

**MINUTES OF THE 100th FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
THURSDAY 30 APRIL AT 13.00PM**

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Stewart Harris (SH), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Rachel Branagan (RB) and Tony Bothwell (TB), Kevin Chamberlain (KC)

In Attendance: Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

Start Time: 1.00PM (via conference call)

1. Apologies for absence

No apologies – all Committee Members were present on conference call.

2. Declaration of interest

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

RJP explained that, as a result of lockdown, the Academy had been unable to invite an external IT adviser to review its network storage and its wider infrastructure requirements.

4. Matters Arising

No matters arising

5. Capital Developments

RJP confirmed that following agreement at the previous meeting, ATA has moved forward with the replacement of its fire protection system control panels at a fixed cost. These will be installed during the summer break.

As covered in note 3, the Academy was due to employ the services of an external IT consultant to review the existing IT infrastructure and produce a report. This will go ahead once lockdown rules are lifted. RJP advised that the Academy will move forward with the SAN storage works as these are essential this summer. The Academy's ICT Strategy Manager will send out tenders for provision and RJP will share these at the next meeting in July, with summary documentation and costs. All Committee Members were in agreement to proceed.

DW asked what comprised the "IT storage area" RJP explained that it was essentially a dedicated network for data storage, which also allows for data backup, improved application performance and improved data protection and security. RJP advised that the current SAN equipment is at end of its service life and the supporting software can

only be supported until summer. RJP explained that he anticipates the cost of actual data hardware, which was in the region of £43k when it was last replaced in 2013, will have probably dropped over the years. However, the same is not true of data storage. RJP expects the cost to be in the region of £50k.

The refurbishment works to support the increase in student numbers are now re-scheduled to go ahead this summer. RJP advised that the first appointed contractors have been replaced and that RJP and DMI were involved in the interview process to appoint a new contractor – albeit Wandsworth Council are the client. The works at ATA have now been re-classified as ‘a smaller works package’ and Wandsworth are happy to proceed on this basis, with similar plans for other local secondary schools put on hold. It was felt that out of the three contractors interviewed, only two performed well. One was a smaller concern (but perhaps more customer focussed), while the other was a larger, less personable organisation. But it was felt either would be suitable for the works. RJP and DMI had a follow-up call today with Wandsworth Council but a final decision on the appointment has not yet been made. The works are, however, now scheduled to start on-site during May break, with a flexible schedule to fit around the student return to the Academy. All three parties were within budget. A pre-start meeting will be arranged for the week beginning 18th May and then the works will be likely to start the week after.

RJP advised that the Academy has a number of staff available to clear areas once the works commence. The work should be finished by mid-August, with completion prior to the students’ return after the summer break. The work can be scheduled to have minimal impact on the day to day running of the Academy.

6. Revenue Funding – 2019-20 Update

As at 31 March – the Academy had spent £5.972M (57% of expected income for the year). At the same stage last year this had been £5.76m (58.7% of expected income). RJP added that there is likely to still be a slight over-spend at the year-end, but due to the current circumstances, if the Academy doesn’t return to full operation by the summer, the overspend may not be so significant.

Exam fee expenditure is around 150K but there may be some costs refunded to the Academy. DMI explained that exam boards still need to cover their costs, but once all of the exam board processes are complete they will review their costs against income received and there may be some money due back to the Academy.

Academy running costs and costs for stationery etc. will be lower, but income for catering and lettings will be greatly impacted. RJP still felt that there will be a saving on what the Academy will be spending over the remainder of the academic year. The Academy is still being funded in full and staff are paid in full. However, areas such as service contracts are expected to be paid in full.

RJP advised the Committee that temporary workers have become entitled to similar employment rights after 12 weeks of service as permanently employed staff. Temporary workers that haven’t reached the 12-week period, have been advised that they will not be paid and there is no obligation for the Academy to do so.

A question was asked on what are other schools doing with regards to paying staff. RJP had no direct knowledge but being a public sector organisation, all the time the Academy is fully funded, including for staff costs, which are expected to be paid in full; however, areas such as overtime have been cut.

DW asked RJP whether, if it is subsequently decided that schools were not returning until September, there was any suggestion that some staff may have to be furloughed. RJP advised that the current information from DFE has made it clear that schools will continue to be funded and they will not be able to furlough staff.

7. Revenue Funding – 2020-21

RJP had sent a number of attachments with his report, including paperwork from the government on allocated funding for the year; a budget comparison table for funding from the ESFA and a detailed funding paper explaining the various components of the overall funding allocation. There were two key elements behind what was an overall

3% increase in funding: an increased unit cost per student and the additional 30 extra students in the current Year 7 cohort, which were included as part of census return information.

Pupil Premium. Funding will not be announced until June but the unit cost per qualifying student is increasing for the first time in six years (from £935 to £955 per qualifying student). However, RJP stated that it appears fewer students qualify for this year-on-year, as criteria are made more stringent, so the increase may well be lost if fewer qualify to receive it.

Minimum Funding Guarantee continues to be cut year on year and is cut by nearly 20% from the current level. This will be £344k next year but will eventually disappear altogether.

RJP also explained several more peripheral grants, including those provided to support teacher pay and pension costs that are not found within existing school budgets. These grants relate to the previous two teacher pay awards and the increase in employer pension contributions last year which exceeded school funding previously allocated. There has been no confirmation of these continuing indefinitely - they are currently only confirmed until 31 March 2021. RJP felt these would more than likely be built into to the main funding provision eventually.

8. Trading Company

50% of the usual turnover will not be achieved due to cancelled lettings. The likelihood that this will remain the situation at least through to the summer.

9. Administrative and Staffing Matters

The Academy has lost a second person it had appointed to its teaching staff for next year so it now has an English and a Maths post to fill.

Newly qualified staff in particular will need to be inducted carefully into Academy life after missing many weeks of their training experience.

DMI advised that the Academy has established a rota for supervising vulnerable children or the children of Key Workers in the LRC and Academy staff been very keen to volunteer.

DW asked about the potential of running a summer school. DMI explained that while there have been talk of this happening, along with the possibility of a Saturday school, nothing has been confirmed. Academy staff have been very keen to help so far and DMI would expect there to be interest from staff if either a summer school or Saturday school programme was mandated by the government. However, in the current circumstances, parents might be wary of sending their children into a busy environment.

Signed: 
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Executive Board

Date: 13, oct / 2020

Agreed
at
meeting