

**MINUTES OF THE 102nd FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD AT ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
WEDNESDAY 13 OCTOBER 2021 AT 16.00**

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Stewart Harris (SH),
Angela Entwistle (AEE), Rachel Brannagan (RB)

Absent:

In Attendance: Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

Start Time: 16.00

1. Apologies for absence

The only absentees were Tony Bothwell (TB) due to connectivity issues and Kevin Chamberlain (KC) due to being on annual leave.

2. Declaration of interest

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of Last meeting

DW commented on the fact that ATA had increased the number of internal students admitted into the 6th Form in September 2020 and the fact that this was a similar trend this year. DW asked if that implies that ATA accept students who do not meet the entry requirements. DMI confirmed that this is not the case and that Covid has made students more cautious about moving to another school.

DW reflected on the responses presented from the staff exit questionnaire and asked for further clarification of staff views on training and development opportunities, which were not presented at the time. RJP gave colleagues reassurance that the staff are given every possible PD opportunity while they are at the Academy and that there were no concerns expressed in the exit questionnaires, which is why this was not included.

RJP mentioned item 3 from the minutes of the last meeting, which outlined the Academy's underfunding for Years 7, 8 and 6th form student numbers in 2020 and reassured colleagues that a huge effort had gone in to making sure that places have been filled this year so that ATA is not under its admission numbers in time for the Census return, upon which next years' funding is based.

RJP told Colleagues that ATA is pleased that the 2022 enrolment processes could be done in person this year and that ATA is holding an open event this evening for the 6th Form. An open event was also organised for prospective Year 7s recently on an appointment basis so that ATA was able to control the number of visitors to the Academy.

DMI confirmed that the Ofsted draft report still has not yet been received.

The previous minutes were agreed and signed.

4. Matters Arising

ATA is starting to look into the potential sale of the ATA bus and RJP told colleagues that ATA will not be using Openview before Christmas, so it would be helpful to see what the interest would be in the bus, but RJP will cover this and the use of Openview in more detail at a future meeting.

5. Capital Developments

RJP updated Colleagues about the discussion for the Ransomware virus that had impacted the Academy and ways of protecting the Academy going forward. Some of the proposed works have been undertaken, some of the works are underway and other works are due to start. RJP shared the details with colleagues and took a number of questions.

DW asked RJP about the secure remote access upgrades and about this being rolled out to staff and students. Would staff and students only be able to 'remote in' using Academy issued devices? RJP confirmed we have many devices that can be allocated for students and staff during periods of lockdown. Thus, the supplier looking into this element is seeing whether it is feasible to shut down the remote system access to such a degree that access could only be enabled using Academy-owned devices, but it is more likely to be a system where an individual's own device would also form part of a revised remote access protocol.

By the October half term, ATA will have the proof of concept and DW asked if RJP could circulate the suggested Ransomware costs to the FRC before proceeding, which RJP confirmed he would do.

RJP had reported on the safe transportation of individuals in Academy lifts and about the cost of the works that will need to be carried out. DW asked about the total of costs and looked for assurance that the safe transportation of people using the lifts was a significant issue. DW asked RJP if the high cost of £100k was strictly necessary, given that some lifts were old but that alone did not warrant costly replacement if some were still functioning effectively. RJP confirmed that the lifts' breakdown frequency increases year on year. These are not urgent works but if they are not completed soon, they will become increasingly urgent. It may be possible to save immediate costs by prioritisation being focussed on lifts known to have more breakdowns than others.

Zone D is the lift which requires the most attention and the parts for repairing these lifts are quickly becoming obsolete. It would be likely to be more expensive to undertake the works over a 3-year period rather than undertaking the full works at once. These are maintenance works to ensure that the facilities don't leave ATA in an emergency position, RJP will ask the Building Services Manager to break down the elements for each lift. RJP feels it would be wise to complete the works for Zone D but also commented that not all three lifts need to be done straight away.

RJP talked Colleagues through the breakdown of costs from the three companies in question for the undertaking of the work.

After some discussion the view was to undertake the repairs to the lift in Zone D next summer. It was agreed by colleagues that Zone D is the most critical and that the works can be undertaken. RJP commented that staff and students would see that this is as a benefit and it would also allow the Academy to monitor the company's workmanship before confirming further work.

6. Revenue Funding 2020-2021 Update

RJP circulated the figures for the end of August and confirmed that ATA had spent 101% of the total income for the year, although subject to the end of year adjustments which will increase this deficit slightly. RJP is still forecasting an overspend of 3% of the anticipated income by the year end which is lower than forecast at the start of the year due to the savings in certain costs due to the COVID pandemic.

The DfE have brought back the timescales for the submission of the final Accounts to the end of December, having extended this to the end of January in 2020.

7. Revenue Funding 2021-22

RJP informed Colleagues that it is too early to send any comparison documentation for September as this would only be based on one month's worth of expenditure, but RJP confirmed he will send the figures to DW and SH, as is done monthly.

RJP discussed the Academies Trust Handbook originally called the Academies Financial Handbook, which he shared with colleagues. This is a familiar document for the financial and governance arrangements and provides a guide of what ATA should be doing and includes a useful update showing changes from the previous year's arrangements.

RJP provided colleagues with Appendix 5 showing the breakdown of changes for reference which are bullet points and within the main document there are clauses referring to those particular elements which are mentioned and RJP advised colleagues to read this document.

DW asked about areas that would be good to look at within the document and raise questions for discussion, it would be good to look at the document, to break it down and see if ATA need to alter everything.

DW asked the question with regards to ATA being a single academy trust with the handbook more geared to multi-academy trust set-ups and the requirements the document places on academies.

DW confirmed in the first instance that he would like to go through the document with RJP and DMI and then the conclusions can be shared with AEE and SH afterwards for their comments.

8. Trading Company

RJP confirmed that there was no significant update on the Trading Company. Again, the lettings had suffered due to the pandemic and profits would again be around 80% of what they had been two years before.

9. Administrative and Staffing Matters

RJP updated colleagues on the Staff Attendance Reward scheme and confirmed that has it been impacted because of COVID-related absences, which had been discounted from the record of sickness for the purposes of this scheme.

ATA recorded 119 staff members who had achieved 100% attendance and 93% of staff in total received some bonus for attendance. The costs for the scheme this year is £125K in total inclusive of all costs but this does minimise the costs for having to recruit cover staff and maintains the continuity of learning for the students allowing them to have lessons with their normal teachers, which occurred successfully during lockdown too.

Even though more staff have qualified for the bonus this year, RJP still believes it provides value for money and acts as an incentive for ATA's staff.

10. Pay Reviews 2021-22

This matter was dealt with as the final item. RJP talked through aspects that have been considered this year and pointed out that staffing costs were likely to increase again this year. This would be approximately 3% should any inflationary award be made within the public sector to local government staff, which could potentially be applied to the Academy's associate staff. There is no such award due for teaching staff this year and the additions that contribute to the 3% mentioned above aside from the potential pay award for associate staff are a small increase in teaching and classroom support staff as well as the planned increase in National Insurance contributions from April 2022.

As a result of keeping staff numbers as efficient as possible, the detailed workings had been undertaken across all staff and DMI raised several exceptions to any standard incremental progression that some staff would still benefit from. These exceptions included confirmation that two teachers would not be recommended for progression they may otherwise qualify for; one teacher was recommended for accelerated progression and two teachers were

recommended for a one-off bonus payment of £1,000 for exceptional work undertaken in the year that he wished to be recognised. The process undertaken for the year was noted by FRC colleagues and agreement given to the exceptional cases.

Any detailed discussion of individuals is not reported in these minutes for confidentiality reasons.

11. Policies

RJP confirmed an update to the Scheme of Delegation which had been circulated. The document has been updated and shared with Colleagues

RJP confirmed that the Safer Recruitment Policy has been updated and a protocol has been set up for the recruitment of staff including a Low-Level Concerns document which is all interlinked. RJP asked colleagues to read the policy and if they have any suggested changes, these will be incorporated into a final update.

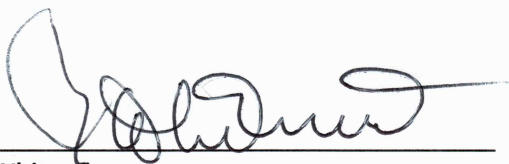
DMI summarised the latest Safer Recruitment Policy and confirmed that a few subtle changes have been made to the policy in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education document and the subject of safer recruitment, the updated policy reflects the changes which have been made so that ATA is fully compliant. The Low-Level Concerns is a new policy and forms part of the culture of vigilance that exists within schools for staff perhaps suffering with mental health issues or need some support, or support for staff who feel they have been in a situation with a child which they think afterwards that the approach was not quite right then they have an opportunity to speak with the Designated Safeguarding Lead about the concerns.

RJP asked if anyone had any comments on the documents please let RJP and DMI know.

12. Any Other Business

No other business was declared.

DW thanks colleagues for attending and their continued support.

Signed: 

Richard Whitcutt
Chair of Finance and Resource Committee

Date: 21 Jan /~~2021~~