RICHARD HUISH TRUST
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

5th February 2025 at 6:00pm

Via MS Teams

Present: Catherine Christie (Chair)
Clare Greenslade
Dominic Lynch

In Attendance: Paul Lonsdale (CFO)
John Abbott (CEO)
Richard Anderson (IT & Facilities Director)
Jess Doyle (Finance Manager)

Clerk: Helen Wells (Governance Specialist)

MINUTES

Action

1. MEETING FORMALITIES

FGP 24/31 **1.1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**
The chair welcomed attendees, there were no apologies for absence.

FGP 24/32 **1.2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**
There were no declarations of interest for the meeting.

FGP 24/33 **1.3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**
The minutes from the last meeting on 16th October 2024 were approved and the Chair consented for her electronic signature to be used in signing them off.

FGP 24/34 **1.4. MATTERS ARISING**
The matter arising was discussed and updates noted on the report.

2. FINANCIAL AND STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE

FGP 24/35 **2.1. Oversight Report (including management accounts)**
The reports for November and December 2024 were received by directors.

FGP 24/36 The CFO highlighted that pupil numbers were included as the focus in the oversight section of the December report. Directors discussed the application data; there is a high level of confidence that most of the schools will be at or very close to realising their Pupil Admission Numbers (PAN) in September 2025. Where the intake is looking likely to be lower than the PAN the executive team will be monitoring the situation closely. Directors noted the complexity of the admissions decision-making process and agreed they would welcome the opportunity to understand it in more detail.

ACTION: Provide opportunity for directors to explore the admissions decision-making process in more detail. **CFO with Clerk**

FGP **How does the current demographic affect admissions?**

24/37 It is anticipated that the impact of the pandemic will negatively impact on pupil numbers over the next few years. The impact of house building is yet to be understood as the profile of new housing projects remains uncertain.

FGP 24/38 The CFO detailed that the finance team have met with all nursery managers to examine the financial performance of each of the nurseries. Where issues have been identified the finance team, with the Director for Nurseries, will ensure a keen focus is maintained on working through challenges. Directors agreed that identified areas need to be monitored closely.

FGP 24/39 **What is the current status with the new finance system?**
The new system is currently being worked towards full implementation, the support so far has been proactive and easy to access.

FGP 24/40 **2.2. Boarding house financial performance**
Due to under recruitment this year there is work under way to manage the level of the deficit, it is anticipated that there is sufficient demand to meet the forecast target for 2025/2026. The terms and conditions, along with associated processes, have been amended to ensure they are more commercially robust.

FGP 24/41 **Is there an indication of the application numbers at this time?**
There are sufficient applications in the system to fill the remaining spaces for September. Checks are being made frequently regarding the application status and the deployment of the new terms and conditions is consistent.

FGP 24/42 **What happens if the internal rate of return (IRR) is not achieved?**
The IRR is 8% and is required as a must in the Academy Trust Handbook (ATH). The penalties for not achieving this are not specified. Any surplus has to be retained for the boarding provision.

FGP 24/43 **2.3. Strategic risks**
Directors noted the risk register with risks relevant to the committee; there have not been any significant changes with the latest review update.

FGP 24/44 The CFO assured directors that the executive team are closely monitoring potentially significant areas of emerging strategic risk.

FGP 24/45 **2.4 Consider areas of focus for internal audit**
Directors noted the internal audit plan and considered if there were any areas that an internal audit would be useful. The CFO noted that nurseries had previously been subject to an internal audit from which there are a number of follow up actions being worked through for resolution. Directors agreed there was nothing else to recommend at this time.

FGP 24/46 **2.5 Novel or contentious transactions**
There were no novel or contentious transactions to report.

3. TRUST INFRASTRUCTURE

FGP 24/47 **3.1. Capital projects and ESFA School Condition Allocation (SCA) priorities including carbon reduction strategy**
Directors noted that the carbon reduction strategy update was useful to understand the context of the overview and noted that this is being moved forward.

FGP 24/48 The SCA priorities were noted along with the need to ensure the allocated finances are realised, as outlined on the related tracking document.

FGP 24/49

Signed:…*Catherine Christie*……………………………………… Date:…13th March 2025**…………………**

Directors discussed the importance of being able to demonstrate progress with working towards carbon reduction as it relates to one of Huish's values and has links into the strategic drivers.

FGP 24/50

3.2 Health and Safety report – Term 1 2024/2025

An overview of key actions were noted, directors requested a detailed update to be carried forward to the next meeting. **Clerk**

ACTION: Carry forward the H&S term 1 report to the next F&GP meeting

FGP 24/51 **4. COMMITTEE MATTERS**

4.1. Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA)

Directors discussed possible changes to the SoDA in light of proposed changes to how the financial delegations are specified and more broadly in terms of how accessible and relevant the SoDA is for the organisation. They proposed a working group be considered to move this forward and to explore examples of similar documents from both within the sector and externally. **CFO/ Clerk**

ACTION - Consider establishing a working group to review the purpose and structure of the SoDA. Explore examples of other similar documents.

FGP 24/52 **5. ANY OTHER BUSINESS AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

FGP 24/53 **5.1. Any other business**

There was no other business.

FGP 24/54 **5.2. Agenda for next meeting**

Directors noted the agenda.

FGP 24/55 **5.3. Confidential items**

Directors agreed the boarding house paper would remain confidential.

5.4. Date of next meeting

The date of future meetings were noted.

The meeting closed at 6.55pm

Signed:…*Catherine Christie*………………………………………… Date:…13th March 2025**…………………**