

MINUTES

Spring term 2018 meeting of the Finance, HR and Operations Committee

Wednesday 7 February 2018, 6pm

Present:

John Monaghan JM
Howard Platt HP
Stuart Titchard ST
Linda Waterson (Chair) LW
Stephen Whatmore SW
Neil Pearson NP
Matthew Grant MG

In attendance:

Angela Grace (Penketh South Primary School) AG
Tim Long (Bridgewater High School) TL
Damian McGuire (Priestley College) DMc
Adrienne Laing (Bridgewater High School) AL
Kirsten Riley (Clerk) KR

1. Welcome

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Absence/Apologies

The clerk confirmed that apologies had been received from A Pailing, G Bratley and T Macormac.

The committee **accepted** the apologies.

3. Minutes

a) Matters Arising

A committee member noted that the minutes from the meeting on 6 December 2017 had an error. The minutes state that the Audit and Risk Committee have a maximum of 5 Trustees; this should be 5 members.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2017 were confirmed as a correct record.

b) Action Log

The committee noted that all actions were completed and recommendations were addressed.

4. Declaration of personal interests

Committee members were asked to declare any interest they may have, pecuniary or otherwise, relating to this meeting. No interests were declared.

5. Finance Report

a) TCAT 2016/2017 End of Year Accounts & Financial Statements

DMc provided a comparison between TCAT's financial statements presented at the meeting on 6 December 2017 and the final approved financial statements.

At the meeting on 6 December 2017, the financial statements were approved subject to the inclusion of outstanding property valuations. DMc reported that the accounts have had a clean audit; the Audit Management Letter was provided for information.

The chair thanked DMc for his work in completing the final accounts and submitting this over the Christmas period.

b) 2016/2017 Audit Management Letter

The committee were informed that the Audit and Risk Committee reviewed the Audit Management Letter and were pleased to see a clean bill of health.

MG advised that the Audit Management Letter is brief due to the short period and it will be far more detailed moving forward.

c) 2017/2018 Budget Report as of 31 December 2017

Overall TCAT is in line with the budget in terms of the four month period. There will be a full mid-year review towards the end of March 2018.

A committee member asked if the review will involve the chairs of finance from Local Governing Boards. DMc confirmed that they could be invited.

Action: DMc to invite chairs of finance from Local Governing Boards to be involved in the mid-year review.

Action: Local Governing Boards to be made aware of the timeline for the mid-year review, in order to plan meetings accordingly.

A committee member noted that there are deficits.

In relation to the historic deficit transferred with Penketh High School, MG explained that the Central Executive Team do not believe it is necessary for Penketh High School to pay their loan early; it is felt that there is a need to invest in the school estate due to its poor condition. MG did not wish for Trustees to be under the impression that the loan will be paid earlier than planned as it is not a priority.

It was noted that Beamont Collegiate Academy has a considerable amount of capital.

d) Forthcoming Tenders

The Tenders/Expenditure Review document was tabled at the meeting.

DMc highlighted that Priestley College and Bridgewater High School both have catering contracts that are due to expire in the summer. There will be a joint tendering exercise commencing towards the end of February 2018.

A committee member asked if there is an aim for all schools to have the same catering contract. MG advised that Beamont Collegiate Academy and Penketh High School cater in-house and the primary schools use the local authority school meal's service. The Trust have assured the local authority that they do not wish to withdraw from this service as it could have negative repercussions for other Warrington primary schools.

A committee member acknowledged that the agreement for catering services would fall under a Local Governing Board's responsibility. The purpose of joint tendering is to reduce tendering costs under OJEU and possibly gain extra benefits if the Local Governing Boards agree on the same catering contractor.

The Trust's insurance is due for renewal therefore a comparison with the RPA and external providers will occur once again.

Moving forward there are plans to review services to find ways to reduce costs:

- HR/Personnel services
- Utilities
- Stationery/educational supplies
- Supplier turnover
- TES (Recruitment advertising)

DMc advised that two members of the Trust pay a 'one-off' amount for advertising in the TES. This excludes gold adverts (e.g. head roles) but also allows advertising support jobs for free. MG highlighted the financial benefits for using TES.

A committee member acknowledged that the Local Governing Boards continue to have autonomy in these decisions and may not wish to share services. The committee discussed that the Local Governing Boards will be looking for best value.

A committee member asked about the current provision for HR/Personnel services. DMc advised that each academy receives advice from different sources. The plan would be to determine the commonalities then move towards a tender process. This service will continue to be explored.

A committee member asked if it would be logical to have a HR professional in house. MG advised that this has been discussed however there would be difficulties if the person was sick; as the Trust grows this may be a longer term ambition. DMc advised that an SLA would cost considerably less than an actual salary for a skilled HR professional.

AL advised that many of the staff within TCAT are members of 'Warrington Rewards' system. AL explained the system. AL understands that there will be a way to move towards a TCAT rewards system; there will be a 'one off' cost for each member of staff, and a 'one off' cost to set up the website.

6. Financial Procedures

There was nothing to report with regards to financial procedures as the committee are awaiting the next draft which is due for completion in March.

7. Pay

a) School Teacher's Pay Update

The School Teacher's Pay Update document was tabled at the meeting.

There is a significant ongoing debate concerning the interpretation of this year's School Teacher Pay Review Body's (STRB) recommendations with regards to pay increased for teachers.

The committee acknowledged the STRB's recommendations.

Following initial advice from the local authority's HR, the majority of schools in Warrington agreed to increase pay as 2% on the minimum of the main pay range and 1% on all other pay points. Schools within TCAT agreed to follow this recommendation.

During the second half of last term Teacher Trade Unions have begun to campaign locally for a 2% increase across the main pay range and a number of schools have made a decision to do this, while others have agreed to pay 2% on the minima and 2% on the maxima, with 1% on all other points.

The NASUWT and NEU have held a series of meetings with colleagues in schools across Warrington to gauge if there is an appetite for industrial action.

The CET have held meetings with NASUWT and with the Joint Consulting and Negotiating Committee (JCNC) where they discussed TCAT's interpretation of the STRB recommendations and shared details of the likely impact of any change to the in-year Academy budgets and the potential impact on long term staffing of any additional costs.

It is understood that an increase across the main pay range will cost TCAT £29,000. It is understood if the maxima of the main pay range is increased by 2% it would cost TCAT £4,000. Affordability is the most important consideration for TCAT.

It was noted that any agreed pay increases will be backdated to 1 September 2017 if they are different to the current position.

The committee highlighted that the STRB recommendations are clear (2% on minima and 2% on maxima of main pay range), and could not understand why the trade unions and some local authorities interpreted this as an automatic 2% increase across the board.

TL tabled an update with regards to the STRB's report. TL noted that the STRB reiterated its expectation that it should be for schools themselves to decide the uplift to pay ranges and allowances within the national pay framework will apply to their teachers. It was the STRB's view that uplifts should not be applied automatically to teachers and that any individual pay award needed to take account of performance.

The STRB made it clear that it was not intended that the uplift for the framework should translate into uniform pay increases for every teacher within school. It is for schools to determine the institutional level how to take account of the uplifts to pay ranges and allowances in light of their individual school's pay policy.

The Government agrees with this approach and that schools should be using their autonomy and making decisions on how they will be rewarding individual teachers in accordance with their pay policies.

A committee member understood that the logic to pay those on the maxima of the main pay range would be due to the fact they are on the top of the scale and would not receive further performance related increases.

A committee member asked how many teachers would receive the 2%. It was confirmed this would be 5 people; approximately £4,000 across TCAT.

A committee member asked if those on UPS would receive a pay increase. TL confirmed that those on the upper pay scale would receive 1%.

The committee were informed that individual pay progression will continue to be considered at Local Governing Board level.

The CET continues to seek further information. A formal recommendation will be presented at the Trust Board meeting on 14 February 2018.

Action: Formal recommendation for pay award to be presented to the Trust Board on 14 February 2018.

8. Personnel Update

a) Personnel Update

There was nothing to report with regards to personnel.

b) Developing a pay policy

MG informed the committee that a Trust wide Pay Policy is being developed; this will also include a Performance Management Policy.

A committee member asked if there will come a point where staffing is discussed within committees. MG advised that the Trust Score Cards highlight any issues with regards to staffing.

TL explained that if there are staff from the Appleton College that he feels could be beneficial to Priestley College when vacancies arise he will ensure they are made aware of any posts. However it is difficult to confirm when the vacancies will be released as college timelines are currently behind schools (primary and secondary have numbers confirmed in February, colleges have confirmed numbers in September).

Committee members felt it would seem right to keep staff in-house; it is a benefit of being part of the Trust.

9. Health and Safety

a) Draft TCAT Health and Safety Policy

TL left the meeting at 7.02pm

AL informed the committee that all TCAT academies health and safety policies were reviewed and compared to create a Trust wide health and safety policy.

All academies within TCAT will continue to hold their own health and safety policy with their distinct arrangements that will comply with the Trust wide statement.

A committee member asked if it notes the Trust health and safety policy will take precedent over the individual academy policies. AL advised that the document provides the delegation.

AL went through the sections of the report. A committee member requested that the Trust policy states that it will take precedent over individual policies in the event of a conflict.

Action: Trust health and safety policy to have a statement highlighting that in the event of conflict, it will take precedent over individual academy policies.

AL advised that the policy will now go to consultation.

A committee member asked if the schools have had sight of the policy. It was confirmed that the Central Executive Team have provided feedback.

The committee thanked AL for the work undertaken on the TCAT health and safety policy.

10. Policies

a) General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

AL reported that the HR and Operational Leads and IT leads have formed a working party to ensure that systems and procedures for the GDPR are implemented within the required timescales.

AL highlighted the actions within the plan based on the Information Commissioners Office (ICO), and the recommendations moving forward. The process of data mapping has commenced.

The aim will be for all academies to have procedures in place to ensure that data is handled and kept securely in line with GDPR, including drafting an Trust GDPR and reviewing options for the designation of a Data Protection Officer.

AL advised that TCAT should designate someone to take responsibility for data protection compliance. The Central Executive Team plans to action this. The data protection officer should not have any data processing responsibilities within the Trust.

AL confirmed that the group continue to seek guidance with regards to student records.

DMc advised that the process will ensure that schools are aware of what data they hold, where the data is, and if it is secure.

A committee member asked what the risks will be if the procedure is not fully in place. AL advised that the risks could be serious data breaches, such as a lost laptop or memory stick; this would need to be declared to the ICO. There is a risk that there is data within the various areas. Staff members need to have awareness of how to treat the information and where to securely hold it. Training is taking place.

A committee member asked if the academies have the appropriate resources for this piece of work. AL advised that while there is a lot work to be done the schools are supporting each other and milestones are being met.

DMc explained that 'SIMs' should capture any required information for pupils in the schools therefore it would not need to be stored anywhere else.

A committee member asked if the Data Protection Officer will be an internal appointment. MG confirmed that the appointment would be internal.

b) Disciplinary Policy

MG highlighted the minor amendments made to the Disciplinary Policy.

The committee **agreed** the Disciplinary Policy.

A committee member asked if there would be a separate policy at Academy level. MG confirmed that all academies will adhere to this policy only.

c) Pensions Discretions - Final

MG advised that the consultation period has now ended for the Pensions Discretions Policy. No changes have been made.

The committee **agreed** the Pensions Discretions Policy.

d) Forthcoming Policies

MG advised that the next Trust wide policy to be approved will be the Grievance Policy.

11. Any other business

A committee member noted that a Member of the Trust had requested a Business Plan. MG advised that Members will receive all reports that are given to Trustees. MG advised there is not yet a business plan but members of the Central Executive Team are in the process of creating one.

The meeting closed at 7.39pm