

Minutes of the meeting of the OLICAT Directors
24th May 2023



Attendees: Joe Burns, Catherine Leong, Bill Nelson,
Christopher Donnellan, Sue Robinson, Tony Bishop, Nathalie Young, Andrew Waterhouse

Apologies: Lucia Debertol

Agenda item	Key information
<p>1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda None declared</p>	
<p>2. Minutes & Matters arising</p> <p>a. Draft minutes of last meeting Accepted as a fair and accurate record.</p> <p>b. Trust Strategic Leadership Structure TB updated on movement within the proposed regional leadership structure following last meeting. Conversations took place with potentially affected heads and LAC chairs. Responses were mixed and further discussion need to take place to alleviate concerns. BN asked how this is being communicated to other LAC chairs to keep them in loop. TB confirmed draft job descriptions and outline discussion are shared with those LAC chairs today, and heads will be briefed further tomorrow. BN observed following discussions with Matt Miller there is nationally a communication disjoint between boards and LACs but this is evidence it is happening. JB noted we are in this position sooner than expected but it was an anticipated direction of travel. TB agreed and confirmed that whilst we had no dates for joiners the diocese are exploring.</p> <p>c. SJSJ site update NY updated on actions following last meeting's agreed plan for SJSJ site. Parents and teachers have been informed and response has been positive. We are currently evaluating options, reviewing existing surveys and scheduling more detailed ones where required. Picture is unclear and we want to move ahead as best informed as we can be. We anticipate at least a 2 year window to get the building to an acceptable standard. BN queried if we had clarity on the role of the diocese. TB advised we are liaising with Colette.</p>	
<p>3. Chair's Update CD updated on a meeting with the ESFA regarding TGS. A process was triggered following OFSTED inspection that flagged school as 'coasting'. Along with diocese the trust pushed back on this, flagging post OFSTED performance data that indicates otherwise.</p> <p>CD reported a panel had met to review a quashed PEX following and IRP, on which he sat. This highlighted training needs across trust at governor, head and clerk levels.</p> <p>Following extensive discussion the TBCS mural will be replaced with a student led design and diocese involvement.</p>	<p>AW to action.</p>

<p>4. LAC Minutes</p> <p>LAC minutes were received and reviewed by Directors. Noted delay in receipt of Northampton minutes due to clerk illness. These will be made available.</p> <p>HT reports are very useful to give context and understanding of school priorities.</p>	
<p>5. Health and Safety</p> <p>NY presented the latest H&S audit for all schools within the Trust. This shows a comparison the prior audit and it is on the whole pleasing progress. The external audit takes place every 2 years, with internal reviews in between.</p> <p>The report has highlighted areas to focus on for each school. Some areas have dropped in score but remain positive and at an acceptable level. Action plans have targeted reds and some ambers and this will be reviewed in February.</p> <p>JB thanked NY for this work as it gave directors clear evidence of impact and progress.</p> <p>NY reported schools initially found the process daunting, but now its an ongoing activity are managing it much more effectively. JB queried given the level of oversight SJSG will require and the possibility of growth is there capacity. NY confirmed we are stretched now, but are looking at structure and roles and options to move ahead.</p>	
<p>6. Finance</p> <p>a. Finance Report</p> <p>SR presented the finance report. Overall we are 505k in deficit, down from 871k predicted – whilst a drop it is still a concerning figure.</p> <p>Specific schools of concern remain largely unchanged (OLWEL due to restructure, TBCS due to lag funding and student numbers). We have contacted the ESFA regarding TBCS and are awaiting response. If no change it will catch up 25/26. Overall our predicted deficit for this year is 300k.</p> <p>CL observed this is an opportunity to look at finance structures and spread the load. TB confirmed we are effectively doing that behind the scenes at the moment but can only do that from joint reserves this year. However schools do not perceive it this way and those that have accumulated reserves are inclined to spend these.</p> <p>CD noted that this scenario has not been caused by poor financial management or decision making.</p> <p>TB reported the challenge is balance. Heads have spent three years putting together a considered curriculum which is largely being delivered, however a significant reduction in staffing would jeopardise this. There are MATs out there making redundancies.</p> <p>b. Budgets</p>	

Teachers pay award remains uncertain and impacts budgeting – whether we budget for 5%, 4% with headroom or the now leaked discussions around 6.5%.

Energy costs have tripled, but they are falling now and we could budget at double. We are keeping options open as long as possible.

Proposed regional lead structure may allow for cost savings in some schools.

Specific school challenges noted:

- St Gregory’s have made staff changes but are struggling to get below a 100k deficit.
- St Mary’s were hit by a low October census – LAC are aware of this recruitment challenge and are taking action.
- St Thomas More Primary are usually a benchmark school in the they are oversubscribed with sa healthy budget, however they are having to make challenging decisions to balance.
- The Good Shepherd reserves are now gone. Staffing may need to be revisited.
- St Thomas More Secondary is predicting a 500k deficit, however pattern is we keep predicting a larger deficit than actual due to unplanned (and unplannable) additional revenue. There is a 100k saving from staff opting out of pensions. This causes the head to challenge and disregard budgets.
- Thomas Becket has been covered often in this meeting and is predicting a 694k deficit.

There will be a further round of discussions and schools have been challenged to bring it down. There have been informed that any deficit budget will require a narrative and plan for directors and ESFA.

- c. Support staff increments
Staff missed by school for increment. Directors agreed.

- 7. Safeguarding
 - a. Critical Issues arising
None reported
 - b. Safeguarding audits - update
This was done as an internal process last year, but this year we have an external evaluator who will do this annually.

- 8. AOB
 - a. Category C trips signed off and approved
Number seeking approval has increased since process reminder was sent out.