

## MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING

**Held on Thursday 17 October 2024 at 18.00**

**Present:** Di Dean, Michael Smethers, Will Dean, Jane Walker-Smith, Angie Farrance, Niro Mendonca, Annie Thomson, Simon Walsh, Peter Tarry, Tim Moss, Richard Sullivan, Sharon Roberts, Jez Farmer

**In attendance:** Jo Wiles (Governance Professional)

<b>1. Apologies for absence</b>	No apologies received.	<b>ALL</b>
<b>2. Election of the Chair</b>	Mr Walsh was unanimously elected as Chair of the Finance & Resources for a term of office of 2 years.	
<b>3. Election of the Vice Char</b>	Mr Tarry was unanimously elected as Vice Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee for a term of office of 2 years.	
<b>4. Declarations of interest</b>	Mr Walsh declared a conflicts of interest were declared.	
<b>5. Confidentiality</b>	Colleagues are reminded that minutes remain in draft until they are signed off at the next meeting and should therefore not be shared before signing off, nor the content discussed outside of the meeting.	<b>ALL</b>
<b>6. To receive any other business</b>	No items were declared.	
<b>7. To receive any correspondence</b>	No items were declared.	
<b>8. Minutes of the previous meeting</b>	The minutes of the meeting held on <b><u>Thursday; 4 July 2024</u></b> were unanimously approved as an accurate account of the meeting.	
<b>9. Matters arising from the minutes</b>	<b><u>Risk Register</u></b> A meeting took place internally relating to the Health and Safety Policy. Mrs Dean reported that the policy is currently under review and that an updated draft policy will be presented at committee's meeting in the second half of the Autumn term. <b>Action: ATN/ DDN</b>	

	<p>Ms Thomson and Mrs Dean also confirmed that the procedures for evacuation/invacuation (following the guidance released from the DfE) will be updated to all the next F&amp;R meeting.</p> <p><b><u>Internal Audit</u></b></p> <p>Mrs Dean informed that there is a further meeting next week to close off the audit before receiving the report and advised that this will be reviewed at the first meeting of the new academic year. <b>Action: Governance Professional for agenda</b></p> <p><b>Please see item 14.</b></p> <p>Mrs Dean updated that Mr Atterton is currently reviewing to see if the GDPR training offered by Educare is applicable for governors, if it is deemed not alternative training will be sought. A further update will be provided at the next meeting. <b>Action: DDN</b></p> <p><b>It was agreed that all governors should undertake GDPR training. Action: Governance Profession to share details of GDPR training to complete on Modern Governor.</b></p> <p><b><u>New Build Update</u></b></p> <p>Mr Tarry will attend meetings to align with the gateway schedule. <b>Action: Mrs Dean to provide update to Mr Tarry when required to attend.</b></p> <p><b>The new build was discussed in Item 15.</b></p>	
<b>10. To review the Terms of Reference for the Committee</b>	<p>It was agreed that the Terms of Reference should be updated to require no fewer than 4 governors in order to be quorate to bring this committee's quorum in line with the other committees.</p> <p>A discussion took place around bullet point 12 in the ToR which provides that the F&amp;R committee will:</p> <p>".... liaise with and receive reports from the Personnel and Curriculum Committees, as appropriate, and to make recommendations to those committees about the financial aspects of matters being considered by them".</p> <p>The committee agreed that DDN and ATN would consider options and related wording for improving cross-committee work for consideration at the next FGB meeting.</p>	<p><b>DDN and ATN to update and send to GP to add to the terms of reference and for for ratification at the next FGB meeting.</b></p>

<p><b>11. Policies</b></p>	<p><u>The following policies were considered after being circulated to members before the meeting.</u></p> <p><u>In answer to members' questions Mrs Dean confirmed that save where the changes listed below had been made for the reasons she explained, all of the policies in question were working satisfactorily.</u></p> <p><b><u>Payment of Allowances to Trustees &amp; Members</u></b> No proposed changes to the policy. <b>Unanimously approved.</b></p> <p><b><u>Financial Reporting</u></b> Amended to reflect the ESFA now being integrated into the DfE. <b>Unanimously approved as amended.</b></p> <p><b><u>Use of Charity Trust Account</u></b> No proposed changes to the policy. <b>Unanimously approved.</b></p> <p><b><u>Treatment of Fixed Assets &amp; Depreciation</u></b> The software system has now been updated and the policy has been reflected. DDN amended references in the policy to the old finance software (FMS), with the new HCSS Finance software.</p> <p><i>Did the annual audit recommend any changes to this policy and/or its operation?</i> Mrs Dean confirmed that it did not. <b>Unanimously approved as amended.</b></p> <p><b><u>Internet &amp; Network Usage</u></b> It was agreed that this policy should be referred to and reviewed by the Curriculum Committee because that committee is better placed to consider it given the policy's subject matter.</p> <p><b><u>Critical Incident Management &amp; Recovery</u></b> This document refers to the BCP and no further changes proposed.</p>	<p>MFN and GP to add to agenda.</p>
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	<p><b>Unanimously approved.</b></p> <p><b><u>Minibus Policy</u></b></p> <p>The committee agreed that the policy should be renamed the “School Vehicles Policy” because the school now has its pool car and the policy should apply to all of the school’s vehicles.</p> <p>Mrs Dean reported that the pool car is working really well and the school has just acquired a new minibus with support from the PTA.</p> <p><b>How often is the pool car used?</b></p> <p>On a daily basis, and it is proving to be a very useful resource.</p> <p><b>Unanimously approved with the above amendment.</b></p> <p><b><u>Lettings</u></b></p> <p>No proposed changes.</p> <p><i>Should the policy also refer to the fact that we hire out to small businesses as well?</i></p> <p>It was agreed to amend the wording to encapsulate other organisations.</p> <p><b>Unanimously approved with the above amendment.</b></p> <p><b><u>Bad Debt Policy</u></b></p> <p>A discussion took place around the policy’s purpose and it was agreed that it should be renamed the “Debt Management Policy” because that better reflects its purpose and scope.</p> <p>As a result of the discussion Ms Thomson confirmed that the school will ensure that decisions made under the policy are expressly signed-off so that the school has a clear audit trail.</p> <p><b>Unanimously approved with the above amendment.</b></p> <p><b><u>Charging &amp; Remissions</u></b></p> <p>It was suggested that the term “The Governors” was replaced with “The school” to reflect that it is a school based procedure/policy.</p>	<p>DDN</p>
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	<p><b>Unanimously approved with the above amendment.</b></p> <p><b><u>CCTV</u></b>  <i>Is there any legal requirement for us to keep CCTV for a certain length of time?</i></p> <p>Mrs Dean confirmed that the Data Retention Policy covers the length of time that CCTV is retained, and the committee agreed that the CCTV Policy should be updated cross-refer to the Data Retention Policy.</p> <p><b>Unanimously approved with the above amendment.</b></p> <p>Having considered the policies above the committee agrees that all those it approved should go to the next FGB meeting for ratification.</p>	<p><b>DDN</b></p> <p><b>GP for FGB agenda</b></p>
<b>12. Schedule of Financial Delegation</b>	<p>Mrs Dean spoke to the changes proposed in the amended draft circulated prior to the meeting which the committee approved unanimously.</p> <p>Mrs Dean also confirmed that Andrew Stanton is now a signatory on the school's main bank account.</p>	
<b>13. Finance Update</b>	<p>Mrs Dean explained that the usual finance report had not been prepared because the school's annual audit is currently underway but confirmed that the year-end outcome is in line with predictions. She also emphasised that some of the school's contingency shown in the last report had been used to cover the deficit that had been predicted and realised.</p> <p>Mrs Dean undertook to circulate the report as soon as it has been finalised.</p> <p>Mrs Dean reminded the meeting that the budget approved for 2024/25 was also a deficit budget, and that it was based on an assumed 3% pay award for both teaching and support staff. Since the budget had been set teachers had been given a 5.5% pay award and that the government had agreed to pay the difference through additional funding. Mrs Dean also confirmed that the</p>	<b>DDN</b>

	<p>pay award for support staff pay award is still being negotiated.</p> <p><i><b>Are the pay awards retrospective?</b></i></p> <p>Yes - support staff pay awards will be backdated to April and teaching staff pay will be backdated to September.</p> <p>Mrs Dean flagged recent reports around the government discussing potential employer insurance contributions increases as well as the removal of the small grant funding and confirmed that she would also be monitoring and reporting on any developments that might impact this year's budget.</p> <p><i><b>What impact would an unfunded 1% increase in employer's the NI have?</b></i></p> <p>Mrs Dean confirmed that it would have a significant impact and explained that the additional funding announced in the Autumn was to cover the teaching pay awards and also meant to go towards covering the support staff pay awards once agreed. Any impact on the budget following an increase in employer NI contributions would have to be met by the school (unless the DfE agree to fund these as it did previously).</p> <p>Mrs Dean reported that recovery Premium funding and National Tutoring funding have both been removed.</p>	
<b>14. Internal Audit</b>	<p><u><b>Spring and Summer Reports</b></u></p> <p>Mrs Dean referred to the reports that were circulated prior to the meeting and confirmed that the spring and summer audits were combined to and cover GDPR as well as credit control.</p> <p>Mrs Dean reported spoke to the report's findings and took the meeting through them as well as the school's responses.</p> <p><u><b>Annual Assurance Report</b></u></p> <p>A discussion took place around the report, its findings and recommendations.</p>	

	<p><i>Are all agency staff and volunteers required to complete GDPR training?</i></p> <p>The committee agreed that the school should introduce a short summary document which summarises the school's approach to, and requirements around, data protection that all agency staff and volunteers will be asked to read and sign on arrival.</p> <p><i>The overall assurance was reasonable but there were no risks recorded in their report?</i></p> <p>Mrs Dean explained that this point had been raised and that the internal auditors have advised that this is due to their grading system. The committee asked Mrs Dean to get clarification around the grading system, for example how many minor issues can be identified before the assurance level drops.</p> <p>Having considered the report, committee, sitting as the audit committee was satisfied with the recommendations that were made, the responses to them and action plan that the school has put in place.</p>	<p>DDN (with RAN as DPO)</p> <p>DDN</p>
15. New Build Update	<p>Mrs Dean reported that the planning application for the build has been submitted to St Albans District Council and that the school is expecting a response by the end of November but warned that it could be delayed until January 2025.</p> <p>Sport England has attended site to review location of the proposed new build and had no issues with the proposal.</p> <p>Mrs Dean reminded the committee that that the plan proposed build will deliver a block with seven classrooms that can be used flexibly.</p> <p><i>What is the proposed timescale and when might construction start?</i></p> <p>All being well, building works should start in March 2025 with the opening expected in September 2026.</p>	
16. Premises and Health and Safety Report	<p>The Facilities Report was circulated prior to the meeting.</p>	

	<p>Mrs Dean confirmed that insurance funded works for the Old Seacole leak and Pascal flooring are now complete.</p> <p><b><u>M Store</u></b></p> <p>The new purpose-built M Store is nearly complete and includes a meeting area and office space.</p> <p>Ms Thomson advised that the Guardian and the Times want to come and do an article about the M Store.</p> <p><b><u>CIF Bids</u></b></p> <p><b>Electrical work</b></p> <p>Electrical work funded by the school's successful CIF bid has now been completed.</p> <p><b>Heating work</b></p> <p>Mrs Dean reported that the school's appeal against the rejection of this bid had today been subsequently approved and funds will now be available to fund the proposed zoning upgrade. Work should start on that project in Summer 2025.</p> <p>Mrs Dean also reported that the school's original preferred contractor for the work has confirmed that they will stick to its original pricing.</p> <p>This upgrade will allow the heating system around the school to be zoned and support the school in meeting its sustainability targets.</p> <p><b><u>Travel plan</u></b></p> <p>This has been updated and submitted as required for the new build planning application.</p> <p><b><u>Lettings</u></b></p> <p>Mrs Dean advised that they two hirers have been lost as a result of a drop in their numbers and the sessions in question not being viable for them to run.</p> <p>Booking forms for spring term are due to be sent shortly.</p>	
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	Annual booking forms have been sent to all hirers with their new increased hire charges and these are slowly coming back in.	
<b>17. Risk Register</b>	<p>The risk register was circulated for review prior to the meeting.</p> <p>It was agreed that the wording for item number 6 should be updated as the election has now taken place although the current rating for this item should be retained.</p> <p>Ms Thomson proposed reflecting school's response to the increase security incidents in schools nationally.</p> <p>Mrs Dean proposed that an item should be included around site security, visitors coming onto site and how that risk is assessed. The committee agreed that its risk register should address this as it is a serious issue and Mrs Dean agreed to produce some draft wording that can be considered at the committee's next meeting.</p>	<b>DDN</b>
<b>18. AOB Items</b>	<p>Mr Walsh referred to the executive summary of the changes in the 2024 Academies Trust Handbook that the GP had circulated and asked for a reminder to be sent to ensure that all governors are familiar with the changes.</p> <p>The GP confirmed that she would also send governors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a reminder to complete the cyber security module on Educare.</li> <li>• a link to the GDPR module on Modern Governor</li> </ul> <p>Mrs Dean confirmed that Hillier Hopkins have not increased its fees for audit work this year.</p>	<p><b>GP</b></p> <p><b>GP</b></p> <p><b>GP</b></p>
<b>19. Date and time of next meeting</b>	<b>Wednesday, 27 November 2024</b>	
<b>20. Close of meeting</b>	The meeting ended at 7pm.	

