



MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

8 December 2020, 1.00 a.m.

Virtual meeting held using Zoom

Part A Public

Item	Subject	Action
	<p>Trustees present: Tom Briant-Evans (TBE) Mike Hosking (MH) – Chair Nick Lake (NL) Keith Tipler (KT) John Whetter (JW)</p> <p><i>Also present:</i> Jem Alder (JA) – Trust Secretary Mike England (ME) – Finance Director Simon Hague (SE) – CEO Tamsin Lamb (TL) – Director of Education Misty Nickells (MN) - Griffin Accountants <i>items 1-2 only</i></p>	
1	Welcome and Apologies	
1.1	MH welcomed MN to the meeting and introductions were made.	
1.2	Apologies: none.	
2	Annual Accounts presentation	
2.1	<p>Financial statement. MN took Trustees through the Statement of funds (note 21) and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reserves reduced from £1.77m to £1.56m • £126K invested from revenue into fixed assets/capital spend • Capital grants of £964K are a mix of DFC, CIF, LA grants for PFI • Outstanding unspent £96K is only a timing issue with CIF grants <p>MN noted that the Trust’s reserves are well in excess of the minimum amount required by their own policy, but suggested this was a good position to be in at present and could help support future CIF bids too. MN confirmed the accounts are unqualified and no concerns will be raised.</p>	
2.2	<p>Covid support. Noting the Trust had not claimed from the first round of government support, MN informed Trustees a second opportunity to claim for Covid-related additional expenditure had just been announced. MN reported that other trusts were finding that with the full re-opening of schools additional costs such as cleaning and heating were no longer being offset by savings due to closures, and cover / supply costs were rising too. She recommended the Trust consider their eligibility for making a claim.</p>	

Item	Subject	Action
	SH confirmed the central team have already started looking at eligibility for this 2 nd round, and also reported that existing insurance will cover some staff costs.	
2.3	<p>Pension deficit.</p> <p>MN explained the reason for the significant rise in the figure on the balance sheet is due to the actuary having to reflect the current economic climate when making decisions. She reminded Trustees this just applies to the LGPS (non-teaching staff) scheme and this deficit is guaranteed by the government. She confirmed the next three yearly review is due in March 2022.</p> <p>Trustees had no further questions on the accounts.</p>	
2.4	<p>Management letter.</p> <p>MN confirmed that despite the need to complete their first audit virtually the process had worked 'very smoothly'.</p> <p>She summarised the series of checks the auditors are required to make and confirmed that only two recommendations had been made:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. No Purchase Order system in place during the year. <p>Trust had explained plans to implement one had been delayed due to Covid and were now back on schedule.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. GIAS record keeping. <p>Some discrepancies between national database and school websites but these had been addressed swiftly.</p> <p>She stressed to Trustees this was a very low number of recommendations and confirmed the audit had not detected any lack of compliance with the AFH.</p> <p>MN explained that the audit is required to comment on previous recommendations as well but again there were just two items outstanding from last year:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Posting of income into PS Financials. She confirmed to Trustees this had no impact on the bottom line and neither would it have impacted on their decision making during the year. 2. 2018 investment balances. Interest from a single account had not been accounted for and should be posted as soon as received. <p>Trustees had no questions.</p>	
2.5	<p>MN passed on her thanks to the central finance team who had been very well prepared and updated fresh information requests promptly.</p> <p>SH confirmed staff had found it a much easier process this year and the reduced workload was welcomed by the team.</p> <p>Trustees asked MN to pass on their thanks to Liam Dingle as well.</p>	
2.6	Trustees approved the annual accounts.	
3	Conflicts of Interest: no additional interests were declared.	
4	Previous minutes of the 10 November 2020 were accepted as an accurate record.	
5	Matters arising / Tracker	
5.1	<p>8.4 De-carbonisation project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft prepared – deadline is 11 January. • Bid reduced in scope due to need to spend it between Easter and September. • Less / no requirement for any contribution from reserves. 	
5.2	Confidential item.	

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6	Delegated Decisions since last meeting	
6.1	Two draft pay policies for 2020.21 (Teacher and Support Staff) were shared with the Trustees on 21 November, and approved by Delegated Decision on 24 November.	
6.2	Trustees agreed to extend current Delegated Decision making arrangements upto the second Board meeting in the spring term. Proposal to draft a permanent process as part of the Governance Scheme of Delegation review was agreed.	JA
7	CEO's update	
7.1	<p>MAT Development Plan.</p> <p>SH acknowledged that this latest version was the culmination of joint working including the strategy session held on 13 October:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • single organisation approach represents a fundamental shift for the Trust • CEO / DoE are effectively 'architects' – building greater capacity for future strategic leadership • HR function will improve performance management process and go beyond the traditional approach to incorporate a greater emphasis on continuous professional development <p>SH reported on two pieces of evidence that this is already having an impact:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heads are now part of weekly meetings which is speeding up the implementation of plans and changes eg one Head will take the lead on all aspects of improving our communications – including the quality of websites. 2. Received very good feedback from a new LGB Chair following their involvement with Head's performance management for the first time – in particular the focus on values. 	
7.2	<p>Trustees welcomed this change – noting the Trust had 'come a long way' and SH and TL had needed to create the right conditions to introduce these changes.</p> <p>SH acknowledged that the impact of Covid had been a factor here, and many planned changes will become operational over the next 2 terms.</p> <p><i>Q: How do support staff fit in?</i></p> <p>New approach to performance management is starting with the Heads and will then be rolled out to teachers. Timescale for support staff is not yet established and will be partly dependent on establishing values across the whole Trust / workforce.</p> <p>TL confirmed support staff are already heavily involved with other aspects of change – for example school admins are involved with a variety of projects including unifying systems for taking electronic payments, payroll, maintenance reporting, purchase ordering system. They are developing into a team supporting the Trust rather than just serving their own school, and some are becoming the lead or 'champion' for different systems.</p> <p><i>Q: Is there a role for the clerks too?</i></p> <p>JA confirmed the clerking team were now meeting every half term and were taking a similar approach by recognising their role was to support governance as a whole.</p>	
7.3	<p>Illogan closures.</p> <p>TL confirmed that 5 class bubbles had been closed due to Covid following what PHE had classified as a localised 'community outbreak' of infection. They had praised the school for their role in helping to minimise the impact of this.</p>	

Item	Subject	Action
	SH reported that this incident had led to the decision to re-write the Trust's staff Covid Code of Conduct and was used to reinforce the message to all our workforce. He confirmed that since last week all bubbles were back in school and there were no issues at any other Trust schools.	
7.4	Expansion. MH held a Zoom meeting with the chair at Trewirgie. SH confirmed the RSC's county lead is aware of our interest.	
8	Teaching & Learning	
8.1	'Onetab' proposal. SH explained that following further discussion of this at the recent Head's meeting he had deferred bringing a formal proposal to the next board.	
8.2	TL reported the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all Headteacher performance reviews have been completed • data drop due this week • next SIP round due to start • commenced planning an online conference for February 	
9	Finance	
9.1	Use of reserves. SH referred Trustees to his briefing paper which had been prepared following the SLT meeting held two days previously. As well as identifying potential expenditure areas for using reserves the Trust needed a process to manage this – especially around capital / premise works. SH explained the list included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • previously agreed items (capital works backlog, Pencoys staffing) • new innovation projects from Heads • newly identified issues (drains at Rosemellin, CIF bid contributions, teacher payscale software error) • contingencies for further maternity leave requests SH explained that the teachers' pay scale issue had been acknowledged as a software error by our supplier and negotiation was underway to receive some form of compensation. Combined these requests total £559K and SLT acknowledged that the current economic uncertainties for schools meant requesting approval was unrealistic. RH column in the paper is a revised proposal for Trustees to consider – and that some costs could reduce further – eg premises.	
9.2	ME reminded Trustees of other factors to be considered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £39K carry forward not included • some outdoor work – eg modular buildings - could be met through operating leases rather than cash spend • potential savings from ongoing procurement schemes not included • uncertainty over some budgeted income streams eg preschool provision SH agreed the paper was a starting point and did not yet represent the full picture. SLT recognise the need for a change in approach and culture to plan ahead better, as well as challenging every single proposal as to ' <i>what impact will it make on children?</i> '	

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9.3	<p>Trustees welcomed this approach of involving Heads, of understanding the need for a medium / long term approach to this expenditure, and also of the need for an impact assessment for every proposal.</p> <p>They also commented on how the briefing paper was further strong evidence of the progress the Trust has made and SH's leadership.</p> <p>SH thanked Trustees for this endorsement and confirmed he felt the Trust was now past a 'tipping point'.</p> <p><i>Q: Is a third party liable for the issues at Rosemellin?</i></p> <p>This will be investigated and already raised with Cornwall Council as this was a PFI project.</p> <p><i>Q: Are proposals for Pennoweth separate from the basic need's improvements?</i></p> <p>Yes. SH confirmed he supported the Head's ambitions with the other proposals but felt it was sensible to have the other work completed and then review again.</p> <p><i>Q: Is the Onetabs proposal intended to be rolled out to the whole Trust?</i></p> <p>Potentially yes. SH briefly summarised the technology and innovation aspects of the proposal and explained the potential to use with both KS1 and pre-school children made it a more attractive prospect. He confirmed that 2 schools had already earmarked some existing budget towards funding the original proposal.</p>	
9.4	<p>Trustees agreed to approve the following additional expenditure – on the understanding any underspends / savings were returned to central funds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIF bid contributions • Emergency works at Rosemellin 	
9.5	<p>Budget monitoring.</p> <p>ME reminded Trustees that it was too early to make any new projections as to the year end position and he recommended a very detailed forecast review was completed in January once figures for first 4 months were available, with the outcome presented to February board meeting. Trustees agreed with this approach.</p> <p>ME highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • numbers do not reflect expected procurement savings yet – could be upto £100K • need to be realistic about Covid-related increases to overheads • reduced income from pre-school provision <p>TL reported that latest figures for pre-school are 26 less than same time last year but expected to rise by another 10 during next term. She confirmed robust plans are in place to address this at the schools most affected (Pennoweth and Roskear) but all schools are reviewing their current offer including staffing levels and ratios, and reducing number of afternoon sessions offered.</p> <p>Trustees noted that any additional investment income would also improve projections, and collectively these might offset some of the call on reserves discussed earlier.</p>	SH
10	<p>Admission Arrangements 2022.23 – <i>deferred due to new guidance from county needing to be incorporated into revised arrangements.</i></p>	SH
11	<p>Audit Committee – 24 November.</p>	
11.1	<p>KT reported that as well as reviewing the draft accounts the committee had met with a member of Cornwall Council's LFS team to discuss options for expanding the areas covered by their existing internal scrutiny programme.</p>	

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	A further meeting is being scheduled but they can meet some of our additional requirements for a modest increase in cost. Confirmed they do not have the expertise to carry out IT / data systems reviews.	
12	Governance meetings feedback	
12.1	LGB Chairs 17 November. Notes to follow. MH reported that the single organisation approach was discussed, as well as need for bespoke training, monitoring of school improvement work, virtual meeting protocols.	
13	AOB	
13.1	Recruitment. MH reported he has made contact with the Academy Ambassadors programme for assistance with Trustee recruitment and has a meeting next week to progress this.	
13.2	Training opportunity. MH explained there is an opportunity for a Trustee to take part in a 'masterclass' session as part of the national Chair's training he is completing. Any expressions of interest to MH please.	ALL
13.3	Networking update. MH reported that the RSC is setting up SW Chairs learning 'sets' to help develop more peer review opportunities, and he had accepted the invitation to lead the Cornwall group.	
13.4	DfE update – closing a day early opportunity. SH explained this latest guidance is designed to take some pressure off school leader's involvement with track and trace systems during the break, and was probably far more relevant to Tier 2 and 3 areas than Cornwall. Following discussion Trustees agreed to delegate decision whether to close early to SH.	
13.5	Publicity. It was agreed work KT had carried out drafting a Trust brochure would be passed via SH to the head now leading on this.	KT
14	Items for next agenda	
14.1	Admissions – revised arrangements. Safeguarding – and agreed should be scheduled at least once a term. T&L update. Virtual meetings protocol. GSoD update. OneTab proposal. Budget forecast review / budget monitoring.	
14.2	MH reported that termly planning meetings with SH and JA were being introduced from January to assist with agenda planning and scheduling.	
15	Agree Confidential items – no additional items were identified.	
16	Confidential item	
	Meeting finished at 15.45	

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	<i>Dates of next meetings:</i> 26 Jan Chairs 4 Feb Audit 9 Feb Board 10 Feb Clerks 26 Feb Members 30 March Board	