

Audit Committee

Minutes: 22 January 2020
9.30am at Lanscove House
A/1/20

Present: Mr Peter Bethel (PB) Mr Mike Fisher (MF)

In attendance: Ms Nicky Dunford – Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Mrs Rachel Hill – Clerk
Mr Matt Matthew – Trust Business Manager (TBM)

Welcome: In the absence of the Chair the CEO advised that it is likely that the Chairman will take up the Member's role. Two people have expressed interest in joining the Audit committee. It was confirmed that Fiona Walters no longer sits on the committee.

The Chair joined the meeting at 09.35

Apologies: There were none.

Declaration of Business Interests: The Chair advised that he is no longer a Director/Trustee of the Totnes Show.

1. **Minutes of the previous meeting:**

Minutes of 13 November 2019 were signed as a true and accurate record of the meeting subject to one amendment under Declaration of Business Interests. This should be changed to read 'Mr Peter Bethel (the Chair) declared that he has a relation that has a relative that is MTA at Harbertonford.'

2. **Matters Arising:**

- 2.1 The Chair has not met with TBM regarding Pupil Premium Impact Statements. This matter has now been resolved and is no longer a matter arising.
- 2.2 The Constitution and Terms of Reference with approved amendments was noted.
- 2.3 It was noted that the Annual Report and Financial Statements had been approved by the Board of Trustees and submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). The TBM advised that the ESFA return had also been submitted.
- 2.4 It was noted that the Griffin Accountancy appointment had been confirmed.
- 2.5 Items 8.1 and 9 of the minutes dated 13/11/2019. The CEO advised that PAT tests are being undertaken and reports drawn up. The TBM advised that he would produce a RAG rated check sheet for this work.

Action TBM

The CEO advised that Single Central Register checks at School level are good. There remains a need to know who the accountability routes are. The CEO will discuss this at the Academy Heads meeting on Thursday.

Action CEO

The Chairman drew the committee's attention to the Chairman's report to the Board of 7 October 2019 which suggests that individual school Head Teachers should prepare their own risk register and suggested that accountability routes could be incorporated within this.

The CEO suggested that the Audit committee audits/scrutinises that the checks are taking place. MF suggested as online document detailing all checks and when they should be completed by. MF agreed to do some work on this.

Action MF

It was agreed that the CEO would investigate if a Health & Safety Officer at local level would be appropriate to assist with the checks. It was noted that compliance testing is within the Terms of Reference for the Audit committee.

Action CEO

It was agreed to include compliance checking annually within the Annual Cycle of Business for the Audit committee. The CEO and the Clerk will discuss the most appropriate timing for this within the annual cycle and present their recommendation to the Chairman and committee at the next meeting.

Action CEO/Clerk

3. Academies Financial Handbook:

The Audit committee Chairman advised that the Chair's Report relates to the report that the Chair of Trustees presented to the Board on the 7 October 2019. The Chair of Trustees highlighted the Audit committee's responsibility within the report to ensure that the Audit committee was compliant.

After review by the Audit committee of each point from this report it was agreed that the Audit committee is compliant.

Financial Procedures Manual. The Chair spoke to each point within the manual which related to the Audit committee to ensure that the Audit Committee was compliant. It was noted that Mike Fisher was not a Director whilst the previous Auditors were employed. The Chair supported the employment of Griffin Accountancy to audit the Academy. It was agreed that the committee was compliant with the Financial Procedures Manual.

Mike Fisher (MF) drew the committee's attention to the Whistleblowing Policy and asked where the responsibility for this policy lies. The CEO agreed that the Audit Committee should look at the matter as there is a link with Safeguarding. It was agreed that the CEO and the Clerk would check which committee the responsibility for the Whistleblowing Policy falls within.

Action CEO/Clerk

4. Internal Audit:

The Chair reminded committee members to complete a new business declaration of interest form and return to the Clerk. The Chair advised that the law has changed on this and committee members must now declare whether they are a Director or Trustee on different companies.

Action All

The Bearnas Trust was discussed. The CEO advised that this was an Educational Trust set up for children in the poor houses. The CEO will pass on all information that she has about this Trust to the Chair. The CEO advised that the Bearnas Trust requires representation on the Members' Board. At present this is not the case. There is a possibility that the Chair will take up this role.

It was noted that the Audit committee has looked at the Internal Audit and the actions raised have been covered.

5. Health & Safety:

The CEO raised points that need to be checked for compliance. The CEO advised that there is a structure for H&S compliance checks at academy level but reporting lines require clarification. It was agreed that the TBM and the CEO would discuss this and report to the Board.

Action TBM/CEO

The Chair asked if, once this was in place, a short report could be presented to the Audit committee. It was agreed that the CEO would take responsibility for presenting a Health & Safety report for the Audit committee at each meeting, raising any issues.

Action CEO

6. Safeguarding:

It was noted that the Single Central Record report is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees.

7. Data Protection:

It was noted that a Data Protection Officer has now been appointed across the Trust. Susan Stansfield, Administrator at Hennock (covered by Becky Ames) will be visiting schools to ensure they are visually compliant with data protection. She will then report back to the Academy. There have been two data breaches. These were not high level and the Data Protection protocol was followed to log the breaches.

8. Risk Management:

8.1 ES&A Section

The CEO referred to her updated report. Risk Probability and Impact figures were discussed. The only concern was that the figures were accurate. It was noted that scoring within the Risk Management Policy presented is out of date. It was thought that the Chair of Trustees had updated the scoring within this Policy. The CEO suggested looking at a new format for the policy.

The CEO to raise item 5.5 bullet point 2 of the Risk Management Policy '*to develop a risk register for each academy which draws on the principals of the Trust-wide register whilst recognising the specific circumstances of their own school(s)*' at the Academy Heads meeting.

Action CEO

It was agreed that the Clerk would ask the Chair of Trustees for the most up to date Risk Management Policy and to then look through it with the CEO. Renewal of the policy to be added to the Audit annual cycle.

Action Clerk/CEO

8.2 South Dartmoor Academy Due Diligence

The summary shows that South Dartmoor Academy is compliant. It is perceived that the biggest risk was that the pre-schools had not expanded their age range.

9. Policy List:

Risk Management Policy.

It was noted that the scoring is out of date on the policy presented. The committee thought that the Chair of Trustees had updated this. The Clerk will ask the Chair of Trustees for the most recent Risk Management Policy.

Action Clerk

10. Date of future meetings

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Mr Mike Fisher will report to the Board of Trustees at their next meeting as the Chair will be an apology.