

FLT Resources Committee Meeting Minutes

15 June 2023 at 6.30pm online

Attending Committee Members (Trustees) Anthony Cook (AC) Chair Duncan Millard (DM) FLT CEO Mark Greenwood (MG)	Attending Committee Members (not Trustees) Alex Bond (AB) Tim Clark (TC) David Hancox (DH)	Attending Others Jude Scutt (JS) & Steve Jenkins (SJ) – Shrivenham school from 7pm Sharon Farrell (SF) & Pauline Forbes (PF) – Folly View Primary/The Elms Primary School from 7.20pm Anne Lynn (AL), FLT COO Danielle Bradley (DB), Finance Mngr Joanne Ray (JR), Operations Mngr Tori Ray (TR), Clerk
Apologies: Jason St John Neville, Richard Wright – Shrivenham School and Ian Pugh - Folly View Primary/The Elms Primary School.		

1	Welcome new members, guests or staff presenting and note any resignations The meeting opened at: 6.33pm. The Chair 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 Minutes of the previous meeting (and confidential minutes) 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' Nothing to report.
8	Finance 5 year Trust Financial Plan AL talked the Committee through budget headlines, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckland, Longcot & Fernham – no major concerns. • Ashbury – watching pupil numbers to ensure a balance with staffing numbers. • FCC – achieved a balanced budget after making some tough decisions for 2024 onwards. In particular looked at utility cost implications for future budgets which is a future area of high-risk. • John Blandy – in a positive position. Future opportunities for expansion being explored. • Watchfield – pupil numbers have been dipping across several year groups. Potential deficit budget for 2024 onwards. • Shrivenham – watching pupil numbers deficit for 2023/24. • Folly View/The Elms – pupil numbers on the low side – in conversation with OCC to address as potential deficit projections following comfortable year 2023/24. Early planning conversations will be held with new Executive Head starting in September. School reserves intentionally larger than normal to provide a buffer for the growing school. <p>Committee members discussed the external context and shared questions regarding demographic data and trends, which seem to mirror what is being seen nationally.</p> <p><i>7pm: AC welcomed JS & SJ and introduced the session as a chance to ask questions and understand the context they are facing as a school. JS shared the context and history of the past year. They outlined key concerns and ways to solve or mitigate them. Particular challenges focused on changes to the number of EHCP children and associated TA costs, staffing and equipment, while underfunded. JS shared details of the</i></p>

wraparound provision (ie: Breakfast Club) that started last year. Other challenges faced by the school include:

- Recruitment and retention – especially with TAs – and the use of temporary agencies which has large financial implications.
- Utilities – school facing large increase in costs
- Moving school – additional costs

JS shared positive news regarding higher pupil numbers and most classes full.

AC asked for reflections on the new school. Discussions were held around letting opportunities, other forms of income and potential uses of land that would meet school and community needs.

AL highlighted lessons learnt from previous school changes and the power of the Trust to support schools while they grow, to ensure pupil needs are met.

The Committee discussed areas including insurance (covering long-term illness/parental leave costs), utility cost increases, environmental improvements, EHCP funding, the quality of child support, different models for recruitment and retention of TAs, and flexibility of staffing/working hours generally.

AL confirmed agency TA costs have faced a particularly large increase. Further discussions followed regarding options for developing Trust-wide TA resources. Additional conversations between Committee members regarding insurance for protecting the Trust against long-term sickness and parental leave costs.

Noted the Shrivenham LGB hadn't yet approved the budget due to unresolved questions. SJ presented an overview of the current situation and the Committee discussed ways to move forward.

AC thanked JS and SJ for their time and recognised on behalf of the Committee the very real challenges faced, especially regarding EHCP resourcing and provision. The priority has to be finding a sustainable way back to budget surplus and building in appropriate plans, as well as rebuilding trust with the LGB.

7.32pm SJ left the meeting

JS shared the context for Watchfield school incl:

- Cost of TA support for EHCP, including international military children (not funded)
- Level of SEN needs
- Recruitment challenges
- Need to promote the school within the community and build the school profile
- Large supply costs – planning ahead
- Maintenance – low level of investment possible
- IT provision – needs boosting

There were further discussions around pupil numbers. Also, the Committee discussed if the right level of support is in place for school leadership.

ACTION: Committee to invite JS back in the Autumn to continue discussions and for further updates.

7.39pm JS left the meeting.

7.41pm SF and PF joined the meeting and were welcomed by AC who expressed how good it is to have the new school open. SF and PF shared an update on next year's budget and the budget cycle looking forwards (3-4 years). Critical issues included:

- Savings have been found but come at a cost
- Recruitment to TA roles is hard and staff are stretched
- Leadership changes are embedding
- Pupil numbers are lower than expected which has a funding impact.

The Committee discussed staffing, recruitment, retention and flexibility across the two school sites, including how to achieve economies of scale. Further updates and clarifications were sought on SEN requirements, needs and provision plus the impact of this on budgets and staff morale. Significant work is being invested in building collaboration between the two schools.

Committee members asked questions regarding how to find improvements, as well as achieving sustainable levels of EHCP staffing support. AC reiterated the Trust's commitment to protecting the needs of EHCP and all pupils. Questions and discussions on legal parameters followed. The Committee Chair emphasised the Trust's commitment to doing the right thing for children and the Trust in balance, and the need for ongoing robust conversations. AC shared his thanks to all staff and members of the governing bodies for their hard work and commitment.

SF shared success of Elms Breakfast Club attendance and growing opportunities in the after school provision (although limited by staffing numbers).

The Committee encouraged school colleagues to ensure letting income covers the cost of electricity used and for nurseries to maximise the provision on offer.

AC thanked everyone for their time and efforts, thanked PF and SF for navigating a challenging year and shared well wishes on behalf of the Committee to Sharon on her retirement, especially for her work in navigating what has been a complex year.

8.10pm SF and PF left the meeting

Further discussions regarding the use of agencies and costs to school. Agreed this area needs looking at.

ACTION: DB to bring analysis of costs/income etc related to supply teachers and assistants over the year to the next meeting.

AC invited further questions/reflections from the Committee. AC shared the context regarding sign off of budgets and proposed adopting the approach of recovering budget while the new schools grow. This was APPROVED.

ACTION: Invite new Exec Head of Elms/Folly View to the Resources Committee meeting in November 2023 for a discussion with the Committee regarding addressing future year budget actions.

AC confirmed a recommendation for the FLT Board to hold an active discussion on PAN for Faringdon schools and Watchfield at their next meeting. The Committee discussed PAN numbers within Faringdon schools.

ACTION: AC to talk to Board regarding Watchfield and Faringdon school PAN numbers.

Faringdon budget approved. The Committee acknowledged the need to continue observation of the Watchfield budget.

AL presented additional information on risk areas including significant utility cost increases in September for gas and electric. The contribution of this to deficit budgets was noted. Also noted that electricity use across the Trust is high and school governing bodies need to be held to account for use. Trust looking at opportunities to share data to show a breakdown of how electricity is used across the estate. Possible learning opportunities for students and a focus on all our behaviours and energy use. Suggestion of 'Energy Treasure Hunts' being incorporated into science classes. Less use of electricity could result in extra TAs.

ACTION: AL to explore establishing electricity graphs showing monthly usage for schools – update on feasibility in September meeting.

Approval of total budget by Committee members was sought. Reserves for year 1, year 2 (with the acknowledgement major costs related to utilities and unfunded staffing) and year 3 were agreed. Noted that work and rigour for next year's budget and savings required, along with some potentially difficult choices on staffing.

	<p>AC raised questions on whether the Trust has the right level of reserves. Noted that IT costs are not currently budgeted for at school level. Asset tagging has been completed. RAG rating for the IT refresh project needs mapping along with the associated costs. Recognised the need for an accurate reserves figure and a basic reserves policy.</p> <p>BUDGET APPROVED.</p> <p>Other areas: Flexible working across sites ACTION: JS/SF to update Committee on progress of staff willingness to work across multiple school sites (Watchfield/Shriv/Faringdon)</p> <p>EHCP Discussion regarding when levels of need become unsustainable. Work on this to be combined with the Quality of Education Committee's thinking, with the underlying principle being to support Heads. Need to look at last academic year EHCPs, the length of need and the impact. Sight needed of the volume and distribution across year groups and schools, in order to help resolve areas of tension.</p> <p>ACTION: Ask the Vale for their EHCP data to use as a benchmark.</p> <p>Period 8 Financial Report DB presented figures from the report to the Committee including capital income and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new funding for Ukrainian children for the next year • TA changes in schools • Support staff pay increase to be included • Central grant from Armed Forces addressing staffing costs <p>AC concluded by sharing sincere thanks to Heads of Schools and their teams, the Central Team and Finance Governors for their hard work on finance and budgeting.</p>
9	<p>Strategic Forward Planning – horizon planning See above. Expecting an out of Committee decision on utilities once have heard back from the Trust's broker regarding prices and costs.</p>
10	<p>Utilities - electricity See above.</p>
11	<p>Pupil Planning Review AL highlighted the overview regarding numbers of places available across schools in September. The census has not changed since January. Particular concerns for Watchfield, especially at reception level. Confirmed we don't try to forecast new entrant levels as it is unreliable.</p>
12	<p>Policies – for approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoke Free Policy v1.3 • Appraisal Policy for Teachers 2023 • Grievance Policy v1.3 2023 <p>Most of these policies haven't changed. Fixed Asset policies have been requested by Auditors including depreciation rates and a small amend on IT renewal timings. Discussion regarding high-value vehicles but these are leased, not owned.</p> <p>ALL POLICIES APPROVED.</p>
13	<p>Risk Register - Nothing to add.</p>
14	<p>Premises report / Health and Safety report and Audit report Health and Safety Term 5/6 audits in progress. Outstanding actions from the last cycle will be closed by next cycle (some long-term). Some could have been closed more quickly. Focus now is on swift resolution and actions.</p> <p>Elms School fire alarm activation – positive resolution but actions needed taking. Learning being shared with Heads. Addressing habits to ensure fire doors being kept closed.</p> <p>ACTION: JR to circulate findings re: outstanding actions to the Committee by Sept meeting, following meeting with Heads.</p>

	<p>Premises</p> <p>JR shared the report with the Committee. Highlights included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LED lighting work within four schools is progressing well. • Watchfield windows and doors – Autumn term work anticipated. • Exploring funding opportunities for decarbonisation work. • Shrivenham – work looking positive and meeting with the contractor next month. • IT – three significant tenders spanning telephony, broadband and WAN. Expecting out of Committee decisions for all in the next month or so.
15	ESFA/DFE letters – None.
16	MAT to MAT collaboration - See separate confidential minutes.
17	<p>Staffing update and changes</p> <p>DM shared a summary paper and headlines. Currently a key recruitment period for schools. Exec Head appointment for Faringdon schools has been successful. Appointment and handover currently in progress. Recruitment remains challenging.</p>
18	Centre for Professional Excellence - Nothing to report.
19	Any other business - None. AC thanked the Central Team for all their work and papers prepared for this meeting, thanked the Committee members for their time, advice and dedication and the Clerk for their work.
20	<p>Future meeting dates and arrangements</p> <p>Meeting dates agreed for the coming year.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 9.15pm</p>

Clerk: Tori Ray
 Date: 28/08/2023