

## Minutes of the Trustee Finance, Human Resources and Estates Committee

Pyramus House Roman Way, Grange Park Northampton NN4 5EA

**Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2023 @ 10.00am**

These minutes reflect the order of the discussion, not necessarily the order of the agenda.

Attendance		
Role	Name	Present
Trustee	Nick Bell (Vice Chair) 📞	P
Trustee	Ayo Salam 📞	P
Trustee	Martin Conlon 📞	P
Trustee	Andy Davis (Chair)	A
Trustee	Kevin Crompton (Chair – Board)	A
Trustee	Stephen Morales	*
	<b>In Attendance</b>	
Chief Executive Officer	Joshua Coleman	P
Chief Financial/Operations Officer	Paul Wheeler	P
Finance Business Partner	Nattia Dhana	P
Senior Workforce Planning and HR BP	Ruhena Mahmood	P
Head of Shared Services	Daryl Unitt	P
Governance Professional	Juliette Pierson	P
<b>P=Present A=Apologies x = Absent</b>		

Agenda item	Discussion	Action
1. Welcome	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded all that the matters discussed during the meeting should remain confidential until such time as the minutes were approved.	
2. Apologies	<b>Apologies</b> were received in advance of the meeting and accepted from Kevin Crompton and Andy Davis. No apologies were received from Stephen Morales (*).	
3. Quoracy and Confidentiality	The meeting was <b>confirmed as quorate</b> and started at 10.05am. The Chair welcomed all and reminded those present both online and in person, that matters raised would remain confidential until the minutes were agreed and signed.	
4. Declarations of interest	There were no declarations of interest pertaining to this agenda that had not already been declared on the annual Register of Interests.	
5. Minutes of S&P meeting held on <b>07.12.2022</b> & matters arising not appearing on the Action Log.	The minutes of the meeting held on <b>07/12/2023</b> had been distributed with the agenda for the meeting and were agreed by all present to be an accurate representation of the meeting that took place, once a small typographical mistake on section 8 was rectified. The Chair agreed to sign the minutes once face to face meetings resume.	<b>GP to rectify mistake on section 8 before releasing</b>

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<p>6. Actions arising from the meeting held on <b>07/12/2023</b> &amp; matters arising</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Spelling errors in the minutes from 17/10/2022 to be rectified – page 1 (PO) <b>Completed</b></li> <li>2. DU/PW to share at the next meeting the initial usage data from the dashboard using comparisons against the last three years (DU/PW). <b>On Agenda</b></li> <li>3. Upload policies to websites once the typos had been rectified (PO) <b>Completed</b></li> </ol> <p>There were no matters arising not already included on the agenda for the meeting.</p>	
<p>7. – Finance Update</p>	<p>Papers on budget assumptions, the December management accounts and the school resource management self-assessment checklist were provided and circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p><b>EMAT December Management Accounts</b> The Finance Business Partner presented a brief overview of the accounts and informed Trustees that a group surplus had been achieved at the end of December. The pay uplifts paid to staff had all been accounted for although it was highlighted that the budgets for Castle, Hardingstone and Stimpson will not enable the absorption of the increase in staff wages and the intention will be to use the contingency funds to support these schools. The NIA are also seeing budgetary pressure associated with external consultancy costs which the school is working hard to reduce. Work is being undertaken on the reforecasts which will be presented to the committee at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Finance Business Partner answered a <b>query</b> from a Trustee concerning the figures on the management accounts which did not appear to balance.</p> <p><b>Following a question from a Trustee</b> about the adult to pupil ratio at Shepherdswell Academy, the CFO explained that the school has had a drop in pupil numbers which has affected the budget. The school is considering ways in which to address this problem and plans to open an on-site nursery in September 2023 and will re-distribute existing staff into this facility. If pupil numbers continue to decrease at the current rate, it is likely that the school will become a one-form entry school or year groups will be combined in order to achieve a balanced budgetary position.</p> <p><b>Following a question from a Trustee</b> regarding the progress of the building project at Prince William School, the CFO explained that the building work will start in May 2023 as otherwise there will be an additional 150k costs associated with compliance with a change in legislation. The trust has invested the funds into term deposits in the meantime giving a return against inflation.</p> <p><b>A Trustee asked a further question</b> about the likelihood of the forecasted surplus position being achieved, the CFO responded that re-forecasts are currently being undertaken and early indications are that this position will be achieved, despite increased pay and energy costs.</p>	<p><b>Business Partner to</b></p>

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	<p><b>A Trustee asked</b> about the two-million-pound investment and where on the balance sheet this was shown. The Finance Business Partner outlined that it was in the asset section which had been condensed but could be separated in future management reports.</p> <p><b>Following a question from a Trustee</b> about the likelihood of the trust being able to secure fixed energy costs, the CFO explained the purchasing process currently being followed using a consortium and outlined that a fixed price could be obtained but that the costs will significantly increase in comparison to current rates.</p> <p><b>Budget Assumptions 2023-24</b> The CFO presented the budget assumptions that will be used to form the basis of the budgets and invited Trustees to consider whether or not the figures and the justifications being made are appropriate. EMAT has been in existence for five years and now is a good time to look at existing functions and structures to see if they are suitable and scalable to allow for future growth. The 3.4% increase in national funding formula announced for next year will not cover all of the expected financial pressures. The CFO explained that integrated curriculum financial planning matrices and benchmarks have been used to set out frameworks appropriate to EMAT schools, which have been used upon which to base the assumptions. EMAT recognises that the NIA will require further investment and will therefore sit outside of any matrices.</p> <p><b>Following a question from a Trustee</b> around how school improvement is viewed in terms of return on investment, the CEO explained that investment in school improvement at each school is slightly different according to identified need and impact is measured through pupil outcomes. The trust was disappointed overall with the outcomes last year which has led to increased focus on performance management and overall trust strategy.</p> <p><b>A Trustee asked a question</b> around the notional 6% management fee and whether or not the trust is looking to reduce the figure over time, the CFO explained that the work of the central team is being scrutinised in terms of educational impact and efficiency. The CEO outlined that the service trusts provide for the management fee differs from trust to trust and that the level of services provided centrally by EMAT is over and above that provided by comparable trusts, but that the trust is nevertheless working hard to reduce the notional management fee. The CFO added that the best way to reduce the percentage was to grow the trust.</p> <p><b>A Trustee commended the CFO on an excellent paper</b> and outlined that there was significant focus on areas the trust can control and has visibility over but less coverage of areas the trust has no control over but that need to feed into the plan. The CFO responded that the 3.4% uplift from the Government has been confirmed and therefore proposed for use in budget assumptions. There may be additional central Government funding, but this is not clear at this time.</p>	<p><b>separate the asset section of the report to show investments</b></p>

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	<p><b>A further Trustee observed</b> that the metrics for value for money needed to be re-visited and made an observation that the trust can only plan based on information released from central Government, therefore 3.4% seems an appropriate figure to use.</p> <p><b>Trustees unanimously agreed to approve the December management accounts and the proposed budget assumptions.</b></p> <p><b>Trustees thanked the finance team</b> for the work involved in preparing the management accounts and budget assumptions papers.</p> <p><b>School Resource Management Checklist</b> The Finance Business Partner briefly outlined the school resource management process and referenced the PowerPoint which was provided to Trustees for information only.</p> <p><b>Following a question from a Trustees</b> around whether the number of Trustee meetings should increase in line with the minimum expectation of six meetings per year, the CEO explained that an additional narrative is provided in the SRMA submission to outline that full trust board meetings are supported by several committee meetings where the detailed scrutiny takes place.</p> <p><b>Trustees unanimously agreed to approve the SRMA submission.</b></p>	
<p><b>8.</b> Update on procurement, IT &amp; Estates</p>	<p><b>Standing Item</b> Papers had been distributed with the agenda in advance of the meeting. The Head of Shared Services briefly presented a summary of the main points including a reportable accident at one of the schools, the implementation of the new Arbor system, an update on the building project at Prince William School and an update on the work of the IT department. The IT service desk has seen a vast improvement in the service provided and the team has also worked towards and been awarded the Cyber security award.</p> <p><b>In response to a question from Trustees</b> around whether the trust risk assess in relation to each compliance check, the Head of Shared Services explained that hundreds of checks and tests are regularly carried out and monitored overall by the Estates Manager.</p> <p><b>In response to a question from Trustees</b> around the reportable accident, the Head of Shared Services responded that information around workplace accidents and significant incidents could be included in the report. <b>A further Trustee asked</b> whether there was any fault on the part of the school for the accident and was informed that there was neither fault nor blame against the trust or school. Insurers had been informed as a matter of procedure and a loss adjuster was visiting the site.</p> <p><b>Prince William Building</b> <b>In response to a question from Trustees</b> around the revised building scheme at PWS and the risk of the local authority rejecting the revised plans, the CFO</p>	<p><b>DU to add information about accidents and significant incidents to the report together with trend analysis over time</b></p>

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	<p>outlined that this would be unlikely as two schemes for the site had already been approved and the new proposal is a hybrid of both schemes, repurposing a building rather than demolishing it.</p> <p><b>Castle PFI</b> Following a brief discussion around the difficulties with the PFI contract at Castle Academy, Trustees asked for a briefing paper to be provided to the next FHRE committee meeting.</p> <p><b>Update on Energy Usage</b> Following a brief discussion, Trustees opted to put the energy usage discussion onto the agenda for the next meeting.</p> <p><b>The Chair asked the Head of Shared Services to pass on thanks</b> to the IT department for the improvements made to the service provided by the service desk.</p>	<p><b>PW/DU to provide a briefing paper on the situation with the PFI contract at Castle Academy</b></p> <p><b>GP to add energy usage discussion onto the agenda for the next meeting</b></p>
9. Policies for Review	<p>Copies of the Freedom of Information, Online Safety and Records Management and Retention policies for approval were circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Following a brief discussion, <b>Trustees were satisfied with the policies and unanimously agreed their approval.</b></p>	<p><b>GP to add to central location</b></p>
10. HR Update	<p><b>Standing Item</b> Papers had been distributed with the agenda in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>The HR Business Partner gave a brief presentation of the paper including the work undertaken to reduce overall trust absences from levels seen last quarter, the implementation of the SAM HR system and recruitment.</p> <p><b>Following a question from Trustees</b> regarding absence levels at Shepherdswell Academy where absence rates did not fall significantly, the HR Business Partner outlined that the school does not have high absence levels, therefore the reduction is not as significant as that seen in other schools.</p> <p><b>Trustees asked for the absence information to be broken down in terms of staff roles.</b></p> <p><i>Governance Professional Note: Ayo Salam left the meeting at 12.00pm</i></p>	<p><b>RH to break down absence information into staff roles</b></p>
11. Confidential Note	<p>Following a brief conversation between trustees, the CEO and the CFO regarding some staffing issues. Trustees provided full support to the plans outlined.</p>	
12. AOB	<p>There being no other business, the meeting closed at 12.20pm</p>	

Agenda item	Discussion	Action
13. Dates of Next Meetings	Dates for the academic year 2022/2023 have been set and distributed as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 29 March 2023 – 10.00am</li> <li>• 15 April 2023 – 10.00am</li> <li>• 19 July 2023 – 10.00am</li> </ul> Calendar appointments have already been sent out to Trustees via EMAT email addresses.	

**The meeting closed at 12.20pm**

Signed by Chair of FHRE Committee.....

Name..... Date.....

#### Actions from the Finance, HR, Estates Committee – 22/02/2023

No.	Action	Owner
1.	GP to rectify mistake on section 8 of the previous minutes before releasing	JP
2.	Finance Business Partner to separate the asset section on management accounts to show investments	ND
3.	Head of Shared Services to add information about accidents and significant incidents to the report together with trend analysis over time.	DU
4.	CFO/Head of Shared Services to provide a briefing paper on the situation with the PFI contract at Castle Academy.	PW/DU
5.	Governance Professional to release approved policies for use.	JP
6.	HR Business Partner to break down absence information into staff roles.	RH
7.	Following a brief discussion, Trustees opted to put the energy usage discussion onto the agenda for the next meeting.	JP