



DIOCESAN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Diocesan Board of Education held on Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 4.00pm via Zoom.

Prayers: The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison led the opening prayers.

Present:

Mrs Jane Addis	Mr Nicholas Jardine
Mr Tom Brooke	Mrs Mary Lewis
Mrs Elaine Burdiss	Mr Guy McGregor
The Revd Dr Karen Burton	Mrs Gillian Mitchell
Mr John Dixon	Mr Pete Mumford
Mr Tim Fairbairn	Mr Hugo Parker
The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison (Chair)	The Revd Toby Tate

Apologies:

The Revd Penny Brinkley	The Revd Carl Melville
Mrs Jane Eccleston	Mr Drew Quayle
The Ven Jeanette Gosney	Mr Paul Ryle

In Attendance:

Mr Daniel Jones	Diocesan Buildings Officer
Mrs Gemma Taylor	Diocesan Schools' Adviser
Mr Phil Knowles	Diocesan School Effectiveness Officer (SEO)
Mrs Jane Sheat	Diocesan Director of Education (DDE)
Miss Jacqui Studd	Administrator (Education)
Mrs Sue Todd	Deputy Diocesan Director of Education (DDDE)

In attendance for Items 21.43 – 21.49

Mr Gary Peverley	Diocesan Finance Director
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WELCOME

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

21.43 RESIGNATION OF FRANCES PARR

The Chair noted the resignation of Frances Parr from the Board due to family commitments and expressed his gratitude for her service.

21.44 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2021 were approved and signed.

21.45 MATTERS ARISING

None.

21.46 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

None.

21.47 BUDGET

Gary Peverley referred to Paper A providing an update on the current financial position of the DBE budget as at 31 October 2021 and an outline budget for 2022.

Gary noted that:

- the forecast deficit for 2021 has reduced to £112k from a budgeted deficit of £149k;
- returns have improved over 2021 on the Investment (equities) fund;
- resources income is ahead of budget;
- costs are lower than budget by £42k due mainly to favourable variances on salaries;
- the forecast deficit for 2022 is £112k deficit;
- the security costs for the St James school site may need to be altered from £60k to £80k.

Mary Lewis referred to the funding provided by the Keswick Hall Trust for the Schools' Adviser, which is assured until 2026, and asked about longer term funding for this important role. The DDE advised that trustees would consider options such as tapered funding nearer the time.

Hugo Parker asked about the financial management of the St James school site. Gary Peverley advised that he is currently discussing the best option for managing costs with the Diocesan auditors and will report back. Hugo Parker asked about the DBE's governance of the budget. Gary Peverley advised that although the DBE is a separate statutory body, it is not a separate legal entity and is therefore part of the Diocesan Board of Finance which is managed by the Finance and Investment Committee. The Chair as a member of this Committee, has oversight.

Tim Fairbairn asked whether the budget was adequate to resource the education team to deliver on objectives. The DDE advised that this is a challenge with a small team, who could do more with more resources, but funds are limited.

The Chair thanked Gary Peverley for his report and work.

21.48 DIOCESAN DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION'S REPORT

The DDE referred to Paper A, which provided an update to DBE members on issues arising since the last meeting. The DDE advised that the draft DBE measure, based on a template provided by the Church of England Education Office, had been updated following the last DBE meeting. The measure will need to be approved by the DBE before going to Bishop's Council and Diocesan Synod for approval next year.

More detailed terms of reference will be drawn up following discussions with the Diocesan Board of Finance, including quorum, for example. The Building Officer has included details of land ownership for each of our church schools and will also include fund accounts for a small number of schools.

The DDE advised that at the last meeting, she had outlined the role of the DBE, its vision and the need to develop a compelling statement on why the diocese is involved in education. The DDE highlighted that the statement could read: "We promote a Christian vision for schools in which all can grow and flourish, and excellence in the teaching of RE and in Collective Worship." The DDE felt that the existing four priorities of the DBE strategy remain relevant. The DDE will be speaking with the

Chair, the Director of Mission and Ministry and the Diocesan Secretary about the questions posed by the DELP research.

The DDE noted:

- schools are experiencing high levels of staff and pupil absence due to positive COVID tests, self-isolating and illness;
- the local authority and Public Health have put additional measures in place to help limit the spread of the virus including only essential visitors in schools;
- Bedfield CEVCP joined the Diocesan MAT and Kersey CEVCP joined Tilian on 1 November 2021;
- the Cathedral service had taken place in October and the DBE welcomed thoughts on the timing of the service and ideas for developing the service;
- work is progressing on the preparations for disposal of the former middle school St James and the DDE expressed her thanks to the Chair, Hugo Parker, Tim Fairbairn and Drew Quayle for their help as executive trustees;
- National Professional Qualifications are now fully funded and the next cohort begins in February 2022;
- Thurston CofE Primary Academy, part of the Thedwastre Education Partnership, moved to its new, larger site in September and the official opening is on 9 December.

Gillian Mitchell highlighted the stress for school leaders of managing staff sickness. She also suggested holding the cathedral service on a school day during the summer term.

The Chair suggested speaking with Canon Jo Gunn, recently appointed as a lay canon at the cathedral. Tim Fairbairn advised that Bures CEVCP School would prefer a Sunday service because of the difficulty of taking children out of school. The Revd Dr Karen Burton felt that having the cathedral service on a school day might incur extra travel costs for schools. The DDE thanked members for their comments and suggestions and would conduct a survey with schools.

The Chair thanked the DDE for the report.

21.49 DBE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

The Building Officer referred to Paper C, the draft DBE environmental policy, which sets out how care for God's creation is a fundamental part of the Diocesan Growing in God vision.

The Buildings Officer explained that the Church of England General Synod had passed a motion in February 2020 to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions by 2030 and the Diocesan Synod had endorsed this in June 2020. As schools account for over half of the Church of England CO² emissions, there is a need to formalise a strategy for church schools to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

The Buildings Officer highlighted that the DBE has control over capital works at the nine Voluntary Aided schools and all operational aspects of Diocesan MAT academies but only influence over remaining church schools. The Action Plan, which accompanies the environmental policy, reflects this and allows for a collaborative approach by stakeholders.

The Buildings Officer asked for DBE approval of the policy.

The Chair highlighted the significance of the paper and the level of responsibility. Tim Fairbairn asked whether the Diocese was working with the local authority. Pete Mumford advised that the local authority had a similar environment strategy, was providing funding for schools to help with energy savings and was working closely with the Buildings Officer.

Hugo Parker asked how progress would be measured. The Buildings Officer advised that timescales had been built in and progress would be regularly reviewed.

Mary Lewis asked about the level of influence on church schools within Multi Academy Trusts. The Buildings Officer advised that he is in regular contact with MATs and is sharing experience on capital funding and energy efficiency. The DDE advised that the Diocesan MAT is working on this with its schools but added that the level of funding is not sufficient and highlighted that the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme was oversubscribed at each stage. The Buildings Officer has also been working with the local authority and with Voluntary Controlled schools as well with other MATS. The DDE highlighted technological issues which will also be challenging especially as the DBE only has influence rather than control over the majority of church schools. Pete Mumford agreed that technologies were costly and needed to be managed.

The Chair asked whether concerns over funding had been raised with the DfE. The Buildings Officer confirmed that the Environment Working Group, which includes estates managers at the Church of England, had fed back concerns.

Members approved the DBE Environmental Policy. The Chair thanked the Buildings Officer for the report.

21.50 GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The DDDE referred to Paper D which provided members with an update on governance in church schools. The DDDE highlighted that governor recruitment is a national issue and not limited to church schools.

There are currently 22 vacancies (11%) within our church schools. The DDDE highlighted the action being taken to recruit new foundation governors within the Diocese, including promoting the role through the new Vocations booklet and a video. The DDDE is also a member of the Diocesan Governance Group (DGG), a working group which is exploring strategies to improve foundation governor recruitment and reduce unfilled vacancies nationally. She noted that current issues include improving diversity and the development of blended, virtual forms of governance.

The DDDE advised of a wide range of training available for governors both by the Diocese and nationally.

The DDDE thanked the education administrator for her work with foundation governor vacancies and asked if DBE members could raise the profile of foundation governors and suggest potential governors.

The Chair asked whether there was comparative data on vacancies across Dioceses. The DDDE highlighted the lack of accurate data but added that this will be looked at.

Tim Fairbairn highlighted the administrative burden for PCC's finding replacement foundation governors during an interregnum. The DDDE advised that this issue would be discussed with the DGG. The DDE highlighted that the Archdeacons are able to appoint during an interregnum or if a member of clergy is unable or unwilling to take on the role of foundation governor.

The Chair noted that while the focus is on foundation governors, recruiting governors more widely is an issue. The Chair thanked the DDDE for her report.

21.51 SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT

The SEO referred to Paper E, providing an update since the last meeting. The SEO noted that there had been six Ofsted inspections and that Elveden CofE Primary

Academy had retained an outstanding judgment in July. The SEO highlighted the different approaches to Covid by Ofsted and SIAMS.

The SEO advised that Jane Addis is monitoring the section of the DBE Strategy, to develop and support highly effective church schools and Headteachers. Jane Addis added that after her first school visit in 2019, and due to COVID, she had not been able to continue with visits. However, after discussions with the SEO, a solution is to join the SEO online with the necessary permissions from those involved, as well as have access to notes dependent on confidentiality. When restrictions are lifted, visits will continue.

Gillian Mitchell left at 17.00

The Chair thanked the SEO for the report and Jane Addis for her input.

21.52 RE AND COLLECTIVE WORSHIP UPDATE

The Schools' Adviser introduced Paper F, providing an update on RE and collective worship work since the last meeting.

The Schools' Adviser noted: further collective worship planning resources had been made available to church schools this half-term; and support provided to small schools with the writing of bespoke RE curriculum plans. The Schools' Adviser highlighted a number of cancellations and postponements this half-term, which included schools she was due to visit with Mary Lewis.

Elaine Burdiss thanked the Schools' Adviser for the collective worship planning which had been inspiring. Mary Lewis highlighted the inclusive and invitational worship session delivered by the Schools' Adviser at the annual church school leaders' conference which had been well received.

The Chair thanked the Schools' Adviser for her work.

21.53 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Pete Mumford referred to Paper G, which provided an update on local authority issues arising since the last meeting. Pete Mumford noted that:

- the Consultation on Admission Arrangements for the 2023/2024 school year closed on 12 November 2021 which included the proposal to remove the oversubscription criteria for voluntary controlled schools for families who have been practising members of the Church of England. This will go for approval at Cabinet on 1 February 2022
- the national driver shortages are having an impact on the post-16 travel policy as fewer tenders are being received
- part of Suffolk's Household Support Fund has been allocated to provide supermarket vouchers for children who receive income based Free School Meals during school holidays up to and including Easter 2022
- a blend of 'in school' and 'virtual' School improvement work continues to be welcomed by school leaders and governors with arrangements adapted where needed due to Covid case numbers
- local authority officers are working collaboratively to ensure the newly arriving Afghan refugee families are welcomed and supported to access education in the most appropriate way
- challenges with the supplier chain and the increasing costs of new projects to provide additional accommodation at schools across Suffolk
- lots of areas nationally have identified a much smaller cohort of primary pupils for September 2021 and are starting to experience surplus capacity in many areas.

The Chair thanked Pete Mumford for the Local Authority update.

21.54 CONFIRMATION OF FOUNDATION GOVERNORS

The DBE ratified the appointment of Foundation Governors listed in Paper H.

In response to a query from Jane Addis, the DDE confirmed that incumbents were appointed by virtue of their office.

21.55 FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The Festival of Suffolk and capacity of schools to engage.

21.56 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

21.57 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Board noted that future meetings would take place on:

Wednesday 9 February 2022 @ 1.30pm

Tuesday 3 May 2022 @ 4.00pm

Tuesday 13 September 2022 @ 4.00pm

Tuesday 22 November 2022 @ 1.30pm

The Chair thanked members for their contribution to the meeting.

The meeting closed at 5.15pm.

Signed: _____
[Chair]

Date: _____