

**Strategic & Finance Committee meeting
Held on 10th October 2024 at 7.15 pm
in person at Brixington Primary Academy and via Teams
Draft Part I Minutes**

Present: M Williams, A Walmsley (chair), A Denner and I Thomas (all in person)

In attendance: M Platten (DoF) and I Candy (Co Sec) (both in person)

Quorum: the meeting is quorate

Circulation: Directors (through GovernorHub), FFT website

	Decision		Action due
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1. Welcome & apologies	
Apologies were received from P Walker (clash with DSLs) and A Gavin annual (leave)	
2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests	
Declarations of conflicts of interests were invited by the chair. None was made.	
3. Minutes of the last meeting of the S&F committee	
3.1. To approve the minutes of the last meeting of the committee (held on 27th June 2024)	
The draft minutes of the last meeting, Part I and Part II, were circulated ahead of this meeting. They were agreed to be an accurate record of the last meeting and signed by the chair.	
3.2. To review matters arising not otherwise on the agenda	
The list of matters arising not otherwise on the agenda was circulated ahead of the meeting. All matters arising closed or on agenda with exception of the following points that were raised and discussed. <u>Brixington 2 years old consultation:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The consultation and replies to it were circulated ahead of the meeting. The committee note that all responses to the consultation, including the response from the LA, were positive. All results are positive including the LA. The committee does not have delegated approval for this matter and agreed to recommend to the board that the age range at Brixington be lowered to accept two years old nursery pupils. <u>Management partnership agreement with Exeter Road:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The agreement has finally been signed by all parties. Joint management partnership meetings will be arranged. Payments are ongoing as agreed. <u>Moxton single supplier documentation:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The use of the single supplier clause for the Moxton review has been documented. <u>Capital panel:</u> This has been set up to review and agree capital requests.	Appendix 1 Appendix 2 I Candy
4. To review (and agree where needed) pay changes for teachers and school leaders	
The summary of pay changes was circulated ahead of the meeting.	Appendix 3

<p>The committee commented that there is a higher number of schools where people have insufficient evidence for UPS and/or were not successful in progressing through the threshold. Therefore, the committee requested a split of the number of unsuccessful vs insufficient evidence applications to understand this better, as well as additional narrative to understand if there are any significant concerns arising or any appeals arising from this.</p> <p>The committee noted that the summary only included FFT schools as appraisals at the former Acorn schools have historically taken place later in the term. Once appraisals there have been completed, the committee will get a report so they have an understanding of the situation for the new-to-the-Trust staff.</p>	<p>A Gavin</p> <p>A Gavin</p>
<p>5. To receive and discuss the CEO report</p>	
<p>The CEO report, a report on pupil numbers and a report on the Trust strategic priority 3 (building capacity ambitions and milestones) were circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p>The following points were raised and discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil numbers are continuing to decrease at about the rate expected due to demographics. • Several schools that transferred from Acorn are very close geographically and share catchments / have neighbouring catchments to other Trust schools so there will be limited opportunities to improve pupil take up. • The current model of funding means that very small schools are currently sustainable, however they have their educational challenges to teach across age groups. • The Trust will need to look at models for different size schools to ensure long term sustainability and compare current budgets vs expectations. M Platten will also be further analysing cost areas to further identify where to aim to save money and then invest it in priorities that are identified. • If TCAF is not received, this will have an impact on the Trust reserves. 	<p>Appendices 4 – 6</p> <p>P Walker & M Platten</p>
<p>6. To receive and discuss the DoF report</p>	
<p>The Director of Finance report and August 2024 management accounts were circulated ahead of the meeting.</p> <p><u>FFT budget for schools that were part of the Trust as of 31 Aug 2024:</u></p> <p>M Platten highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The in-year deficit for the schools that were part of the Trust as of 31 Aug 2024 is currently predicted to be £487K, which is better than was forecasted, thanks to lower spending over the summer across a number of schools. • The team is hoping to produce more meaningful management accounts with dashboards to make it easier to understand significant matters. • Trust reserves are currently forecasted to be about 5% of income. The vast majority of the in-year deficit was due to Mary Dean's budget being in deficit. The budget for the school is now showing an improvement. However, some roles at the school are paid higher for historical reasons, especially where staff had more responsibilities when the school was stand alone. • It is important that resources are allocated based on priorities. This needs to be more carefully planned, especially when several schools require additional funding. <p><u>Consolidation of budget to include Sep 2024 joiner schools:</u></p> <p>M Platten highlighted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All joiner schools will have an in-year deficit for 2023-24. Whilst the FFT budget has included staff pay scale increases, Acorn and Chickerell had not, although that will be partly paid through the additional DfE grants, that will also cover some of the NJC increase. 	<p>Appendices 7 – 8</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • He was hoping the consolidated budget would continue to show the same predicted in-year position, subject to a more detailed understanding of the joiner schools and matters like pupil numbers. • The bigger risk is TCAF. • There are also some inflationary pressures which are difficult to forecast at present due to workload. <p>The Trust asked what order of magnitude the risk was.</p> <p>TCAF is likely to about £250K-£400k, other matters such as inflation is about £100K.</p> <p>In addition, the outcome of the Moxton review may be that some significant spend is needed on IT. This could potentially be as high as about £300K - £400K. Some of this may be covered by DSC funding. What can be afforded will also be dependent on TCAF funding.</p> <p>Having efficient devices and infrastructures will however have a positive impact on the use of educational resources. IT aspects are being RAG rated as part of the Moxton review.</p> <p>The meeting went into Part II to review commercially sensitive information.</p> <p>The meeting went back into Part I.</p> <p><u>Rockbeare new modular classroom:</u></p> <p>The committee were reminded that the new mobile classroom at Rockbeare had been needed due to the state of one previous mobile classroom, and demand on places locally. Due to the additional local school places required, Devon LA had previously agreed to pay £100K of the costs, The Trust will have to pay to cover the remainder of the £248K, so a net cost to the Trust of about £150K. The committee agreed for this net cost to be spent by the Trust.</p> <p>[Post meeting note: the procurement of the new mobile classroom had previously been agreed at the Dec 2023 directors meeting, item 4.2].</p> <p><u>Capital funding programme:</u></p> <p>This will be reviewed at the next meeting of the committee.</p>	<p>A Gavin</p>
<p>7. To receive and discuss the DoPO report</p> <p>The Director of People and Operations was circulated ahead of the meeting. M Platten reported on behalf of A Gavin that indicative costs at Sidmouth were being a concern again and that the main aspect of the project was progressing to the final design stage with a level of risk. South West Norse are looking at reducing costs through competitive tendering and potentially some small changes in specification. If costs remain too high, the Trust will need to look at whether additional funding may be sourced, or reserves used if that is value for money.</p> <p>The committee asked to see an executive summary of the Moxton review and RAG rating.</p> <p>The following points were raised and discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MIS procurement is ongoing. • Funding for new wraparound care provisions is being made available by the government and this needs to be investigated further. The Trust SLT will have a strategic review of this. • P Walker and A Walmsley are due to meet with the Bestic trust around Mrs Ethelston's. • The transfer of the preschool provision at Musbury is taking longer than expected, this is not due to the Trust. • The committee asked for the cost of HR legal support to be reported to the committee. 	<p>Appendix 9</p> <p>A Gavin</p> <p>Trust SLT</p> <p>A Gavin</p>
<p>8. Policies and compliance</p> <p>The policies and compliance summary was circulated ahead of the meeting, as were the proposed policies.</p> <p>The updated health & safety policy and the updated whistleblowing policy were adopted by the committee.</p> <p>The committee noted the accounting officer letters.</p>	<p>Appendix 10</p>

The committee also note that the **finance policy** was due to be updated in May 2023 and an interim step had been agreed at the time to reflect the change in personnel and how this applied within the current policy. An updated version of the policy has been developed and will be discussed with the chair of the board. This **will then be sent to the board for approval by written resolution.**

**M Platten / I
Candy**

Meeting times: start: 7.20 pm, end: 8.42 pm

Date of next meeting: 21 Nov 2024

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

Signed:.....
Chair of S&F committee

Date:.....