

Attendees

Christopher Donnellan, Rob Hill, Catherine Leong, Anna Kilsby, Lucia Debertol, Bill Nelson, Tony Bishop, Andrew Waterhouse

Agenda item	Action
1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None arising from agenda • Forms to be distributed following meeting 	AW to circulate pecuniary interest forms
2. Minutes and Matters arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of last meeting agreed as fair and accurate with no items arising. • Minutes of Directors and LAC chairs meeting agreed. Directors noted meeting was positive and constructive. 	
3. Safeguarding TB outlined following initial high levels of anxiety and concern over re-opening we are now in a period of relative calm. Schools and processes are up and running, and some have taken in additional students. All had a phased return with all having specified groups in bar one due to lack of capacity. We have had suspected cases of illness and one confirmed case (two staff, one student). All have been dealt with according to policy and procedure. The positive was a primary student and the bubble self-isolated for 14 days and cleaning procedures were followed. Directors recognise where incidences arose they were dealt with in accordance with correct procedure. All schools have been providing online support, contact and feedback. Levels have varied, but where schools have been concerned contact has been made to improve engagement. Some schools are doing drop in slots for all students/parents to support/discuss how they're doing. Both secondary schools have been doing transition with year 6 in schools although much reduced to normal. They are also planning results days as they felt giving the option to come in and discuss what next was important. Offers have already been made to y11 based on knowledge of their abilities without the formal release of adjusted results. We have contacted OFQAL regarding process and fairness to students in schools on an upward trajectory. September guidance was released a week ago, although heads were discussing possible scenarios in advance and it meshed with these. Guidance is all back in all years in full classes and this is what we're planning for, and the changes/accommodations that need to be made to do this. Starts/breaks/lunches/day end will all be a challenge. Secondary movement around school is also a challenge. Heads are aware of the need for a break as previously discussed and where possible will plan to the end of term and then do so. However we need to accept some heads will want to work to a place where they can then stop and rest for their wellbeing. Thoughts are guidance will change over summer, and this is why an early enforced break is good. CD queried availability of breakfast/after school clubs in September. TB explained guidance doesn't say we can't, but that it shouldn't work in same way as school	

bubbles. They are considering options in their schools if it is appropriate. CD observed driver is parents return to work but managing risk factors to staff is paramount. Directors agreed is specific to each school and its provision/needs and do not intend to direct action.

TB updated on IT infrastructure improvements and the move to single tenancy allowing easier access to tools. This is ongoing, with a grant received to implement. Work starts tomorrow ready for September. We are also evaluating online learning tools to support in September in case we have a worst case scenario but we also want to leverage online learning skills learnt over past few months.

4. Finance

SR presented the monitoring reports. These have been discussed with heads.

SR explained the monitoring budget is I&E against the budget set at year start with an explanation against each line if overspent. It also includes commitments to year end and anticipated income not yet received to give a picture of where we are. TB commended SR and the finance team in getting these new systems up and running from 3 legacy systems. For a number of HTs this is additional info they did not receive before. HT feedback has been positive and gives clearer picture of spend happening.

A new Academies Handbook and audit requirement is the cashflow report. Green is actual and yellow estimated. Level of benefit from report is questionable but we are required to show it. We can consider putting some of that in high interest, although in current financial climate it is hard to find this, and is a future question for directors.

SR presented the budgets for 20/21. Most have been through LACs. Overall:

- Our Lady of Walsingham is balanced. Historically this school has had significant surpluses but the new build has brought these down. They will need closer monitoring as they are used to having a large surplus.
- St Brendan's has an 11k deficit, however the School Business Manager has now resigned and this role was included. Assuming restructure the budget will now balance.
- St Edwards is 26k over but they have a business plan agreed to address.
- St John Rigby has a 40k surplus, and given historically balancing a budget for them has been difficult this is a very positive achievement.
- St Josephs and St Gregorys is 15k over with a large surplus, However roles are falling, and a plan is being put in place to address.
- St Thomas More Primary has a small overspend that does not raise concern.
- The Good Shepherd has a small overspend and plan in place to address.
- Thomas Becket has a small overspend. However the town has significant pupil increases and are asking school to take more. Money may be attached.
- St Thomas More Secondary has a large deficit and is a significant concern. A plan has been submitted and the trust will be working closely with them to address.
- St Gregorys has an overspend and is looking at staffing structure.
- St Marys has a small overspend and is looking at staffing.
- Central trust has a 30k overspend but historic reserves. Longer term it will balance.

LD observed when looking at budget and 2025 projections, the Trust as a whole will be low on cash and queried if we have a strategy to mitigate. SR explained 5 year

plans are questionable in accuracy after year 3 due to range of variables, and modelling is a cautious one, but it does highlight big drops where small year groups replace large ones.

RH observed it is always the position with 5 year plans that the end projections are out, but it's a worst case scenario for forward planning, and the school numbers are a major factor to pick up on.

SR confirmed she is setting up meeting with Northants on numbers as we are aware of a couple of bulge years moving through, but we don't know the primary market. TGS has 35 coming in but a large development going up nearby. St Gregorys LAC spent time looking at how to increase numbers and market, but the area is saturated for primaries.

CD agreed projections over 3 years are questionable in accuracy, but it is important to carry out the exercise to flag how quickly the money can disappear if schools do not address issues (especially if running with a large surplus).

LD observed the deficit reduction plan for St Thomas More Secondary favours natural wastage, but this option does not allow for planning reduction and maintaining structural cohesion.

CD noted STM Secondary will be a work in progress as a deficit budget is not desirable. LD queried if SR was confident in the plan and if they can sustain it.

SR confirmed STM Secondary will be challenging and needs buy in and awareness across the school to find those savings. Jo Brake-Oakes will be reviewing the admin structure and look at TLR (management points) structure as this must be consistent and equal across the trust. BN questioned how these points are evaluated and awarded. CD agreed with historic structures there are anomalies and questionable awards in places. BN noted the linkage between dysfunctional management behaviour and dysfunctional reward systems. SR confirmed staff is the biggest cost and we aim for sub 80%. STM could increase PAN and go to 180 instead of running at 150 and 6 forms of 25 rather than 30, but this would need a strong marketing push. LD questioned if they do balance is it sustainable operationally. TB confirmed he believes it is if those proposals work. The school has to make savings, and it has made some, but it is unfortunate timing with clawback and reduction in KS4 funding. All HTs would like to reduce by natural wastage as is less painful and cheaper. However it has been made clear that if it doesn't happen we will need to step in and make something happen, and they are looking at that whilst trying to minimise impact on outcomes. BN noted we might also need to consider redeployment across trust.

SR confirmed next year this process will happen much earlier in the year looking at 21/22 budgets in October.

Directors agreed those budgets where LAC recommendation had been received. Those budgets where LAC recommendation was still awaited (STM S, GS, TB, SJG) where agreed in principle subject to that being received.

SR reported on CIF outcomes. We had two successful bids -SJR 400k for boilers, and STMS 77K for fire doors. We don't know how close we were with the others yet and if close we will appeal. Next May we will get an SCA instead of bidding (anticipate 600k), and the Trust will determine how to spend that.

LD questioned if a bid is unsuccessful how it is then funded. SR confirmed this will have to be based off need part of the future SCA process.

SR to look at numbers on staff school by school and MAT overall and share.

SR presented the Support Staff Increment ratification. This is a legacy process whilst we get an appraisal system in place. As employers we ratify annually. CD queried going forward will be rationalised around an appraisal process linked to performance. SR confirmed it would be. BN queried will the change in appraisal include change of employment contracts. SR confirmed it shouldn't but will check with HR. Directors ratified the awards.

SR highlighted changes to the Academies Financial handbook:

- From 01 September websites to list employees on over 100k as with statutory accounts.
- Now allowed alcohol for religious services only.
- Risk register to be reviewed by board annually.
- Internal scrutiny a bigger focus.

BN noted accountancy qualifications for the professional team and stressed how important these and CPD for financial staff are. SR confirmed most of the finance staff are now AAT or working towards.

BN reported on the auditor appointment process. An email was shared with CD on this to confirm process, evaluation and appointment. Email to be shared with all directors. BN confirmed process was strict, robust and equitable and looked at best organisational fit. Baldwins were selected.

SR confirmed items requiring over 20k spend needed director approval.

1. Modular build. BN questioned how the figure was arrived at. SR confirmed open tender, and will ensure added to future request. Directors approved.
2. STMS fire doors (as per above CIF bid). Ingleton Wood are managing and have tenders. Directors approved.
3. New central role request – Premises Manager. This supports operation of trust, reduces compliance risk and pressure on heads. RH noted will also improve understanding of site issues and future development/maintenance. Directors approved.
4. Thomas Becket new flooring, roofing and redecoration. CD noted given school is going to have increased competition this seems sensible. Directors approved.
5. SJR ICT spend. BN noted company contact providing refurbished IT – no business interest – for future consideration. Directors approves.
6. Energy contracts. This is a stage in aligning 3 legacy contracts across trust, with Bedford coming up in 2 years. Directors agreed.

SR flagged known expenditure requests expected.

STMS has a critical ICT infrastructure issue it needs to address urgently that could affect the continuity of the school. It has been a known issue for some time, but inaction means it must now be addressed. Funding will come from remainder of two tier funds. Expected cost is 59k, subject to further quotes. CD noted directors can step outside those requirements if they feel it is necessary. BN confirmed costs are likely fixed with equipment and labour, and getting further quotes is unlikely in that industry sector at short notice. Directors agreed school should proceed without delay.

SJG needs to proceed with its boiler work and is refreshing quotes. CD noted legacy structure had approved this multiple times.

AW forward to SR

5. School Improvement

LC updated on the school improvement plan. Key points noted:

- SI team has still been working with leaders and middle leadership despite partial closures, although they have had to be flexible and make a lot of changes to the plan.
- Schools have been doing a lot of work on curriculum which we will visit as part of co-action groups.
- A number of schools are restructuring staffing to meet demands of curriculum and children being out for 6 months.
- We have looked at staffing areas that have been less accountable and are working on the pdr system.
- Currently working on a longer term assessment project with 10 members of school leadership. As further curriculum work is done we will get a better understanding of the formative and summative assessment needed.
- As we approach September wellbeing strategies will be high priority, particularly in relation to attendance.
- Plan to support new school is with RSC, along with a TCAF bid.
- Engagement levels with online platforms are good – one last school to work on.
- Impact is not as we would have planned for July had we not had Covid19, but buy in is good and collaborative networks are being set up with the facility for strong and rapid movement.

CD observed the whole game changed due to circumstances outside our control. Are we confident we have buy in and everything in place so we can recover and move forward. LC confirmed our strength is we have the right plan in place to address those issues – they were known to us before the lockdown and we moved ahead appointing people. Interestingly the most disadvantaged families are currently the most engaged having required more personal support and the challenge is how we build on that.

TB observed LCs team plan is excellent, and one of the reasons we have HT buy in as it's a plan designed for them. Schools have become used to reactive support from Local Authorities and this is bespoke.

LC stressed it is important to recognise if we keep asking schools to just report English and Maths they'll stay RI. Their curriculum wasn't rich enough. We need to measure the whole curriculum, plus metacognition and what has greatest impact. The questions we ask are important as too narrow a focus on core curriculum and monitoring led to RI. Visits scheduled to school will be asking how their curriculum is threaded through classroom and will reflect in governor evaluation and training.

CD asked what questions should we be asking in 6-9 months. LC confirmed:

- What difference is teaching making to learning.
- How is training impacting on the capacity to improve learning.
- What difference are we making to children and their outcomes, and if not how do we make more of a difference.

BN flagged another community charity from Screwfix with small grants (5k) for specific things. LC to follow up.

TB outlined current stage of plans for Our Lady of Wellingborough to join the Trust. We have a sponsorship application to the RSC for the HT board meeting on 15th

<p>July. OLW have an academy order. If the board agree then OLW will be placed in our MAT from Jan 2021 (Head has already been working with LC).</p>	
<p>6. AOB Directors noted LAC minutes shared on the hub. RH noted minutes of Thomas Becket have only one governor at the meeting, and it should be recorded as non quorate.</p> <p>BN reported the St Edwards Kettering Parish website still references the former trust. TB confirmed Trust marketing wording can be amended and sent.</p>	