

Meeting of the OLICAT Directors
 By video link
 21.05.2020 at 17:00
 Minutes



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

| Agenda item | Actions |
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| <p>1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda</p> <p>Rob Hill – family member in relationship with staff member at one of the schools and will act accordingly when looking at risk assessments.</p> | |
| <p>2. Minutes and Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correction to Lucia Debertol’s name in attendees. • Late change to agenda to reflect need for re-opening. • Accepted as a fair record. | |
| <p>3. Finance report</p> <p>Finance report key issues (Sue Robinson)</p> <p>Currently figures on budget work in progress are looking within acceptable parameters. A number are at deficits but these are either small and reserves will cover if needed, or are for specific one off expenditure. The exception to this is STM Secondary with a far larger projected overspend than expected at 250k. Head has been asked to bring down to 100k and further work needs to be done looking at staffing structure, admin structure and TLRs. CD observed needs to be further discussion with LAC chair, central team and Accounting Officer before final budget position agreed.</p> <p>SR reported normally considerations would include an increase in PAN but local area seems challenging to achieve increased numbers. TB noted figures are usually around the 150 PAN. Last year STM was permitted a one off overspend of 200k due to circumstances around two tier clawback, and the actual will be less than this. TB confirmed he will sit in on final budget meetings with heads, but with STM will be involved earlier and more often. The school is currently reflecting on options.</p> <p>RH queried if any of the schools had carry forward. TB confirmed they all do and STMs is 900k. We have always asked schools to use carry forwards for specific one offs and not ongoing staffing costs as this is not sustainable. RH noted this does give us some flexibility if needs be. CD observed staffing costs at 84%, are a higher level than expected and would indicate a staffing issue. RH agreed but noted this does give a buffer to provide time to make adjustment if needed.</p> <p>BN queried if staff is an issue how does it relate to the rest of the trust? SR confirmed STM is the highest percentage. BN questioned how does that relate to numbers and ratio, and is it the number of staff or the level at which they are employed. TB noted sixth form funding is an issue which is hard to compare with only 2 schools taking sixth form. A level is always smaller groups and higher cost per group, and effectively subsidised from funding from the lower years in school.</p> | |

LD queried how did we get to this position with this school in this financial situation and was governance aware and did it address. TB confirmed it did address and there has been a unique circumstance in Bedford with two tier changes and short term funding clawback. Similar conversations took place with similar cause. Staffing changes have been made, curriculum range reduced and class sizes increased. We thought that would be enough and lead to balanced situation. However funding for year 10 and 11 has dropped (c£400 head).

LD queried if staffing cost can be related to the grading the school has, and would reduction risk standards. TB confirmed it can. If staffing reduces may impact range of curriculum and some classes will have to be bigger. Last year we lost some specialist subjects, but doesn't look like we will be able to reinstate. Cause is Bedford moving to a national funding formula a year early.

LD queried looking at range of deficits how are these covered. SR confirmed form individual school reserves. TB confirmed the aim is to get to a cost neutral budget as part of the process.

SR confirmed next steps will be complete discussions and follow process through LACs before coming back to board for final approval in July.

Accounts

SR reported STCCAT accounts are on track and will be submitted on time. SFAAT has been extended to September for 31 Jan accounts.

Contracts

IXL contract at 40k as discussed last meeting. Programme supports English and Maths and schools are keen to use as part of continuing online provision. BN queried do IXL provide backup support and system integration. TB confirmed it is an online tool with training brought in and will upload student information from MIS.

New roles

SR outlined plans to move payroll in-house from 3 different providers at present as this will be more cost effective. We also have payroll expertise in-house to oversee the new role proposed. We are currently spending 67k across the trust now. BN queried how big payroll is. JBO confirmed around a 1000 staff. BN queried if done in-house with software will this be exception led and will schools do it or it be central? SR confirmed it will be and it will be centralised. RH observed it financially makes sense to go in-house even with factoring in software and management time. CD queried backup to cover absence/system issues. SR confirmed she and JBO have payroll expertise. BN queried implementation process. SR confirmed aim was to bring resource in in September and go live from January. Directors agreed the role.

Directors considered request for an additional HR admin support role. RH queried what would happen with some of the in school tasks. JBO confirmed work done by this role is now being covered now by external providers – contracts, policy support, managing sick absence, central reporting. We are moving away from paid external support to in-house. Directors agreed the role.

Budget approval scheduled for July Board.

New Trust roles and role name changes agreed.

Risk assessment for primary re-opening

TB outlined following the opening announcement, one requirement was a risk assessment in each school. Aim is 01 June at the earliest, still subject to government announcement on 28th May. This has been extremely challenging to manage for HTs as guidance from government has been drip fed and highly contradictory. We haven't had secondary guidance yet so these are out of scope for tonight.

Risk assessment was created after final guidance on Thursday with common principles across both MATs. This was finished Monday, circulated Tuesday and back today, so heads have had only 2 days. It was reviewed in detail today and a summary document provided with amber and red rated risks identified. Recommendations have been made on when school can open.

CD questioned that some schools surveyed parents to get an idea of numbers, and given views will change, do any have a realistic idea. TB confirmed all have done something if not a formal survey to get figures to work from. Guidance assumes a plan for all returning but key worker numbers were far lower than initially predicted. We've not calculated overall as each quite different with some high and some <50%. BN queried if there are any similar numbers for staffing availability. TB confirmed each head has looked at all staff and the risk assessment includes the number of shielding staff and vulnerable staff, and WFH has been considered. BN questioned how we are identifying shielding as guidance to GPs changed on Monday. JBO confirmed she monitors NHS advice and provides continual advice to schools on categories and what to do. TB noted the ongoing plan will need to be flexible to reflect change.

BN noted the standard format and structure is reassuring to allow monitoring but critical element is communication with positive messages to get kids back in.

CD observed if a member of staff can no longer be part of process we should be reluctant to bring agency staff in as presents additional risk. RH agreed it must be known staff although some schools have well known regular and long term supply. TB confirmed a couple of assessments mention supply but heads don't want to bring unknowns in and supply could be visiting multiple schools which defeats the point.

LD queried if the assumptions of the risk plan is that there will also be online provision for those not coming in, and if this essentially doubles workload. TB confirmed there won't be same level of online provision as there will not be capacity. LD questioned what happens to other years and those not attending. TB confirmed there will be some online provision (for example provided by shielding staff). One school has placed online provision and safeguarding with SLT to provide. Schools however will not have capacity for both but additional facilities like IXL will support. LD observed a reduced online provision may be a factor in driving children to school. TB confirmed capacity will be less and offering will be less as staff are reallocated to physical classrooms but resources are better now than when we started and we are discussing if we can work/share across trust and are tapping into national online resources (Oak academy).

JBO/NY gave an overview of each risk assessment document. JBO gave the context that amber mostly indicates plans are in place but awaiting the actual action of mitigation (i.e. training).

CL queried in terms of process/structure if one school identified a risk but another had not thought to evaluate this how was this shared. TB confirmed the RA document was standardised and 2 heads meetings were used to discuss it.

RH queried how many questions did we ask and what was maximum number of risks. TB confirmed it was a 10 page document with c60 risks to RAG rate.

St Brendan's has 15 amber risks. Query on undelivered PPE clarified as items for dealing with medical emergencies and isolated students with symptoms. Recommendation is they are ready to open 01 June in a phased manner. Directors approved recommendation.

Our Lady of Walsingham – the head has noted a few areas of concern she wants to list as red (toilets and social distancing in classroom). Staffing is OK, but has working from home staff and if they lose any more staff they will have to close. We believe they are ready to open with some additional support from the trust. Opening plan is sound, but cautious with ambers, and wanted to highlight unease due to classroom sizes. Official guidance recognises we cannot maintain 2 metres and 15 number given. Directors approved with additional trust support and advice.

The Good Shepherd. JBO clarified the information provided wasn't a full plan so we need additional clarification. Directors agreed as pending subject to further detail and conversation.

St Edwards. RA has minimal number of issues raised, but does not include provision for year 6. NY confirmed plan is around available teachers and once key worker and EYS/reception provision is in place there are no further staff available for y6. TB confirmed guidance says year 6 over year 1 for admission sequence and will discuss further. BN queried lack of site supervisor. NY confirmed a number of schools in the area are missing site support and sharing/stop gap measures are being put in place. BN queried adequate cleaning regimes given this. NY confirmed contract services can be increased. Directors approve subject to discussion around year 6 and year 1.

St Gregorys. High numbers of reds may be a symptom of how the RA was completed. NY will arrange time to go through RA with school and discuss further. Directors agreed as pending subject to further detail and conversation.

St Marys. TB noted both schools have same head and issue is same as above. Directors agreed as pending subject to further detail and conversation.

St John Rigby. Assessment is comprehensive and ambers will turn green. No significant concerns to opening here. BN noted in reality opening to new cohort on 8th and 3 days for training. TB will discuss training and phased arrival and encourage an earlier opening. Directors approved recommendation.

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| <p>St Thomas More Primary. Opening plan is sound and risk assessment is solid. No significant concerns and ambers are turning green following opening and approval. Directors approved recommendation.</p> <p>St Joseph's and St Gregory's – few a. Overall a few areas for further clarification but subject to these Directors approved recommendation.</p> <p>Directors agree approach was sound. TB/JBO/NY/AW will meet tomorrow and plan to communicate with all heads.</p> | <p>Central team to review next steps and communicate director outcomes.</p> |
| <p>5. AOB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directors recorded policies were reviewed and agreed outside of this meeting (Finance, HR, Complaints and GDPR). • Question raised by LD over A Level. BG will share information on how grades were put together, how vulnerable students were supported, and analysis done on this. • Lead teacher for Reading has been appointed. • Vision day is being worked on and TB looking at when, how and who this can be arranged for. • CD confirmed SEL appraisal has been completed. • CD queried no staff bereavements had been notified to directors. TB confirmed we do collect information, but HT haven't specifically been asked to notify directors. Will keep informed. | |