



RUTLAND AND DISTRICT
SCHOOLS' FEDERATION

MINUTES OF THE FEDERATION TRUST MEETING

Thursday 5 December 2024 8.15am
The Gallery

Present

Andrew Holt (Chair), Guy Magrath, Alex Mould, Clive Norgaard Morton, Mark Tinkler (Vice Chair), Stuart Williams (Executive Principal).

In Attendance

Kelly Jackson (Head of Catmose Primary), Oliver Teasel (Head of Harington School), Chris Wilson (Chief Finance Officer), Sheryl Wilson (Governance Professional). Mark Jackson (Azets Auditors).

1. Welcome introductions and apologies for absence

Andrew Holt welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Lindsey Madeley-Harland and Rob Guthrie.

2. Declarations of Personal Interest and Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of personal or pecuniary interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 17 October 2024

The minutes were signed to be a true and accurate record.

4. Matters arising from previous minutes

There had not been any further communication regarding a mobile phone mast. The Operations Director will obtain a quote for a pathway onto the Federation site from Barleythorpe Road.

Ben Solly will meet with Oliver Teasel regarding his role of governor at Harington School.

5. Presentation and sign off of annual accounts (Mark Jackson)

Mark Jackson from Azets presented the annual accounts to trustees.

Two audit reports are produced, the first is the statutory audit where Azets report their opinion on whether the accounts provide a true and fair view of the Academy Trust's finances. Azets have issued an unqualified report in this regard which means that they believe the accounts do show a true and fair view. The second audit report pertains to their work on regularity, the concept that governs appropriation of funds within Academy Trusts. Azets report that nothing has come to their attention that requires reporting formally in the accounts. Trustees were also given access to the audit findings report.

Mark Jackson drew trustees' attention to staff costs of 72% of total expenditure for 2024 against 71% for 2023. Staff costs as a percentage of total income (including capital) was 75%, compared to 57% in 2023. These figures include the additional grant income and expenditure attributable for the new build.

It was confirmed that the Trust's reserves are within the acceptable range required for the Education and Skills Funding Agency. (ESFA).

Top cover lines include the sports hall refurbishment monies, which were unspent at the end of the year as there is still ongoing work and the School Fund (trips and visits) which remains on the accounts each year.

The Local Government Pension Scheme is at nil (the same as last year) as this is not an asset recognised in the accounts. Mark Jackson reported that another local authority are consulting on each academy paying the same rates and this may be a consideration in the future.

With regards to income and expenditure, income is down by £2.9million due to the capital grant and expenditure has increased by £800,000, with all core revenue grants increasing and the reason for the revenue deficit in the current year. The bank balance is £1 million down on last year, due to the timing of the capital grant payments.

Mark Jackson drew attention to the Trustees' report section on the Draft Annual reports and accounts, in addition to staff salary costs and related party transactions.

Question: What do the governance costs include on page 34 of the report as they had increased by £12,500 from last year.

Under governance costs the following are included:

- Legal costs
- Auditor's remuneration
- Audit of financial statements
- Other audit costs
- Trustees' reimbursed expenses

The main difference for the increase from the previous year was due to legal costs. Mark Jackson will check if this could be under a separate heading of legal and professional.

Question: Has there been any further guidance from the government on being able to offer the electric car scheme?

Mark Jackson confirmed that he has not heard anything.

Budget

In May 2024 trustees agreed the budget for this academic year. However, since then, the Government agreed a 5.5% pay increase for support and teaching staff which was unexpected and fully funded. Initially, the budget was forecasting a £137k deficit. At the Resources meeting in February, a break-even budget will be presented to the committee. Mark Jackson confirmed this is what the auditors like to see, (the original

ESFA budget, the latest projection of year-end and a revised budget). The aim is to end on a break-even position.

The finance team are also continuing to work on the changes to the nominal codes.

Mark Jackson confirmed that these are a clean set of accounts and observations, and the Federation's reserves are where they should be. Trustees agreed that a solid set of accounts were presented that had been well administered and gave thanks to the finance team for their work. Trustees approved the annual accounts.

6. Governance Professional

Guy Magrath, Andrew Holt and Rob Guthrie's term of office on the Resources committee was due to come to an end of their 4-year term. Trustees agreed to reappoint all three for another term.

Trustees were asked to read the guidance notes on completing the business interests' form and sign and return the declaration.

7. Federation Transformation Plan

Stuart Williams presented the Federation Transformation Plan which included work completed by the support staff teams; including IT, catering, site, governance finance, admin and HR and their plans for this academic year with targets cascading to individual performance reviews. A summary of the forthcoming plans was also shared with trustees for each team area.

The Transformation Plan was approved by trustees.

The refurbishment of the sports centre had been delayed due to quotes being received. Trustees agreed to give Stuart Williams delegated approval to scrutinise the quotes for best value, once received.

Question: How do you ensure the Transformation Plan remains a live working document?

A large proportion of the document is an analysis of the work already achieved and when Stuart Williams meets with each of the support team managers throughout the year, they discuss the plans in place to achieve the transformation plan targets and the progress made.

8. Federation Financial Management Policy

It was suggested that the tendering procedure and limits for informal and formal orders is reviewed (within the Financial Management Policy). This will be discussed at the meeting in February.

9. Term Dates 2026/2027

An amendment to the proposed term dates was agreed as follows:

- Teacher training day - Wednesday 2 September 2026
- Term starting on Thursday 3 September 2026
- Finish term 4 on Thursday 25 March 2027.

Trustees approved the dates for 2026/27.

10. Agenda Items for Audit and Scrutiny Risk Assessment Committee

- 5.12.24 Health and Safety
- 6.2.25 Cybersecurity
- 27.3.25 TBC
- 15.5.25 TBC

11. AOB

Andrew Holt confirmed that Martyn Rhowbotham had been formally thanked for his long service as a trustee and governor.

Date of Next Meeting

Trust Thursday 6 February 2025 8.15am

Christmas Concert Wednesday 18 December 2024, 6.30pm,
All Saints' Church, Oakham