

Finance and People Committee Minutes

Meeting	Finance and People Committee	Date	Tuesday, 20 th January 2026
Location	Burgess Hodgson, Canterbury	Time	2.00 pm
Membership	Ollie Laughton (OL) - Chair; Paul Sayers (PS): Alison Gray (AG)		
In Attendance	Tammy Mitchell, (CEO), Matthew Cooper, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Sharon Hollingsworth, Director of Governance (DG), Summer Macer. Chief of Staff (CoS) for item 10; Claire Edgeworth – Note Taker		

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and Apologies	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. No apologies were noted.	
2	Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations other than those standing.	
3	Minutes of the meeting held 25 November 2025	The Committee reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting and considered progress against agreed actions. Trustees noted timely progress on financial reporting improvements agreed previously. APPROVED – Minutes from the meeting held on the 25 th November 2025	
4	Matters Arising not covered by this agenda	There were no matters arising that are not covered by the agenda.	
5	Management Accounts October 2025	The Management Accounts October 25 were shared prior to the meeting and were noted. NOTED – Management Accounts October 2025	

6	<p>Management Accounts November 2025 including Q1 re-forecast</p>	<p>The Management Accounts for November 2025 were shared prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Trustees reviewed the Management Accounts and Q1 forecast to assure themselves that the Trust remains financially sustainable, and risks are understood ahead of Trust Board scrutiny.</p> <p>The CFO explained that headline variances were largely due to accounting presentation and phasing issues rather than deterioration in performance. Transferred-in reserves are being separated below EBITDA to provide a clearer view of operational performance. Trustees challenged the accuracy of current reserve lines and were assured that a revised model would be in place within three months as a temporary person had been appointed to address coding and accounting presentation issues.</p> <p>Trustee sought clarity on the reserves and robustness of forecasting. Trustees were assured that additional qualified capacity had been secured to improve long-term sustainability and reporting quality.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED – Management Accounts November 2025 including Q1 forecast</p>	
7	<p>Review Income from Interest</p>	<p>The CFO shared a review paper on Income from Interest prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The CFO advised that interest received this year will be slightly less due to Sheppey capital funding being utilised and interest rates have dropped. This was known at budget setting.</p> <p>Trustees questioned how historic interest income had been used and the CEO explained that it had funded the Director of Safeguarding and Compliance post for a year and provided trust-wide capacity ahead of growth, representing a managed and low-risk investment in improvement.</p> <p>Trustees challenged whether current banking arrangements were the most advantageous and the CFO confirmed that a review with the Trust’s bankers is planned as part of wider procurement improvements.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED – Review of Income from Interest Paper</p>	

8	<p>Review of School Reserve levels</p>	<p>The CFO shared a review paper on the School Reserve Levels prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The Trustees had previously scrutinised the school-level reserves and amended the Reserves Policy to ensure Trust growth.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the updated Reserves Policy and noted the previous agreement to adjust thresholds to a more proportionate level. Trustees challenged how and when schools could access their reserves and were assured that any releases had to be agreed and are linked to capital or time-limited pressures and would not be used for staffing. The CEO advised some schools are in discussion regarding releasing some funds and the reasons for this. Large projects need to be discussed with the CEO and CFO and until the whole budget is set, they cannot agree to release funds.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">APPROVED – School Reserve Levels</p>	
9	<p>Capital Estates Project including: Estates Strategy update</p>	<p>The Director of Safeguarding and Compliance, Dan Lewsey (DSC). shared an Update on the Estates Strategy prior to the meeting and the CEO presented the paper on behalf of DSC. The previous CFO had undertaken the Estates Strategy review, but this now sits with DSC.</p> <p>The CEO outlined the new central capital approach following historic CIF bids where the Trust had had mixed success. The Trustees discussed the reasons why bids had been unsuccessful. The Trust should receive an indicative figure within the next month and a final figure in April. The figure will be taken from data on the 1st April 2025 so Aylesham will not be included. Due to the amount of capital already spent on Sheppey Secondary, they will also not be included this year. The CEO explained the process and advised that safety would always be a priority. Any requests under £20k should be funded from the repairs and maintenance budget. The requests will come to the Finance and People Committee for approval.</p> <p>Trustees queried if any money not spent had to be handed back to the DfE and the CEO advised the money could be carried over if there was a plan for the money. Initially, the money would be spent on repairing and replacing.</p>	

		<p>Trustees welcomed the robust scoring framework, use of external validation and emphasis on safety, sustainability and carbon reduction. Trustees challenged decision-making authority, emergency scenarios and communication with schools. Assurance was provided that the Department for Education’s Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA) will cover emergencies.</p> <p>Trustees queried if there were any potential pots of funding for high needs commissioning, The CEO advised she had been asked to consider opening two SRPs and a paper will be brought to the Trust Board in March for approval for Bysing Wood. The CEO has also been approached to open an SRP at Sheppey Secondary.</p> <p>Trustees agreed this should be added to the annual Health and Safety process to see if anything is picked up that would be suitable for the grant. CoS to discuss with DSC.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">APPROVED – Estates Strategy ACTIONS - DG to update Trustee Feedback forms - CoS to discuss with DSC adding to Health and Safety process</p>	
10	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion update</p>	<p>The CoS shared a Public Sector Equality Duty paper prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Trustees noted significant progress around inclusion, and this is noted during Trustee visits to the schools.</p> <p>All the schools have now reached Parentkind Silver accreditation and are the first Trust in the country to achieve this. There is a new Drawn Together project due to be launched on Thursday, which will see a visual representation of the Trusts inclusive ethos across all the schools. The CoS advised the work will be until Easter and then monoliths will go up in the summer term. Trustees acknowledged this linked with discussions at the Strategy Day.</p> <p>Trustees discussed the increasing challenge of social media hostility impacting leaders and welcomed the Trust’s values-led response focused on culture, visibility and staff welfare. The CoS shared the Ethnicity Pay Gap 2024 prior to the meeting.</p>	

		<p>The CoS advised this is not yet a legal requirement but due to the Equality Bill this will be a requirement. Trustees discussed how the papers could be streamlined. The CoS advised there is a baseline that can be quietly monitored until reportable.</p> <p>Trustees discussed inclusivity and feedback from surveys.</p> <p>Trustees welcomed the early consideration of ethnicity pay gap reporting.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED – Equality Duty Paper</p>	
11	Support Staff Pay . Confidential Item	<p>CFO and Trust staff not in attendance</p> <p>This item was considered confidential and will form Part A of the minutes.</p>	
12	Matters considered confidential	Item 11 is considered confidential and will form Part A of the minutes.	
13	Any other business	There was no additional business.	
14	Date and time of next meeting	Tuesday, 24 th March 2026 at 2.00 p.m.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.40 pm.

Signed: *Chang Chen*

Print: O. LAKHON

Date: 14/1/26