

Finance & General Purposes Committee

Part I Minutes: 30th September 2022

9.30am

This meeting was held in person at Landscope School House

Ben Thorne (Chair)
Nicky Dunford (CEO)
Cheryl Mathieson (CM)
Christopher Norman (CN)

In attendance: Matt Matthew – Deputy Chief Executive Officer (DCEO)
Charlotte Roe (GP)

No	Item	Action
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies The Chair welcomed those in attendance to the meeting.</p> <p>The Chair accepted the apology from Paul Waterworth</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of interest 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.</p>	
3.	<p>Any other business Changes to the Academy Trust Handbook – it was noted that there were only 4 minor changes and nothing of concern.</p>	
4.	<p>Approval of meeting minutes The Part I minutes of the meeting held on 1st July 2022 were approved as a true and accurate record. The Chair initialled and signed accordingly.</p>	
5.	<p>Matters arising from minutes of 1st July 2022 not on the agenda</p> <p>Feedback from DCEO regarding investing reserves</p> <p>5.2 The Chair confirmed that there was a meeting arranged with the bank which due to technical issues did not go ahead – another one would be arranged. It was noted that with interest rates going up there could be more options. Following a question from CM, the Chair confirmed that the reserves would be split into short-, medium- and long-term investments to allow flexibility and maximise growth. The trustees discussed the options.</p> <p>Feedback from trustees on actions for current year</p> <p>14. The Chair updated the committee on the progress of his actions. CN confirmed that this was in hand.</p> <p>DCEO/Chair to update on planned spending of surplus reserves</p> <p>17. This item was to be discussed under item 7. Finance</p>	

6.	<p>Governance Terms of Reference</p> <p>There was a discussion about financial statements, whether they come under the Audit committee or Finance & GP committee. It was agreed that the current procedure was sufficient and so 6.3 of the terms of reference could be omitted.</p> <p>The wording was added that DCEO would attend the meeting '<i>as required</i>' in line with the NGA governance action plan.</p> <p>With small changes of job titles and names, the terms of reference were agreed by the committee for approval at the next Full Board Meeting.</p> <p>It was further noted that the Scheme of Delegation was being reviewed and so the committee might need to revisit the terms of reference at this time.</p>	
7.	<p>Finance. Finance Performance to 31 August 2022 – Month 12</p> <p>The DCEO was invited to present the current financial position of the Trust. The Trust is being audited next month. With the support of the Chair, the finance report was now presented in an easier manner however continues to be a 'work in progress' – the Chair added that this new report would be generated monthly to allow a more informed track of the actual financial position throughout the whole year. This would in turn avoid any 'surprises' at the end of the year. The figures were circulated, and the following points/questions were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variances in the budgets across each trust school were due to several reasons such as staffing changes, projects that did not go ahead, pupil numbers. • The DCEO felt that there would still be further adjustments to the final figure once audited. • The CEO raised a concern about the reserve and urged that a proportion of it was spent across the trust to improve the educational outcomes for the pupils. There was a long discussion about the way forward recognising risks such as possible freezing of future funding from central government, unknown tender costings and timings, however still ensuring that essential issues were addressed within the Trust. • The Chair suggested and it was agreed that a lump sum was ringfenced for one school while waiting for the outcome of the two bidding streams. • The CEO outlined the need for additional experienced teachers and HLTAs across the Trust. The DCEO added that the schools' staffing levels were constantly under review. • The Chair asked the DCEO to add pupil numbers to the overview financial report. The CEO gave a brief overview of the pupil numbers across the trust. • The trustees recognised that there was a high reserve which could be detrimental to future funding and tasked the CEO and DCEO to do a feasibility study of possible projects/spending across the trust for the next meeting. <p>The DCEO shared the projections for the next 3 years (attached) which illustrated that there could be a deficit. It was noted however that there were many variances which could change, and historically projected budgets nearly always presented a deficit. The DCEO raised consideration around teachers' pay awards, NJC awards and cost of living crisis; no allowance for Government additional funding has been considered in these budgets.</p> <p>The DCEO reported that most of the schools had had their energy bills tied in for the next 3 years (until 2025).</p> <p>CN asked how much funding had been set aside for the Asset Plan. The DCEO said it was just the DfE devolved capital funding currently.</p>	<p>DCEO</p> <p>DCEO</p> <p>CEO/DCEO</p>
8.	<p>Property – DCEO to raise any issues for discussion</p> <p>The DCEO reported the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The roof (through the CIF bid) had been replaced on Bearnese' over the summer. • Following a question from CM, the CEO confirmed that new schools joining the trust needing essential building works would unlikely join with the additional 	

	<p>emergency funding to address their existing issues and this would need to be sought through CIF application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Several schools had been redecorated over the summer mainly under the individual devolved capital. • Two parallel bids for considerable work had been submitted for one school – there was no further update. The Chair asked if there was a cost for the trust. The DCEO said there would be a cost , via the Urgent Capital Rebuild route but this was currently an unknown figure despite being requested. The Chair asked for the parents to be kept regularly updated even if there was no actual progress. • Bailey Partnership had completed a condition survey for all the schools. It was noted that the cost was over £3 million to undertake all the work- from urgent (grade D) to low level (grade A). The meeting went over the priorities, and it was agreed that this should inform part of the feasibility study earlier requested. It was noted that this information informed the CIF funding. The DCEO discussed in more depth the costs of each project in all the schools. It was noted that Bailey Partnership were intending to submit the bids on behalf of the trust – there was a nominal cost for the trust for new bids. Following a question from the Chair, the DCEO confirmed that there was an asbestos register for all the schools and was included in the condition surveys. The deadline for CIF submissions was expected around December 2022. • There was a further discussion around the condition of some of the schools and noted that some work was essential under health and safety and providing a learning environment. • The DCEO said that another bid would hopefully be submitted into the public sector decarbonation scheme to change the boilers in several schools based on the age of their boilers. It was not expected to be successful as the scheme was heavily subscribed. • Across the trust, if the trial in Hennock was successful, there would be a possible project where all lighting bulbs would be changed to LED. Some schools were already LED as refurbishments were completed. CN asked whether the energy saved could be tracked – the DCEO agreed to investigate this. • Funding from South Brent Community Energy fund was to be used to put solar panels on the pre-school roof. Once permission from the diocese had been received it would go ahead. There was a discussion whether all the schools could be considered for solar panels. The DCEO said that this would be researched. • The DCEO informed the meeting of the schools that were now eligible for the Rural Gigabit Connectivity programme from the governments. This meant that improved broadband internet services going into these schools. • It was agreed for the risk register to be a standard agenda item. The DCEO informed the meeting that his intention was to meet every trustee once a term to review the strategy plan and risk register. • The CEO explained the issue around the footpath going through one school raised by the local Board. It was noted that it had been researched and addressed several times and it was reiterated that the footpath cannot be redirected. The CEO added that the risks around the footpath had been considered. CM asked if it was on the risk register – The DCEO confirmed it was. It was felt that it was not appropriate to put high security fences through the school. GP to report back to S&C Chair and the local governor who raised the concern. Following a suggestion by the CEO, GP was asked to put security of all schools under property of the next F&GP meeting. 	<p>DCEO</p> <p>CEO/DCEO</p> <p>DCEO</p> <p>GP</p> <p>GP</p>
9.	<p>Human Resources – CEO / CM to raise any issues for discussion The CEO reported that there were no HR issues for discussion in this meeting.</p>	
10.	<p>Health and Safety – DCEO to raise any issues for discussion Claire Slee, Health and Safety Assistant was now 5 days a week. She was also overseeing the general H&S issues across all the schools. There was a new handyman working for</p>	

	<p>the Trust, line managed by Claire Slee. The post was on a trial period up to half term. The DCEO recommended that he was employed permanently as he had had a positive impact across the whole trust. Following a question from the Chair, the DCEO confirmed that the cost for the new handyman would be through the central budget and charged out to each school.</p> <p>Claire Slee was now booked onto the NEBOSH course. Claire Slee was also overseeing health and safety related reports such as fire risk assessments. The CEO added that Claire Slee would visit each school twice a year for a walk around.</p>	
11.	<p>Data Protection – CEO / DCEO to raise any issues for discussion</p> <p>Susan Stansfield, the Data Protection Officer (DPO) had completed the course and so was now up to date.</p> <p>The CEO informed the meeting that there had only been one data protection issue and outlined what had happened. She confirmed that it had gone through the DPO to the ICO – it had been classed by them as low risk. The CEO added that all the necessary actions had been completed.</p>	
12.	<p>ESFA Bulletins – DCEO to raise any issues for discussion</p> <p>The following issues from the latest bulletins were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tutoring money – returns were now due • Unspent PE money and Sports Premium – The DCEO confirmed that the outstanding amount would be spent or returned <p>It was agreed for the GP to be added to the circulation list.</p>	
16. 16.1	<p>Policies for review</p> <p>Fundraising Policy – trustees agreed to recommend the policy to the Full Board. The only changes were the date and TBM to DCEO</p> <p>CM informed the meeting that there were other policies due however on 12th October 2022 herself, CEO and GP were meeting to create a policy schedule for all the trust policies, reviewing at what level policies needed approval and frequency.</p>	GP

The meeting finished at 11.31am

Dates of next meetings

25 November 2022

03 February 2022

24 March 2022

05 May 2022

30 June 2022