



EPA Audit Committee Meeting
Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 14 June 2017 at 6 pm
at Bartholomew School

Present: Members: James Bird (JB), Mike Foster (MF), Peter Reynolds (PR) (CHAIR),

In attendance: Mike Lawes (ML) EPA Chief Financial Officer, Kit Howells (KH) Clerk

The meeting was quorate

1.	<p>Apologies Received from Frances Bartlett (FB), and Anne Carter (AC), and accepted.</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of Interests</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PR is employed by City of Oxford College; several Bartholomew students are on roll there. • FB is Diocesan Schools Adviser for all the Church schools in the EPA • JB is employed by Oxford Brookes University Education Department • AC is employed by Housing Support at West Oxfordshire District Council
3.	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017 The Minutes were agreed and signed by the Chair for EPA files.</p>
4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes of 19 January 2017, not on the Agenda</p>
4.1	<p>(Item 6): This Committee and the EPA Finance & Resources Committee will monitor that Headteachers and the LGBs' Finance Committees are ensuring detailed scrutiny of spending proposals by reviewing the LGBs' Finance Committee Minutes (which are uploaded to GovernorHub). Action: All Committee members ongoing</p>
4.2	<p>Single Central Record Although the EPA is the employer of all staff in EPA, it currently remains the responsibility of each school to maintain the Single Central Record for employees, including record of DBS checks etc. That this is being done correctly is part of the annual internal review process (see Item 6 below). ML confirmed that additionally there is a Single Central Record maintained for the EPA (DB, Members and staff), which Ofsted have requested to check several times for compliancy. It is crucial that all the EPA Schools have complete and correct SCRs.</p> <hr style="width: 20%; margin-left: 0;"/> <p>All Matters Arising were covered by main Agenda items for this meeting.</p>
5.	<p>Review of responses to 2015-16 Audit findings Auditors' letter containing observations and recommendations from last year, and the EPA Management's responses, had been previously circulated. ML confirmed that review of actions is ongoing with a control template being completed each month; he drew Directors' attention to the latest completed actions. Some of these issues had been taken up during the internal audit reviews of the Primary Schools. The EPA is fully compliant with all statutory requirements.</p> <p>The Committee agreed it is content with the work undertaken and update provided.</p>
6.	<p>Review of the internal audits conducted in 2016-17 A summary table and copies of the reports from the first cycle of all the EPA schools' internal audit reviews had been previously circulated. ML briefed on issues that had arisen and levels of assurance gained. Many issues had been corrected/updated immediately and other actions are being monitored; ML will revisit to check the work is being done. Staff in the EPA schools understand that these audits replicate the LA's</p>

	<p>audit programme and they had previously been used to following the Schools Financial Value Standard, so this was a relatively straightforward process. The review reports are circulated to the Headteacher, Finance Officer and Chair of Governors.</p> <p>Following discussion, this Committee recommended that a DBS audit should be carried out for all the EPA schools and new DBS certification be obtained for all new teaching contracts and always for any agency staff, and that each school ensures that one person, usually the person responsible for maintaining the Single Central Record, should be responsible for checking the details and recording the DBS certificates. This may be the Headteacher. It is essential that the process is diligent and recorded appropriately and PR will draft a short recommendation to the DB which he will circulate for Committee approval prior to going to DB. The associated risk should be included on the EPA Risk Register.</p> <p>Action: PR to make recommendation to Directing Board (draft to Committee for approval first) for an urgent cross-EPA DBS audit to be undertaken</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Review of Spring 2016/17 EPA Financial Deviance Protocol Paper previously circulated.</p> <p>The Review is an internal process which indicates whether or not the EPA schools should continue to have financial autonomy by checking that they are following the agreed Protocols. The Review provides indication of financial standards for the information of the Governing Bodies, Finance Managers and Headteachers. It was suggested that maintenance of financial standards should be part of each Headteacher's performance management. Action: PR recommend to ASH</p> <p>The Committee confirmed its satisfaction with this robust checking system.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>Review of first Budget Forecast Output 2016-17 Return submitted to EFSA on 19.5.17 ML tabled the Return, briefed the Committee on its completion, noted it was an interim Return requested by the EFSA, and confirmed it had been submitted by the deadline date.</p> <p>The Committee was satisfied that the necessary Return had been made on time.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Continuing Review of EPA DB Finance & Resources Risk Register Update previously circulated. A further update will be provided to the EPA DB Finance & Resources Committee which meets on 19 June.</p> <p>ML highlighted areas where changes have been made, including with regard to Succession Planning. ML will add Safeguarding Checks to the Register per this Committee's discussion under Item 6 above, prior to the 19 June meeting of Finance & Resources Committee. Action: ML to add Safeguarding checks per DBS audit</p> <p>The Committee discussed the particular risks associated with the resignation of the current CEO /Executive Head of Bartholomew, noting the timing with regard to the proposed Merger with the Faringdon Academy of Schools but also acknowledging that it might be possible to appoint a current MAT CEO for a short interim period. It will be essential to have safe and appropriate interim management arrangement at this crucial period for the EPA. It will also be essential to ensure that the CFO and Accounting Officer posts remain separate (a requirement of the EFSA) from 1 September. The Accounting Officer must be the Principal or the most senior Executive in the Trust but not the CFO as this would be represent a conflict.</p>

	<p>The Committee agreed that the Finance & Resources Committee should be asked to review the Risk Register in the light of the resignation of the CEO.</p> <p>Action: ML to take Register to Finance & Resources Committee updated for this risk</p> <p>The Committee is satisfied that there is a robust Risk Register and that it is being regularly reviewed.</p>
10.	<p>Review of initial merger process with Faringdon Academy of Schools</p> <p>ML tabled a Paper outlining the key work streams and membership of the associated steering groups, in relation to the work to ensure due diligence in preparing for proposed merger with the FAoS. The two MATs' Steering Groups are also meeting jointly. The same legal team is being utilised (both MATs had – coincidentally - used this team when initially converting to Single MATs). There will also be a group to look at finance which has not yet been called; ML will keep the Audit and Finance & Resources Committee updated.</p> <p>Action: ML to keep Committee informed of likely timescale for finance group and any input to it</p> <p>The Committee is satisfied that all key groups are being represented in the MAT merger discussions.</p>
11.	<p>Any other business – None.</p>
12.	<p>Date of next meeting: Wed 24 January 2018, at 6 pm, at Bartholomew School</p> <p>Action: KH to check date is convenient for FB and AC and ask BVB to book meeting room). [done]</p> <p>Items for the Agenda to include: Review of 2016-17 Accounts and Auditors' findings</p> <p>Action: ML/PR/BVB</p> <p>The Committee thanked ML for his continued efforts.</p>

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm
Kh/PR/19.6.17