

Meeting Minutes
Trust Audit, Finance and Resources Committee
Wednesday 20 January 2021, 5.00pm
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

Meeting Summary Sheet

Item Ref	Meeting Summary Information
	List of Actions
9.	Executive to review the wording of the Trust Pay Policy to provide greater clarity on Pay Progression and Capability.
11.	MF to publish the updated policies and circulate to schools as per the usual process.
	List of Decisions Taken Under the Scheme of Delegation
8.	It was agreed to approve the recommendation to spend the remaining Capital allocation on the projects identified within Appendix B of the Capital Programme Report.
11.	The updates to the Attendance, Exclusion, Safe Operating During Covid-19, Health & Safety and Apprenticeship policies were agreed.
12.	It was agreed that the new Audit Committee should have its first meeting during the Summer term.
AOB	It was agreed to undertake market testing prior to appointment of the Auditors for both internal and external audits.

Meeting Minutes
Trust Audit, Finance and Resources Committee
Wednesday 20 January 2021, *Virtual Meeting*

In attendance:

Alex Walmsley –Chair (AW)	Rob Bosworth (RB)
Philip Bostock (PB)	Charlotte Davies (CD)
Richard Jacobs (RJ)	Moira Marder (MM)
Sue Pym (SP)	
Melody Floyd - Clerk to the Trust (MF)	

Meeting Minutes

Item Ref	Business	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Attendance</p> <p>The meeting opened at 17:00.</p> <p>AW welcomed everyone to the virtual meeting. Apologies were received from Beccy Mitchell.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>RB declared an interest in the Apprenticeship Policy due to being employed by Exeter College who are the current provider of Apprenticeships for the Trust.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of Previous meetings</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 11.11.20 were approved as a full and accurate record.</p> <p>The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and marked as complete.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>AW confirmed that All Saints Academy Plymouth formally joined the Trust on 1 January 2021. CD updated that there had been some preliminary consultancy work on the Trust’s behalf related to the Sports Hall and there was a meeting planned to discuss this further on 22.01.21.</p> <p>RB confirmed that wider communications had now gone out confirming the Academisation.</p>	
For Monitoring		
5.	<p>Trust Financial Update</p> <p>SP gave an update on the current financial status, noting that the figures were still for the November accounts.</p> <p>A full record of the discussion is in Part B of the minutes.</p>	

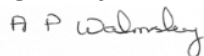
6.	<p>Internal Control</p> <p>SP updated on the termly internal audit which had been directed specifically towards Plymouth schools, as they had not been audited in the last cycle. The observations were fairly normal and would be easily resolved. Some were attributed to initial transfer issues.</p> <p>AW noted that the report was reassuring and supported the due diligence undertaken by the Trust.</p> <p>SP confirmed that an internal audit had also been commissioned for QE.</p>	
7.	<p>Insurance</p> <p>SP noted that Victoria Strickson, Trust Estates Manager, was responsible for the Trust Insurance Policies but that an annual update was required under the Scheme of Delegation.</p> <p>Currently the Trust was bound into an agreement with Zurich, however this was the final year. This had worked well and the only issue had been around refunds for external trips.</p> <p>SP stated that this year the Trust needed to consider whether to join the RPA. SP felt that this would be beneficial to ensure that all aspects were covered, for example Terrorism which was not currently covered.</p> <p>RJ noted that insurance premiums were going up significantly at the moment. He queried how the Trust would be testing the market to ensure competitiveness of cover. CD confirmed that market testing would be undertaken due to the current contract coming to an end.</p> <p>RB queried if there was a broker fee to be paid for the RPA, as this was currently high at approximately 10%. SP confirmed that she would expect this to be lower. SP also noted that the RPA was not for profit so they would not be looking to make money and had a good baseline figure. CD noted that some aspects could not be covered by the RPA but that joining would significantly reduce the costs.</p> <p>AW noted that the RPA had been notably very quick to confirm cover throughout the Covid-19 crisis. Whereas the private providers had not been so timely. This gave a level of comfort when considering joining.</p>	
8.	<p>Capital Programme 2020/21</p> <p>SP gave an update on the Capital Programme report and confirmed that two streams of funding were currently received - formula funding and SCF. SP noted that there was a reasonable sum within the capital programme.</p> <p>SP also noted the Trust's move towards schools that pull in higher levels of Condition Funding and it was likely that the demand on the Capital Programme would increase. SP updated that the MAT Condition allocation was anticipated to be £600k (April 2021) and £852k (April 2022) assuming no change in the methodology. The inclusion of QE accounts for the year-on-year increase.</p> <p>In terms of the current position, there was £512k of available resources to allocate from the April 2020 Condition Allocation, this needed to be prioritised. Other LA funding had been received for specific projects.</p>	

	<p>SP noted that figures were not confirmed beyond this year (April 2020 to March 2021) and estimated allocations for future years are based on reasonable expectations and current assumptions.</p> <p>SP noted the list of projects in Appendix B which the Committee were asked to consider for expenditure, these totalled £468k. SP noted that Whipton featured heavily and there were a number of priorities identified. This would need to be revisited and reprioritised when further funding was received.</p> <p>A survey for QE had also been commissioned and SP expected there to be a significant programme of investment required. A substantial CIF bid had also been submitted for QE.</p> <p>AW noted that Capital Allocation could only be carried forward for two years, SP confirmed that this was not a problem.</p> <p>RJ noted that a number of the projects were small and queried if there would be a time when the Trust would employ staff to do these smaller works rather than contracting externally. CD agreed that this was something to consider, especially given the context of the PFI schools and bringing other services in-house, which would provide a point to build upon.</p> <p>CD confirmed that a scoring matrix was in place to prioritise projects for expenditure. This process would be made as robust as possible going forwards, and a small panel would be incorporated as a means of providing assurances to LGBs.</p> <p>It was agreed to take the recommendation to spend the remaining allocation on the projects identified within Appendix B of the papers.</p>	
9.	<p>LGB Finance & Resources Minutes</p> <p>These were reviewed.</p> <p>AW noted the action from within the Isca Minutes for the Pay Policy wording needing greater clarity in relation to pay progress and capability. It was agreed that this should be reviewed.</p> <p>Action: Executive to review the wording of the Trust Pay Policy regarding Pay Progression and Capability.</p>	CD
10.	<p>Strategic Risk Register / Risk Impact Review</p> <p>CD gave an overview of the updates to the Strategic Risk Register. The risks around the Exeter New School were noted and this would be discussed in more detail by the Growth Working Group.</p> <p>CD highlighted the increased risk around the impact of Covid-19, this was due to the number of significant changes being introduced and short timeframes being imposed on schools. This remained a significant risk.</p> <p>There had been significant changes around school outcomes and assessment frameworks so changes within the School Improvement section were needed. This would be reviewed in more detail by the Education Committee.</p>	

For Approval		
11.	<p>Policies</p> <p>AW queried if Policies were reviewed internally or if external advice and benchmarking was taken. CD noted that most policies were based on model policies and templates however, where these were not, advice was taken from PHP Law – for example for the Covid-19 policy.</p> <p>RB queried the reason for the Exclusion and Attendance policy being reviewed by the AFR Committee. CD confirmed that the review process for policies was currently being updated, this would be defined within revised terms of reference for each committee. RB noted that it would be timely to review this as part of the Governance Review. AW noted that the ESFA considered Safeguarding to be a financial matter, however this did not feel like a natural home.</p> <p>RB also noted that the Covid-19 policy was well written but did not make reference to testing. CD confirmed that there was a brief inclusion but that there was a separate risk assessment for testing.</p> <p>AW also queried the Complaints Policy and where this sits. CD confirmed that this was being updated and would be taken to the Education Committee prior to sign off by AFR.</p> <p>The changes to all policies listed were agreed. Action: MF to publish revised policies and circulate to Schools.</p>	MF
12.	<p>Terms of Reference for New Audit and Risk Committee</p> <p>AW noted the need for the new Audit Committee once the Trust exceeded £50m turnover, this would be following the Academisation of QE.</p> <p>The circulated draft Terms of Reference were based on ESFA templates and other published information available. AW noted that the Terms of Reference did not need to be signed off at the meeting. However the practicalities did need to be discussed. PB noted some inconsistencies between the documents which would need to be revised in the final documents. AW agreed and noted the need to take these draft documents into account when finalising the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>PB noted that the Trust Chair could be a member of the Audit Committee and that the review of the Committee needed to sit within the David Carter Review. RB noted issues around capacity, communication and timings and that any changes to the Board needed to be signed off by the Members.</p> <p>RB also referenced the frequency of the meetings and queried if six AFR meetings per year was too many now that it was being split. The need for a balance between capacity and the number of meetings was agreed. AW referenced his previous experience of reducing the number of finance meetings at another Trust that had not been successful, however it could be viable to shorten some of the meetings to allow for the Audit committee to run alongside.</p> <p>RB noted that, from his experience, it was preferable to keep the two committees separate. It was evident that a wider Trustee group and wider debate was needed. RB noted the importance of the new committee forming part of the wider Governance structure.</p>	

	<p>AW noted it would be sensible to have an Audit Committee that had run before the financial year end (August) so a meeting would be needed in the Summer Term. This was agreed.</p> <p>PB agreed with the importance of the new committee falling into a wider review of the whole Governance Structure and also a small increase in the number of Trustees and the skill set.</p> <p>The Trust Chairs were meeting on 28.01.21 to discuss the Governance Review and this could then be discussed further by the Board</p>	
For Information		
13.	<p>Growth Update</p> <p>PB gave a brief overview, however noted that the next Growth WG was on 22.01.21.</p> <p>It was still hoped that QE would academise on 01.02.21 and this was currently on track.</p>	
14.	<p>PFI Update</p> <p>CD updated on the PFI project and the Working Group meeting held on 13.01.21.</p> <p>A full record of the discussion is recorded in Part B of the Minutes.</p>	
Any Other Business and Next Meeting Date		
	<p>AW noted that the quote from the Auditors had been received for 2021. This was an uplift on the current year but was within the current budget. RB noted the Members' desire to go out to market testing. This was agreed. SP felt that this should be for both internal and external auditors. AW gave reassurance that Bishops Fleming were providing a good service, but agreed that there was no problem in testing the market.</p> <p>RJ queried the outcome of the fundraising campaign for iPads. MM confirmed that this had been brilliant and that every primary school in Exeter had benefited.</p> <p>Date of next meeting: Wednesday 17 March 2021, 5.00pm</p> <p>The meeting closed at 18:40</p>	

Signed by the Chair of the Committee:



Date: 17.03.21