

Meeting of the OLICAT Directors
18th December 2023



Minutes

Attendees: Tony Bishop (Zoom) Bill Nelson (Zoom), Christopher Donnellan, Catherine Leong, Joe Burns, Sue Robinson, Richard Monkhouse (Azets), Andrew Waterhouse

Apologies Ilona Bond, Lucia Debertol

Agenda item	
<p>1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda None raised.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes & Matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Draft minutes Items arising are on agenda. Accepted as a fair record b. Policies approved outside of committee Noted that pay policies were approved outside of committee by email Noted the DFE infrastructure grant bid was approved outside of committee by email. 	
<p>3. Chair's Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Welcome and Farewells Lucia has not renewed her Directorship and will be leaving at the end of January. The Directors thanked Lucia for her valuable contribution to the formation and development of the trust. b. ESFA CD reported as Chair we sporadically receive 'seeking assurances' letters, and had one such recently focused on out of date school policies. A follow was then received seeking further information and veering into areas outside the ESFAs remit. <p>TB updated on a meeting with the regional group on Friday requested by the regional hub. This was a regular touching base meeting, and was very constructive covering finance, governance, forward planning and additional support available.</p>	
<p>4. Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Audit RM presented the report. Key points to note: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 1 has captured changes in Members and Trustees. Confirmed LD end date is 31 January. • CD queried Trade Union Facilities time. RM confirmed standard wording that must be included. • Statement is the Trust's opportunity to give a narrative of how the year has progressed. CD asked for all Ofsted outcomes to be included. 	<p>Update to include SJG outcome</p>

- Page 17 is the governor statement on value for money.
- Page 20 is the statement of regularity.
- Page 21 is the statement of trustees responsibility.
- Page 22 is the first of the auditors reports – this is exactly what is wanted, a clean and unqualified report.
- Page 25 is the auditors statement of regularity.
- Page 27 shows shows a 1 page summary with movements, pensions etc stripped out and gives a realistic picture of schools.
- Page 28 shows the balance sheet. Overall a strong position with netcurrent assets of 4.4 million. Capital spend is now being used.
- Pension liability is dropping.
- Note 11 flagged for information – staff costs are up.
- Page 39 – more people have now fallen into the bandings for pay disclosure.
- Page 41 noted a couple of Salix lines due to CIF bids that will reduce and disappear.
- Page 45 is funds per school. Variable picture but no surprises or unknowns.

b. Audit Findings Report

RM presented the report. Key points to note:

- There were 4 findings, 2 of which were minor:
 - Purchase orders not raised prior to orders made and authorised.
 - Member of staff paid for 3 months beyond leaving date (recovered).
 - A group of fixed assets on register written down.
 - Old balances in reconciliation.
- Appendix 2 is anything from last years report – monthly depreciation noted.
- Appendix 3 shows points cleared from last year.
- Appendix 4 shows adjustment to figures.

Directors accepted the audit report and agreed the findings.

c. Finance Update

SR circulated finance reports. Key points noted:

- Notes in report reflect those in the management letter.
- Monitoring reports adjusted to include a year to date column.
- Budgets remain challenging with some schools resistant.
- JB noted STMS and budget management concern – for example the English budget consistently underspends by 30% but is not adjusted. And the money held back not used. CD noted its being used to cover overspend elsewhere but not adjusted to recognise or accurately record this. JB observed the budget appears to be for a 180 intake with just 150 taken.
- Retrospective approval given for building works at SJSJG – garage removal and water leaks.

d. Staff increments

TB presented the requests for staff increments to be approved. TB confirmed the process has been followed by all schools and reviewed by LACs. There are three outside normal parameters being recommended for increment:

- At SJSJ an exceptional teacher who has led a subject who joined as MPS but has been UPS before. Has been there for three years, but permanent for 1. Directors approved.
- At SJSJ a teacher who is numerically at the UPS point and has been at the school a year (but has evidence from a prior school). Work in EYS was key to a successful OFSTED. Directors approved.
- Staff member at STE where new executive head has done the PDR and supports progression. Historic progression appears to have been blocked for budgetary reasons. This is contrary to our policy. Directors agreed.
- Directors agreed all progression as submitted for teaching staff and central staff.

5. LAC Minutes

CD reported a letter had been submitted from some LAC Chairs raising questions on the Trust's financial operation, and a further letter from Donna Gallagher to Tony on a similar footing. TB explained this followed a meeting with LAC Chairs in October subsequent to Director discussions and decisions on financial planning, and ESFA direction to pool reserves. Some LACs are finding this harder to accept.

CD noted we recognise LACs are trying to do the right thing for their schools, but the ESFA sees us as a single entity and to get the adjustment needed to fund TBCS we have to follow their requirements.

JB observed the SRMA report may assist in giving a fuller picture and context for LACs. Directors agreed to share the report as a whole when finalised with LACs, and address as plans and support individually with schools.

BN noted the clean audit does not support a view that the central team is in any way lacking.

JB noted the head teachers reports are very useful to receive and the heads find them very useful to direct responses.

6. Governance

Directors have received and reviewed the external governance report. CD noted we have already started responding to recommendations.

Formation of a Finance Sub Committee is one recommended item, and introducing this now will support the Trusts financial strategy. Draft TORs circulated and directors agreed to proceed.

TB observed this was a positive report and whilst we may have focused on concerns with communication it was seen positively and more than many other MATs.

<p>7. Safeguarding No critical incidents to report.</p> <p>Individual school audits continue and feedback is positive. Review of to add to agenda planners as a termly item.</p>	
<p>8. Policies</p> <p>a. Admissions policies. Directors reviewed and agreed collated admissions policies for Bedford and Northampton. Polices were determined.</p>	
<p>9. AOB</p> <p>a. SRMA report Receipt noted. To be table for next meeting.</p> <p>b. BMS letting BN queried progress on the letting of the upper primary site in Bedford. TB confirmed BMS have moved in and have been renovating. There is a meeting with the head to touch base in January. Lease is for 12 months, with 3 months rolling extension.</p>	<p>SRMA as agenda item next meeting.</p>