

**Strategic & Finance Committee meeting  
Held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025 at 5 pm at Brixington Primary Academy  
Draft Minutes**

**Present:** A Walmsley (chair), P Walker (CEO) and I Thomas

**In attendance:** M Platten (Director of Finance - DoF) and I Candy (Lead Governance Professional - LGP)

**Quorum:** as it was known in advance that this meeting would not be quorate, the meeting only covered items for information. Another meeting was held to discuss items requiring approval.

**Circulation:** Directors (through GovernorHub), FFT website

	Decision		Action due
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<b>1. Welcome &amp; apologies</b>	
Apologies were received from A Denner (unable to attend due to the date of the meeting being rescheduled) and M Williams (ill health).	
<b>2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests</b>	
Declarations of conflicts of interests were invited by the chair. None was made.	
<b>3. Minutes of the last meetings of the S&amp;F committee</b>	
<b>3.1. To approve the minutes of the last meeting (26 June 2025) and recommend them for approval by the committee at their next meeting</b>	
The minutes were reviewed and recommended for approval by the committee at their next meeting	
<b>3.2. To review matters arising not otherwise on the agenda</b>	
The list of matters arising not otherwise on the agenda was circulated ahead of the meeting. The following points were raised and discussed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Exeter Road</u>: the school financial position remained unclear due to system issues. The school was keeping its own spreadsheet to track spending and was being cautious around spending.</li> <li>• <u>Budget forecasting</u>: the DoF confirmed he was planning to continue to do this as it had been done in 2024-25 (ie three times a year)</li> <li>• <u>Marshwood Church Lease</u>: PHP was asked to check progress when the Trust last met up with them. <b>P Walker was asked to follow up this up with them.</b></li> </ul> The committee noted the matters approved by written resolution since the last meeting of the committee, as set out in the matters arising list.	<b>Appendix 1</b>          <b>P Walker</b>
<b>4. To receive and discuss the CEO report</b>	
A written report was not circulated ahead of the meeting, the CEO reported verbally at the meeting. <u>Pupil numbers</u> : A summary of pupil numbers (numbers predicted in October 2024 for September 2025, actually numbers on roll in October 2025 and predicted	<b>Appendix 2</b>

numbers for September 2026) and class numbers was circulated on the day of the meeting.

The CEO highlighted that:

- Rockbeare has gained a significant number of pupils.
- Brixington had also gained pupils because of parental dissatisfaction with another local school. T
- There had also been some growth at Axminster.
- Overall, October 2025 pupil numbers were still below October 2024 numbers, but were 12 pupils higher than anticipated, whereas last year at the same time pupil numbers were below those anticipated the previous year.
- He was anticipating the Trust total number of classes to decrease in 2026-27 but there was one school where the number of classes may increase by one.
- He would meet with the LAs after Christmas regarding reception places to help plan for 2026-27 class structures. Therefore, anticipated class numbers for 2026-27 were likely to be reviewed in February 2026.

RISE support for Exeter Road:

The CEO reported that:

- The Trust had been asked whether they would be happy to provide this support and confirmed it was.
- The school and Devon would also be consulted on the decision.
- Providing the support would bring some income, which would be beneficial to the school. If the school was to join the Trust, the funding may stop. Therefore, the CEO has asked the DfE regional office to check conditions around joining vs support and also the amount of funding.

**5. To review and discuss the Director of Finance (DoF) report, to include management accounts for May, June and July 2025**

The DoF report and management accounts for May, June, July and August 2025 were circulated ahead of the meeting.

Management accounts and annual accounts:

The DoF highlighted that:

- The August management accounts included the depreciation from the finalised accounts for 2024-25, hence the apparent deficit. With hindsight, it would have been beneficial to do this report before the depreciation was added to the system.
- The final in-year deficit for 2024-25 was £18K, much below the anticipated in-year deficit of £676K. This figure included redundancy costs (including pension strains) and one-off costs so the final position would otherwise have been a surplus of approximately £300K.
- The percentage of reserves to income was therefore better (ie higher) than anticipated and the team was looking at building on this in future years.
- At Sidmouth, building project valuations did not take place at month end, therefore the valuation of the project costs to date did not align with the end of the financial year. A small portion of costs was not accrued for the end of August.
- An audit progress meeting was due to take place the day after this meeting. The Trust accountant and the finance team had helped to progress queries daily.
- An in-year deficit of approximately £249K was anticipated for 2025-26.

Premises:

The DoF reported that:

- The CEO had met with the Maynard Trust trustees and agreed to including Bere Alston in the Trust programme of capital spending to demonstrate the Trust commitment to keeping the building in good condition. As with other schools, the condition survey will be used to prioritise work.

**Appendices  
3 - 7**

Other matters:

In response to a question, the DoF confirmed there was no cash flow issue and therefore he had been able to invest funds as agreed.

Meeting times: start: 5 pm, end: 5.30 pm

Date of next meeting: 23 October 2025

**These minutes are agreed by those present as being a true record.**

**Signed:**.....

Chair of S&F committee

**Date:**.....