

East Midlands Academy Trust – Finance, HR and Estates committee

Monday 15th February 2021 @ 10.00am. Meeting to be conducted virtually.

Third meeting of academic year 2020/2021

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

Agenda item	Discussion	Action
1. Welcome	<p>Present: Andrew Davis (Trustee) - Chair David Houghton (Trustee) Asvin Morjaria (Trustee)</p> <p>Joshua Coleman (EMAT: CEO) Paul Wheeler (EMAT: Finance & Operations Director) Monica Juan (EMAT: Head of Governance & Safeguarding) – Minutes</p> <p>AD welcomed everyone and reminded all present that the matters raised within this meeting would remain confidential until the minutes were agreed and signed off.</p>	
2. Apologies	Apologies had been received, and were accepted, from Stephen Morales	
3. Quoracy	The meeting was confirmed as quorate.	
4. Declarations of interest	AD asked if there were any declarations of interest pertaining to this agenda in addition to those already recorded on the annual Register of Interests. None were declared.	
5. Minutes of FHRE meeting 03/12/2020 & matters arising not appearing on the Action Log	<p>The minutes of the meeting held on the 03/12/2020 had been distributed with the agenda for this meeting and were agreed to be an accurate representation of the meeting.</p> <p>AD agreed to physically sign the minutes once lockdown restrictions had been lifted.</p> <p>There were no matters arising not already on the agenda for this meeting.</p>	
6. Actions Log from the meeting held on 03/12/2020	<p>Actions from the meeting held on the 03/12/2020 were reviewed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Upload policies to website - DONE 2) Produce schedule of financial risks and opportunities - ONGOING 3) Send draft agenda to all committee members - DONE 	
7. COVID19 Update	<p><i>JC gave a verbal update and answered questions from trustees.</i></p> <p>JC reported that there was an expectation that the government would announce on 22nd February that all students would go back to school on March 8th. Preparations were underway in all schools, following the COVID19 mitigations plans already put in place.</p>	

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	<p>The remote learning provision had been deployed across all schools and working well. A QA exercise was in place to review the implementation and quality of the provision until students were back in school.</p> <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding whether the plans for full reopening of schools would be distributed to parent/carers JC confirmed that schools would contact parent/carers in due course with any relevant information.</p> <p>As the government had confirmed that exams would not take place during the current academic year, HTs had been asked to review their original Catch-up funding plans to ensure that the £80 pp would be fully utilised by schools upon reopening. PW confirmed that PWS had already used some of its allocation, around £20k, before going into lockdown.</p> <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding whether there would be any savings for schools not carrying exams JC explained that the only saving would be from not employing invigilators in secondary schools.</p> <p>The risk assessments put in place at the beginning of the pandemic were being regularly reviewed and LFD Testing was being conducted across all schools. There was a possibility that students in secondary schools would have to be COVID19 tested upon return. RAs would be reviewed accordingly to accommodate this if necessary.</p> <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding whether the unions had expressed any views to the reopening of schools and staff not being vaccinated JC made clear that since the introduction on LFD testing across all schools (primary and secondary) staff comfort levels had considerably increased. Staff were being tested twice a week (once at work and once at home) therefore the issue around asymptomatic carriers had reduced significantly. Vulnerable individuals were being fully supported by HR and most members of staff were happy to be back in school.</p> <p>JC updated trustees about the NIA Safeguarding Ofsted inspection. The PR and Communications Manager had released a statement to the press which had been previously distributed to trustees. A couple of news articles had been published about the subject.</p> <p>A virtual Section 8 monitoring visit had taken place at The Harefield Academy and the inspector had actively praised the support given by EMAT.</p>	<p>Schools to forward reopening information to parent/carers</p>
<p>8. Finance Update: i. Management Accounts ii. Catch up Funding</p>	<p><i>Finance papers had been distributed with the agenda for the meeting.</i></p> <p>i. PW presented the Management Accounts for the period to December 2020 in the financial year 2020/2021. Most schools were performing well against their budget and currently there was £206K surplus for the group.</p> <p>Shepherdswell had budgeted for a significant deficit (around £57K)</p>	

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	<p>However, the restructuring of support staff and SEND department had brought the overall cost lower, effectively reducing the estimated deficit.</p> <p>PWS had also improved their deficit and was in a much healthier position compared with previous years.</p> <p>NIA was currently showing a surplus of £128K due to being overfunded. PW explained that, being a new school, the NIA funding was estimated. Once the census had been conducted the DfE would claw back any surplus from March. This was expected to happen for the next two years until the school was full. The school had put a restructuring plan in place which was expected to be in place from October half term. However, this had not happened until January. A budget virement would be presented in the next management accounts.</p> <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding the NIA deficit in previous years PW clarified that the expectation was for this year to break even.</p> <p>PW explained that the team was working on the NIA budget for next year as it would need additional staff to meet the growing needs of the student population. Ideally, to facilitate transition, some of the new staff would be invited to start earlier. This would bring an additional cost (around £100k) which would be reflected in the new forecast to be presented at the next meeting.</p> <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding any predicted downturns in PAN across all schools PW explained that this was not expected to be an issue, particularly within Northampton town. PWS had currently a 280 PAN which was unrealistic. The trust would be conducting a consultation to bring the PAN down to 230/235, in line with the capacity of the school, once the funding agreement for the 3rd phase development was in place. PW confirmed that the LA was happy to support a reduction in PAN to bring it in line with reality.</p> <p>Trustees noted that the reduction in PAN from neighboring primaries and the creation of other secondary schools in the vicinity might affect the future PWS intake.</p> <p>At the request of trustees PW agreed to reissue the summary page as there were a couple of typos in the figures.</p> <p><i>Subject to the corrections</i> The FHRE committee unanimously agreed to accept the Management Accounts – Period December 2020</p> <p>ii. Catch-up funding had been discussed under point 7.</p>	<p>PW to reissue summary page</p>

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9. Update on Procurement, IT & Estates i. PWS Funding agreement ii. Caterlink catering contract	<p><i>PWS Funding agreement had been distributed with the agenda for the meeting.</i></p> <p>i. PW explained that the £6.2 million PWS funding agreement had been send to County Council for signing and had entered the cooling period which was to end on 16th February.</p> <p>The project would include a multi-use space, comprising a theatre and dance studio as well as being able to be used as a school hall. A working party including LAB members had been involved in the design process.</p> <p>Food tech areas, developing the humanities block and adding lighting to the Astro turf were some of the other areas being considered for development.</p> <p>A master plan for the site was being put in place based on the DfE specifications. PW acknowledged that the trust might had to use some of its own capital to finish the scheme and some delays might occur during the completion of the works.</p> <p>There were no questions from trustees. The FHRE committee unanimously agreed to continue with the project.</p> <p>Trustees agree to sign the agreement once the County Council had returned the document.</p> <p>ii. PW gave a verbal update about the current situation with the two catering companies operating across all schools, Caterlink and Aspens. Both contracts had been awarded an extension until July 2023.</p> <p>PW clarified that although both companies had had some issues during the pandemic, Aspens had managed to resolve them faster that Caterlink. Review meetings taking place every six weeks with both companies had uncover some issues with Caterlink regarding the quality of their delivery and customer services.</p> <p>Caterlink seemed to be suffering more during the pandemic as they were part of la larger organisation serving the corporate sector. PW explained that conversations had taken place with Caterlink around agreeing to an early termination of contract. Caterlink had around £70-100k of undepreciated capital.</p> <p>PW recommended, in the event of Caterlink amicably walking away from the contract, to migrate the school to Aspens.</p> <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding the payment for catering services during lockdown PW confirmed that any payments had been issued only to services delivered.</p>	

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	<p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding what would happen with the equipment in schools if the organization went into administration PW confirmed that the equipment belonged to the trust and it would remain in the schools.</p> <p>Regarding other matters in the trust, PW explained that the NIA feasibility plan should be ready to present to trustees at the next meeting.</p> <p>PW confirmed that the trust was trying to reach carbon zero across the trust and was putting together a plan on how to reduce the carbon footprint over a period of years.</p> <p>Trustees thanked PW for his report.</p>	
10. HR Update	<p><i>JC gave a verbal update and answered questions from trustees.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trust was looking to purchase a new HR & Payroll software, Itrent, to enhance engagement with staff, streamline processes and have a greater control over the record keeping of the SCR. Commercial discussions around the pricing were taking place. • Support for Harefield continued around Finance and HR. • Caseloads around disciplinaries had been reduced and the cultural shift around embedding policies and procedures was moving forward. • In response to the latest safeguarding findings some changes had taken place within the central team. MJ was now Head of Governance & Compliance and LB had been appointed interim Head of Safeguarding & Inclusion. PP, SEND and EAL would be under her remit. GO had been appointed Head of School Improvement. <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding recruitment of staff and skill gaps in the teaching body across all schools JC confirmed that the situation remained the same, however the trust was getting better at attracting the right quality of candidates. Nevertheless, there were still specific areas of the curriculum where it was difficult to recruit.</p> <p>In response to a question from a trustee regarding the progress of the NIA restructure JC confirmed that this had taken place in January and was completed. There had been very positive statements about the new appointments.</p> <p>JC confirmed that NIA was expecting another visit from Ofsted as soon as school reopen to all students. In the meantime, the trust had asked the Local Authority to conduct a safeguarding audit at NIA. This would take place at the end of February.</p>	

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11. Policies for Ratification	<p><i>The following policies were presented for ratification.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Freedom of information 2021/23</i> • <i>Records Management Policy & Retention Schedule 2021/23</i> <p>The FHRE committee unanimously agreed to ratify all policies.</p>	MJ to upload policies to website
11. AOB	There were no AOB.	
12. DONM	<p>Dates for the academic year 2020/2021 have been set.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thursday 4th March 2021 at 10am (changed to 10th March) • Friday 16th April 2021 at 10am • Tuesday 8th June 2021 at 10am • Thursday 8th July 2021 at 10am 	Calendar appointments had been sent

The meeting closed at 11.44am

Actions from the FHR & Estates committee meeting 15/02/2020

Item	Action	Owner
1.	Schools to forward reopening information to parent/carers	JC
2.	Reissue summary page	PW
3.	Upload policies to website	MJ