



An Daras Trust
Igniting Curiosity Growing Capabilities

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CEO: W. T. Hermon

15/03/2023

Minutes
Audit Committee Spring 2023
Wednesday 15th March 2023 at 9.30am at central office

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present: Graeme Barriball (Chair), Peter Hague (Vice), Steve Tavener, Gill Shippies, Margaret Savage

Apologies: Ian Wilkinson, Jon Sharpe

In Attendance: Will Hermon (CEO), Emma Gilbert (CEO), Toni Martin (Governance Officer)

2. Declarations of Interest/Pecuniary Interests relevant to this Agenda

None declared relevant to this agenda. Two changes for declarations to GS and GB; register will be updated.

3. Confirm minutes of Audit Autumn Meeting (7th December 2022) and Matters Arising

- Full risk register to be reviewed at Spring audit to re grade some items on the risk register. *See item 5.*
- Completed PREVENT self-assessment tool will be shared with committee in Spring term. *See item 5.*
- As a lease, it will be renewed and updated in 3 years. Subject to clarification on the quotes and information regarding the cost against the existing IT budget, recommended that full Board make decision on the IT contract. C/F to full Board. *Decision - enter IT lease agreement for WHA, NP and Wer.*
- Refer the decision to increase minimum wage to £10.50 and approve support staff pay policy to full board. *Decision made on 12th December 2022 to approve minimum wage at £10.50.*
- Support Staff Pay Policy – C/F to full Board for approval pending decision. *Approved on 12th December 2022.*

No actions from the confidential minutes. Committee agreed the minutes and the Chair signed a copy.

4. Confidential Matters

None.

5. Review Risks

a. MAT Risk Register

To be discussed at the end after item 11.

b. PREVENT Self-Assessment Tool Kit from DfE

Completed for the schools. Nothing further to report.

c. **DPA & GDPR Compliance**

All systems in operation and all compliant. One minor incident last year that didn't meet the threshold of referral to ICO. No incidents to report this year. Regular training ongoing.

6. **MAT Improvement Plan**

Brief discussion was had on gag pooling options. Remaining priorities have been discussed at the other committees.

7. **Finance & Strategy**

a. **Latest Management Accounts**

The committee briefly discussed strike action and the minimal staff absences involved. The current budget is in line but any variances will depend on the outcome of pay negotiations. The committee discussed other financial matters.

b. **Debt Report**

Nothing significant to report. **Is there a rise in debtors given the current situation?** No there isn't. Committee content.

c. **Going Concern**

Healthy bank balance, no complaints, no staff issues, good Ofsted reports, pupils making progress, risk management is tight, good financial controls; all lead to the conclusion that the trust remains a going concern.

d. **Conflict of Interest**

This is managed appropriately within the trust and was checked by the Finance Director at his last meeting with EG. Nothing to report.

e. **Catering Contract Tender**

The Chair noted that he needed to depart at 10am. Item 7e Catering contract was discussed and the need for an extraordinary full Board via zoom before the end of term to make a decision on this contract. **Have we looked at doing it in-house so we have a price comparison?** Not enough detail to do that but can compare with previous contract.

The committee discussed the energy contract which is due renewal and the amount is over WH's sign off so the Board will need to make a decision. **Action full Board on 22 March 2023.**

f. **School Resource Self-Assessment Tool**

Committee discussed this in detail.

8. **Internal Audit**

EG updated the committee on the initial internal audit feedback. This will be provided in a written report that we will be given a chance to comment on. More to follow from EG.

9. **External Audit**

WH noted the points raised at the last external audit but these have been answered or addressed, less one issue on PS Financials which is continuing to be worked on.

How is the use of payroll going? Generally good, the usual expected teething issues but they are being worked through. EG discussed finance staff and training, apprenticeships and succession planning. Other finance matters such as mini bus usage were discussed.

WH noted the external safeguarding audit that was completed and indicates that safeguarding in the trust is good. This is also supported by the Ofsted inspections. **Have you considered making the external audit of safeguarding a regular process across all the schools?** WH discussed the benefits of this versus the cost, and noted that perhaps this could be done on a cyclical basis in future to provide that external assurance across the trust over a period of time.

GB left the meeting and PH then chaired the meeting.

10. Governance Review

Directors' skills audit complete this year. Collectively there are no gaps in the Board's skills. Also there are a number of on-going matters under governance sustainability ongoing under the improvement plan. Nothing further to be added to this at present.

TM noted the SchoolBus contract (governance resource) is up for renewal in May. She is getting quotes and benefits together and would like to present to full Board for a decision. The committee agreed. **Add to full Board agenda.**

11. Policy Review

- Pecuniary Interests (TM). Minor amendments. Approved.
- Critical Incident (WH). **Should the critical incident policy contain a section on social media, forbidding staff to post on social media during or immediately after an incident without the express consent of the Head Teacher.** The committee agreed. Policy approved subject to the inclusion of that paragraph.
- On-Line Safety (CP). Minor changes. Approved.

The committee then fully reviewed the current risk register and suggested the following changes:

It was noted that all Covid 19 mitigations on any risk it is mentioned should be removed. In addition to that the following was noted:

A Staffing

- A1 – adequate mitigation, likelihood slim, no change.
- A2 – absence insurance cover in place, lower the risk rating.
- A3 – no change.
- A4 – no change.
- A5 – lower the risk rating.
- A6 – recruitment improved, lower the risk rating.
- A7 – no change.
- A8 – no change.

B Admissions

- B9 – lower risk rating.

C Property

- C10 – lower severity due to actions over last few years.
- C11 – still low, reduce likelihood to 1.
- C12 – reduce likelihood to 2.
- C13 – still low, no change.
- C14 – No track record of H&S issues but the risk is still high, with mitigation it is still low – no change.
- C15 – Severity remain high, but probability is low, no change.
- C15a – Cyber has been addressed, no change.

C16 – some little incidents occur occasionally but no major incidents previously, risk rating still high, no change.

D Financial

17 – risk considered high but mitigation in place. Difficult to control numbers but budgets can be controlled.

18 – Education political picture as changed and therefore this is no longer as much of a risk. Risk can be reduced.

19 – remains low.

20 – mitigations in place are effective, consider lowering risk.

21 – mitigations in place, consider lowering risk.

22 – mitigations in place, consider lowering risk.

23 – no change, remains low.

24 – no change, remains low.

E Curriculum & Standards

25 – risk rating can be reduced. It was noted the new SIAMS scoring system may cause issues with fairness.

26 – no change, remains low.

27 – risk high because data was important, now Ofsted inspections are focussed on curriculum offer – so risk severity is lower and overall risk is reduced following current trust improvement initiatives as mitigation.

28 – no change, remains low.

29 – Probability should be much lower, also reduce the final risk score.

30 – proved in recent Ofsted inspections and hence risk score can be lowered.

F Other

31 – no change, outside of our control.

32 – new systems in place, lower the risk.

33 – controls and audits show this can reduce, lower the risk.

34 – no change.

35 – remove as not a risk in it's own right, and incorporate subject in to other financial areas.

36 – remove and incorporate elements into other areas.

37 – reduce probability and post mitigation risk.

38 – reduce.

39 – remove.

40 – lower risk, full board with range of skills

41 – no change as this is ongoing.

42 – probability is lower, post mitigation score can be lower.

43 – reduce severity, and overall score can be lower.

44 – no change.

Previously funds were allocated to mitigate certain risks such as recovery from covid. **Once risk register is updated, full Board will need to decide where to re-allocate funds to which risks. Action full Board spring or summer term.**

12. AOB

None.

13. DONM

Date of next meeting is planned as Wednesday 5th July 2023 at 9.30 at central office.

Meeting closed 11.25 hrs

TJH Martin
Governance Officer

Distribution List:

W. Hermon – CEO / Director G. Barriball (Committee Chair) P. Hague – Director (Committee Vice Chair) S. Tavener - Director	I. Wilkinson – Director J. Sharpe - Director E. Gilbert – CFO J. Callow – Ex Officio Observer
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