

OLICAT Directors Meeting
11th February 2026
Minutes



Attendees

Directors: Christopher Donnellan, Bill Nelson, Catherine Leong, Ilona Bond, Joe Burns
Executive: Nathalie Young, David McNally, Catherine Burnham, Sam Jukes, Andrew Waterhouse
Consultant: Andrew Meighan

Reflection: Catherine Burnham

Agenda item	Actions
<p>1. Declaration of pecuniary interest/conflict of interest arising from agenda None declared</p>	
<p>2. Minutes & Matters arising</p> <p>a. Minutes Updated on OLOW and prior financial arrangement. School wishes to use reserves to address works. Current deficit pattern restricts use. AM will create a reserves policy.</p> <p>Accepted as a fair record.</p> <p>b. Matters Arising</p> <p>I. Site sale and Diocese communication Directors discussed an increased offer from The Cube made directly to the diocese outside committee by email. Directors are clear that unless the LA fails to proceed, the advice given is that selling and transferring land without LA support will be problematic and potentially costly. Directors agreed no change to current sale plan.</p> <p>II. Judicium IB raised concerns about the cost vs service delivery from Judicium for the Bedford schools. To canvas LAC opinion and seek feedback alongside review around contract break point.</p> <p>III. Headteacher increments Increments were approved outside committee by email.</p>	
<p>3. IT Strategy Update Andrew Meighan (AMe) joined the meeting. SJ explained following last meeting we were tasked to find an external consultant to support, and AMe is that consultant.</p> <p>AMe explained he has a background in working with Trusts and has seen similar processes/journeys over the past two years. This allows us to take a tested approach and deployment model and modify it to fit OLICAT, thus allowing a quicker process albeit perhaps not cheaper one.</p>	

SJ explained the document shared is a summary of our version of the design we wish to implement. Each school will have the same setup across the board, moving away from silos to a fully centralised service with no onsite servers.

CD observed that whilst there is some reticence on the cloud and AI whatever the medium or solution there will be an element of risk. What reassurance can be offered?

SJ explained security forms the basis of the solution. With OLICAT there has always been a conversation about what the priority of schools is it education or is it keeping people safe. Security and safety are the intertwined core of this strategy. Tools to protect ourselves in the cloud are more modern and more robust. We can limit access from outside the UK, set up conditional access etc.

BN made 3 observations:

- Ensure this is the final set system. One of the biggest delays and costs is change requests. Deliver and then consider changes.
- Ubiquity does not have the best customer service reputation.
- Ensure whole system works with printers – may sound obvious but it's a common failing.

AMe explained that whilst it may seem counter intuitive to send data away to a cloud than a server in the cupboard it is easier to secure one cloud environment than 12 local networks. It is hard for any medium sized organisation that doesn't have a security team to do that but using Microsoft expertise and team in the cloud does make that easier. In our own security testing none of our internal sites were secure, but similar testing on cloud was safer and secure. Control aspect is another one that's counter intuitive but it is easier to control in one cloud. With outsourced IT support you will get better value for money from them if supporting one system and one design.

AMe observed in respect of the Ubiquity feedback they are not one of the top tier suppliers. Its reasonably good equipment and cost effective. It mainly depends on design. We wanted it to apply to any manufactured equipment and no bespoke work required.

Ame explained Easy PC have put the worst case financial situation in front of you quite quickly but that cost can be spread over a longer period. The direction they put in front of you is essentially doing the same thing as the design we have shared.

SJ stated there are elements that people want to see. A HT spending money wants to see impact but we have to remind them they might not see much different initially, but it will work as opposed to not working. We have Identified areas where they will see a difference. The 2 schools selected - OLW is in the worst state, and SFOA were part of connect the schools programme so large part of base is done for us. So one needs lot of investment, and one less so.

BN noted in certain circumstances cloud can be slower than local server. How good is our internet across the trust.

SJ reported 3 schools are outstanding on the broadband upgrade projects. One down to road s needing digging up, and 2 due to long contracts. All will have fibreoptic as primary line, with a mobile connection as backup for compliance.

BN observed if we can identify phases of implementation. Having identified the most critical and the impact of not proceeding can we delay any to year end when financial position is clearer.

CD –noted the 2nd opinion from someone who has seen what works and doesn't has been very useful.

SJ noted the documentation and input AMe has given is essentially tens of thousands in savings.

AM reported finance are still awaiting some details, so some figures are estimates. We cannot use a large proportion of SCA to fund as it is restricted. There are options:

1. Site sale proceeds. AM concern is we don't have confirmation yet from diocese on any possible restrictions.
2. Historic DFC was all settled with diocese last year. Some schools had an amount come back at c135k. It sits in individual schools, but many don't know they have it. It could be viewed as unfair to allocate to this as not an even amount and a number of schools will need to refresh their IT on completion. Would only cover part of cost.
3. Use current in year budget reserves. This will push schools into deficit and impact on work done with the DFE. Month ends are volatile. Year end would not be known until very close to year end and if we were to end up with surplus that would fall on shoulders of a few schools whilst some remain in deficit. We could use an end of year surplus if we have one.

BN noted the diocese is appointing a new CFO, and there is a risk they will want to hold money. CB stated trustees have confirmed in writing its ours. AM stated if the diocese is giving money as a gift, we can use as we wish.

CD observed direction of options depends on that confirmation as it seems the most viable.

CD stated we have to take a degree of risk as the impact of not acting is greater. Directors agrteed 40k to be spent on the first 2 schools.

Action: Proceed as planned. Aim for full design and costing by Easter. Pursue written verification of funding.

4. Operations

NY shared the Asset Management Plan and SCA prioritisation document.

NY reported we are clear on what works need to be done, however the SFOA project was huge and utilised the full SCA funding. Biggest risk are roofs and all are hit hard this winter. Spreadsheet shows prioritising and this is live and continually changes.

CB reported last year we applied to the DFE to open a nursery and this has been granted. We have a robust opening plan for September. NY noted costs are estimates

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and subject to change. The 30k is if paving is included but this could be delayed/reduced.

The STB nursery roof leaks. Tender is out for this

2 toilet refurbishments are scheduled at STMP and OLW – both are deeply unpleasant now.

At STB a company approached us with roof maintenance plans. Site staff are largely reluctant to access roofs. On inspection they came back with serious issues – water under the felt and sitting on ceiling. CD noted repairing a flat roof with a flat roof is a false economy evaluate replace with a pitch, longer term plan and risk reduction. NY will ask company for a quote to survey.

IB queried should condition surveys pick these things up? NY noted these were 5 years ago.

NY stated STG heating is listed but may not need doing as replacement controls and boiler replacement may do it. SFOA car park can also be pushed back.

DMc noted safety pushes things up the list but there are items on there that do not need doing immediately.

BN observed this is not a spreadsheet, but a Built Environment Development and Maintenance Schedule (BEDMS).

DMC noted 3 items are aesthetic but these do impact on perspective of the school, especially when recruitment is a factor.

CD observed Directors will take will stock on confirmation of sale but some things need to be done now. Reserves are for a rainy day but viability of schools may be a factor in spending money.

Directors agreed with the plan and schedule of works as presented.

5. Finance update

AM gave a verbal Finance update

AM highlighted that the position is volatile at the moment and monthly reports can look deceiving against forecasts. Changes are rapid and significant, and it would be a risk to rely on a surplus at this point. We would expect it to take three years to build a reliable forecasting pattern.

The current trust reserves are from four schools with an historic surplus and the individual picture is far more variable. Aim is to keep an in year surplus.

The TBCS deficit is restricting access to reserves for other schools. CB has proposed 150k annual repayment to PMC, and that's what we're planning for. School has agreed, and other schools need to see it is happening.

<p>Last meeting discussed LGPS pension rates. Bedford is down at 17.6, Nhants doing from now rather than phased. Whilst some school have benefitted the Trust has taken a hit overall.</p>	
<p>6. Risk Register A revised risk register format was presented for the Directors to review and agree.</p> <p>BN felt this was an improvement on the prior format. Directors to feed back any revisions and changes.</p>	
<p>7. Policies Admissions policies were agreed.</p> <p>Noted change from Duns Scotus Trust to Education Sub Committee.</p>	
<p>8. Governance One item addressed in matters arising</p> <p>Directors noted the clarity and usefulness of the minutes.</p> <p>IB requested re-organisation of folders on governor hub for clarity.</p>	
<p>9. Safeguarding No critical issues to report.</p> <p>Procedures are under review at a MAT level. Our external auditor may not be able to carry out all items this year due to personal circumstances.</p> <p>CB reported the supply teacher who was reported in the media as having received a drink driving ban has resigned.</p> <p>CD queried if any patterns were emerging from recent safeguarding events. CB stated we are looking at how to strengthen reporting of low levels concerns consistently across the MAT.</p>	
<p>10. AOB IB flagged recent first aid policy created for schools, and that it doesn't reflect board as employers and ultimately responsible.</p>	<p>AW to address for this and other policies produced for school use to reflect correct responsibility levels.</p>