

Finance & General Purposes Committee MINUTES

3rd February 2023

9.00am

Held at Lanscove House or via TEAMS online

Present: Ben Thorne (Chair) (attended via TEAMS)
Mrs Nicola Dunford
Mrs Cheryl Mathieson
Mr Paul Waterworth
Mr Christopher Norman

In attendance: Deputy CEO - Mr Matt Matthew (DCEO) and Angela Hughes (Finance Manager (FM))

Papers are circulated to all members of the Committee and are confidential.

No	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and Apologies There were no apologies as full attendance.	
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. There were no further business interests to declare.	
3.	Any Other Business There was no AOB	
4.	Minutes of the previous meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 25 th November 2022 was approved as an accurate record. The Chair agreed to sign them accordingly.	
5.	Matters Arising from meeting held on 25th November 2022 (not on agenda)	
6.	<p>Finance</p> <p>6.1 Financial Performance to 31 December 2023 – month 4 AH reported that she was unable to circulate month 5 finances as the meeting was too close to the January month end. AH reported the following:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the 22/23 pay awards, the Trust produced a revised budget against which the IMP forecasting software was reporting. The current forecast is showing a shortfall in funding but work is continuing in the background to further reduce – see the Directors Dashboard for details. • A recent communique from Peninsula Pensions had advised the Trust that the employers rate for pension contribution was increasing from 17% to 21.9% (2023) and then to 22.9% in 2024. This would have further impact upon the Trust's current budget and future years. See Finance Manager's report for details. • Following the Spring census and the deadline for admissions expiring, a spreadsheet had been created to track the changes and would inform the budget planning process soon to start. Cumulatively, the Trust was showing a reduction of 31 pupils overall. • The DCEO informed the committee that GAG statements were expected in February and would form the basis of budget planning for 23/24. The DCEO and FM were scheduled to meeting during the February half term to review current budgets and further meetings would be planned to review staffing and other expenditure. 	

PW asked if the Trust need to take any action around the pension contribution increase and the teachers' salary increase. The DCEO said these part of the considerations for the budget planning process and initial findings would be presented at the next committee meeting along with recommendations.

*In summary, the meeting noted that although there was a reported shortfall, taking the reserves into consideration, the overall financial picture of the trust was strong. The trustees accepted and **agreed** the budget as at 31st December 2023.*

6.2 Finance Update

The Chair commented that the lateness of funding notifications made it difficult for the finance team to forecast effectively and in a timely manner. DCEO stated that it was becoming increasingly difficult to produce a budget with a high confidence rate as many decisions by the DfE were occurring so late. He had already noted that the DfE had failed to meet the deadline for commenting to the STRB. He added that this was a nationwide issue. The meeting commented that the budget 23/24 forecast would be on a 'best guess' basis until the government were clearer on future funding/pay awards. The Chair asked that the committee were presented with a few scenarios outlining the financial impact if the future teachers' pay rise was funded or not funded.

AH/
DCEO

AH presented the Trust's rolling 3-year capital plan outlining the CIF bids, works needed to be completed across all the schools, condition survey D1 costs and bringing in the condition survey C1 costs. AH added that the Trust would not be successful with all the CIF bids and so some of the bids would be resubmitted the following year.

PW asked about the future unknown financial uncertainties and keeping a healthy reserve. The CEO said that the reserves would be closely monitored but that spend would be required across the Trust to address the other building issues in schools.

CN commented that a large portion of the costs in the condition survey were to address the Diptford project, adding that now this was being addressed this would decrease the overall cost of the condition survey. The DCEO said he would provide an actual figure.

DCEO

The Trustees discussed the reserves, CIF contributions and the Energy Efficiency Grant. AH explained what the grant was allowed to be spent on. Following a question from CN, it was confirmed that the grant was not ringfenced to each school. The CEO explained that the condition C projects were being costed and the Trust would start addressing them over the future months.

The Trustees thanked AH for her work on the rolling programme as it gave them an accurate plan on the capital expenditure across the Trust. PW added that the programme needed to be regularly updated to provide a useful accurate action plan. The CEO confirmed that this had been planned.

Following a question from CN, it was confirmed that the category D CIF bids would be spread over the years. PW asked whether successful bids would be more difficult over future years. It was noted that as more schools become academies there would be more pressure on funding. It was added that the Trust, under due diligence, would consider the condition of a school, when joining the Link Academy. It was noted it was unlikely that grant money would be awarded when schools join to address existing building issues. The CEO said there would come a time when successful CIF bids would be harder to achieve and the Trust would welcome the point of reaching 3,000 pupils in order to benefit from SCA.

6.3 PE and Sports Premium

The Chair reported that the Trust had asked the ESFA for clarification on what the PE grant could be spent on. The ESFA had replied with a vague outline. The DCEO said that the Trust could not spend the grant money on capital fixed assets. It had to be on equipment or activities. Matt Tanner (Sport Lead) had developed a comprehensive

	programme with costings. The Chair added that the Trust could consider leasing bigger items of equipment. It was agreed to approach the local MP to discuss a change in the policy of how the grant can be spent. It was also agreed to change the Capitalisation Policy to increase the fixed asset limit from £1,000 to £5,000.	DCEO GP
7.	Planned spending of surplus reserves and investing reserves 7.1 Feasibility studies and planning update - <i>Covered in Item 6</i> 7.2 CIF bids for D1 issues The DCEO confirmed that the outcome of the current CIF bids was expected in April/May and until then there was not much the Trust could do to move forward. The DCEO added that the lateness of the outcome meant it was difficult for the Trust to complete works over the summer holidays.	
8.	Property 8.1 Grid of contribution level for CIF bids It was confirmed that the Diptford project was underway with a community meeting with Bailey Partnership present planned. CN said he felt that the Energy Efficiency Funding needed to be discussed. The DCEO outlined what it had been spent on to date. The CEO said that the Sustainable Strategy would be updated to capture works done and moving forward; adding that pupils, parents and the community views would be included as well as linking with eco groups in the schools and their communities.	
9.	Human Resources The CEO said the Trust continued to struggle with employing experience senior teachers however the ECT programme was producing highly skilled practitioners. She added that there were also gaps in the Central Team that need to be addressed. Following a question from CN, the Chair confirmed that the vacancies had been included in the budget. The CEO explained the way forward was to be more creative with the advertising.	
10.	Health & Safety The trustees considered the report circulated before the meeting. CM asked what was needed to achieve 100% in the H&S audit. The CEO explained that the audits were subjective and so were not consistent. It was also noted that the Trustees had been previously informed that there was a change in the audits which made it impossible to achieve 100%. The CEO confirmed that the H&S Lead addressed any arising issues – adding that all the schools hit between 80%-90%. It was noted that the H&S Lead also flagged any issues to the Trustees. The CEO explained that every year there was 3 external audits by DCC and then the H&S Lead completed audits on another 3 schools. Every year (November), each school had to complete an internal H&S audit for DCC. PW said that he was satisfied that issues were being flagged.	
11.	Data Protection The CEO outlined the work of the Data Protection Officer.	
12.	Safeguarding The security of schools had not been completed yet. The CEO reported that recent Ofsted inspections had judged safeguarding as strong.	
13.	Risk Register and Strategy Plan There was a meeting planned with the internal auditor on 22 nd February 2023 to review the risk assessment procedure across the trust; ensuring that the risk owner were EIT with trustees maintaining oversight and there was consistent reporting across the trust. The DCEO asked the trustees to review the strategy plan to update their section.	Trustees
14.	ESFA Bulletins It was confirmed that all the returns were up to date.	
15.	Policies 15.1 Fair Processing Notice The meeting reviewed and approved the Fair Processing Notice 2023 policy. 15.2 Reserves & Investment The meeting reviewed and approved the Reserves and Investment Policy 2023	

Dates of Future Meetings

Friday 24th March 2023

Friday 5th May 2023

30th June 2023