



Whinless Down Academy Trust

FSARC Meeting

Thursday 13th July 2023

Minutes of the Finance, Strategy, Risk and Audit Committee Meeting

Held on Thursday 13th July 2023 at 9am at the Trust Office, St Martin's School

Committee Members Present: Mike Ashley (chair), Anne Siggins (CEO), Tricia Sherling, Alison Mackintosh

Others Present: Michelle Hards (Bursar), Michelle Noden (Trust Business Manager), Kelly Brown (Priory Fields Headteacher)

Governance Professional: Claudia Sawyers

1	<u>Welcome, Introduction, Resignations and Apologies</u> Chair welcomed all to the meeting. The resignation of Helen Seeley from the Trust Board means that this committee needs to elect a new vice chair. AM nominated TS, which TS agreed and this was seconded by MA (chair). <u>Apologies</u> None	<u>Actions</u>
2	<u>Register of Business and Pecuniary Interest</u> All committee members were given the opportunity to declare any new business interests. No new business interests were declared. There were no interests declared against this agenda.	
3	<u>Minutes from 9th February 2023 Published on the Website</u> The Governance Professional confirmed the minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 9 th February 2023 have been published on the Whinless Down Academy Trust website.	
4	<u>Minutes from the meeting held on Thursday 18th May 2023</u>	
4.1	<u>Approval of Minutes</u> Previous minutes were distributed to the committee via email prior to the meeting. Trustees agreed the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting and minutes were signed by chair.	

4.2	<u>Actions/Matters Arising</u> See confidential minutes	
4.3	Response from Kreston Reeves regarding possible benchmarking errors - TBM has followed up to chase for a response and has not yet heard back. Updates to the Financial Regulations policy will be made for the new policy in Autumn, in line with the recommendations by the audit.	TBM to chase again
5	<u>Budget Monitoring – April</u> All budget monitoring and variance reports were sent to FSARC prior to the meeting.	
5.1	<u>Priory Fields School</u> The April rollover was £232,357, which is a variance in addition of £12,130 compared to March monitoring. This was mainly contributed by reductions made in staffing costs including strike action days, a TA leaving and not yet replaced and some unpaid leave taken.	
5.2	<u>St Martin's School</u> The April rollover was £45,956, which is a variance in addition of £3117 compared to March monitoring. This was mainly contributed by receiving a grant from ESFA for Senior Mental Health Lead and a reduction in contribution to Trust.	
5.3	<u>Vale View School</u> The April rollover was £185,665, which is a variance in addition of £5682 compared to March monitoring. This was mainly contributed by receiving a grant from ESFA for Senior Mental Health Lead. There was also a change in support staff with a TA moving from the main school to the Nursery and these figures are largely offset in budget codes. It was noted by a committee member that Vale View and St Martin's both received funding for a Mental Health lead and this was not mentioned in Priory Fields, Bursar commented that Priory Fields had already received this grant in the previous month.	
5.4	<u>Catering</u> The April Rollover for Catering was £2040, which was no change from the previous month. Trustees were reminded that £50,000 has been loaned to St Martin's from this budget for the new toilets, as well as £15,000 aside in maintenance which is for equipment failure/repair.	
5.5	<u>Trust</u> The April Rollover was £150,115 which was a slight increase of £50 from the previous month and was Interest from the bank on this reserves balance. A trustee asked whether there is any methods of earning more interest since rates are currently high. This is something that would need to be explored and may come with risks.	TBM/Bursar to explore interest/earnings on reserves.
	<u>Budget Monitoring – May</u>	

5.6	<p><u>Priory Fields School</u></p> <p>The May rollover was £252,778, which is a variance in addition of £20,452 compared to April monitoring. This is mainly contributed by additional High Needs Funding being received, Pupil Premium Plus, more strike action savings and a payment from Canterbury Christ Church University which is being investigated as to what it is for, likely to be student teachers.</p> <p>A Trustee asked whether there are any large expenditures/incomes to be expected in the last three months from June to August. Bursar stated there are not any known or predicted.</p> <p>A Trustee asked how the capital efficiency grant is being used. There have been some timers purchased at Priory Fields to use on large electronic items such as the laptop trolleys, so that they are only on when they are being used and turned off automatically at night. The window film at Vale View can also be contributed to this grant and Priory Fields is also exploring window film for one side of the school windows. There will need to be more thinking and research in to what this grant can be used for that would be beneficial to the schools.</p>	
5.7	<p><u>St Martin's School</u></p> <p>The May rollover was £53,642, which is a variance in addition of £7,676 compared to April monitoring. This is mainly contributed by two members of support staff leaving and not yet replaced. A trustee asked whether there are plans for the remaining ICT budget which is almost £4000. CEO commented that the school is currently well resourced and as class laptops are bought and replaced in bulk, there are not any outstanding needs.</p>	
5.8	<p><u>Vale View School</u></p> <p>The May rollover was £185,378, which is a variance reduction of £287 compared to April monitoring. Although a small change, there are some larger variances that cancel out, including strike action savings, additional High Needs Funding received and an increase in spending on gas and electricity. Curriculum Professional Services budget was increased due to spending on Ed Psych service.</p>	
5.9	<p><u>Trust</u></p> <p>The May rollover was £150,115 which was no change from April.</p>	
5.10	<p><u>Catering</u></p> <p>The May rollover was £5541, an increase of £3501 from April monitoring. This was due to the budget for catering maintenance being reduced from £15,000 to £10,000 due to nearing the year-end, there was also an increase in staffing cost due to pay increasing.</p>	
5.11	<p><u>Key Performance Indicators</u></p> <p>It was noted that the in-year balance is overspent in each school, particularly in relation to staff cost indicator and staff salaries. This is exacerbated by the fact that the schools are not full, so there is less funding being received than if the schools were full, but with the same amount of staffing.</p>	

6	<p><u>Budget Proposals</u></p> <p>Budget proposals were made available to FSARC prior to the meeting. Proposals were created for the three individual schools and for the Trust as a whole. Each of the proposals include income and expenditure, which includes the rollovers being used in full. A big consideration, as with every year, is staff pay. In years 2 and 3, there has been a need to consider redundancy, however a reduction in staffing can usually be achieved through the natural resignation/recruitment process. There are repayments made to Catering from St Martin's for the loan for the new toilets and fence.</p> <p>Bursar commented that there have been more changes required in year 2 in order to produce the balanced budget, which is usually required in year 3, which demonstrates the difficulties in setting a balanced budget.</p> <p>It was highlighted that budgeting as a whole Trust and GAG pooling may need further consideration.</p> <p>The committee recommend for the budgets to be agreed by the Trust Board.</p>	
7	<p><u>TBM Report</u></p> <p>The Trust Business Manager's report was tabled at the meeting. TBM talked through the report; the CIF bids were once again unsuccessful. Conditions Surveys have been conducted and TBM is waiting on the reports and it is hoped that these could strengthen the CIF applications; however it is acknowledged that it is unlikely that the mobile unit at Vale View would be replaced due to the desire to move away from teaching in mobile classrooms, so another solution would need to be sought.</p> <p>Health and Safety walks were conducted and actions identified, but no major works will be needed this summer. St Martin's is having the new toilets installed as well as new perimeter fence in the pond area.</p> <p>Although throughout the year the budget monitoring has been delayed due to the new system in place, the finance team are generally up to date now, although further training is needed for aspects such as budget closing.</p> <p>IOSH training took place within the Trust and there are now IOSH certified competent staff in each school as well at the Trust Board Chair.</p> <p>A trustee asked whether the finger guards on doors have been replaced as previously identified. TBM has obtained quotes and this has been put in the Capital budget for next year, at approximately £140 per door of which there are currently 22 doors (not all doors as they are replaced as the previous ones fail, this is less than half of the doors).</p>	
9	<p><u>Estates Management</u></p> <p><u>Asbestos Management Plan</u></p> <p>The plan has been updated and made available to the committee prior to the meeting. The plan was reviewed and there were no material changes needed, just updates in terminology and staff titles. The plan was agreed and signed.</p>	

10	<u>Policies</u> <u>Investment and Reserves Policy</u> Further to the policy being discussed at the last meeting, the reserve amounts have been finalised and written in to the policy. The committee agreed the policy.	
11	<u>Cost of School Meals</u> The committee reviewed the cost of school meals in line with other schools and in line with inflation and affordability for parents. Currently the cost is £2.30, which was the same cost as the previous academic year. There has been some research conducted in to other local schools and catering company costs, which range from £2.30 to £2.60. It was agreed that it is important to be mindful of affordability and rising costs for parents and keeping the cost the same would benefit parents, therefore it will not change at present but will be reviewed regularly in line with costs and may need to be increased in the new year. There was also a discussion in to whether a cheaper 'packed lunch' style option could be offered and it was agreed that this could be looked in to for costing and whether there would be interest from parents for this.	TBM to look in to packed lunch style dinner option.
<u>Audit and Risk Committee Business</u>		
12	<u>Pensions Audit</u> The pensions audit has been completed and TBM confirmed there were no errors to report.	
13	<u>Risk Register Review</u> The Risk Register has been reviewed by CEO for the summer term and updates made. The committee discussed whether there are any new risks to consider and there were none suggested. The biggest concern is the mobile unit at Vale View, as discussed earlier in the meeting, it is unlikely to be funded to replace and there is no known usable space for a classroom or suitable and accessible entrance.	
14	<u>Date of Next meeting</u> The dates for 2023-2024 meetings will be circulated and agreed at the Trust Board meeting next week.	
15	<u>AOB</u> None	
16	<u>Confidentiality of Proceeding</u> Item 4.2 – Matters Arising	

<u>Action Points</u>	
<u>4.2</u>	TBM to chase Kreston Reeves response
<u>5.5</u>	TBM/Bursar to explore interest/earnings on reserves.
<u>11</u>	TBM to look in to packed lunch style dinner option.

Minutes taken by Governance Professional, Claudia Sawyers

Signed by Chair of FSAC Committee: _____ Date: _____ Mike Ashley