

FLT Resources Committee – Meeting Minutes

9 March 2023 at 6.30pm online

Attending Committee Members (Trustees) Anthony Cook (AC) Chair Duncan Millard (DM) FLT CEO Mark Greenwood (MG) Jason St John Neville (JStJN)	Attending Committee Members (not Trustees) Alex Bond (AB) Tim Clark (TC) David Hancox (DH)	Attending Others Anne Lynn (AL), FLT COO Danielle Bradley (DB), Finance Mngr Joanne Ray (JR), Operations Mngr Tori Ray (TR), Clerk
Apologies – n/a		

1	Welcome new members, guests or staff presenting and note any resignations The meeting opened at: 6.33pm. AC gave a warm welcome to all.
2	Apologies for absence, confidentiality and quoracy No apologies received. Committee members were reminded that anything raised confidentially in the meeting, needs to be flagged as such at the time and that the minutes are available publicly. 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 No new declarations shared.
5	Approve minutes of previous meeting One name change required. Then minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate representation of proceedings and APPROVED .
6	Review of carried over actions The status of all actions were checked – see Carried over Actions document for details.
7	Other activity agreed ‘Out of Committee’ Two invoices were signed regarding work required on Shrevenham roof repairs.
8	Finance Report (DB) DB talked Committee members through Finance period 5 report. Particular note was paid to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase in deficit since period 4 due to expenditures within the Central budget and links to an OCC grant ● Improvements to SEN funding in the last month ● Income decreases elsewhere – this was discussed in some detail, in particular the lower than expected take up of after school/nursery provision and changes in staffing/vacancies which had brought some short-term savings. ● Agency costs which are still proving problematic – costs increasing across most of the Trust ● ICT costs - also increasing due to licensing in part ● Budget support - meetings underway with all schools to discuss areas of concerns, find savings and reduce expenditures. Capital DB talked through several ongoing capital expenditure projects and additional calls on resources, including a boiler requirement in one school. Discussions took place regarding ‘absence insurance’ and whether adequate cover was in place. AL went on to share reflections on the challenges facing schools which also impact their funding. Support is in place and encouraged for Heads. Questions were asked regarding how we ensure appropriate levels of school spending. Reserves were confirmed as healthy – this has been an intentional move ahead of growing the Trust and school location changes. Clarifications were requested on the reasons for the expected school deficits and Committee members were reassured that support is in place - allowing us to proactively challenge spending assumptions, ask the difficult questions and hold the Trust accountable for spending decisions in order to find a way back to balanced budgets.

	<p>ACTION: DB to request the Heads and Finance Governors from schools in deficit to create a short overview outlining their current status, risks identified and the steps they are taking to reduce it.</p> <p>DM shared reflections regarding FCC sixth form after changes in funding – looking at ways to adjust recruitment for the future to consider a greater variety of academic alternatives. Sixth form environment and facilities need investment. There is a longer-term strategy for reconfiguration of the sixth form to ensure funded appropriately and retention of good students. The Leadership team are considering strategic questions as part of the future growth plan.</p> <p>Risks and budgeting assumptions A benchmarking report and comparison document was shared with the Committee. AL talked through additional funding and assumptions. Headlines included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding has increased – both in terms of amount received per pupil and number of pupils • There are concerns regarding Watchfield School due to reductions in pupil numbers for next year – this was discussed by the Committee in greater detail. <p>Clarification questions were asked regarding funding and accountability requirements. The Trust isn't expecting further funding to support salary increase commitments.</p> <p>AL presented a Financial Assumptions document to the Committee. The Trust is expecting lower financial uplift in future years. The nature of salary increases over the next year were examined.</p> <p>Utilities The Trust is planning ahead as much as is possible but in the climate of external change, this is very challenging to do. Utilities contract ends mid-Autumn and seeing very high utility charges. Discussions highlighted the need for consistency and a prudent approach to expenditure. There were also further discussions around planning assumptions within the budget cycle. DB updated the Committee on the current Government position.</p> <p>Noted there is a perception utility prices are falling but not seeing that happen as fast as was thought.</p> <p>AL responded to questions regarding supplier contract decisions at Folly View school and electricity demands in the new schools.</p> <p>AC summarised discussions and points of concern for the Committee and clarified when the Committee will next be able to review finances related to pay, additional costs the Trust needs to expect and energy costs.</p> <p>ACTION: AL to set out timescales and process for electricity contract, balancing price and green credentials/sustainability for next meeting</p>
9	<p>IT</p> <p>JR shared the current vision. Next stage is to tender for a service provider. Plan to appoint from September onwards. More to be shared in the next meeting. Committee members asked questions regarding the current contract. JR confirmed things have been positive. Significant progress made understanding IT infrastructure and the Central Team have been getting good feedback from Heads. The Trust has been able to make progress on new projects related to photocopiers and asset tagging. IT service to the Trust has stabilised.</p> <p>Discussions focussed on document control and consistency between the business and education strategy. JR clarified approach to managing policy and procurement and approvals processes. JR also confirmed they are following guidelines to ensure the Trust meets the appropriate regulations. There will be a final decision paper to outline processes.</p>
10	<p>Strategic Forward Planning</p> <p>Investment choices – Focus: Can we get a better return for the Trust's money?</p> <p>AC summarised the background context. AL outlined recommendations and their benefits. The Committee discussed possible variations and the benefits. Recognised the need for flexibility during changing times. Strong commitment articulated regarding making the best use of public money, while facing significant risks for the future. The Trust has some funding available for investing. Discussions centred on the right level for reserves during periods of uncertainty while using a rolling programme to invest portions of Trust savings to ensure increasing value. Further discussions centred on the appropriate level of cashflow to put away as</p>

	<p>investment and the proposal was APPROVED. Programme of investments to be revisited at the next meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: AL/AC to explore and assess if viable to establish a rolling programme of investments for Trust (incl goal for SCA funding), to achieve a higher rate of investment.</p>
11	<p>Pupil Planning</p> <p>AL shared a paper outlining early indications of pupil numbers in the short and longer term for the Trust and at individual school level. Awaiting confirmation of primary numbers. Some schools are undersubscribed, some oversubscribed. Some out of county numbers are still to come. Risk areas include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decline in primary numbers – reception classes may see problems in future years. • Expected decline in secondary numbers in c.2 years. Projections are uncertain. <p>The Trust is in conversation with Oxfordshire County Council regarding how to best manage fluctuations.</p> <p>Discussions continued regarding individual schools. Noted that staffing flexibility will be critical. Current focus is on confirming data to inform future planning.</p>
12	<p>Policies</p> <p>Estate Handling Plan 2022-27 - APPROVED</p> <p>AC thanked JR for developing the plan as a great step forward for the Trust.</p> <p>Manual Handling Policy Statement - APPROVED</p> <p>Discussions confirmed the suite of documents that come to the Committee (policies, process guides, procedures and manuals) and clarifications compulsory and advisory. Intention is to connect policies we have with the strategic governance of the Trust to ensure strategically effective. The Trust has a framework in place for assessing and auditing policies, ensuring people are clear on expected behaviours etc. Also working with external auditors to ensure oversight of policies and procedures and how they are implemented. Recognition the Trust has recently been under-resourced in this area, so now catching up. The focus is now on ensuring policies are 'digestible' and how to deliver operational implementation through the creation of a visual 'Quick Card' series.</p> <p>ACTION: JR to look at the framework approach for policies and procedures and take forward the 'Quick Card' idea.</p>
13	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>Nothing new to report.</p>
14	<p>Premises report / Health and Safety report (JR)</p> <p>Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No reportable accidents. Reporting improving but new reporting system is needed. JR leading on assessing options available against value for money. • Audit actions – very good progress. FCC and Watchfield have made outstanding progress but good in all areas and seeing good reporting. • Fire safety – taking some time to progress as need to work with consultants but in progress. <p>AC thanked all involved for driving these areas of progress.</p> <p>Premises</p> <p>JR updated on works taking place across the Trust. Noted slight underspend on SCA funding but have action plan in place for way forward. Particular updates include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCC long-term classroom replacement project – good progress against plans. Currently working on tender for the work. • Shrevenham expansion of primary – on target for February 2024. • John Blandy pipework – on target and budget. • Watchfield roof work – within scope and budget, good progress. <p>Ambition to get faster in the management of SCA funding.</p> <p>Catering</p> <p>JR shared a report. Trust catering supplier seeking increase of meal price due to external pressures and costs. JR shared an outline of the situation, and a proposal with details of the impact for the Trust. Discussions centred on external context, the partnership, contract viability and alternative options, a</p>

	<p>comparison of figures and how to best work going forward. There was recognition of the real challenges and a desire to avoid passing on costs to parents. JR outlined recommendations regarding primary/secondary meal provisions. There were clarifications on meal uptake percentages.</p> <p>A proposal was shared including an outline of how to meet the financial gap/cost increase while ensuring sustainability. Questions were addressed regarding the Trusts' strategic aim of food provision and how the Trust approach is linked to our values on sustainability and healthy eating. Our school food standards model is based on healthy/nutritious food with an emphasis on good value and good quality. Ambition is to offer children who need it, good food at least once a day. This is an important part of the service. Breakfast clubs are also an important part of our provision.</p> <p>AC summarised the context, the problems faced, figures provided. A proposal was put forward regarding how to manage increases to ensure sustainability, support parents, and encourage children to have a meal. Also some red lines agreed for future contract agreements. JR to continue working with suppliers to agree targets for the number of meals the supplier is aiming to achieve in order to ensure sustainability in each school, as well as growing the economy of scale and provision.</p>
15	ESFA/DFE letters – Nothing to discuss.
16	Confidential item – see separate minutes
17	Staffing update DM shared an update with Committee members on the current recruitments in progress.
18	<p>Centre for Professional Excellence</p> <p>Short frequent updates are being shared with staff. Currently looking at options for CPE role recruitment. DM highlighted the Trust subscription to the National College online CPE website and its resources for training and safeguarding. There is a lot of online content available to staff. Currently evaluating further software as possible resource for staff related to leadership. The Committee shared thanks with the staff member who has been leading this work on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>ACTION: DM/TR to invite the staff member leading the CPE work to meet with the RC to share learning.</p>
19	<p>Gender Pay Gap - APPROVED</p> <p>Discussions centred on interrogation of data in the report and hourly rates for teaching/non-teaching staff. Statutory reporting captures data in a way that highlights the disparities within the sector but the Trust is confident of equity and consistency in how staff are paid.</p> <p>MG requested expansion to show the detail and the breakdown across teaching and non-teaching staff, to demonstrate the values of the Trust and meeting statutory requirements, which it doesn't currently reflect.</p> <p>The Board's duty to rights under the equalities act was confirmed. It was also confirmed that employees are not required to tell the Trust if they fall into protected characteristics, which means data can be hard to come by.</p> <p>There was a further discussion around the need for diversity and women in positions of leadership.</p>
20	Any other business - None
19	<p>Future meeting dates and arrangements</p> <p>Next RC meeting - 11 May 2023. AC thanked all Committee members for their papers and preparation behind the scenes.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 9.10pm</p>

Clerk: Tori Ray
 Date: 10/04/2023