

**Audit Committee**

**Minutes**

13<sup>th</sup> June 2024

10 am

*Held at Lanscove House*

**Present:** Dominic Course (Chair)  
Sarah Cox  
Graeme Scott

**In attendance:** Nicky Dunford (CEO) (online via TEAMS) (left the meeting at 10.15)  
Matt Matthew (DCEO)

**Minutes:** Charlotte Roe (GP)

Papers will be circulated to all members of the Committee and will be confidential.

No	Item	Action
1.	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b> The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. There were no apologies	
2.	<b>Declarations of Business Interests</b> The CEO is a trustee of the Bearnas Education Foundation. Dominic Course is Chair of Governors at South Dartmoor Community College and a director of DACORS Ltd. Sarah Cox is a shareholder of S Cox & Co, and Naked Sprout Ltd, a trustee of The Fryer Welfare Trust and The Fryer Recreational Trust and a trustee of Drake's School PTFA. Graeme Scott is Executive Chair of The Mario Framework.	
3.	<b>Any Other Business</b> No other business was brought forward	
4.	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b> The minutes of the meeting held on 29 <sup>th</sup> February 2024 were <b>approved</b> as an accurate record. The Chair signed accordingly.	
5.	<b>Matters Arising from the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 (not included within the agenda)</b> 5.6 Information guide for Trustees – It was noted that all information was kept on Sharepoint which all Trustees had full access of. 5.9 'Quick fix' on improving the Trust's sustainability response – SC discussed about the Trust moving towards being paperless. The DCEO said that it was an area to follow up on. The CEO said that there was a big push by Diocese and Local Authority on climate change with the need for a Trustee responsible for sustainability. The government directive was for a plan to be in place by end of 2030. It was <b>agreed</b> that in the first instance a Trust wide audit would be completed to benchmark the Trust's current standing as though schools were addressing sustainability; it was on a school-by-school basis. <i>The Trustees asked who would take responsibility for this.</i> The CEO said that she would start it, delegating some to other colleagues. SC volunteered to support the initiative as well. <i>The Trustees asked for this to be a standard agenda item for future meetings splitting between Education and Central.</i> GS said that he had undertaken an audit in another school and would send it as an example.	CEO GP/Clerk GS
6.	<b>Internal Audit</b> 6.1 The Finance Internal Audit Report was circulated before the meeting. The following comments/questions were made: -	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The DCEO said that it was a standard audit and due to strong financial systems in place and highly skilled staff there were no outstanding issues raised, only minor recommendations.</li> <li>• <i>The Trustees asked about the recommendation around the purchase orders needing to be agreed in the advance</i> – it was noted that this was not always practicable. The DCEO explained the current procedure and it was <b>agreed</b> that this was acceptable and compliant. <i>The Trustees asked for good practice that additional notes were added to purchase orders that were agreed retrospectively.</i></li> <li>• The Trustees commented on how payroll was a ‘clean’ audit. The Trustees raised a concern that the HROM was the only staff member who was proficient at the payroll and <i>asked the DCEO to consider a contingency, succession plan and add it to the risk register.</i></li> <li>• The DCEO said that the auditors were now reviewing the H&amp;S compliance reporting from school to Trustees.</li> <li>• The DCEO said that once the risk registers were reviewed then the following year’s programme could be agreed.</li> <li>• <i>The Trustees asked about the outstanding answers to queries which had been raised by Trustees about the previous internal audit on due diligence.</i> It was <b>agreed</b> that the Trustees would meet with the Auditors and the DCEO <b>agreed</b> to organise it. It was <b>agreed</b> that in future in the summer meeting to invite the Auditors to discuss the outcome of previous year and the foci of the future academic year.</li> </ul>	<p>DCEO</p> <p>DCEO GP</p>
7.	<p><b>External Audit</b></p> <p>7.1 The DCEO updated the meeting on Bishop Fleming Audit 2024 planning meeting. The Chair confirmed that he attended as well. It was noted that most Trusts were in the same financial position as the Trust. The DCEO reported it was a standard pre-audit meeting. The main highlighted issues were viability and succession planning.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Due Diligence</b></p> <p>A report was circulated before the meeting.</p> <p>The DCEO updated the Trustees on the 4 potential schools joining the Trust in September 2024. The DCEO went over the budgets of the 4 potential schools and their predicted carry forwards. It was reported that the viability of the new schools had not been included in the future 2024/2025 budget. The DCEO informed the meeting that the new schools would not significantly affect the Trust’s financial position. The DCEO said that the schools were right for the Trust. It was noted that the CEO was now the Acting Executive Head of the Jubilee and Pebblebed schools. <i>The Trustees raised concerns about capacity and asked further questions of clarification.</i> The DCEO said that the staffing picture was fluid and was the focus of the Senior Leader Team. <i>The Trustees asked further questions around the short and long-term prognosis.</i> The conversion date is 1 Sep 24 for the four schools but may slip if any land issues arise. <i>The Trustees asked about the EIT’s capacity for school improvement.</i> The DCEO explained the new hub model that was being put in place to support a more effective school improvement provision. It was added that Devon County was also supplying some support. <i>The Trustees asked for it to be raised for additional recompense in the event of the CEO being an Acting Executive and a protracted conversion period with DCC.</i> The DCEO <b>agreed</b> to raise this with the CEO. The DCEO added that East Devon was an area of growth as there were a lot of small schools who were not attached to a Trust.</p> <p>The Trustees asked about a previous due diligence apparent discrepancy of a school. The DCEO said that it had been due to additional costs following a staffing decision after conversion and not to the due diligence. The DCEO added that staffing of this school was under review. <i>The Trustees asked questions about the proposed actions.</i></p> <p><i>The Trustees asked about supply costs across the Trust.</i> The DCEO said that due to unforeseen circumstances in some schools, supply costs were high. The DCEO gave a deeper depth explanation. <i>The Trustees asked whether recruiting a floating</i></p>	<p>DCEO/ CEO</p>

	<i>TA was viable.</i> The DCEO said it could be a consideration but felt it was not appropriate.	
9.	<b>PE and Sports Grant</b> It was noted this was no longer a concern of the auditors. The DCEO presented a breakdown of the spending of the individual schools. It was noted that with the surplus, additional wrap around care had been put in place which would benefit the pupils.	
10.	<b>Health &amp; Safety</b> 10.1 The Trustees reviewed the Summer H&S report presented by the Acting Estates Manager. It was noted that this report had already been presented at F&GP and Board of Trustees in Summer 1. The Trustees asked about the DCC audits and the benchmark. The DCEO reported that the Trust strived for 100%. Anything less was due to minor infringements. The DCEO said that H&S was a strong provision across the Trust. The Trustees said that it was a concise report. <i>The Trustees asked about the overdue legionella reports.</i> The DCEO said it was usually due to inspection being completed but waiting for the reports however it was also where the weekly 'flushing' out by admin staff had not been done in a timely manner. <i>Following a question from the Trustees,</i> the DCEO confirmed that a note was added to the compliance system if there was a delay in a report from the DCC. <i>The Trustees asked how the schools were coping with completing the risk register actions.</i> The DCEO said that overall, the schools were effective and understood that the risk register was being looked at by the Trustees.	
11.	<b>Data Protection</b> The Trustees reviewed the report presented by the Trust's DPO. The following comments were made: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Following a question from the Trustees,</i> it was confirmed that the reports were getting shorter as there were less infringements to report as the Trust were getting more proficient with protecting data.</li> <li>• The DCEO said that he had undertaken an investigation on the SAR complaint and was due to complete the paperwork. No more information was shared.</li> <li>• The Trustees suggested that administrative tasks were moved electronically across the Trust allowing a more effective process when compiling reports or sharing information.</li> </ul>	
12.	<b>Cyber Security</b> 12.1 The DCEO reported that the current cyber response plan had gone through the AHs and the only outstanding item was for a 'dry run'. The DCEO said that he had met with Limbtec and had asked for single microsoft tenancy across the Trust to be set up.	
13.	<b>Safeguarding</b> There was no update since the last report in May. GS said that he had spoken with the Safeguarding deputy who had updated him the following: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audits had been continuing with 3 outstanding scheduled for next academic year.</li> <li>• C-Poms was being installed across the Trust with final installation aimed to be 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024.</li> <li>• New KcSiE draft had been released. There were only vocabulary changes. The government focus on sextortion would be reflected in the Trust focus.</li> </ul> The Trustees discussed safeguarding in relation to the new 4 schools. The DCEO updated the Trustees on the move to MIS system across the Trust to give the Trust a clearer data understanding.	
14.	<b>Risk Register and Strategy Plan</b> 14.1 Trustees/DCEO reviewed the Audit Committee's Risk report which was circulated before the meeting – It was noted that there were no outstanding issues to address 14.2 The Trustees reviewed the risk performance dashboard to ensure that any issues highlighted in the meeting was added to risk register. The Trustees also discussed the process going forward. It was <b>agreed</b> that across all Trustee	

	<p>meetings, any issues raised would be considered whether to add to the risk register. This would be led by the Governance Professional. The GP was also directed to update the risk register following each meeting on the items reviewed, outlining any related actions, as per the updated Terms of References.</p> <p>14.3 It was noted that there were no scores above the agreed risk register figure, in line with the Risk Management policy, that needed to be reported to the Members.</p> <p>Strategy Plan – the DCEO urged the Trustees to update their Strategy Plans and asked them to consider the format for the following year.</p>	GP
15.	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>15.1 Risk Management Policy – The policy was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees <b>approved</b> the policy.</p> <p>15.2 Positive Handling policy - The policy was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees <b>approved</b> the policy.</p> <p>15.3 Mobile Phone policy – It was noted that this policy was still under review.</p>	

**The meeting closed at 11.30 am**

**Signed by the Chair on.....5<sup>th</sup> December 2025**