 2023
Friday 30th June 2023