

Meeting of the OLICAT Directors
9^h February 2022
18:30 by video



Attendees: Christopher Donnellan, Catherine Leong, Bill Nelson, Joe Burns, Lucia Debertol, Jo Brake Oakes, Sue Robinson, Nathan Wells, Andrew Waterhouse

Agenda item	
<p>1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda</p> <p>None raised</p>	
<p>2. Minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correction – add Christopher Donnellan to those present for FGB and A&R. • Correction – company is DAYTA. • Minutes accepted as a true and fair record <p>Matters Arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ofsted reports – St Mary’s is now in the public domain. Awaiting St Edwards. • JB queried the plan to bring down TBCS supply costs. SR confirmed September appointments are being started early where possible to bring down supply costs. • Educational Psychologist recruitment update. Role has been advertised, unsuccessfully and will be re-advertised with wider scope before looking at alternatives. We are considering if we can support someone through training. CL noted the contact provided to support interviews may be interested. JBO will follow up. • Union request for a JCC was followed up, but no written submission has been received. We have not pursued this further and will address if unions make further representation. 	
<p>3. Chairs Update</p> <p>3.1 Update on prior confidential item. Not for distribution.</p> <p>3.2 Colette is working with CES on training for directors.</p> <p>3.3 Colette and CD has been working with Academy Ambassadors to bring in more directors. If existing directors are aware of anyone they’d like to put forward please make them known.</p>	
<p>4. Finance</p> <p>4.1 Sue Robinson presented the finance report. Key points to note:</p> <p>Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are on track with all DFE submissions. • Highlights of last management letter – update included. • Internal audit – was hoping for draft scope this week to share but will forward on receipt. • School initial budgets are expected now for construction – budget timelines shared. • Schools monitor their budgets, so have included the central trust budget (5%). We are dipping into reserves. 	

- Schools monitoring shows nothing unexpected. All those overspent are anticipated and on track. TBCS income lower than budgeted and we are following through on unreceived LA income.
- Capital funding – all condition survey reports now in and the portal populated. We can now prioritise and begin to allocate funding.
- Legacy CIF projects now almost finished and finalised.
- Our Lady, Wellingborough, funds received from the LA – 251k.

Joe Burns asked for elaboration on the reference to poor project management at St Thomas More. Sue Robinson explained this was a million pound project and the DFE reviewed the management of it. Ingleton Wood have not performed well this time. Tony Bishop observed they are a company who have been used before successfully, and on the new build management were very good.. They are on diocesan approved list. Our concerns have been shared.

Bill Nelson asked if have we addressed at top level and said future with us is at risk. Tony Bishop confirmed we have discussed with senior directors of the company and they are aware.

Sue Robinson asked if on the monthly monitoring report if a narrative be helpful? Lucia Debertol confirmed it would.

4.2 Expenditure approval

- School MIS replacement

We have had to speed up plans due to ownership change of SIMs and their attempt to push us into three year contract. TBCS will need further preparation due to additional risk to school operation, but the aim is to phase them in. Bill Nelson noted he was aware of plans due to advanced discussions on procurement and all is in line with future plans.

Expenditure approved.

Directors noted their thanks to Sam Jukes for his work on making this happen in a short time frame.

Lucia Debertol queried what is happening with historic performance data and the move to Bromcom. Question to be raised with Sam Jukes for response.

4.3 Pay increments

Request for approval of pay increments is based on application of a consistent appraisal process and policy.

Directors approved:

- Trust staff increments
- Headteacher increments
- Teachers pay progression. (Waiting for one set as head is absent due to ill health – approved assuming meets same standards/parameters as those viewed)
- 27 UPS progressions submitted and assessed by heads. 26 recommended by heads to progress. The declined progression is undertaking informal stage of the appeal process – opportunity to present more information.

<p>Bill Nelson queried that OLWEL has no recommendations for UPS on the report and as the last school to join are we confident they have equanimity of process. Jo Brake-Oakes confirmed staff were aware and had access to materials, but the one person interested did not believe they had data and evidence.</p> <p>CD – flag did appraisal with Gill Clarke following same standard process. Will deal with agenda item by email.</p> <p>4.4 Briefing – Bedford Pension Pool changes. Sue Robinson outlined the consultation. Bedford LA wish to pool all the MAT schools and in spreading the risk it lowers the impact on any individual school. To be re-evaluated every three years.</p> <p>Lucia Debertol queried what is the risk assessment – how often and likelihood. Sue Robinson said this is hard to gauge but a historic 52% NI payment indicates we have had one.</p> <p>4.5 Accounting for Assets in Church Schools – to note Item circulated for directors to note. Bill Nelson queried if auditors are happy with this approach. Sue Robinson confirmed they see it every year and have raised no concerns.</p> <p>4.6 Support staff pay awards A final offer has been made of 1.75%, however unions have not yet agreed. Given NI changes we propose paying and backdating the 1.75%, and if at a later date a higher offer is agreed implement this. Directors agreed.</p>	<p>SR to add to risk register</p>
<p>5. Safeguarding</p> <p>5.1 No major incidents to report.</p> <p>5.2 Some frustration and concerns from Nhants schools on safeguarding and LA response. Meeting being arranged with Colin Foster, Director of Children’s Services.</p> <p>5.3 Safeguarding audits ongoing.</p> <p>Bill Nelson noted the LAC reports at St Mary’s and St Gregory’s mentioned criminal gangs and police involvement. Tony Bishop explained there is a known issue being managed that involves a vexatious complainant, and schools are in a troubled part of Nhants where there is known gang activity in local estates. Some parents and children have associations. Police work closely with the school and it is referring to long term issues in the area.</p>	
<p>6. School Improvement –</p> <p>6.1 Wellbeing</p> <p>Nathan Wells outlined the report contains a lot of detail, but there are caveats around some of the data and the narrative attached covers this.</p> <p>Headlines and key points to note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response rate has dropped from 61% to 49%. 50% is the national figure, but it is a concerning trend (103 fewer staff). We have to recognise this has influenced data. September outcomes are lower but not as severe as EduRio indicates – about 4% lower. We are below average in most modules except for behaviour which is higher. • Reasons are many and complex. 2 schools have markedly less positive responses. St Marys timing was not good - literally just finished Ofsted. St Edwards was the same but positive outcome is reflected. 	

- Marked drop at TBCS but very high volume of change reflected.
- SJR is the 3rd survey in a row with the 'unhappiest' staff body. A significant amount of work is going into the school.
- We are taking the outcomes seriously as it can affect outcomes and retention. There are different themes in each school and individual meetings with heads are arranged to agree moving forward. We know we are pushing significantly on school improvement, and management of that change process will have added to pressures (plus the pandemic, cover, additional tasks etc.)

On evaluation of data one important aspect became apparent. We're measuring ourselves against an unknown standard of wellbeing. As adults, staff are responsible for their wellbeing but schools are responsible for having a system. There is a lack of clarity on that for staff.

Moving ahead we need to define what wellbeing is before we can measure and evaluate it. Wellbeing leads are working together to discuss and determine an understanding of wellbeing which will lead into a Trust approach.

Bill Nelson noted one point of caution. Wellbeing is individual and defined by the individual as self-reflective process. Don't overload yourself and management teams with responsibility for this. Nathan Wells agreed and confirmed this reflects the process the heads are going through.

Lucia Debertol observed we can see big differences in school response rates and we need to keep this in mind in relation to data. Definition and expectation management is very welcome.

Lucia Debertol asked for further information on wellbeing leads. Nathan Wells explained these are representatives within each school. They had first wellbeing forum on 01 Feb and started discussing what wellbeing was. Two more are planned. We then move to a consultation phase based around collaborative ownership.

Catherine Leong observed we need to recognise that high levels of pressure exist in many environments, and there is an opportunity to recognise what works positively in other schools. Introspection can cause negative spirals.

CD observed pressure can also depend on where you are in the structure. Pressure on management teams has been significant. Teachers and the NHS have been dumped on by government. We do need to listen as we could be the problem.

6.2 RAG rated evaluation

Tony Bishop explained the document circulated is one the Duns Scotus Trust has requested from both ourselves and the southern MAT. We will input on development and usefulness. As an annually submitted document the thought process is to keep it as a live document to be updated as and when appropriate.

Bill Nelson queried the purpose of the document. Tony Bishop stated our understanding was this is a mechanism for the diocese to progress across all the MATs.

Lucia Debertol queried the colour coding and if it reflected the performance statement, or is it about how far away we are from achieving the narrative. Tony Bishop confirmed in reality we probably interpreted it as both. We have used our own judgement as no further guidance was given than the document itself.

JB can we get an update before year end. NW will also circulate draft docs.

6.3 Recruitment/Supply/Leadership Strategy

Tony Bishop updated that at the last meeting we had a discussion around a Trust supply pool. We have re-evaluated this and looked at a more fundamental and wider approach. The revised proposal covers that one issue and all our other challenges around recruitment and retention and is shared with Directors as a way forward.

This approach will take longer but it is a sustainable solution rather than a a sticking plaster. There are three elements:

- Heading Up (leadership) available to existing staff and new recruits.
- Flexible teaching team.
- Centralised recruitment – making available applicants to other schools not applied to.

Joe Burns observed in terms of giving it an OLICAT stamp it has a lot going for it. Who runs the Heading Up programme? Tony Bishop explained this will run through the School Improvement team (one of Bernie's roles is CPD) but we will draw in expertise from the MAT as needed.

BN stated this is a good long term plan. There is a cost but it is an investment.

6.4 TBCS induction and support plan

Document circulated for information and to highlight how we are supporting at TBCS. Paul has had a very positive start in the school. Support is bespoke to Paul's needs. He has appointed a new Deputy Head. Bernie is working with him as needed.

Bill Nelson noted this is a positive start and positive document, with one query in relation to LAC reports and reference to holding back on CPD to save money. Tony Bishop clarified that refers to external CPD where value for money is sometimes questionable and we can offer better internally.

7. Vision, values and strategy plans

Tony Bishop explained that on our training day we introduced a consult on vision and strategic plan. This delayed multiple times but having lived as a MAT for a couple of years we might now benefit more.

Link provided takes you to stage 1 of a consult which has gone to all staff. Another version is going to wider community (NORES input). Submissions are as groups or individually.

Our end point is a few clear aims we are working towards as a MAT that we can use in all of our meetings that align our decisions and development, and a 3 year strategic plan on how we are working.

8. AOB

8.1 2023 Admission criteria (determination)

The Directors determined the admission criteria. To amend: Bedford Borough