



**An Daras Trust**  
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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CEO: W. T. Hermon

10/02/2021

**Minutes**  
**Audit Committee Spring 2021**  
**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 9.30am remotely via Zoom**

**1. Join Meeting**

All participants had video and audio.

**2. Welcome and Apologies**

**Present:** Steve Tavener (Chair), Peter Hague (Vice), Trudy Rudge, Will Hermon

**Apologies:** Jo Callow (ex officio)

**In attendance:** Emma Gilbert (CFO), Toni Martin (Governance Officer)

**3. Declarations of Interest/Pecuniary Interests relevant to this Agenda**

None to declare.

**4. Confirm minutes of previous Audit Autumn 2 Meeting (2<sup>nd</sup> December 2020) and Matters Arising**

Add Visible Learning to Audit Committee cyclical plan annually for Autumn term. *Done.*  
Committee agreed minutes and the Chair will sign a copy when normality resumes.

**5. Confidential Matters**

Three matters were discussed and recorded under confidential minutes.

**6. Review Risk Register**

Three directors met separately on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021 and the risk register was updated. The version has been sent to all committees and will be put to full Board in March for approval. One subject discussed was property management services and WH noted 2 quotes for property management service level agreements to start in September. It was agreed that this service should be put out to tender as this will allow us to do some planned maintenance rather than reactive maintenance across the Trust.

**Action: A zoom working group will be called for week starting 26<sup>th</sup> April with ST, EG and WH to assess property services and bids (WH)**

**7. Internal Audit**

Internal auditor was selected at full Board extra-ordinary meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021 (Thomas Westcott). Thomas Westcott will be meeting with ST, WH, EG and MB to discuss direction of travel for internal audit. It was noted that to look at how the processes used at central and in schools are linked and joined up, including non financial as well as financial.

## 8. External Audit

The minor points from the previous external review were discussed – only 2 areas under amber and both have been addressed. One was Covid costs that was a one off issue anyway, and the second re VAT has been resolved and is being claimed monthly. The key issues document will be amended with management comments from WH, EG and MB and put in front of full Board in March. **How much do pension contribution costs pose a risk to the Trust?** WH and EG discussed, and noted that the new external auditor will be invited to the next Audit committee to explain this.

**Action: External auditor invited to next Audit committee to meet Directors and discuss pension contributions matter (EG)**

The latest individual benchmarking document was noted and discussed. It compares the Trust across Cornwall and with other Trusts across the country. Nothing significant to report. The following questions are noted. **Why are our technology costs per pupil double the national average?** Because in the last 12 months we have invested in improving the IT infrastructure across most Trust schools including wi-fi connectivity, cloud-based servers, physical servers, better learning platforms, increased phone connectivity, new IT suites and extra mobile IT technology. This was a long overdue investment which has been completed in line with recommendations from our external IT service provider. It has made the Trust's educational and business systems much more secure, robust and fit for purpose. There was a lack of long-term investment in previous years and this programme has now caught the Trust up in terms of IT resilience resulting in the mitigation of some risks listed within the Trust Risk register. This was planned improvement and was detailed in the Trust Improvement Plan over the last two years as an area for development as regularly reviewed by the Trust Board. The importance of this was highlighted by how effectively Trust schools have provided remote learning for pupils as part of the January/February school closure due to lockdown. **Why are our premises costs higher than average?** Due to the increase in premises related reactive maintenance we have completed at many Trust schools in that financial year. These include the significant and expensive sewage works at North Petherwin, the flood related issues at Princetown and Lew Trenchard and the ongoing windows work at St Stephens. Up to date premises conditions surveys have been completed for some schools and these should allow the Trust to create 2-3-year plan pro-active maintenance which may help reduce long term deterioration costs in the future. **Why are our insurance costs per pupil so much higher?** From the BF Trust specific benchmarking report for financial year 19/20 the insurance cost per pupil is £51 for An Daras. This is inline within the average and median for all MATS within Cornwall (which is £50 average and £51 median). The nature of having multiple sites and a high proportion of small schools is part of the insurance cost issue. **Why is our GAG carry forward so high?** A higher GAG carry forward percentage is due to good in-year budgeting allowing certain schools to make effective savings wherever possible. Increased in-year income against expected yearly income for some schools also supported a surplus. The first national lockdown also meant that some expected/planned costs were not required as pupils were not in school. The GAG savings achieved in 19/20 can now be used to support Trust wide projects this year – particularly the LT land project.

## 9. Review Debt Report

Latest debt report provided to the committee. Some items were queried and answered. **Music hub debt is high - why?** We are awaiting re-imburement for these costs from Cornwall LA. They generally run behind with payment but it should not be a long-term debt issue.

## 10. Local Governance Review

TM produced a short report regarding LGB numbers, recruitment and Chair succession, highlighting any concerns. The committee discussed the issues with recruitment and 'on the job mentoring'. TM will produce a draft action plan with the aim of addressing the issues concerned in governor recruitment. A small working group will be held mid way through Spring second half term with TR, WH and TM to discuss action plan and agree actions.

**Action: LGB recruitment action plan (TM)**

**Action: Working group in second half of term to discuss LGB recruitment (TM, WH & TR)**

**11. DPA & GDPR Compliance**

GDPR compliant; personal data held has been reviewed and reason known; effective process to deal with breach; training and resources to deal with GDPR in place – exceptions report produced for committee and no issues reported. GDPR policy was reviewed and approved on 5 Oct 2020 by Audit committee as there were some required changes to it.

**12. Policy Review**

Asset Control & Accounting – **carried forward next Audit**

Write Off & Disposal – minor amendments – approved.

Pecuniary Interests – minor amendments – approved.

**13. AOB**

**Recovery Plans**

The post lockdown recovery plans were discussed. **What is the situation regarding the post lockdown recovery plans?** These have been temporarily mothballed whilst pupils are not in school as agreed at previous committee meetings this term. They will restart with any required amendment once pupils return possibly in early March. The DfE have announced a further amount of catch-up grant money coming to schools as a result of the recent school closure. So in theory schools should have additional funds to kick start the second recovery process and having been through this process, it is now known which of the interventions on the recovery schedule had an impact and this will be used with the forthcoming recovery schedules. The Trust Board sent a thank you letter to the staff.

**Admissions**

It was noted that Devon consultation process runs much later than in Cornwall; they run their's in January and February. Directors will need to determine the 2022-2023 admissions policies for Devon Schools in February (as the determination in January cannot apply to our 2 Devon schools as it is before the Devon consultation window).

**Flooding at Princetown School**

It was noted that there is an issue with a blockage that needs to be resolved by the Duchy of Cornwall. Ultimately if Princetown floods again, they will be liable as the issue is known about and they need to action it.

**14. DONM**

Next meeting planned for Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2021 at 9.30 at central office or via zoom

Meeting closed 11am

TJH Martin

Governance Officer

**Distribution List:**

W. Hermon – CEO / Director S. Tavener (Chair) P. Hague – Director (Vice Chair) T. Rudge - Director	G. Barriball – Chair Trust Board E. Gilbert – CFO J. Callow – Ex Officio Observer
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