

**THINKING SCHOOLS ACADEMY TRUST**  
**COMPANY NUMBER: 7359755**

Subject	<b>Meeting of the Board of Directors</b>	Date	12 <sup>th</sup> July 2023
Room	Via Teams Call	Time	5.00pm
Present	Gerard Newman (GN) (Chair), Peter Martin (PM) (Vice Chair), Steve Geary (SGE), Julie Spurgeon (JS), Kaye Bettey (KB)	Clerk	Jennifer Coates
Apologies accepted	Stuart Gardner (SG), Natasha Hurtado (NH), Michael Bailey (MB), Clive Star (CS), Derek Morrison (DM), Ian Mason (IM)	In attendance	Lee Miller (LM), Jody Murphy (JM), Janet Perry (JP), Ashley Hall (AH), Matthew Fleet (MF), Dan High (DH), Dave Glassey (DG)

<b>Key Points Discussed and Action Items</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action/Discussion</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>When</b>
1.	<b>Declaration of business interests</b>	There were no declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda.		
2.	<b>Welcome and apologies for absence</b>	GN welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Stuart Gardner, Natasha Hurtado, Michael Bailey, Clive Star, Ian Mason and Derek Morrison.		
3.	<b>Reports from Committees/2023 2024 Budget</b>	<p>A. GN presented the Finance Committee report which contained the following key information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks of cost-of-living increases feeding into the budget next year impacting 22/23 end position resulting [REDACTED]. 23/24 current projected [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]</li> <li>- Signed off the procurement of the IMP budget software at a cost of £98k which was formally approved at the Board meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> July.</li> </ul> <p>B. LM presented the budget for 2023-2024 for approval which contained the following key information:</p> <p><u>Outturn position 22/23</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Projecting an [REDACTED] which will leave reserves of [REDACTED]. Challenges around energy and cost of living which created an unfunded position of over [REDACTED]. We wanted to deliver an outturn position</li> </ul>		

in line with the budget originally set before these challenges. To provide reassurance, excluding Colchester, we will be bringing forward [REDACTED] reserves which is higher than the [REDACTED] reserves which was our original target. Delivery from the team, Heads and Leaders to navigate through the challenges should not be forgotten in light of the challenges we faced.

Governor Comment – I agree and thank you formally from the board as we recognise that you and the team have been dealing with significant challenges and as you have managed to improve the position is great credit to you and the team.

23/24 Budget

- We are presenting a budget with many uncertainties. Yet to have a decision on cost of living. Support Staff cost of living offer has been rejected by the unions. Unaware of the Teacher cost of living offer. Unaware of any additional funding. Broad assumptions have been made in modelling.
- We hope to improve on this budget position when we have certain information on cost of living and funding.
- The number of steps to achieve this has been significant. The process begins in February and goes under multiple reviews through schools, central teams and governance.

Academy budgets:

- RGS [REDACTED]
- Goodwin [REDACTED] The Chatham Hub budget is being split back out into school level due to changes in leadership structure.
- Holcombe [REDACTED]
- Victory [REDACTED]
- New Horizons Medway [REDACTED]
- Maritime Academy [REDACTED]
- Colchester Royal [REDACTED]
- TPA [REDACTED]
- Meon Hub [REDACTED]
- Penbridge [REDACTED]

- New Horizons Primary

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**Governor Q – Why are schools centrally pooled charges going up?**

**LM A – There is a cost per pupil model which is applied to all schools which has increased due to the inflationary increase.**

- Brixham

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- Plymouth High School

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- Plympton Academy

- Furzeham

- All Academies' consolidated position is an

Central budget costs

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Within this budget are some POT 4 investments made in advance.

- Overall,

**Governor Q – Could you explain the Thinking Fitness reserves lines in central budget?**

**LM A – Thinking Fitness has commercial activity so it is split out to show commercial activity is split out from reserves at school level.**

[REDACTED]

**Governor Q – Plymouth High have a sink hole in their playground. In the numbers presented, has any monies been allocated to rectifying that issue?**

**LM A – This will be covered by insurance. The insurance company have sent out claims assessor and is being escalated due to the potential size of the claim.**

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Governor Q – In regards to the Treasury Management Policy, how much you invest in different areas of the market and what are the limits with how far you go?**

**LM A – We do have a policy and it is managed by the Head of Finance.**

*Action DH to follow up with DS to provide a more robust answer to JP regarding the Treasury Management Policy.*

*Governors provided unanimous approval of the 2023/2024 budget, proposed by KB and seconded by PM.*

- C. PM presented the Audit & Risk report which contained the following key information:
- Education auditor feedback on safeguarding review. Very positive about safeguarding procedures and assured we are doing well. Full detailed report to come with an action plan for next steps.
  - Internal audit planning focus for 23/24 agreed to be Thinking Food, Lettings, Safeguarding & Data Protection.
  - Data Protection training for new staff 100% compliant in most schools. Outstanding

		<p>training will need to be complete by 1<sup>st</sup> September.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Risks and issues were discussed including RAAC at schools. CRGS due RAAC survey in July.</li> <li>- Strood Hub leadership stretched next year due to Headteacher vacancies and KJ in an Executive Headteacher position. Support is in place for September and new Director has been appointed and will start in January.</li> <li>- Actions going forward included Head of safeguarding producing action plan to audit report and review of payroll end to end process as part of payroll system.</li> </ul> <p><b>Governor Q – Regarding the phishing simulation, 1/8 staff being compromised seems high, were there certain areas that showed weakness and are there areas that have been identified for further support?</b></p> <p><b>KD A – 13% of staff put password in. Microsoft tell us the average was 30%. We train our staff well and level of data they have. We will re-run this simulation and if staff fail again will have further training. We are working on updating training and covering those with high levels of clicking.</b></p> <p>Governor Comment – I.T. team are implementing 2 factor authentication for all staff and Governors.</p> <p>D. DH presented the full Trust risk register which contained the following key information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Main risks are around finances and budgets.</li> <li>- DH explained the active risk page on the risk register and welcomed questioned and queries from Governors.</li> </ul> <p><b>Governor Q – On the inactive risks, 4.13 failing to have policy on taxation which only mentions VAT. Are there other tax risks?</b></p> <p><b>DH A – Yes, we do need to review for corporation tax that goes through subsidiaries. DH will add more detail to that commentary.</b></p> <p><b>Governor Q – 4.11, is there a money laundering risk around donations?</b></p> <p><b>DH A – We can add further detail on that. Much of the funding for donations is parental contributions to trips or school activities.</b></p> <p><b>Governor Q – Is there a risk around something similar to a Covid situation, a national situation that we have to suddenly deal with? If not, should there be something?</b></p> <p><b>DH A – We have a business continuity plan which covers certain events that might happen but is not referenced in the risk register.</b></p>	<p>DH</p>	<p>ASAP</p>
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4.	<b>Any Other Business &amp; Correspondence to</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Safeguarding Policy for approval. Template safeguarding policy which will be used by all schools.</li> </ul>		

	<b>the Chair</b>	<p><i>Governors unanimously approved the safeguarding policy for 2023-2024 proposed by PM and seconded by KB.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Seeking assurances letter from RGS is for information for the Board. Complaint received and SG provided response.</li> <li>- HSE letter regarding Asbestos Management at RGS.</li> <li>- Accounting Officer letter from the DFE.</li> <li>- Academies Trust Handbook has been updated. KD is pulling together changes to the handbook and will share document showing compliance and any actions required. The descriptors as to what makes a good MAT from a DFE perspective need to be reviewed as a Board and will set time at a later date and will come into Board development plan.</li> <li>- Members of TSAT appointed Andrew Medhurst to the Board officially from September.</li> <li>- Proposal to appoint Judy Ravenscroft, HR specialist, as a co-opted Governor the on Staffing Pay &amp; PG Committee, for a review for a full board appointment in January 2024.</li> </ul> <p><i>Governors unanimously agreed to appoint Judy Ravenscroft as a co-opted Governor on the staffing, pay and professional growth committee.</i></p> <p>Governors expressed their thanks to Julie Spurgeon for time on the board and wished her well for the future.</p>		
5.	<b>Items for next agenda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Budget updates including new Trust schools.</li> <li>- Possible feedback on Health &amp; Safety training compliance.</li> </ul>		
6.	<b>Date of next meeting</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 Meeting closed at 6.29pm.		
	<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By Whom</b>	<b>By When</b>
1.	3	DH to follow up with DS to provide a more robust answer to JP regarding the Treasury Management Policy.	DH	ASAP