**The Federation of Abbey Schools Academy Trust**

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**Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting**

**5.30pm on Wednesday 29th November 2023**

**PRESENT:**

Mr J Briggs (Headteacher), Mr M Fryer, Dr L Bryant, Mrs C Stow-Smith, Mrs A Gibbs and Mr A Phillips

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mr K Shotton – Clive Owen LLP

Mr S Leigh – Clerk to the Governing Body

**Action**

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| **Procedural Business** | | |
| **1.** | **Welcome**  The meeting opened at 5.30pm with all welcomed. In the absence of Mrs Del La Motte, Dr Bryant agreed to Chair the meeting. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could move to business. |  |
| **2.** | **Apologies for Absence**  Apologies for absence were received from Mrs E del la Motte, Mr N Little, Mrs N McDowell and Mr G Buchanan who were unable to attend due to work commitments and personal circumstances.  ***Directors RESOLVED to consent to the absence of Mrs E del la Motte, Mr N Little, Mrs N McDowell and Mr G Buchanan.*** |  |
| **3.** | **Declarations of Interest**   1. **Declarations of Personal or Pecuniary Interest**   All Directors were reminded that any personal or pecuniary interest relating to items on the agenda should be declared. There were no declarations of interest made by any governor in relation to items on the agenda.   1. **Register of Business Interests**   Directors were reminded of the requirement to maintain a register of business interests and for this to be updated on a regular basis. ***All governors present confirmed that their registers were up to date at the time of reporting. Dr Bryant confirmed that he needed to complete and sign his register.*** |  |
| **Policies** | | |
| **4.** | **HR Policies**  ***Directors RESOLVED to approve the following reviewed policies for immediate adoption:***   * Absence Mgt Policy * Appraisal Policy * Bullying & Harassment Policy * Capability Procedures – Teaching Staff * Capability Procedures – Non-Teaching Staff * Code of Conduct * Disciplinary Procedures * Family Friendly Policy * Grievance Procedures * Health & Wellbeing Policy * Pay Policy * PD days * Recruitment Selection * Requests to work flexibly * Staffing level management * Stress Risk Assessments * Substance Misuse Policy * Unpaid parental leave |  |
| **5.** | **Equality Policy and Objectives**  **Equality Objectives** - Directors received a copy of the Federation’s reviewed and revised equality objectives for consideration and approval. It was highlighted that as part of the review exercise, statements produced by other Trust organisations had been reviewed for comparative purposes with no real differences identified.  Directors re-affirmed that the Federation of Abbey Schools was committed to ensuring equality of education and opportunity for all pupils, staff, parents and carers, irrespective of race, gender, disability, belief, religion or socio-economic background.  In order to further support pupils, raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching, the following objectives were confirmed:   * Objective 1: To monitor and analyse pupil achievement by race, gender and disability and act on any trends or patterns in the data that require additional support for pupils. * Objective 2: To raise levels of attainment in core subjects for vulnerable learners. * Objective 3: To review levels of parental and pupil engagement in learning and school life, across all activities to ensure equity and fairness in access and engagement.   ***Directors RESOLVED to approve the reviewed Equality Objectives as presented.***  ***Questioning the objective’s reference to disability access***, it was highlighted that the Federation did maintain a detailed Accessibility Plan which was reviewed annually, fulfilling requirements in this area.  **Equality, Diversity and Cohesion Policy** – referencing the section of the policy relating to visitor and contractor DBS checks, Directors were assured that this was adequately covered in all relevant policies maintained by the Federation.  ***Directors RESOLVED to approve the reviewed Equality Policy as presented***. | **Chair / Headteacher** |
| **Company Business** | | |
| **6.** | **Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st August 2023**  Directors welcomed Mr K Shotton, Clive Owen LLP into the meeting. Copies of the Audit Findings Report together with the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st August 2023 had been circulated for reading prior to the meeting. The information presented was the final drafting and presented for Director approval.  **Financial Statements for the year ended 31st August 2023**  Trustees acknowledged receipt of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st August 2023. It was reported that there were no significant issues to highlight from the statements presented.  Directors RESOLVED to approve the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st August 2023 as presented.  **Audit Findings Report**  Attention was drawn to the Audit Findings report for the year ended 31st August 2023 which had been circulated, noting the scope of the audit which examined and sample tested the Trust’s accounting systems, the findings from the audit work undertaken and recommendations made for the Federation to action. Key highlighted the following points:   * Accounting and Internal Control Systems – audit work considered the Academy’s systems and internal controls and identified no significant matters for attention. * Significant Difficulties Encountered during the Audit - reported that there were no significant difficulties encountered during the audit.   Key points of note from the report were highlighted as follows:  **Summary of results for the period** – key points from the summary were highlighted as follows:   * total income for the year confirmed as £3.408m * % spend on staff costs confirmed at 84.1% * Reserves to carry forward at the year-end = £285k   **Audit Focus and Conclusions** – key areas of audit focus and judgement were summarised as follows:  **Going Concern** – Directors were informed that management forecasts and assumptions made had been subject to review. The forecasts highlighted a projected deficit of £17k in 2023/2024. Given the level of reserves maintained, it was considered that the Trust has headroom against this position deteriorating. The cash position of the Trust was deemed to be healthy at approx. £0.5m and the forecasts show this position is expected to be maintained. The audit view concluded that there were no material uncertainties surrounding Going Concern and the disclosure in the financial statements was considered appropriate.  **Management Override** – ***questioning the position regarding management override***, it was highlighted that audit confirmed that there is no significant misstatement as a result of audit procedures. The review of both standard and non-standard journal entries posted did not highlight any issues. Test checks confirmed that expenses and payments had been made in accordance with the Trust’s written procedures and that their true nature was reflected in the financial statements.  **Revenue recognition & restricted income** – noted that all significant sources of revenue are materially complete. Terms of the funding agreements reviewed with no identified instances where grants would be repayable. Expenditure incurred reviewed to ensure that it appears in accordance with grant conditions. No instances of misappropriation of income had been identified.  **Accounting Estimates** – acknowledged that the LGPS valuation is considered separately in the report. Land and buildings valuation have remained unchanged in the year and therefore no reason to change this valuation given the trust policy is to hold the asset at initial value less impairment rather than adopting a policy of revaluation. Whilst there is an element of judgement in the other areas highlighted, audit do not believe them to be at significant risk of material misstatement. We have reviewed the positions taken by management and have not identified any issues as a result of our audit work.  **ESFA Regularity Review** - Terms and conditions of key grants reviewed to ensure that the trust has complied with these. Trust expenditure reviewed to ensure that it is permissible within the trust’s framework of authorities, appropriately authorised and in line with funding agreements. Confirmed that there are no unauthorised borrowings or disposals of assets. There were no extra-contractual payments during the period. The related party transactions were notified to the ESFA and correctly disclosed in the financial statements.  **LGPS Retirement Benefits** – reliance placed upon the independent actuaries appointed by the trust to perform a valuation of the trust’s pension liabilities for FRS 102 purposes. Confirmed that the firms appointed have the necessary skills and experience to perform these tasks. Actuaries assigned to perform the valuations on behalf of the trust assessed with no concerns. Ensured that the trust’s management have checked the data and considered the assumptions used by the actuary in preparing the LGPS valuation. Reviewed a copy of the LGPS valuation to support the disclosures in the financial statements. Compared the actuarial assumptions used for the trust with those used by other trusts to ensure consistency.  Internal control recommendations were summarised as follows:  **Declaration of Business Interests for newly appointed Directors (July 2023)** – required completion of registers at the time of the appointments noted. This had now been addressed with completed registers in place.  **GIAS and Companies House** – suggested that both need to be checked on a regular basis to ensure accuracy of information for each Director.  As highlighted earlier in the meeting, the audit concluded that the audit reports undertaken as part of the process were clean and had produced unqualified reports, supporting the view that the accounts presented a true and fair view of the academy’s financial activities with no issues identified that would require formal reporting.  ***Directors RESOLVED to approve the Annual Report and Financial Statements for Year Ended 31st August 2021 for Board approval.***  Directors extended their thanks and appreciation to Mr Shotton and the audit team for the support provided to the Trust. Thanks were also extended to staff for their work and efforts in securing such a positive report, recognising the levels of work involved in achieving this position. The Headteacher fully endorsed these comments, expressing his appreciation for the support received in the financial management of the Federation.  ***Directors RESOLVED to approve the drafted Annual General Meeting agenda for circulation.***  There being no further points to discuss, Mr Shotton was thanked for his attendance and presentation of the documentation provided. At this point, Mr Shotton left the meeting. |  |
| **Concluding items** | | |
| **7.** | **Company Business – signing of documents**  With Director approval being given to both the Financial Statements for 2022/2023 and the Audit Finding s report for 2022/2023, ***Directors agreed that arrangements be made for the Headteacher and Chair to the Board to sign the financial statements for submission to the auditor and publication***. | **Headteacher** |
| **8.** | **Any Other Business**  There were no other items of urgent business to raise for discussion at this point. |  |
| **9.** | **Items for Next Meeting**  ***Items identified for inclusion at the next meeting governing body were noted as follows:***   * SchoolIP – demonstration of new platform for capturing and monitoring progress of the School Development Plan * Consideration of National College courses and CPD |  |
| **10.** | **Approval of documents for inspection**  ***Directors RESOLVED that the agenda and all supporting papers circulated for this meeting be approved for inspection.*** | **Headteacher** |
| **11.** | **Date and Time of Next Meeting**  Noted as follows:   * Monday 18th December 2023 at 5.00pm   There being no further business, Directors were thanked for their attendance and contributions to the meeting and the meeting closed at 6.06pm. | **All to note** |

Chair…………………………………………………………………

Signed……………………………………………………………….

Date………………………………………………………………….