

**MINUTES OF THE 96th FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
THURSDAY 11 JULY 2019 AT 16.15**

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW - Chair), Angela Entwistle (AEE by telephone), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Stewart Harris (SH),

Absent: Tony Bothwell (TBO), Rachel Branagan (RB)

In Attendance: Richard Perry (RJP), Conor Hewitt (COH) – Minutes

Meeting Started: 16:15

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were passed on from TBO and RB. AEE was available via telephone during the meeting for any required decision making and requested a call be made to her near its conclusion to share with her the items that were discussed and to seek her endorsement on relevant matters.

2. Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting (02/05/19)

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

DW asked RJP for an update on the annual staff pay increase in terms of STRB and Local Government proposals. RJP noted that the recommended increase was expected to be 2% across teaching and associate staff. RJP added that he would undertake work over the summer on the staffing costs in view of these likely increases, which would be put forward to the Trustee Remuneration Committee at a later date for outline approval. The October meeting of the FRC would continue to be the forum at which individual awards are discussed and agreed.

5. Capital Developments

RJP updated the Committee on the building development plans that are crucial to cater for the increase in student numbers. RJP had written in his report that no work would take place until Easter 2020 at the earliest. RJP also reported that, having originally quoted a sum that was significantly over budget, the appointed main contractor (to Wandsworth whose project this was) was instructed to reduce the quote. This main contractor will oversee all four of the secondary school developments in Wandsworth that form part of the borough-wide expansion programme of school premises to accommodate an increase in student numbers. DW asked if the work delay would cause the Academy any issues once the extra form of entry starts in September. DMI and RJP confirmed that there should be enough flexibility on class room space in the Academy to house one extra form for the immediate future; however, the work will need to be completed in time for September 2020 and would therefore need to begin prior to the 2020 summer break. RJP expressed his frustration at the delay, as he had hoped that some work would have been undertaken during the 2019 summer break. RJP confirmed that no planning permission would be needed.

RJP showed the Committee the building plans for the Library. RJP explained that the new library space would become more of a dedicated study area. The library would still function primarily as a lending facility with a large number of books situated on shelving around the perimeter of the space. RJP added that the library will have three distinct work areas. Two of the areas will have permanent laptop facilities and the third area will be multi-use and where students will be able to read or work in books or on a laptop. RJP also explained that the office space will be reduced and will feature glass panelling, so staff are able to supervise students at all times.

A redundant door to a fire escape will be changed and will become a storage area for the library. This had been cleared with both the fire services and the local health and safety authority. The new library space will also operate as the only identified area for catch up and study hall. DMI and RJP both explained that the new library will provide our pupil premium students better access to IT facilities.

Some additional costs have been incurred, including the conversion of the storage area and some additional ceiling work which had not previously been tendered for. 30 extra laptops and three new electronic white boards will also be needed, and RJP had put this work out to tender. The estimated rise in cost would take the full cost for the improvements to around £110,000.

RJP added that the ICT Strategy Manager was looking into securing a provider of Cloud backup arrangements for the Academy's Office 365 software, as well as the possible introduction of print management software.

RJP noted that the Academy would have around £177,000 of capital funds to operate with.

6. Revenue Funding (2018/19)

RJP reminded the Committee that the Academy remained likely to incur a deficit in the region of a £100,000 for the year 2018/19, in line with RJP's previous estimation.

7. Revenue Funding (2019/20) & 3 Year Revenue Budget Forecast Return

RJP had circulated the latest revenue funding sheet which compares funding allocations over several years. The latest update included the pupil premium funding which continues to decline. Although the funding had been reduced by around £30,000 there had been a slight increase in overall government funding compared to the previous year. RJP explained to colleagues that this was almost entirely due to the two additional grants the Academy had received (for teachers' pay and pension costs), and stressed that, in real terms, education funding was still decreasing year-on-year.

RJP updated the Committee on the revenue budget forecast return, which was due to be submitted to the ESFA before the end of July. RJP told the Committee that the three-year figures had been extracted from the five-year budget forecast. RJP added that the yearly deficit had continued to grow, with next year's deficit expected to grow to around £300,000 and continuing to grow to £500,000 in 2021. Submitting figures which show a deficit could lead to visits from the ESFA's efficiency team. RJP clarified that the Academy would continue to operate in the same way, including provision of the IB diploma in the Sixth Form, staffing of the ICAS facility and operating a longer school day. DW put forward the idea of creating an alternative three-year budget to demonstrate the Academy's figures, without the extra expenditure caused by these areas. RJP mentioned that the Trustees had agreed for the Academy to continue to operate with a deficit, albeit it funded from reserves, because they believe that these aspects are fundamental to the overall success of the Academy.

RJP circulated the draft three-year budget forecast return. This was discussed and the Committee approved it for submission. RJP will circulate it electronically to FRC members

8. Trading Company

RJP notified the committee that the trading company continued to operate in its core areas of sport and other lettings and that there was nothing substantial to report. RJP will meet next week with existing customers who are interested in expanding their hiring arrangements at Openview.

9. Administrative & Staffing Matters

RJP had mentioned in a previous meeting that the rise in the national minimum wage would lead to an increase in salary for a number of support staff which would be over and above the headline pay awards. RJP shared with the Committee a document which compared historic Wandsworth pay scales for support staff with new pay scales. He confirmed that the recommendation is for the Academy to continue to abide

by these scales in determining pay levels for its associate staff, which would therefore provide on average a 5-6% pay increase to a number of staff including kitchen and cleaning staff who are currently paid on much lower pay scales. Other members of staff on higher scales would receive the recommended 2% pay increase. The Committee (which included members of the Trustee's Remuneration Committee) agreed this approach.

RJP then showed the Committee the Teaching and Learning Assistant (TLA) and Learning Mentor pay scales. RJP noted that the rise in national minimum wage would mean a rise for some of the staff on the lowest points of these scales. The Committee discussed the important role TLAs and Learning Mentors perform at the Academy and suggested starting staff at a higher point of the pay scale, to give a further pay increase. The Committee discussed this in further detail and agreed to remove points 1 to 3 of the existing scale, so that, in future, the minimum start point for TLA staff would be point 4 of the Academy scale. DMI also added that the Academy continues to offer talented TLAs routes into teaching.

10. Policies

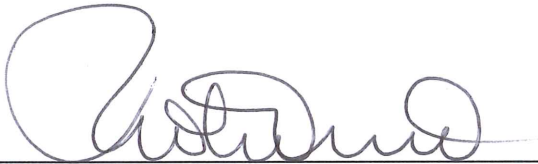
RJP highlighted the minor updates to both the Scheme of Delegation and the Academy Financial Procedures Manual. The Committee agreed to the changes.

11. Any Other Business

AEE was contacted via telephone she approved and agreed with all of the decisions that were made by the Committee.

No other issues were raised.

Signed: _____



Date: 16 / Oct / 2019

Richard Whitcutt

Chair of Finance & Resources Committee

