

FLT Resources Committee – Meeting Minutes

24 November 2022 at 6.30pm online

Attending Committee Members (Trustees) Anthony Cook (AC), Chair Duncan Millard (DM), FLT CEO Mark Greenwood (MG), Risk Lead	Attending Committee Members (not Trustees) Tim Clark (TC) Alex Bond (AB) David Hancox (DH)	Attending Others Katherine Wilkes (KW), Critchleys Suzanne Elliott (SE), John Blandy Headteacher Sharon Farrell (SF), Faringdon Prim. Schools Exec. Head Laura Bunning (LB), FLT Gov. & Policy Lead Anne Lynn (AL), FLT COO Jo Ray (JR), FLT Operations Manager Danielle Bradley (DB), FLT Finance Manager Tori Ray (TR), Clerk Jason St John Nicolle (guest)
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Apologies noted in advance

- Jude Scutt (JS), Shrivenham Headteacher
- Sophie Dors (SD), FLT HR Manager

1	Welcome new members, guests or staff presenting and note any resignations The meeting opened at: 6.30pm. AC welcomed everyone, with special thanks to all those joining for the first time.
2	Apologies for absence, confidentiality and quoracy Apologies noted. Committee members were reminded that anything raised confidentially in the meeting, needs to be flagged as such at the time. Due to attendance levels, the meeting was quorate.
3	Matters to be raised as urgent A.O.B: None
4	Declaration of any personal/business interests relating to this meeting: None
5	Approve minutes of previous meeting The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate representation of proceedings and were APPROVED .
6	Review of Carried Over Actions The status of all actions were checked – see Carried over Actions document for details. No areas of concern.
8	Financial and Annual Report/Accountant's Report AC welcomed Katherine Wilkes from Critchleys to speak to the Committee about the Financial and Annual Report/Accountant's Report. KW shared her thoughts on the headline figures and summarised the audit findings. It was noted it had been a hard year but any issues arising were low risk and no considerable concerns had been found. All Committee members were asked to focus on the findings in the report and encouraged to ask questions. KW talked through the nature of the audit statutory opinion and regulatory reporting adhering to policies and compliance. Critchleys presented the Executive Summary, commenting specifically on areas such as revenue, management over-ride and controls, pensions, related party transactions, capital expenditure and the correct allocation of income and expenditure. It was noted significant testing and sampling was conducted. The result was a clean audit with no significant concerns. No concerns regarding auditor independence arose. The Committee heard details of new matters arising and recommendations for advisory follow up and best practice. KW presented Trust Accounts, and talked the Committee through particular points of clarification. <i>SE and SF joined the meeting at 7.13pm</i> AC thanked KW and invited questions and concerns from Committee members which included discussions regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total funds allocated to each school • Historical school budget deficits • Reserves allocation between Trust and schools

	AC asked KW to clarify when final documentation for the Trust Board would be available and clarified tight timelines. AC then thanked KW for the significant work. <i>KW left the meeting at 7.33pm.</i>
16	<p>TA Recruitment and Retention</p> <p>To ensure best use of people's time, we then moved to agenda item 16. AC welcomed SE and SF and invited them to share their perspectives and opinions on how the Trust can better support Teaching Assistants (TAs). SE and SF led an open and honest presentation and discussion on the changes to TA roles since Covid, noting the shift from supporting classroom learning to covering teacher absences and increased needs for providing specific child needs following a rapid increase in complex needs. TA roles were recognised as becoming physically and mentally harder and more draining. They shared the realities of retention challenges due to ill health, low pay, and shifting nature of the roles.</p> <p>The Committee recognised the resilience of Trust staff, especially TAs, and discussed potential ways the Trust can focus on ensuring staff feel valued. Opportunities for career progression for TAs were discussed. It was noted some TAs are very well qualified and recruitment is also a challenge. Budget constraints mean Heads of Schools can't always offer more hours or more pay. The Committee asked clarification questions on pay progression, funding for TAs supporting SEND children, and personal development planning.</p> <p>DM highlighted this as a national issue and other Trusts are facing similar challenges. Career development and finding ways to demonstrably show staff are valued was recognised as essential steps.</p> <p>AC thanked SE and SF for their honesty. The Committee agreed they had heard the frustrations and challenges of the current situation and AC made a commitment for the Committee to look at how to improve support for teams in schools and Trust wide.</p> <p><i>7.54pm SE and SF left the meeting</i></p>
7	<p>Activity agreed 'Out of Committee'</p> <p>AC talked Committee members through work done 'Out of Committee' regarding Support Staff Pay Award and Implementation of Brazel vs Harper Tribunal Outcome plus the Teachers' Pay Award and Policy. JR also noted value for money benchmark work undertaken on an estate pipework project.</p>
8	<p>Finance</p> <p>AL presented the period 12 report and shared headlines. Congratulations sent to one school who have moved into surplus after several years. Noted another school has slipped into deficit due to staffing changes but also that appropriate checks and balances and support is being put in place. The Trust is supporting the Head to find efficiencies and ensure a creative use of resources. It was noted that salary increases across the Trust will impact school budgets moving forward.</p> <p>Capital</p> <p>AL acknowledged the year ahead is likely to be complex but the Trust has good awareness of the most significant risks. Schools are keeping capital reserves for the year ahead, including use for IT needs. The Trust is also considering looking at SCA funding over a 17 month period, rather than 12 months, to ensure forward planning can take school holidays and better weather conditions into account.</p>
9	<p>Pupil Planning</p> <p>AL shared the Oct 2022 census and pupil planning numbers. They were down on expected levels which may impact next year's funding so the Trust are tracking possible risks. Committee members asked questions if this would impact staffing numbers. AL confirmed that pupil numbers at some schools do typically fluctuate, so it was more a case of watching for patterns and what they mean. AC suggested there may be opportunities for creativity and flexibility in how the Trust recruits in the future as vacancies naturally occur. Committee members went on to discuss other external influences regarding post-16 provision including markets, interest levels, results and costs of academic vs vocational provision.</p>
10	Policies for approval: None.
11	Risk Register: Update to come in January.
12	<p>Strategic forward planning</p> <p>Reserves: The Committee are confident on the Trust approach to reserves management.</p> <p>Investment options: The Committee have been waiting to look at this post Covid. In the next 6 months, the Trust will need to consider opportunities available to it. However, it is recognised that what the Trust has available to invest will be impacted by rising costs of utilities and other cost of living rises. The Trust has been relatively prudent to this point</p>

	ACTION: AL to bring investment options for discussion to the March meeting, including investment choices and recommendations.
13	<p>Health & Safety / Premises Report</p> <p>Premises: JR shared a report on SCA funding and capital projects and talked Committee members through ongoing Estates work, the status of projects, timelines and costs. The Trust expects to spend all SCA funding within the funding year. Some projects may be deferred depending on costs. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions on the FCC section 106 project classroom replacement are in progress. Work expected to start on site in summer 2024. Formal opening for Folly View was moved to 31 October 2022. The move brought challenges but on the whole was very positive. Land transfer issues for Shrivenham's move have been resolved. Looking for completion in Jan 2024 but all dates subject to change. Monthly progress meetings are underway. No update regarding contracts. <p>Health and Safety: Compliance with H&S actions – areas of outstanding issues were outlined with further updates expected in the next month.</p> <p>The Committee discussed a particular contract and JR presented a paper and recommendations, noting very positive feedback and experience regarding value for money and efficiencies across the Trust from the services supplied. Particular discussions focused on duty of care and opportunities for future growth. The paper was APPROVED.</p> <p>JR noted visits to schools for Committee members were delayed but dates will be circulated in the next meeting. JR then shared the paper that went to the Board on completing compliance audit actions. The team are confident we are moving forward and will share data on outstanding items in January.</p> <p>Accidents, incidents and near misses: A report was shared with the Committee. JR talked through incidents and appropriate actions taken. Committee members discussed categorisation of incidents.</p> <p>Violence against staff by pupils: The Committee strongly noted the duty of care the Trust has to staff to ensure they are protected in the workplace. There was concern we not be seeing the full picture and not all reports are coming through, which makes it difficult to see the scale of the issue. Heads have been urged to ensure reporting is in place, especially repeated incidents by children. It was recognised the Trust needs to protect and care for both staff and pupils. AL confirmed the intention to better capture data, look at trends and investigate issues. This will be a standing item for the ALT.</p> <p>ACTION: DM and AL to discuss this at the next ALT meeting, covering H&S audit outstanding actions, incident recording and violence against staff.</p> <p>AC shared his thanks to JR for her hard work.</p>
14	ESFA/DFE letters: None
15	MAT to MAT collaboration: No update due to meeting having been rescheduled.
16	TA Recruitment and Retention: see earlier in agenda
17	<p>Staffing update and changes</p> <p>It has been a busy period with 19 staffing changes over 2 months. An advert for a Head of School has been readvertised and will close 1 December.</p>
18	<p>Centre for Professional Excellence</p> <p>DM shared his screen to show the new CPE website for Committee members. He confirmed further work is ongoing on training events – internal and other providers – improving the search function and who in the Trust can offer support and training. Recommendations on resources staff can use, with links to websites and other providers, will be added. AC thanked DM and the wider team for this great work and visibility for an important area.</p>
19	Any other Business (as agreed as urgent): Discussions took place regarding future auditing. Feedback sessions with Critchleys to be planned.
20	Future meeting dates and arrangements: Next Resources Committee meeting 12 Jan 2023. Meeting closed at 9.03pm.