



Finance & General Purposes Committee
Minutes
Friday 29th September 2023
9.00 am
Held at Landscope House

Present: Ben Thorne (Chair)
Mrs Nicola Dunford
Mrs Cheryl Mathieson
Christopher Norman

In attendance: Deputy CEO - Mr Matt Matthew (DCEO)

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

No	Item	Led by
1.	Welcome and Apologies The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome. Apologies from Paul Waterworth were accepted .	Chair
2.	Declarations of Business Interests The CEO is a Trustee of the Bearnas Education Foundation. Christopher Norman is a director and shareholder of CANE Properties Ltd. Ben Thorne is no longer a Trustee of Tor Bridge High Academy Trust. The Trustees confirmed that they had completed the Related Parties form and returned to the Governance Professional.	Chair
3.	Any Other Business 3.1 Arrange the date for the online meeting of the Remuneration Committee The Trustees agreed for the Remuneration Committee meeting to be on Wednesday 4 th October 2023 at 1330 online. 3.2 Elect Chair – the Trustees agreed for Ben Thorne to continue as the Chair of Finance & GP meeting	Chair
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 10 th July 2023 were accepted as a true record. T	Chair
5.	Matters Arising (not on the agenda) There were no Matters Arising	Chair
6.	Governance Annual Review of Constitution and Terms of Reference to check: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership is appropriate • Duties remain relevant • All duties have been covered during the year and it aligns with the Scheme of Delegation The Terms of Reference was circulated before the meeting. There were some changes made. The Trustees agreed for the updated Terms of Reference 2023 to be sent to Board of Trustees for approval.	Chair
7.	Finance covering 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 A number of reports were circulated before the meeting. The DCEO reported that the BFRs for the Trust and Sparkwell were submitted by the deadline of 31 st August 2023.	

	<p>The DCEO provided the latest funds balances report for the committee showing the year end position by schools and cumulatively for the Trust. The following comments were provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the year-end adjustments, there was a year-end surplus of £84,000. Several schools had an in-year deficit however had reserves to balance. It was noted that Moretonhampstead held insufficient funds in reserves to provide a balance at year end. The Trustees had a discussion around how to mitigate this deficit. <i>Following questions from the Trustees</i>, it was confirmed that the class numbers had been reduced and was now based on the 1st floor of the school. A suggestion by the CEO was to maximise the use of the existing building to provide specialist SEN provision. The CEO reported that there should be grants available to develop a special needs unit. The Trustees asked whether the unit would be separate to the Trust. The CEO said it would be open to other schools but would take children from within the Trust that need specialist provision. The CEO added that an East Devon school was also interested in this. <i>The Trustees asked how it would be funded?</i> – The CEO said it would be through grants and charging for places. There was a discussion around which roll the pupil would remain on if attending this specialist provision and how the funding would work. <i>The Trustees asked about transporting pupils to the specialist provision</i> – this was an unknown at this point. Following the discussion, the CEO was tasked in producing a feasibility study. • The DCEO caveated the report by stating that further works on accrued expenditure would occur following discussion with Bishop Fleming. • Overall, the reserves had reduced from the previous year but remained at a healthy level. Discussion then moved onto the levels of reserves required for the Trust with the outcome being that the committee tasked the CEO/DCEO to produce a rationale based on priorities for the coming year. The CEO strongly expressed her concern over the ongoing level of reserves. GP agreed to send the current reserves policy to the CEO to be reviewed and amended to reflect the current financial situation. • The Chair explained the financial statements and the reporting mechanisms. It was agreed that the reserves would be reported as pooled, and this must be reflected in the Reserves Policy. It was noted that F&GP would continue to monitor on a school-by-school basis. • <i>The Chair commented that being part of the Trust had allowed the small schools to be maintained and developed which would not have been possible if the schools were stand alone.</i> <p>The DCEO reminded the committee of the Budget 23/24 report sent in August that includes the latest pay awards with commensurate DfE income.</p> <p>The revised budget 2023-2024 was agreed by the Trustees.</p> <p>The DCEO provided an updated version of the Capital Rolling plan that considered the recent spend over the summer through CIF projects, £604k of expenditure had been removed from the AMP survey reports. The Trustees asked that a narrative be provided to the Capital Rolling plan to highlight the impact of works undertaken by the Trust. The CEO added that substantial work had been completed with majority schools completing the D categories. The Chair asked the reporting to add priorities on the capital plan on impact on pupils/safety.</p>	<p>CEO</p> <p>CEO/ DCEO</p> <p>GP/ CEO</p> <p>DCEO</p> <p>DCEO</p>
8.	<p>Property</p> <p>8.1 Update on building programme over the summer holidays</p> <p>The DCEO shared the CIF tracker with the Trustees and updated on the substantial building programme over the summer holidays. <i>The Trustees asked questions of clarification.</i> It was noted that the CIF funding would be spent. The DCEO explained</p>	

	<p>that there was still outstanding works which would be completed over the Autumn half term.</p> <p>The DCEO shared with the meeting the proposed CIF bids for the following year. The bids were based on need. <i>The Trustees asked whether Bailey Partnership would be supporting the CIF bids</i> and the DCEO confirmed they were with WHP resubmitting the Harbertonford bid. <i>The Trustees asked questions condition of the building of the new proposed school to the Trust.</i> It was confirmed that the building was of reasonable standard.</p> <p>8.2 Diptford build</p> <p>The CEO and DCEO updated the meeting on the opening ceremony for Diptford. It was confirmed that there was representation from the Members and Trustees. The DCEO reported that the snagging list would be completed in Autumn half term. The final account from Bailey Partnership was outstanding – it was expected to be a small overspend. The CEO reported that the build at Diptford was up for an award. <i>The Chair asked about response from pupils and parents.</i> It was reported that it was positive.</p>	
9.	<p>Internal/External Audit</p> <p>External Audit was nearly completed and would be submitted soon – no major issues were expected. The DCEO said that the finance team/HROM had worked very hard to complete the audit. The Trustees asked for their thanks to be passed onto the team.</p>	
10.	<p>Human Resources</p> <p>The CEO reported that recruitment was still difficult across the Trust. The meeting discussed on possible options to support current staff.</p>	
11.	<p>Health & Safety</p> <p>New Estate Manager had started and settled in. The DCEO reported that the handover would be completed by October half term.</p>	
12.	<p>Data Protection</p> <p>The CEO updated the Trustees on any outstanding issues.</p>	
13.	<p>ESFA Bulletins</p> <p>13.1 There were no issues to be raised.</p> <p>13.2 Academy Trust Handbook summary (Page 7) The summary was circulated before the meeting. The Trustees confirmed this had been read – it noted it was relatively minor changes.</p>	
14.	<p>Risk Register</p> <p>DCEO to update the meeting on the following risk categories</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial • Estate • H&S • Operational <p>The DCEO shared the Every risk register and how to highlight the relevant information to enable Trustees to have an oversight on the Risk Register. <i>The Trustees asked for clarification on who had overall responsibility to ensure that the registers were being updated</i> – it was confirmed that the DCEO would undertake this with the red risks being shared at Trustee level.</p> <p>It was noted that there were no red risks for the 4 categories listed in the item.</p>	
15.	<p>Strategic Plan – Financial Strategy and Control and Estate Management</p> <p>15.1 Review of 2022/2023</p> <p>The DCEO presented the impact assessment of the year’s strategy plan. It was noted that it was moderately successful across the Trust and now there was a process in place it was expected to improve.</p> <p>15.2 Update on 2023/2024</p> <p>The DECO had spoken to most of the Trustees regarding their strategy plan and the plan was being updated accordingly.</p>	
16.	<p>Policies</p>	DCEO/

	16.1 Central Funds policy – the policy was discussed and following a discussion on the accuracy of the policy, the DCEO agreed to make the appropriate changes to be represented at the next meeting.	GP
17.	<p>Evaluation of governance impact</p> <p>Review performance and value of meeting – to summarise the effectiveness of the meeting and how this will positively impact the pupils</p> <p>The meeting thanked the DCEO for his hard work over the summer especially on the building programme and with the finance.</p>	