

Minutes of Directors' Meeting 14 May 2021 8am via Google Meet

Attendees : Mr P Lovern (PL) (CEO and Director), Mrs H Bowman (HB) (Chair of Directors), Mr C Bradshaw-Smith (CBS) (Director), Mr P Halifax (PH) (Vice-Chair of Directors)
Also present up to end of Item 6: Ms S Cole (SCo) (Finance Manager)
Also present for Items 13, 14 and 15: Mrs J Bowman (JBo) (Data Protection Officer, Business Operations Manager)
Clerk: Mrs A Howard (AH)

RC: Richard Crosse
SM: St Mary's
TH: The Howard
AS: Anson School

PAN: Planned Admission Numbers
CIF: Condition Improvement Funding
HT: Headteacher
LA: Local Authority

1. **Welcome, Prayer** - HB welcomed everyone to the meeting and PL led the Directors in the prayer.
2. **Apologies** - Apologies had been received from Mrs S Cockayne (SC) (Director), Mrs C Humphries (CH) (Director) and Mrs J Smith (JS) (Director). AH will update the attendance register.
3. **Pecuniary Interest** - There were no changes to the Pecuniary Interest Register.
4. **Minutes of last meeting** - The minutes of the Members' and Directors' meeting held on 5.3.21 were agreed as a true copy by Directors. The minutes will be signed by HB and Mr Grewer when the situation allows. As this meeting was concerned with arrangements for the appointment of the new CEO, the minutes will not appear on the website as public minutes.
5. **FAR meeting** - As the Directors present had attended the FAR meeting, CBS did not give an update on this. The draft minutes of the meeting have been sent to all Directors and CBS confirmed that they were accurate.
6. **Finance** - SCo presented the Management Accounts for Period 8, up to the end of April, saying that it had been a routine month with no major changes. She reported an outturn of around £73k and all schools were showing a surplus. The finances are expected to be around budget at the end of the year. All refunds required for the cancelled Kingswood trip have now been paid to parents including the deposit for which a claim was made to the RPA. There are extra catering costs at AS to cover the school cook who is away on long-term sickness. There is a net surplus of around £45k and reserves of £248k which is a healthy situation.
With regards to Cash Flow, the bank balance is £366k, but is expected to be around £435k by the end of the month with extra income expected.
SCo went on to explain that small changes had been made to the 3-year budget (discussed at the FAR meeting), due to the appointment of the new CEO. The 2021/22 budget shows an overall surplus of £10,691 for the Trust, with SM and TH showing in-year surplus outturns and an in-year deficit for RC and AS; reserves are expected to be £293k. SCo added that the pay increase has been included, but may not happen; sports premium and 2% inflationary increase have also been included. The 3-year budget shows a deficit in 2022-23 of £68k and in 2023-24 of £136k, not including reserves, based on the PAN; however, if temporary contracts are not renewed, that would make a difference to the finances. PL and SCo are not concerned about the deficits as much can change over the next 3 years and reserves are still good.
PL said he would encourage the new CEO to set a balanced budget as it was vital to show the ESFA that the Trust was viable and it was always prudent to offer temporary contracts when appointing staff; PH and CBS agreed that the income cannot be predicted but there are always some increases. PL reported that numbers of admissions were looking encouraging, with good nursery numbers. He considered that SM needs to have a good unique selling point as there will be stiff competition

from the building of new schools in Rugeley; the Head at SM is emphasising the value of outdoor learning.

SCo was thanked for her report and all her hard work on the budget. PL stated that SCo had done brilliant work preparing the budget and worked well with the MLG accountant; the present accountant was moving to a different company but PL was confident that MLG would continue to offer good support. The accountancy fees are now less, as SCo is doing virtually all the work. PH suggested keeping a note of the company that the present accountant was moving to, for future reference.

7. **Staffing** - PL reported that two cooks have resigned to take up new posts; adverts are being placed to recruit new cooks, but in the meantime an agency is being used to provide temporary staff. A teacher at AS has resigned and it is planned to appoint a new member of staff, possibly an NQT, for September. PL confirmed to CBS that the recruitment process is being constantly monitored and updated.

HB confirmed that Charlene Gethin (CG) has been appointed as the new CEO, starting in September 2021.

PL wished to draw to Directors' attention the proposed term dates (in the Google Drive Directors' folder) for 2021-22 and 2022-23, which showed that in 2021-22 the week before the Whit bank holiday will be taken as the first of the two week holiday, to enable Phonic screening in early June. This will probably continue to be the case in future years. Although at the end of the summer term in 2022 the school will be open an extra day, to finish on Friday 22 July 2022, the following year the school will have 2 fewer days in accordance with Staffordshire term dates. Directors agreed to these term dates.

8. **PPA time Friday afternoon** - With regards to the Friday afternoon PPA time, PL confirmed that the Trust schools will finish at 3.30pm from the start of the autumn term. Parents have reacted favourably to this decision and HB has received positive feedback. Governors at AS would like to continue with the 8.30am start to the school day, which has been in place at the school during the Covid situation, to match the other Trust schools. They are consulting with parents and will have an extraordinary meeting after half-term to look at the results of the survey.
9. **Premises** - The decision on CIF bids has now been delayed until June. PL reported that a PTA member at TH has obtained sponsorship from a company for the school and it is hoped that planning permission will be obtained from Lichfield District Council for a fully insulated, wooden hut, with toilets, which will be installed on the school site free of charge. This would be invaluable in achieving the development of a Nursery at the school and the Trust may be approached to top up the funding to purchase furnishings etc. A contractor has also been engaged to provide secure fencing and a gate at TH. The outdoor area at the school is being developed.
10. **Admissions** - PL considered that the numbers for September were looking good, with TH receiving 10 applications for Reception (out of 12 places), AS 15 applications for 15 places, RC 19 for 15 places (which will be accepted due to lower numbers this academic year) and SM 12 for 15 places.
11. **Safeguarding** - *Confidential*
12. **Health and Safety** - Following a H&S audit, PL suggested that the folding doors at RC should be given a visual check by an internal group of people, including the HT, JBo and a competent person in the building trade. This was approved by Directors and AH will contact a local builder.
13. **Policy Updates** - JBo as Business Operations Manager had sent the following policies to Directors to be reviewed:

Authorised Driver, Marking, Community Cohesion, Design & Technology, Drugs, Home-School Partnership, Looked After Children, Modern Foreign Languages, Missing Child, PSHE & Citizenship, School Council. Carried over from March 2021: Biting, Bomb Threat & Suspicious Packages, Directors/LAG Meeting Minutes, Flexible Working, Harassment & Bullying, Managing Aggressive Behaviour from Parents/Carers, Managing Probation, Placement, Recruitment, Sun Safety, Toileting & Intimate Care, Website.

These were ratified by Directors with slight amendments to Home-School Partnership and Directors/LAG Meeting Minutes.

14. **Data Protection** - JBo presented the DPO report Jan-Apr and reported that virtual monitoring had taken place due to the Covid restrictions, with 3 virtual visits last term. All schools were compliant and AS was coming more into line with the other Trust schools.
15. **Internal Assurance** - PHRP had undertaken a virtual audit of HR files which had been very thorough. Although there were some non-conformity issues, JBo reported that these related to historic issues and re-verification had taken place since then, with new forms created. The more recent files were found to have everything in place and were correct. PL considered that great progress had been made over recent years with HR paperwork and thanked JBo for all her hard work. CBS agreed that it was important to get things right and that correct procedures were now being followed. With regards to the new CEO appointment, PL asked whether CG could have a temporary email address and access to the Directors files on Google Drive as part of the transition arrangements. CBS asked whether a hand-over plan was in place. PL and HB agreed that a one-page plan could be put together and they were meeting with CG after half-term. JBo reported that CG had signed a conditional offer letter and a contract was being sent to her; PH suggested that the Trust should wait to receive the signed contract before giving access to the Directors' files. There was discussion on meetings to be held during the next half-term and it was agreed that CG should be invited to the Members' and Directors' meeting on 18 June and the LAG meeting on 23 June. CBS suggested that it was important for CG to meet Members and Directors, discuss the hand-over plan and get an idea of what the meetings are like. The agendas for these two meetings will be reviewed, to make the meetings relevant to CG, and it will be decided nearer the time whether the meetings will be face-to-face or by Google Meet.

16. **Any Other Business - Confidential**

PL reported that he was still waiting for the audit on IT from Staffs Tech and then the work would be put out to tender.

Dates of next meetings –

Directors' meetings: 8am on a Friday

18 June (with Members)

9 July

Members' meetings: 8am on a Friday

18 June (with Directors)

LAG meetings: 4pm on a Wednesday

23 June 4pm at SM

Signed.....

Date

Heather Bowman - Chair of Directors

Item	Action to be taken	Action by whom	Action by when
12	Contact local builder about checking folding doors at RC	AH	21/5/21
15	Arrange for new CEO to have temporary email address and have access to Directors' files, once signed contract has been received.	PL/JBo	tba
15	Invite new CEO to meetings after half-term	PL	18/6/21 23/6/21
16	<i>Confidential</i>		