

East Midlands Academy Trust

Minutes of the Finance, HR and Estates Committee meeting held on the 22nd of October 2019, 08:00 at Prince William School, Herne Road, Oundle, Northants, PE8 4BS

These minutes reflect the order of the agenda and not necessarily the order in which items were discussed.

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action
1. Present	<p>Present: Ayo Salam (Chair; Co-opted Trustee) Andy Davis (Member appointed Trustee) Matt Johanson (Member appointed Trustee) via telephone until part way through item 8 Kevin Crompton (Member appointed Trustee): via telephone for part of item 8 only</p> <p>Joshua Coleman (EMAT: CEO) Paul Wheeler (EMAT: Finance & Operations Director) Nigel Starkey (EMAT: IT & Estates Manager) item 9 only Carole Kirby (Clerk) Minutes</p> <p>AS 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 and consent for absence	Apologies had been received, and were accepted, from KC.	
3. Quoracy	The meeting was determined quorate with at least three Trustees present.	
4. Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations of interest pertaining to this agenda in addition to those already recorded on the annual Register of Interests.	
5. Minutes of the meeting held 11/07/19 and matters arising not on the Action Log	The minutes of the meeting held on the 11 th of July 2019 were reviewed and agreed to be an accurate representation of the meeting. AS signed the minutes and these were passed to JC for return to the office.	
6. Action Log from the meeting held 11/07/19	Actions from the meeting held on the 11 th of July 2019 were reviewed:	

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	<p>i. Policies within the EMAT finance Handbook to be collated in date order and reviewed and presented to this committee as required – PW. PW stated that the Finance Handbook has been reviewed and this included a review of the policy list. As a consequence of the reissue of the Handbook, all policies were updated. PW added that there were very few changes to the ESFA Handbook and all updates from the ESFA had been included. The budgeting and financial management sections had been updated to reflect GaG pooling and ICFP modelling.</p> <p>ii. Discuss self-generated funding opportunities at the strategy event on 20/09/19 – All. There had not been enough time within the strategy event to do this. It was agreed that JC will prepare a paper for presentation to this committee for discussion at the next meeting in January 2020.</p> <p>iii. AS and NS to meet to discuss the email migration and ICT architecture. C/F. NS will present to the committee during this meeting (item 9). PW reported that NS has resigned from his position so it may now be prudent to wait and have this meeting with the new IT & Infrastructure Manager once they are appointed. There is capacity within the team to accommodate the role until an appointment can be made. A Trustee asked if the team members who will be stepping up in the interim period are on the central payroll. PW confirmed that they are and a brief discussion followed about the responsibilities of the role. A Trustee asked how difficult it is to attract good calibre people to the academies sector. PW stated that the Trust will be looking at an appointment at a slightly higher level as it is a very strategic role and JC suggested that the Trust might like to look at recruitment of a new trustee with ICT expertise.</p> <p>iv. Time allowance of this committee meeting to be increased if agenda longer than usual – CK. Done.</p>	<p>Prepare paper for discussion for this committee – JC</p> <p>AS to meet with new IT & Infrastructure Manager to look at email migration</p>
7. Period 12 Management Accounts	It was agreed to combine item 7 and item 8 in one discussion due to the nature of the subjects and the overlap between them.	

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<p>8. Finance Director's update.</p>	<p>The period 12 Management Accounts, Auditors' Report and the Statutory Accounts had been distributed to committee members beforehand.</p> <p>PW reported that the Statutory Accounts had been reviewed and some minor alterations will need to be made as some figures were not available at the time of circulation, for example the pensions component. As the external audit also begins today, this may reveal further slight amendments, but overall the Trust is in a much better place at this point in time. Trustees agreed with this statement and expressed their satisfaction with the Statutory Accounts.</p> <p>A Trustee asked if the Trust has noticed any significant impact due to the recent court cases around pension amounts. PW replied that the McCloud case has had an impact on pension deficit figures and explained how the pension deficit has arisen within the public sector. PW further explained how this is monitored to ensure there is no structural deficit which might require an increase in pension contributions. There are regulations about how pension funds are administered that ensure deficits do not adversely affect those in employment who are contributing to the pension pot.</p> <p>A discussion followed and JC asked the committee if the Trust should look at pensions as part of the overall review of pay and conditions. Trustees thought this would be prudent. JC advised that the LGPS and TP are different because staff can move their pension contributions between different employers when they switch jobs. It was agreed that although the subject carries some turbulence the Trust must be diligent and conscientious to ensure that its employees are getting a good deal. PW thought that the Trust may be tied into LGPS and the TP providers.</p> <p>A Trustee asked if Mazars would be able to present to the Board about this matter outlining the different options available and how each would affect staff in our employ. PW will ask Mazars to do this.</p> <p>There is a confidential minute at this point (CM01)</p> <p>PW reported that he had applied to sit on the Schools Forum and had been accepted.</p> <p>With regard to the accounts, a Trustee asked what the outlook is going forward; what has been learned to help the Trust next year? PW explained that there should not be any unknown expenses next year although the Trust should expect some building costs around the NIA as it is a new build and is still throwing up some issues. There are no accounts for the current year yet; there are no indications of any problems and the Trust is not expecting any one-off large staff costs.</p>	<p>Review pensions as part of the review of pay & conditions – PW/JC</p> <p>PW – arrange presentation from Mazars to TB</p>

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	<p>There is a confidential minute at this point (CM02).</p> <p>The committee looked at spending at Shepherdswell; there is a confidential minute at this point (CM03).</p> <p>A Trustee asked if there is a School Business Manager in each school. No.</p> <p>A Trustee asked what support the trust can give the Head Teachers around financial matters. The Trust holds monthly scrutiny meetings with the CEO, Finance Director, Management Accountant and Head Teacher to go through the budget line by line and the management Accountant provides ongoing support between these meetings. Most of the Primary Schools within the Trust have an Office Manager and NIA and PWS have a Finance Officer although that role deals with processing rather than management; the Trust Management Accountant has been performing this role. The Trust is cognisant that it requires a Finance Business Partner and has gone to advert to recruit. The Trust will also need to recruit an additional member of the finance team but this is not a priority at the moment. There is a Financial Analyst working within the team to look at processes and efficiency. Once this has been analysed it will create space for other tasks such as maintaining the Risk Register.</p> <p>A Trustee asked why the amount spent on school improvement is different for each school. The Trust sets aside 1.5% for each school to spend on school improvement. Each school received three visits form an AIP and any spend above that is optional at the discretion of the Head Teacher. Some Head Teachers did not spend all of their allocated budget last year.</p> <p>A Trustee asked who conducts the internal audit. McIntyre Hudson on a piece by piece basis. The Trust will be putting the contract out to tender for a three year contract. PW added that the Trust will also look at conducting a VAT review at some point in the near future.</p> <p>Procurement update: PW informed the committee that the Procurement Manager had composed a Procurement Strategy; this document had been distributed before this meeting. The Procurement Strategy reiterates that the delegations contained within the EMAT Finance Handbook can be removed to centre if the school is in deficit.</p> <p>A Trustee asked if the Procurement Manager can take responsibility for signing off school expenditure in that scenario. Yes, and the Finance Business Partner will be able to also approve expenditure.</p>	

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	<p>The Trust recognises that overspending is not always a procurement issue; it is sometimes about budgetary awareness.</p> <p>09:30: MJ lost telephone connection at this point and KC joined the meeting by telephone.</p> <p>A Trustee asked what the current OJEU threshold is. PW stated that it is approximately £180K – appendix 1 within the Procurement Strategy sets out the thresholds and actions. The Strategy provides for delegated oversight of contracts between £25K and the OJEU threshold. The committee discussed this matter and were reassured that anything contentious or novel would always be brought to their attention regardless of value.</p> <p>The committee agreed they are all happy with the Procurement Strategy.</p> <p>Teachers Pay Award: PW reported that the government have agreed a pay award of 2.75% and the Trust is awaiting confirmation; this should be confirmed by the end of November and the Trust expects to be honouring this increase.</p> <p>09:35: KC lost telephone connection. NB committee not quorate from this point.</p> <p>PW informed the committee that the in-house payroll is now live and there have been no problems reported so far. All pay dates will be harmonised from the end of November. A Trustee asked how much notice is required for employees with regard to a change of pay date. JC confirmed that there is no minimum notice period set out in legislation but the Trust had provided three months notice.</p>	
9. Estates and IT Update	<p>NS attended for this item.</p> <p>NS reported that the work on the commercial units at NIA is due to complete soon and there will be a handover on the 29th of October. Any defects work will be undertaken during half term. The report investigations on the terrace area are also due to take place during the half term holiday. As there had been separate contracts for design and build of the NIA there was a dispute about which contractor is liable for the defects; the investigatory report will assist in apportioning liability and therefore who is responsible for the cost</p>	

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	<p>of remedial work. All remedial work will be overseen by the flooring supplier to ensure the materials are fitted correctly.</p> <p>There are still multiple roof leaks at the NIA and the source of these is not yet known. A Review is scheduled to ascertain why the roofing system does not work and then it is likely we will also need an investigatory report for this matter in order to correctly identify who is liable for the cost of remedial work.</p> <p>Work at SAA begins today. There will be work on the roof during the half term period. The school has been kept fully informed and all safeguarding issues have been addressed. Work at the school is likely to continue until April 2020. The Trust should be able to recover some cost through the sale of the Westmorland slates removed from the roof.</p> <p>Four classrooms at SAA will be fitted with interactive smart boards during the half term. Motorised mounts will be employed to ensure the boards are suitable for all age groups. There is also an order in place for a new set of laptops to enhance provision at the school.</p> <p>There is not yet a confirmed start date for work to begin at PWS. Phase two refurbishment of the Science block is ready to start now. Phase three (the sports and theatre block) is in the process of being updated with regard to costs; the design is in place. This work will follow on once phase two is complete. Trustees requested an update at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>A Trustee asked what plans have been made for use of the Science block once it is refurbished. It will be the Maths Department which will release the current Maths block for other uses. It will also mean the temporary buildings can be removed from the site.</p> <p>NS stated that the Trust will be moving to a remote back-up for ICT next April in the cloud under a subscription service. This will also provide additional facilities and will prove to be cost-neutral. A Trustee asked which provider had been chosen. Redstore as they provided the best value for money.</p> <p>Office 365 migrations are all on track. It has been decided to leave PWS until after the expected Ofsted inspection. A Trustee asked how long the migration usually takes for each school. NS confirmed that it depends on how each school uses one-drive but three to four days is a good estimate. A discussion followed about the practicalities of migrating PWS before or after an Ofsted visit.</p>	<p>JC/PW – update TB w/r to work at PWS at next TB meeting</p>

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	<p>NS reported that safeguarding reporting is now being moved to a cloud based hosting system as it provides better functionality and joins up with SIMS.</p> <p>Compliance testing with regard to Health and Safety is now underway at all schools to ensure they are all compliant with necessary tests such as water checks and fire alarm testing.</p> <p>Within the IT and Estates Team a staff member is moving into a pastoral role at one school. There has been some staff turnover during the year and consequently the skill level as a staff body needs to be reviewed to see where further training is required. It would therefore be a good idea to provide some Health and Safety training across the team. JC/PW to investigate.</p> <p>NS left the meeting at 10:06.</p>	<p>JC/PW investigate H&S training required within Estates team</p>
<p>10. Policy for discussion/approval</p>	<p>The updated Staff Absence and sickness Policy had not been received for distribution to this committee. JC to request the policy from HR and organise distribution via email to Trustees for approval.</p>	<p>JC – organise distribution of policy to Trustees for approval</p>
<p>11. Any other business</p>	<p>AS raised the issue of succession planning for the Trust Board, across SLT in all schools and within the Central Team. PW confirmed that more resilience is being built into the system through restructuring and careful appointment of new staff. CK suggested that the Board organise a working party to look at succession planning and devise appropriate strategies especially with regard to Trustees.</p> <p>AS highlighted that Trustees' knowledge of PP may need further development. CK advised that all PP Strategies are on the school websites and JC confirmed that all Trustees are very welcome to attend the PP forum meetings. In addition, CK recommended Trustees access the PP training module within the NGA e-learning link provided by the Trust and also accessed the slides from the PP Training provided by the Trust last year; these will be found within the 'Resources' area of GovernorHub.</p> <p>AS requested a written HR Report for future meetings of this committee and a written Estates and IT Report.</p>	<p>Trustees – organise working party to look at succession planning for board.</p> <p>Trustees to access the PP training materials on GovernorHub and Learning Link</p> <p>JC – request reports form HR and Estates/IT for future meetings</p>

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12. Dates of future meetings	06/12/19 at 10:00 at SAA 25/02/20 at 10:00 at Shepherdswell 12/05/20 at 09:30 at NIA 10/07/20 at 09:30 at Castle	Calendar appointments have been sent

Meeting ended at 10:10

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Actions from the FHR & Estates committee meeting 22/10/19

Action	Owner
A. Prepare paper on self-generated funding opportunities for discussion within this committee	JC
B. Meet with new IT & Estates Manager to look at email migration	AS
C. Review pensions as part of the review of pay & conditions	PW/JC
D. Arrange presentation on pensions from Mazars to TB	PW
E. Update TB w/r to work at PWS at next TB meeting	PW/JC
F. Investigate H&S training required within Estates team	JC/PW
G. Organise distribution of staff sickness and absence policy to Trustees for approval	JC
H. Organise working party to look at succession planning for board	Trustees
I. Access the PP training materials on GovernorHub and Learning Link	Trustees
J. Request reports form HR and Estates/IT for future meetings	JC

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