

Finance and People Committee Minutes

Meeting	Finance and People Committee	Date	Tuesday, 25 th November 2025
Location	The Private Dining Room, The Yarrow Hotel	Time	1.30 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 (COO) for item 9; Claire Edgeworth – Note Taker		

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and Apologies	There were no apologies. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
2	Declarations of Interest	There were no declarations other than those standing.	
3	Minutes of the meeting held 24 June 2025	The minutes of the meeting held on the 24 th June 2025 were deemed to be an accurate record of the meeting. AGREED – Minutes of the meeting held 24th June 2025	
4	Matters Arising not covered by this agenda	There were no matters arising that are not covered by the agenda.	
5	Terms of Reference for the Finance and People Committee	The Terms of Reference must be reviewed annually, and these were shared with the Finance and People Committee prior to the meeting. Item 3e had one change from ESFA to DfE. APPROVED – The Terms of Reference for the Finance and People Committee.	

6	Management Accounts – Final Year End August 2025	<p>The CFO presented the Management Accounts for the Year ending August 2025. The CFO advised that the bottom line was better than forecast and there were not many variances. There was an increased GAG for Sheppey Secondary School, than had been expected. There have been large pension adjustments, but this is offset. The transferred in values will be amended with coding. Trustees reflected that the previous Chair of the Trustees had discussed strongly with the Auditors about pension adjustment and the CFO advised that the Trust needs to work within the rules.</p> <p>The Finance and People Committee will be joining the RAC Committee after the meeting, to discuss the Financial Statements with the Auditor.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED - Management Accounts – Final Year End August 2025</p>	
7	Management Accounts – September 2025	<p>The CFO presented the September Management Accounts, highlighting improved cash flow and budget alignment. Trustees raised detailed questions about the choice of SAGE accounting system, querying whether alternative platforms were considered and how scalability will be supported as the Trust grows. The CFO explained that SAGE was selected by the previous CFO for its integration capabilities and cost-effectiveness, noting that training sessions for staff are scheduled. Trustees reflected on previous system challenges and shared anecdotes about operational delays, emphasising the importance of robust financial systems for Ofsted readiness.</p> <p>There were no further questions on September’s Management Accounts.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED – September 2025 Management Accounts</p>	
8	Reserves Policy	<p>The CEO shared a paper prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The paper highlighted that the Trust currently has a three part approach to reserves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5% of GAG (core turnover) per Academy • 25K per form of entry in the primary Academies which are restricted / emergency reserves • 2% of total turnover as Trust Central Reserves 	

		<p>This equates to total reserves of around 7.3%. When this target and approach was originally agreed it was set to provide a reserves level of around 5.5% (comfortably within the best practice guidance and ensures clarity for schools and Governance on the financial security of the Trust). However, with continual Trust growth this approach has raised the reserves level to a target of over 7%.</p> <p>The CEO asked the Finance and People Committee to recommend a change to the limit of the central reserves to a cash sum of £500,000 rather than 2% of turnover. This is to prevent the central team from continually needing to find savings to increase the central reserves as the Trust grows. This has meant adding needed capacity to the central team increasingly challenging. The CEO would like the plan to be reviewed annually and therefore, at the point the overall reserves level was at risk of reducing below the guidance level of 5%, this would be reviewed to increase the overall cash value.</p> <p>Trustees debated the adequacy of the proposed £500,000 reserve, linking this to risk mitigation and succession planning. Trustees challenged whether this figure aligns with sector benchmarks and queried the impact on future capital projects. The CFO confirmed that the policy will remain under annual review and adjustments will be made based on financial forecasts. The Trustees felt comfortable with the central reserve figure being £450,000 and keeping this under review.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AGREED to recommend £450,000 reserve under annual review.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ACTION - Review Reserves Policy annually</p>	DG
9	Trust People Strategy Update	<p>The COO joined the meeting for item 9 to update the Trustees on the People Strategy.</p> <p>The COO provided a paper prior to the meeting.</p> <p>The COO presented updates on staff handbooks, recruitment and induction improvements, noting positive feedback from new staff. The handbook was created with Headteachers and leaders and provides operational guidance.</p>	

		<p>The COO advised that the Flexible Working Policy is starting in earnest and this is not around individual requests but how education is done differently and a Workshop will be run in term 3.</p> <p>The CEO has looked at the new education toolkit and has tested this against what is already in existence and there is evidence to show that the Trust complies with the toolkit. Trustees explored the Growth and Skills Levy that is coming in, and how this could work in the Trust. The CEO felt there was an opportunity around work experience placements and the flexible working proposals and their potential impact on recruitment and retention.</p> <p>Trustees advised that during Trustee visits to schools it highlighted morale improvements following professional wellbeing initiatives.</p> <p>Update People Strategy with flexible working policy, Jan 2026</p> <p>NOTED – Trust People Strategy Update</p>	COO
10	Any other business	<p>The CEO advised there were some challenges around the Audit.</p> <p>One challenge was that the Management Accounts were not aligned to the Financial Statements, this was due to the closing balance given from new schools, did not align with the money received from KCC. The new CFO had picked this up and discussed with the Auditors and this is now shown on Restricted and Unrestricted Classification of Recommendation as an improvement for the Trust. The CFO is working on this as a key priority.</p> <p>The second issue is around obtaining employment documents.. These documents are held at the individual schools and not held centrally. This has now been shown as a controlled efficiency, and the CEO does not agree with this. The CEO felt that the documents were more secure being held at the individual schools.</p> <p>The CEO and Trustees scrutinised the Auditor’s approach, raising concerns about efficiency and classification issues.</p>	

		<p>The DfE do not see the Audit Report, but any concerns are put on a portal and could affect any future growth, as this is what the DfE will look at as part of due diligence.</p> <p>Trustees questioned whether tendering for a new auditor would improve value for money. The CFO would prefer to wait for a further year, to embed finance systems.</p>	
11	Matters considered confidential	There were no matters considered confidential.	
12	Date and time of next meeting	Tuesday, 20 th January 2026 at 2.00 p.m.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 2.45 pm

Signed: O Haugliter

Print: OLIVER LAUGLITER

Date: 24/1/2026