



**RICHARD HUISH TRUST  
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

**12<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 5:00pm**

**In Rowan House/Microsoft Teams, Richard Huish College**

- Present:** Catherine Christie (Chair) – via Teams  
Clare Greenslade – via Teams
- In Attendance:** Paul Lonsdale (CFO)  
Richard Anderson (IT & Facilities Director)  
Jessica Doyle (Finance Manager/Management Accountant)
- Clerk:** Helen Wells

**MINUTES**

**Action**

**1. MEETING FORMALITIES**

**FGP 23/01**      **1.1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**  
The chair welcomed attendees. There were apologies for absence from John Abbott.

**FGP 23/02**      **1.2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
There were no declarations of interest for the meeting.

**FGP 23/03**      **1.3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**  
The minutes from the last meeting on 27 June 2023 were approved and the Chair consented for her electronic signature to be used in signing them off.

**FGP 23/04**      **1.4. MATTERS ARISING**  
All matters arising were discussed and were agreed as being complete.

**2. FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE**

**FGP 23/05**      **2.1. Management accounts August 2023**  
The CFO noted that the external audit is currently underway, he is not expecting the management accounts to change as a result. The CFO highlighted that most RHT academies had a good year financially, with some having a strong year end. A few underlying concerns were noted and discussed; these will be kept under close observation. Directors agreed that there are some improvements across the group, reflecting an overall positive picture.

**FGP 23/06**      Directors requested that the key indicator and benchmark report expectation to achieve the reserves target be included in the report in the future.

**ACTION: Add the reserves target to the management accounts in the future.** **CFO**

**FGP 23/07**      The budget forecast for the college was noted as positive overall as things stand. The forecasts assumed a 3% uplift in funding, it has come out as 2% which will have an impact on academies and will impact in the next 11 months. Forecasts will be reconsidered soon.

**FGP 23/08**      **Have the 2023/24 allocations been made public?**  
The GAG statements have not been reissued; everything is therefore in place. There is a push at the moment on Pupil Premium (PP), the internal auditors have been asked to investigate if schools are maximising their PP funding. Senior teams across the academies are being supported to ensure they are optimising data collection.

**Signed:**...C Christie..... **Date:**...23/01/2024.....

**FGP 23/09** **Are they confident in being able to do that?** This is what is being worked through at the moment. A new role has been introduced to the central MIS team to work with schools to normalise how data is collected and processed and to test the quality and accuracy of what is coming through, the positive impact of this may take some time to come through.

**FGP 23/10** **2.2. Emerging budget challenges 2023/24**  
There is a lack of guidance around the 2023/24 in-year growth funding which may impact on Pyrland School, it is therefore challenging for them to plan ahead for any significant spending. The college recruitment was not as high as anticipated and this could impact on the forecasted funding.

**FGP 23/11** Challenges at smaller schools with pupils with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) joining late/at short notice that were not planned for in the budgets. The CFO noted that he is working with the council to look at proportion of EHCP pupils compared to the total and also the way EHCPs are funded.

**FGP 23/12** **Is this just an issue in Somerset, or is it a broader issue?**  
Special Educational Needs (SEN) funding is a challenge nationally. There is often a discrepancy between practice and what is in the SEN Code of Practice, the CFO assured directors that the executive team are pushing on a number of fronts to encourage change and inform an understanding of the broader impacts on schools.

**FGP 23/13** **2.3. Risk insurance arrangements**  
The CFO confirmed that the college is remaining in the commercial insurance sector, with a three-year agreement with FE Protect to give a surety around the premium and is better value than the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA). The CFO noted that he has investigated moving schools into the commercial sector, but it is not feasible to move them from RPA so they will remain.

**FGP 23/14** **2.4. Receive and review external auditor planning document from Audit & Risk Committee**  
The CFO asked the committee if there is anything they want the auditors to look at specifically, in addition to the substantive financial testing. Directors discussed the possibility of checks around procurement, boarding or data collection noting that there are limitations and challenges in each of these areas.

**ACTION: Consider possible additional areas for audit and report back to the Audit & Risk Committee.** CFO

**ACTION: Consider the consistency of what is being included in the returns by schools and how accurate this is across Huish to provide further assurances to directors.** CFO

**FGP 23/15** **2.5. Committee report for 2022/23**  
Directors noted they found this a useful overview and that it helped highlight to them the need to recruit more directors to the committee.

Directors confirmed they were happy with the content of the report and recommendations.

**APPROVED: Directors approved the F&GP Committee Report for 2022/23**

**FGP 23/16** **2.6. Report any novel or contentious transactions and consider risk**  
The CFO confirmed there were no novel or contentious transactions since the last meeting.

### 3. TRUST INFRASTRUCTURE

**FGP 23/17** **3.1. School condition grant works (ESFA) grant and capital projects update**  
The IT & Facilities Director noted that the accompanying paper builds on the general overview recently given to the full board. He highlighted that completed works packages were noted as

Signed:....C Christie..... Date:....23/01/2024.....

detailed in the report, with the remaining money having been fully allocated with some kept in reserve. The re-categorisation of the Condition Data Collection (CDC) survey by the will change based on the condition of buildings, as improvements are made this is likely to reduce the funding grant in the future.

**FGP 23/18** **Is there a bid in for the public sector phase 3 decarbonisation funding?**  
Futures have facilitated this bid on behalf of the trust, it is a complicated bid that has recently been submitted.

**FGP 23/19** **Does the grant cover solar panels?**  
This is not offered as part of the grant, there is no financial contribution and having them does not count towards the decarbonisation calculation. This would have to be funded by the trust, who could then use any grant funding to purchase air source or ground source heat pumps. However, such pumps require a significant input of electricity to run them. As most mains power is still reliant on fossil fuels and the cost of solar panels locally is not grant funded it remains questionable as to whether they are worth bidding for.

**FGP 23/20** **When are the next SCA allocations due?**  
It was noted that current plans for re-roofing will fit in the School Condition Allocation (SCA). It was confirmed that the trust will bid for refurbishing the science labs at the college, with a technical consultation with staff underway.

**FGP 23/21** **When are the next SCA allocations due?**  
March/April to feed into budgets for 2024/25.

**FGP 23/22** **How do we know how well Huish are doing at delivering the estates strategy and priorities?**  
The CFO described that he produces a report once a term as part of management accounts that details this. Directors noted they need to have assurance of a wider plan and in line with the context of the strategy. The CFO confirmed this is within the Estates Strategy; there are a series of milestones to report on, this is also the case for the Carbon Reduction Strategy.

**FGP 23/23** **3.2 Estates and general update**  
The Estates & Facilities Director noted that the Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) survey has not yet been received for Pyrland School, this is due imminently. Directors discussed that if any areas are noted as being inaccessible in the survey this could leave the trust with further areas of concern and possible costly investigations.

**ACTION: Send on RAAC survey outcome for Pyrland School to directors once available. RIA**

**FGP 23/24** **Will priorities relevant to the committee (3 and 4) be reflected in specific plans/strategies (e.g. Estates Strategy/Carbon Reduction)?**  
The Estates & Facilities Director and CFO are meeting academy heads to guide them regarding their maintenance budgets to be sure that they allocate appropriate spending to meet the planned preventative maintenance items within their condition survey.

Directors thanked the Estates & Facilities Director for his input.

#### 4. COMMITTEE MATTERS/POLICIES

##### 4.1. Strategic Plan 2023-2027

**FGP 23/25** **Will priorities relevant to the committee (3 and 4) be reflected in specific plans/strategies (e.g. Estates Strategy/Carbon Reduction)?**  
The CFO confirmed the priorities will be reflected in relevant plans/strategies. It was noted that having a more centralised approach as to how estates develop and how the trust use estates is helpful. The idea of this is to work collectively to achieve the best solutions, enabling academies to work on a longer term strategic basis. The Carbon Reduction Strategy is challenging to achieve and will require a longer term approach, taking account in the future of emerging technologies that may be beneficial to consider.

Signed:....C Christie..... Date:....23/01/2024.....

**FGP 23/26** **Is there any external expert input into the Carbon Reduction Strategy?**

Huish work with Northern Gas and Power (NGP), using their Clear View monitoring tool to provide solutions to reduce their carbon footprint. This is still a new area for Huish; the team are building their knowledge and understanding. Part of the carbon reduction strategy is to draw on external expert advice. The Estates and Facilities Director noted they could benefit from engaging with NGP more now, to explore the next level of detail.

**FGP 23/27** **4.2 Financial Regulations**

The CFO noted that the timing of this for consideration by the committee has changed slightly, so that they now consider it after the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) updates have been released. He added that there are no major changes. The Finance Manager highlighted that they looked at the thresholds last year and increased those but there were no other changes, only tweaks as matters of detail.

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD: Directors recommended the approval of the Financial Regulations to the Board.**

**FGP 23/28** **4.3 Investment Policy**

The CFO noted that this has been updated to reflect the closure of the County Council Community Fund, but that there are no other alterations. All surplus funds are with the bank; Huish is very cautious about how it chooses to invest funds.

**RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD: Directors recommended the approval of the Investment Policy to the Board.**

**5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**FGP 23/29** **5.1. Confidential minute content**

Directors agreed there was no confidential content.

**FGP 23/30** **5.2. Items for next meeting**

Directors noted the draft agendas for the next two meetings and requested that the Estates Strategy, including the Carbon Reduction Strategy are added to the January agenda.

**ACTION: Add the Estates Strategy (including Carbon Reduction Strategy) to the January Clerk meeting agenda.**

**FGP 23/31** **5.3. Any other business**

There was no other business.

**FGP 23/32** **5.4. Dates of future meetings**

Directors noted the dates of the future meetings.

The meeting closed at 6.37pm

Signed:...C Christie..... Date:...23/01/2024.....