

Minutes of the Meeting of the OLICAT Directors
12th February 2025



Directors in Attendance: Joe Burns, Bill Nelson, Catherine Leong, Ilona Bond, Christopher Donnellan

Executive: Andrew Waterhouse, Sam Jukes, Asha Morjaria, Jo Brake-Oakes, Tony Bishop

Prayer: Tony Bishop

Agenda item	
<p>1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda</p> <p>BN declared an exemption under FSMA from the FCA and will recuse from discussion on investment and decision.</p>	
<p>2. Minutes & Matters arising</p> <p>a. Draft minutes Accepted as a fair record.</p> <p>b. Feedback from DFE meeting The meeting was attended by TB, BN and AM.</p> <p>BN reported that whilst the meeting went well, we are being asked to do the impossible. They have asked for 3 year and beyond budgets without any definitive information on funding. The immersive visits were received positively. However, they are expressing dissatisfaction regarding deficit budgets and we can expect greater challenge in future.</p> <p>BN presented the idea that we recognise the investment made in development and improvement systems and present within accounts as an intangible asset.</p> <p>IB noted DFE approach seems to be inconsistent, with other Trusts running similar deficits but greater scrutiny placed on us.</p> <p>TB noted there seems to be a lack of confidence in us addressing the deficit. They understand us but aren't happy about the numbers.</p> <p>CD queried realistically what the DFE would do if we did not address to their satisfaction. AM confirmed this would be a financial notice to improve where everything will have to go through them – recruitment, contracts etc.</p> <p>AM observed there was a change in this meeting – they were pleased in initial meetings but want a 3 year budget to not show a deficit. They seem to want us to return to the SRMA report and look at impact of changes and planned actions.</p>	

<p>CD suggested in creating a response to assume a fully funded NI and pay rise position. AM noted main issue is lag funding from TBCS that they acknowledge but won't address.</p> <p>TB reported we can see improvements across the board (with one exception), and we are going to have to look at a way to bring the STMS budget more into line as it is hugely skewing our position financially. We will be using a more directed approach this year.</p> <p>AM reported initial figures indicate a 450k deficit at STMS. The curriculum planning tool showed overstaffing and low contact ratio. If we don't address it the DFE will.</p> <p>CD acknowledged the risk is that this affects the whole MAT.</p> <p>AM flagged a concern over a trip planned to South Korea. This is a high-cost trip with a large amount of up front non refundable cost. The school cannot afford to shoulder this cost should the trip not proceed. AM/IB to discuss outside meeting.</p>	<p>AM to discuss further with IB</p>
<p>3. Finance</p> <p>a. Finance Report Key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finance system has changed with some minor teething issues but went well. Had to close accounts on 20.12, so some expenditure won't show. • Pay increments go through in January so it will catch up. • Some expenditure shown will be funded by SCA. • Energy costs have positive variance. LED installation will show a positive trend. • ICT has an adverse variance that is mostly a timing issue with up front licensing. • Education supplies closed earlier for new system so higher up front cost. • Cash position is good but is declining steadily. CD queried if the decline follows same proportion over the year –and if it will drop substantially? AM stated it is not expected to, and we are expecting SCA funding in April. • Within the school by school breakdown most are positive. • Item c on the agenda shows works agreed to be funded from SCA on SJSJG UPS. Whilst a large amount of SCA will be spent on SJSJG we are evaluating what will be left and priorities elsewhere. • TB stated we are hoping for an offer from the council in the next 4 weeks. This may be less than the valuation, but we have agreed improved access from Queen's Park. <p>b. Investment – current MAT position AM outlined we should be in a position to make money off cash reserves. An example paper has been provided based on approach from one company. We will investigate further to give more options.</p> <p>c. Upper Primary site – committed expenditure overview</p>	<p>AM to return item at future meeting.</p>

<p>Documents provided show the range of expenditure committed. Barkers are supporting in finding project management and best possible suppliers.</p> <p>d. Expenditure approvals – telephony Directors approved proposed expenditure. Transition will be staggered as contracts come to a natural end.</p> <p>e. Senior Leaders Pension Scheme There is debate in the public domain and some confusion caused by whether trust leaders should be on LGPS or TPS. Trusts are asked to state a position. Governors agreed that the senior leader remain on the pathway they entered on, and in most cases, this will be the TPS. Those on TPS are involved in the day to day running of a school.</p>	
<p>4. HR</p> <p>a. Exceptional staff increments As requested at the previous meeting all exceptional requests have been resubmitted with a more detailed case and confirmation of LAC support.</p> <p>Noted Emma Bolton does not need to be considered by this process and was removed.</p> <p>TB noted decisions should be based on merit not available budget.</p> <p>Directors agreed exceptional progression with the exception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unqualified to UPS 3. To be returned to school for further discussion. <p>Directors noted insufficient evidence provided and that in any future instances that discussions must have taken place with HR as to what is reasonable prior to progression to LAC chair.</p> <p>b. Redundancy proposal Directors received a redundancy proposal providing evidence of legal and statutory process being followed. Directors agreed the proposal.</p>	<p>HR to return to school for further discussion/evaluation.</p>
<p>5. MAT Development</p> <p>a. Leadership at St Edward’s and St Brendan’s TB presented paper with options as a discussion and awareness. No decision is required at this stage and is shared for information. At the moment option 3 is looking preferable following discussions with leaders at both school and SI team. Whatever option taken there is a risk.</p> <p>BN queried if there was the same situation in Northampton. TB confirmed this was a fixed term secondment and Northampton was permanent prior to OLICAT.</p>	

BN queried difference between Head of School and Headteacher. TB explained from a DFE/Ofsted perspective the Executive Head is the leader of the school and HOS has operational leadership day to day.

BN asked what the potential cost impacts were? AM confirmed she will cost out options.

- b. Expansion – context and update
Base data shared for information in relation to remaining schools in the diocese who were not in a MAT.

6. Confidential item – TBCS

- a. SJ gave a verbal update on a risk issue at Thomas Becket
Allegations were made against a number of staff in regards to a unit of a particular qualification. The awarding body was notified of the allegation and in accordance with their directions a nominated individual began an investigation. This exercise is to gather information for the exam board to make a judgement.

Subsequently further allegations were raised into a second qualification and the notification process has begun for this one. It is the same subject area. Years 11 and 13 are affected.

Typically the board will review information to determine next steps including option of a determination or referral to a malpractice board. We anticipate the board will nullify two units of work.

Speculating on potential outcomes if this is viewed as deception it will then bar those staff from operation of a qualification with that board, limiting a member of staff to KS3 or non examined subjects.

CD queried if the board would refer those staff to the TRA? SJ confirmed this would be the Trusts responsibility.

SJ explained one risk is several staff being struck off by the board, and that the board may then notify other boards. We may be left with insufficient staff to deliver the BTEC to years 11-13.

TB confirmed internal HR processes are also being followed.

CL noted that, historically, the school had had issues with an examination board in the past. SJ confirmed this was a different department. CL noted we should be learning from mistakes and putting in controls.

IB queried based on information known what outcome is indicated. SJ stated that 5 staff are under investigation. Likelihood is one at least will be barred and require reporting to TRA. The centre will be under significant scrutiny going forward.

<p>7. Chair's Update.</p> <p>CD reported that Catherine Burnham has accepted the SEL role. She will liaise with Tony over the forthcoming months.</p> <p>CD reported that the position with the MK schools had not fundamentally change, however there has been pushback from the MK schools to the Bishop. We are treating it as a pause.</p> <p>BN queried St Patricks in Northampton. TB observed it does seem to have been a little forgotten, but the message is all will join.</p>	
<p>8. Governance</p> <p>Receipt of LAC minutes noted.</p>	
<p>9. Safeguarding</p> <p>None arising</p>	
<p>10. Policies</p> <p>Directors determined the admissions policies for 2026 intake.</p>	
<p>11. AOB</p> <p>BN requested support for better guidelines for recruitment from the diocese.</p>	