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DE CURCI TRUST

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

28th June 2017, 5.30 – 8.05pm

Present:

Trustees: Chris Batstone (CB), Sharon Brueton (SB), Alan Cufley (AC), Derek Good (DG) Chair, Lucy Sinnott (LS), Sara Spivey (SS), Tessa Webber (TW), Lucy Wilby (LW)

In attendance: Jean Loy (JL) Clerk to The Solent Schools Local Governing Committee

1. Apologies were accepted from: Marion Hallsworth (MH) Interim Company Secretary/Clerk, Ros Cannell (RC) Interim Financial Co-ordinator

Not present: Anders Bohea (AB)

2. LS declared interest in Item 8 – Chief Financial and Operating Officer. LW declared interest in Item 8 – EHT Job Profile.

Quoracy was confirmed.

Any Other Business: There was none.

3. The minutes of the last meeting (9th May 2017)

Page 2, Condition Reports, SS advised that three companies had been identified and one had already provided a quotation. Once the other quotations had been provided, together with risk assessments, the information would be taken to Resources Committee to make a final decision. SS had accessed the HSE website for contacts.

Page 3, LGB recommendations would be carried forward to the next agenda.

Page 15, Letter from Dominic Herrington, it was noted that The De Curci Trust was the only Trust to reply by the deadline.

Page 16, Audit Reports, one Report was outstanding. This would be followed up.

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

A Trustee advised that governors and trustees should not be identified by name or initials in minutes when asking questions or posing challenge. It was acceptable to use initials against actions to be carried out.

In order to make it easier to identify actions in the minutes, it was suggested that a separate table of actions, with columns for identifying the person tasked with the action, completion date and comments, be attached to the minutes.

Confidential minutes of the last meeting (9th May 2017)

There were no issues with accuracy or actions to be followed up.

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.

4. Update on Tenancy at Will (Solent)

Trustees were advised that the transfer had been agreed in principle and the draft document would need to be agreed by both authorities. Portsmouth City Council had prepared the draft transfer and were awaiting Hampshire's comments. LW and SS were monitoring the situation.

5. Draft Risk Registers

Trustees were advised that more time was required to get the register to the required standard for audit. It was suggested that there should be a single Trust Register rather than separate ones. This would be considered.

Springfield Risk Register

There were a number of areas coded yellow referring to IT systems.

Solent Schools Risk Register

Solent Schools Register had been annotated by LW with the two Solent School Business Managers and then considered by the Local Resources Committee prior to bringing to trustees. LW advised there were some areas of vulnerability coded red such as fraud. This was because the School Business Managers recognised various vulnerabilities linked to finance, in particular: legislation requirements; employment risk management strategy which was not yet in place; financial reporting requirement of the Trust; and legislation regarding tax.

Trustees were assured there were no reasons for concern. The vulnerabilities identified were potential at that stage as a result of new system requirements and the priority was to remain very vigilant and to ensure the finance team had a clear understanding and were supported to work through the systems

Trustee Question: One major risk mentioned for Springfield is that of failing to fill places. This is an issue that needs to be kept in mind.

Response: We are now above 227 for year 7 (2017/18). There are reasons why we did not have the normal intake from the feeder schools in the previous year, however, the point about keeping the issue at the forefront is taken. The school had already noted this area as "yellow" on the risk register.

Trustee Comment: The risk register is a very good piece of work. As the skills are consolidated it will feel more "comfortable" and items will turn from red to green. Congratulations are due to all staff involved in preparing the register.

Site Contingency Plan – Disaster/Catastrophe

SS had spoken to the council about how risk could be managed. It was noted that there was land at Springfield which could be used for temporary buildings. Further investigation would be required and advice would be sought from VWV.

It was noted that there was a conference planned for September.

Action: DG to meet with SPY to agree an approach to planning for disaster/catastrophe.

6. Scheme of Financial Limits and Delegation

LS advised that all schemes were now in line, with a uniform layout of risks.

It was noted that the safeguards and controls were that there should be an appropriate number of people responsible for signing off items. There were no concerns.

7. Budgets September 2017/August 2018

Budget Summary Reports 2017-2018 had been prepared for the MAT, Springfield and Solent Junior School. Governors received a copy of the documents. It was noted that the Infant School had had a technical issue due to issues at source rather than at school level, which meant the 2017-2018 budget was not available. The company were creating a patch and a report would be available as soon as this was completed.

DCT Budget Summary Report

Question: Governance Costs (Other) is £12,000. What does this relate to?

Answer: The costs are for items such as training, insurance etc

It was noted that the CFOO post would cost an extra 1%. It was felt that although there would be an initial cost, employing a CFOO would benefit the Trust in the long run and help to save money. It was proposed that the 1% budget would increase to 2% in the coming financial year.

This was agreed unanimously.

Deficit Reduction Plans

Solent Infant School

The Deficit Reduction Plans for Infant and Junior School had been discussed at the Resources Committee meeting on 27 June. There was a significant concern with regard to the deficit budget in the future, with an in-year deficit of £24,000 anticipated in 2017-2018. Action had already been taken to reduce spending and included: remodelling of senior leader posts within the school; moving from a full-time post of a shared post; using the shared schools status to re-negotiate SLAs and contracts. Curriculum spending had already been reduced by £20,000.

Question: Are these savings on-going?

Answer: Yes.

Question: What is included in the curriculum spend saving?

Answer: This includes some materials but it is more linked to curriculum training. Training has reduced dramatically and we have done this by using school to school dialogue and advice.

Trustees noted that the Solent Schools were becoming concerned that the savings were beginning to have a negative impact on the staff and children and the main focus was to maintain the core structure of the schools and their priorities. If, for example, a member of staff who delivered an enriching rather than a curriculum service, like the ICT HLTA, left they were not replaced. LW advised, however, that it was felt that ultimately there would be a negative impact on the schools resulting from the funding formula.

Actions were planned to ensure that an annual saving of £50,000 was made to offset the deficit concern.

It was noted that the teaching team at the Infant School was very experienced and many teachers were at the top of the scale. The staffing profile differed across the Solent Schools.

A further aspect at the Infant School was the number of children with significant additional needs who started in Year R but did not necessarily follow on to the Junior School. The Infant School had to support these children by putting in one-to-one support before an EHCP was available.

Solent Junior School

There were significant works required to be carried out on the roof.

The in-year deficit for 2017-2018 was Nil. The school's surplus was calculated not to be spent by 2021 although it was possible this would change due to premises condition.

Actions taken over the past two years to reduce spending mirrored those taken at Infant School and included removing a cover supervisory role and covering a maternity vacancy with existing teaching staff.

Analysis had indicated that for 2017-2018 an annual saving of £10,000 would be sufficient to offset the deficit concern.

LW explained that PCC had applied for funding from Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF). The Solent Schools had expressed interest and had been selected to be part of the bid for the fund. PCC were yet to find out if their bid would be successful.

Springfield School

Trustees noted that an annual saving of £100,000 would be required to offset the deficit concern. A reduction in planned curriculum spending by £45,000 for 2017-2018 had been made. The cumulative surplus in 2016-2017 was higher than the previous year's prediction. It was noted that in future some difficult decisions would have to be made. The Steering Group would be reviewing proposed options.

PCC had not yet confirmed the surplus amount; this would probably be available by mid-July.

It was agreed that when the Solent Infant School budget was available, this would need to be approved by the Board electronically. The appropriate papers to be sent to RC and MH to distribute and all Trustees would be required to respond.

Action: LW to forward papers to RC/MH to distribute electronically. All Trustees to respond.

8. HR Committee Report

A report was made to the Trustees. The main points noted included:
Progress was being made on contracts for the Trust.

The job description for the EHT was available but it was felt that reference should be made to the safeguarding and child protection aspects of the role. **It was proposed** that the job description for the EHT be adopted, subject to the amendment. All were in favour; the proposal was carried.

Trustees considered the job description for a Chief Financial and Operating Officer (CFOO) which would be a senior leadership post with wide-ranging responsibilities. A timeline for advertising and interviewing potential candidates was discussed. It was felt that there should be a 2-step interview and task process to see how potential candidates related to colleagues as well as children.

It was noted that SS, DG, SB and AC had all undertaken safer recruitment training.

Question: Is it possible to get somebody by 1 September?

Answer: It is more important to make the right appointment rather than the right date. Perhaps 1 September could serve as a guideline date, but that this does not have to be a firm date and it could, for example, be just October.

Question: Are colleagues prepared to work during the summer to carry out the interview process?

Answer: Some Trustees could be available in August to short-list or to interview.

It was proposed that there should be De Curci Trust Education Improvement Partners for the schools. This was approved unanimously.

Action: LW and SS to manage this.

The HR Committee approved the recommended changes to the staff contract and this was approved by HR.

Terms of Reference were circulated and approved. It was agreed that membership would be 6 with a quorum of 3 with regard to the HR Committee and Finance Committee. It was agreed that the ToRs be amended to incorporate the amendment.

Action: MH to amend ToRs

Apprenticeship Levy was noted.

The HoS Job Profile would be taken to the Local Governing Committee for approval.

9. Committee Terms of Reference

The ToRs for Behaviour & Safety Committee, Resources Committee and Curriculum & Standards Committee were agreed.

[A Trustee left the meeting at 6.25pm]

10. Policy Review Schedule

Whistleblowing Policy and Admissions Policy

The policies had been researched by a Trustee and new ones drafted based on the existing PCC policies. The policies would be emailed to the Company Secretary to forward to the Trustees with a request for comments/approval to be provided electronically.

Action: MH to email the policies to Trustees with a request for comment/approval.

Health & Safety Policy

The Trustee tasked with looking at the policy commented that Springfield and Solent Junior schools' existing policies were either out of date or needed to be rewritten; he requested up to date policies. The Trustee would like to see some challenge in the minutes regarding compliance with H&S Policy. A Trustee felt that it could be tracked through Resources Committee meetings how H&S issues were dealt with. It was considered that there could be a draft overview of Trust policy and generic items, with separate sections (as appendices) for each school. It was agreed that an amalgamated version of the policies would be prepared and sections relevant to each of the three schools would be added in following that.

Action: DG to prepare amalgamated version of the policies appropriate for the Trust.

Anti-Fraud Policy

This had been drafted by the CEO. It was agreed that the policy would have a three-year review cycle. The policy was proposed and accepted unanimously.

Gifts and Hospitality Guidance

The limit of £25.00 was agreed and £50.00 for present giving. The wording with regard to hospitalisation or significant bereavement would remain. The Guidance was proposed and accepted unanimously

11. Training

It was noted that a number of skills audit forms had not yet been completed. A presentation was given incorporating the data from the forms which had been completed and included a separate analysis for Trustees; Members; and Trustees and Members combined.

Action: Trustees and/or Members who had not yet completed the skills audit form to do so as soon as possible and forward to SB.

Training Needs analysis indicated that the training needs for Trustees and Members were very similar and the main skills gap occurred in the area of compliance, particularly understanding and experience of legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities. It was agreed that training to close this gap should be the main priority.

It was further agreed that a focussed training day should be held once a term based on the areas noted on the skills gap analysis. The dates would be planned for the year ahead and training would be open to all Trustees, Members and Governors on Local Committees.

Action: First training session to be arranged with a focus on compliance and legal issues.

Action: MH to liaise with JL with regard to setting training session dates for 2017-2018.

12. Member/Trustee Code of Conduct

The Member/Trustee Code of Conduct and the Governor Code of Conduct had been circulated to Trustees for approval. There were no comments or amendments and it was proposed that both Codes of Conduct be approved. This was agreed unanimously.

13 AOB

DBS Forms

It was agreed that these should be completed and submitted to RC by the end of term.

Cloud Storage System for Trust Documents

A Trustee requested that a system be set up for storing Trust documents electronically and which could be accessed by all Trustees. It was noted that a model system was being set up for this purpose.

Documents for Meetings

It was requested that, wherever possible, documents for meetings be issued 7 days before the meeting to ensure that Trustees/Members had sufficient time to read them and become familiar with the contents.

14. Agenda Items for 25th September 2017

To be agreed

15. Dates of Next meetings

25 th September 2017 – Springfield	19 th March 2018 – Springfield
13 th November 2017 – Solent Junior	14 th May 2018 – Solent Junior
5 th February 2018 – Solent Infant	9 th or 16 th July 2018 tbc – Solent Infant

There was no other business and the meeting closed.

Signature of the Chair:

Date:

The De Curci Trust, a charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with company number 10646541.

Registered office address: Springfield School Central Road, Drayton, Portsmouth, Hampshire, United Kingdom, PO6 1QY.

ACTION POINT SUMMARY

Action	Person responsible	To be completed by
Site Contingency Plan: Meet with SPY to agree an approach to planning for disaster/catastrophe	DG	
Deficit Reduction Plans – Solent Infant School Budget to be approved by the Board when available. LW to forward papers to RC/MH to distribute electronically and all Trustees to respond.	LW/RC/MH All Trustees	
HR Committee Report: Proposal that there should be De Curci Trust Education Improvement Partners for the schools was approved. LW and SS to manage the process.	LW/SS	
Terms of Reference: To be amended to reflect membership would be 6, with a quorum of 3 re HR Committee and Finance Committee.	MH	
Whistleblowing Policy and Admissions Policy: To be emailed to Company Secretary to forward to Trustees. Request comments/approval to be provided electronically.	MH All Trustees	
Health & Safety Policy: Amalgamated version of the policies appropriate for the Trust to be prepared.	DG	
Training: Trustees/Members who have not yet completed the Skills Audit to do so as soon as possible and forward to SB	Trustees/ Members	ASAP
Training: First session to be arranged with focus on compliance and legal issues.		
Training Session Dates: Arrange to set dates for 2017-2018.	MH/JL	ASAP
DBS Forms: To be completed and submitted to RC by the end of term.		end of term