

FLT Resources Committee – Meeting Minutes

17 June 2021 at 6.30pm via Teams

Attending Committee Members (Trustees)	Attending Committee Members (not Trustees)	Attending Others
Anthony Cook (AC), Chair Mark Greenwood (MG) Carrie Insley (CI)	David Hancox (DH) Tim Clark (TC) Alex Bond (AB)	Anne Lynn (AL), Joanne Ray (JR), Operations Manager Jane Cole (JC), Finance Manager Tori Ray (TR), Clerk

Apologies noted in advance

- Duncan Millard

Non attending

- Ian Wright (IW)

1	<p>Welcome new members, guests or staff presenting and note any resignations The meeting opened at: 6.35pm. AC welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>
2	<p>Apologies for absence, confidentiality and quoracy Apologies noted. AC asked if there was anything being raised confidentially in the meeting, that this be noted at the time. Due to attendance levels, the meeting was quorate: <i>50% of committee members of which 2 attendees are Trustees. Current total committee number is 8.</i></p>
3	<p>Matters to be raised as urgent A.O.B None</p>
4	<p>Declaration of any personal/business interests relating to this meeting None</p>
5	<p>Approve minutes of previous meeting in May 2021 The minutes were agreed as an accurate representation of proceedings and were APPROVED.</p>
6	<p>Review of Carried Over Actions All actions were either completed or were updated – see Carried over Actions document for details.</p>
7	<p>Other activity agreed out of Committee AC advised that he had taken the following actions out of Committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sign off on a purchase order for a FJS boiler • AL had asked for views on a new 2 year electricity supplier extension agreement due to being made aware of significant financial risks if the Trust wasn't on a fixed price tariff due to expected cost increases. This was also shared with the Trust Board. AC approved the extension to ensure cost certainty for the Trust for the next 2 years. DH asked for clarification of how much the Trust spends on electricity. AL confirmed approx. £125,000 per year. • JR highlighted the need to take a procurement route for FJS slope defects project – this was agreed.
8	<p>Sign off of 5 year Trust financial plan including discussions on school deficit budgets and pupil planning review. AL presented the paper including highlighting budget risks per school to ensure the Committee had sight of the overview. Most school financial plans are satisfactory. Some will see a very small surplus.</p> <p>Particular areas of discussion or approvals included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FIS – have received significant SEN funding and have asked to be able to spend some of it next year as also have backdated OCC payments coming through. Proposed the school is allowed to draw down £15k from reserves next year as not able to push the funding through to next year. This was APPROVED by the Committee.

- **Watchfield** – proposal for provision of tapered additional leadership support to be offered by Shrevenham Headteacher over the next year, starting at 3 days a week in Sept, reducing to 1 day a week by the Summer Term. Arrangements have full support of both schools LGBs and the staff involved. AL highlighted two possible financial scenarios to ensure appropriate financing arrangements for both schools, also ensuring any backfilling support is appropriately resourced. This was discussed in some detail with a recommendation that the support is funded from Watchfield reserves, rather than finding finances from within the current budget. Discussions included:
 - **Q: (AC)** Has this been tried before within Trust / does it set a precedent?
A: (AL) No it hasn't, not at this scale.
 - **Q: (DH)** Is there any detrimental impact of the change for either school? **(CI)** Are we confident it will only be for a year?
A: (AL) No detrimental impact anticipated due to how support is being offered. The plan is currently just for next academic year.

There were further discussions regarding possible benefits of ensuring the changes are funded from existing budgets, rather than reserves, as will potentially keep more of a focus on it for both LGB and the Resources Committee.

AL then proposed adopting Scenario 3 in her paper but allowing an overspend so it is funded from the reserves. **APPROVED** by Committee – with noted concern of the need to monitor the impact closely during the full length of arrangements.

AL then noted that following that decision, the Trust has a small surplus with FIS in slight deficit (but this will be offset by the proposed SEN spend already approved) and Watchfield with a £35k deficit but with plans in place for managing that going forward.

Dept for Education 3 year plan

AL flagged that in years 2 & 3 of the plan, the key risks are related to the conversion of FIS and FJS to primary status which the Trust isn't currently able to budget for in certainty, due to the unknowns around which school pupils will choose. Current planning is based around one scenario encapsulating both schools and ensuring no double counting of pupils or staff. Budget under this circumstance is looking good. Discussions between Committee members followed, including if OCC could be able to offer guidance on what to expect in terms of pupil choices based on experience elsewhere but AL confirmed that guidance is not available and the Trust won't have certainty until nearer September 2022. It was also confirmed that the Trust is committed to the principle of working collaboratively to manage any risks and will make it work – it will be possible to relocate funding between the two schools if needed. The year 2&3 budgets are as secure as they can be for now. Other school plans are seeing either no change or expecting improvements. FCC is becoming more stable as it grows in size and has plans for additional teaching staff built into the budget forecast. Overall, school budgets are starting to look more positive.

Risks?

AL highlighted the following:

- 3x schools are adding wraparound care (FIS/FJS/SHR) as a new facility – they are confident they can make it work and be profitable. It is still a risk (due to staff costs) but it will bring in income. All three are likely to impact on other local providers, if successful.
- In Watchfield, we won't know pupil numbers until the Autumn, so there could be fluctuations.
- John Blandy and Watchfield have growing SEN needs which may involve a need for more TA hours.
- FJS premises are needing ongoing works – may carry over to the Autumn.

Q: (DH) Any risk that the DfE will withdraw funding if our budgets improve?

A: (AL) The Trust will supply a commentary highlighting the need for vital support for 2x schools as they transition to primaries. We will also highlight the current lottery the Trust faces due to CIF funding bids, which requires schools to draw on reserves to deal with premises risks.

DH also flagged that although he is very happy John Blandy is heading out of deficit budget, there may be further risks and challenges ahead around staffing scenarios as it grows to 1.5 form entry.

Opportunities?

Projected pupil numbers to go over 3,000 in the Autumn which brings significant funding benefits including not having to regularly bid for CIF funding.

	<p>Also, worth noting FCC will be looking at its support staff structure as it hasn't been updated since FCC moved from a 7 to a 9 form structure. The outcome of that will have an impact.</p> <p>Reserves Q: (AC) What level of reserves should we be aiming for? A: (AL) No DfE guidelines. Attending seminar on reserves policies for Trusts later this week. Currently work to ensuring at least one month of staff salaries and allowing some schools to grow reserves to ensure project funding. Highlighted need for a longer-term vision for the schools – some have them, some need to develop further.</p> <p>AC reflected the need to ensure the Resources Committee helps the Trust to hold a balance – encourage schools to think about aging premises plans but not avoiding seeming to just 'save for a rainy day'. Others voiced agreement with this.</p> <p>5 year plan APPROVAL AC thanked AL, the Finance Team, LGBs and Heads for all their planning and hard work. The Committee approved the plan. AL confirmed the budget now goes to Trustees on 1 July for ratification.</p>
9	<p>Period 8 Financial Reports Looking good. Slight dip from last month, partly due to FCC purchasing items with their surplus (such as outside tables/refreshing outdated screens etc). No other major changes. No questions.</p> <p>AL enquired if the Committee is happy with the reports offered for these meetings and whether members are seeing enough commentary. AB highlighted risk that not all schools have representation on the Committee through finance governors. AL reassured that this is why the reports include summaries and include Finance Officer commentary in notes with more details in the Revenue and Capital reports. This highlights main changes and risks with a breakdown across staffing and other expenditures.</p> <p>AC suggested having sight of school 'wish lists' twice a year, linked to the condition reports. This would allow the Committee to check in on what schools are saving towards and their own priorities. AL suggested could ask Finance Link Governors to report 6 monthly on opportunities, risks and aspirations. Acknowledgement this is useful, especially if reserves climb. AC shared his commitment that the Resources Committee has a role to play in challenging the Trust to spend money on the right projects.</p> <p>ACTION: AL to request Finance Governors to provide a 6 monthly report as above.</p>
10	<p>Set dates for next academic year APPROVED as per paper. Finance Governors' meeting agreed for April. Start times to stay the same. First meeting of the year in September to provisionally be face to face with others online or alternating. Committee to remain flexible but discussed desire to ensure 100% either online or in person, not split between platforms.</p>
11	<p>Risk Register – key changes MG confirmed no changes. Committee agreed to review risk register.</p> <p>ACTION: MG/AL to review risk register before Sept meeting.</p>
12	<p>Premises Report JR updated on key changes in the last month.</p> <p>FJS defects – good meeting with contractors. Confident no delays expected. Drainage works in boiler area should be resolved which is very positive. Flooring work may be done in summer holidays with costs hoped to be around £10k. Expected to take 1-2 weeks. Boiler work delayed – more work than expected but plans in place. Expected completion week ending 2 July.</p> <p>Buckland roof and bell tower – difficult to get 3 quotes for the work needed. Contractor confirmed, prices of materials has increased but reasonable due to current market. The school are contributing funding from a village fund but asking Committee to approve extra costs. DH checked if quotes are comparable. JR clarified</p>

	<p>that not exactly same – main difference is replacement of rotten timbers and significant repairs. AL confirmed that in the Oxfordshire Business Managers meeting it was confirmed very significant challenges with getting tenders in current market. Anticipate may have to come back to Resources Committee for further benchmarking decisions. JR highlighted her report which outlines the struggle to get quotes and may need to use benchmarking. DH agreed good approach to benchmark against value for money instead of standard tender process.</p> <p>Q: (AC) Given current market turbulence and increase in material costs etc, is there anything more we should be doing to protect the Trust or plan ahead? A: (JR) Extend contracts longer if we can. CIF is an area of concern – risk we won't be able to get work lined up for summer holidays.</p> <p>Bell Tower work proposal APPROVED</p> <p>ACTION: AC to flag to Board so all fully aware of risks and benefits to the Trust if we make ourselves nimble.</p> <p>Premises Hire policy and procedure JR introduced the policy and highlighted local benchmarking and autonomy for schools to make adjustments. Next steps agreed as briefing Leadership Team on policies so Heads understand them before the roll out, so they can guide their staff. JR and Siobhan will also help with briefing admin staff.</p> <p>Q: (MG) Letting guidelines, paragraph 1 – who has discretion? What is the breakeven point? A: (JR) Giving schools autonomy – may need a staged approach to raising costs before make profit. Heads and LGB set charges and the Central team use the termly operational audits to look at ratios and see disparities. The Central team can support Heads to make any changes.</p> <p>Premises Hire policy and associated docs APPROVED.</p> <p>AC flagged there may be a need for out of committee benchmarking conversations.</p>
13	<p>Health and Safety Report JR flagged there are audits and inspections over the next fortnight. Not looking positive on the outstanding actions – partly due to reporting software needing improvement but the Trust is on a 5 year contract and may not be able to make changes. Central Team are supporting Heads on updating actions via the system portal.</p> <p>AB confirmed he's seen that the critical actions in FCC have been done and are all moving in the right direction.</p> <p>JR highlighted the need to work with Heads on improving the online portal – they have responsibility for ensuring it's updated, with support from their teams. Need support from Resources Committee to ensure this is understood.</p> <p>AB proposed Resources Committee has sight of a spreadsheet of outstanding actions to enhance accountability.</p> <p>ACTION: AC to send statement from Resources Committee for JR to circulate to head – by end of academic year. JR to share RAG spreadsheet to show critical vs routine actions needed – for next academic year</p> <p>The Committee discussed the viability of the auditor's ratings/terminology and timelines for resolving any issues. Agreed if auditors are using terminology such as 'intolerable', we need to work with them to agree this is only in exceptional circumstances and explore what the appropriate timeframes will look like.</p> <p>ACTION: JR to follow up with auditors to find resolution on categorisations and timelines.</p>
14	<p>Covid Update AL updated the Committee – Trust received £100k Covid Catchup Premium across schools – not expecting more. Schools are accountable for how they spend it. FCC are receiving an additional £76k for summer school which has good sign up rate so far. Asked Heads to reflect on the pandemic and what has helped</p>

	<p>them – to lead, with remote learning, changes to retain etc. Keen to capture these new perspectives. At time of meeting, 1 positive Covid case in Shrivenham – with those in the bubble moving to remote learning. Overall as Trust, very few directly impacted so far.</p>
15	<p>ESFA/DFE letters received since last meeting 1 letter received – PUS renamed financial handbook.</p>
16	<p>Quarter 3 workforce data Not available for this meeting – will update the Resources Committee as soon as the remaining data is available.</p>
17	<p>Staffing update and changes See paper for key appointments.</p> <p>One important change related to the Resources Committee is that Jane Cole is stepping back from the role as Finance Manager, having made a very significant contribution to the Trust. AL shared a very big thank you. The Committee all agreed everyone is very pleased Jane will be staying with the Trust and has chosen to move to an Assistant post for personal reasons. Many thanks for all your time, skill and dedication Jane.</p> <p>AL went on to note the high level of posts currently being recruited – 78 (approx. 15% of Trust). HR colleagues are doing immense work to ensure these are fulfilled for September and the Trust has staffing consistency.</p> <p>Q: (AC) Are we suitably resourced for managing this? A: (AL) Stretched to the limit on top of payroll and pension queries.</p> <p>The Committee further discussed previous and current areas of turnover and the steps put in place to monitor it via a tracker. AL highlighted support staff were offered a payrise but this was rejected by Unions but the Trust has included it in next year's budget. Externally, awaiting confirmation of school teachers' pay review as differing percentages across UK nations. Trust hasn't budgeted for teachers pay rise as all advice, including from Unions, has been not to. One to watch.</p> <p>High recruitment of staff and turnover or new posts looks to be a growing trend – need to stay aware of how this develops and how we can keep talent and attract new.</p>
18	<p>Any other Business (as agreed as urgent) None</p>
19	<p>Future meeting dates and arrangements AC thanked all for attending with particular thanks to Jane and best wishes for her future role. Also big thanks to all Committee members for their dedication and significant time given to the work of this Committee in the past academic year. Thanks to Tori for clerking and to the Central Team for the consistently high quality of their inputs. AC asked AL, JR and JC to pass on thanks to the wider team.</p> <p>The meeting concluded with wishing everyone a good summer holidays and looking forward to seeing everyone in September.</p> <p>Date of next meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources Committee Meetings – 23 September 2021 <p>FYI – next Independent Audit and Risk Committee meeting is on 22 June 2021 – all welcome</p> <p>Meeting closed at: 8.30pm.</p>

Clerk: Tori Ray
 Date: 22/06/2021

Signed _____ Dated _____