

**MINUTES OF THE 114th FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MEETING
OF ASHCROFT TECHNOLOGY ACADEMY ON
WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2024 AT 16.30**

Present: Dick Whitcutt (DW) - Chair, Richard Perry (RJP), Douglas Mitchell (DMI), Angela Entwistle (AEE), Stewart Harris (SH), Kevin Chamberlain (KC)

In Attendance: Jane Kiddell (JKD) (Minutes)

Start Time: 16:30

1. Apologies for absence

The were no apologies

2. Declaration of interest

No interests were declared.

3. Minutes of last meeting held on Wednesday 13 December 2023

DW reviewed the minutes of the last meeting, which was held on Wednesday 13 December 2023.

DW referred to the TLA's pay scales. It was confirmed that the pay scale for TLAs had improved (particularly at the lower end) as was the case with the main pay scales. It was hoped that recruiting will be made a little easier as a result.

RJP updated colleagues on the national living wage increase from April 2024. RJP said that ATA agreed an increase to reflect the average increase across Associate Staff for employees paid at an hourly rate, which equated to a minimum rate of £11.30 per hour. As the minimum national living wage was to increase to £11.44 per hour from April, colleagues agreed to raise the minimum rate to £11.50 per hour from 1st April 2024 at a cost of around £8.5k per full year to the Academy.

ATA are still to receive indicative funding notification for 2024-2025 but there are no updates as this time as to whether the Academy will be funded for its oversubscribed student numbers.

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

RJP referred to the cost for the specified lift upgrades and the works were completed to the £102k budget. However, the works that were carried out to two of the lifts has led to additional work being required that fell outside the scope of the tendered works. One being the replacement of the hydraulic block for one lift and the other being the replacement of the rollers and doors skate for the other lift. The total additional costs came to around £12,500.

DW asked what the costs were colleagues originally approved. RJP explained that the original cost was £102K and the works were carried out exactly to budget, the additional costs have unfortunately been incurred as two of the lifts failed which meant there was additional works that had to be done which had been unforeseeable.

5. Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023

The Annual Reports and Financial Statements have been signed off and RJP thanked members for their contribution. The reports were submitted before the Christmas break and are now available on the Academy website. These were as approved at the December meeting.

ATA received a clean bill of health from the auditors and they again provided some additional benchmarking material.

ATA made a small surplus on in terms of operational margin.

The five-year forecast agreed by Trustees in November indicates small deficits year-on-year based on projected income and expenditure. The funding reserve at the end of the five-year period would have dropped by around £875k.

If ATA is in a position for being funded for its total student numbers in 2024-2025, ATA is looking at extra funding of approx. £300K.

DW asked about what the staff costs would be if ATA didn't have in-house staff. RJP gave a breakdown. This would be in the region of £200K for the catering staffing and £230k in respect of the cleaning colleagues, inclusive of on-costs would total to around £560k reducing to 72% the salaries percentage of total income.

DMI commented that other schools in Wandsworth finish earlier than ATA which reduces their staffing costs.

ATA brought down its percentage to 81% in the last year but it will be difficult to maintain this due to the extra employer pension costs from April.

DW commented that this will be the same for everyone else and RJP said it seems that all extra money which is given to schools will be spent on staff.

6. Annual Accounts Return 2023

The Annual Accounts return is a requirement for the Government which requires more details. This was submitted at the end of January and RJP shared this with the FRC.

7. Capital Developments

RJP mentioned that the second Astro Turf installation was still scheduled to proceed this summer.

8. Revenue Funding 2023-2024

The current years funding as at the end of January showed ATA had spent approx. £5M (£4.8M at the same time last year), which is 41% of expected income (compared to 40% last year). Energy costs have been enhanced due to a new deal having to be done due to the end of the current contract and with a price increase of approximately 50%.

DW asked if this is the best deal that has been offered. RJP said that ATA utilises an energy management consultant to recommend the best option. RJP said that all schools who are facing renewal of their energy suppliers are facing similar increases.

9. Revenue Funding 2024-2025

RJP told colleagues that he will update them on the indicative revenue funding for 2024-2025 at the next meeting as ATA is still waiting for funding allocations to be notified.

10. Openview

RJP shared with Colleagues the outcome of his meeting with the Spencer club for an update to discuss the usage of Openview for this year and for the usage for next year.

£40k of profit was made last year. This year will be slightly lower but is still worth continuing. Thomas's are still interested in using the facilities and other schools are interested too. Thomas's would like a longer-term arrangement if possible. Thomas's and Broomwood/LPS would both be interested and this would look to secure profits in the region of last year's level for the next three years. Usage of the facility continues to be made by The Spencer Club, Bec Old Boys Rugby Club and Battersea Ironsides Minis rugby sides alongside more occasional ad-hoc use by other schools.

Kevin asked if Thomas' proposed the three- year proposal and RJP explained the rationale for securing a three- year deal to provide both the hiring body and the hirer greater security going forward.

RJP confirmed that the new floodlighting at Openview is in full operation and working well.

RJP said that one issue is that Thomas's would additionally like weekend access but that Bec Old Boys (who have the say on weekend usage of the grassed areas) are resistant to this so RJP will have some negotiation with the Rugby club and Thomas's. Colleagues are happy for RJP to liaise appropriately on the Academy's behalf.

11. Administration and Staffing Matters

RJP updated colleagues about the Foundation Pension Plan and the forthcoming Trustee meeting.

DW thanked the FRC for their continued support.

The next FRC meeting will be Tuesday 30 April 2024.

Signed: 
Richard Whitcutt
Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee

Date 30/4/2024

