

**Eynsham Partnership Academy
Annual General Meeting (AGM)
Thursday 24 June 2021, 6 pm
Virtual via Zoom**

Present:

Members: Gavin Robinson (GR) (**Chair** of Members), Gordon Joyner (GJ) (Corporate Diocesan Member), Jonathan Marks (JM); Jo Godsal (JG), David Tyler (DT), Julian Soames (JS) (Chair of Directing Board)

In attendance: David Brown (DB) EPA CEO, Ros Avery (RA), EPA CFO, Kit Howells (KH), Clerk

Apologies: None (all Members present)

Minutes

Item	Item title
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>GR welcomed Members. All Members were present. James Bird (EPA DSI) apologies were noted.</p>
2	<p>EPA Annual Accounts year ended 31 August 2020, for approval and brief update on expected EPA financial position at end 2020-21 and Budget 2021-24</p> <p>CFO report previously circulated, containing Accounts and summary forecast 2020-21, and Budget 2021-24.</p> <p>The Accounts for year ended 31 August 2020 previously circulated. The major issues affecting the EPA during that year were the Covid pandemic and associated restrictions and Heyford Park School joining the Trust. Capital expenditure of £4.4m had been managed; grants and income & expenditure data were noted. Members noted the clean audit report, and the Accounts for year ended 31 August 2020 were approved.</p> <p>CFO gave a PowerPoint slide summary illustrating income and expenditure, from 2019 to 2024 (predicted for forward years). 2021 will see more than double the normal year's revenue due to bringing HPS into the EPA. Otherwise income continues to be fairly flat.</p> <p>Pupil numbers are fairly static overall, but admissions are increasing slightly in ECPS Reception and Y7 and Sixth Form at Bartholomew. The EPA is suffering from the departure of large year groups alongside reduced admissions in Primary and the smaller cohorts working their way through the schools. Local housing developments are not currently having any significant effect on pupil numbers in schools other than ECPS. Some schools are seeing reducing pupil rolls. There has been a c80% fall in primary numbers across the County in the last two years.</p> <p>Expenditure 2016 to 2024 was noted, comparing data across these years and noting the estimated forward predictions. In 2021, staff expenditure increased due to recruitment of additional TA staff to support Covid catch up, as well as HPS joining the EPA.</p> <p>Top slice of EPA schools' budgets remains at 5%, the same as in 2017 when there was no Central Team support.</p> <p>Reserves are generally healthy across the schools, with HPS needing to build reserves, and Hanborough having low reserves due to recent expenditure to refurbish toilets. Schools wishing to utilise reserves have to provide a solid business case for the proposed projects. Pupil numbers are the main key to building reserves at HPS, alongside rapid school improvement which is taking place. It is acknowledged that this will take some time, but it is also the case that the most growth potential is at HPS. The amount of reserves that the EPA aims to hold is that recommended by the ESFA as acceptable. Schools budgets are now better managed and they all have balanced budgets.</p>

	<p>Covid-related issues were reported, including risk assessment, continued adherence to government guidelines and current status of infection in the schools and any class closures.</p> <p>Members asked for, and received, confirmation that the Trustees (through their Finance & Resources and Audit Committees) were fully briefed on all financial issues and in receipt of all necessary documentation and background in order to make fully informed financial decisions. Trustees and Local Governors are challenging appropriately.</p> <p>Members noted the likely financial pressures which will be brought to bear on schools by the Government post-Covid and that the Trust is using worst case assumptions in budget planning for the next financial period, including flat income alongside salary increases.</p> <p>Capital developments in the Trust in the period since the last AGM having included Hanborough Manor expansion with a 6-classroom block, Stanton Harcourt expansion with a 2-classroom block, ECPS plans to refurbish classrooms to make them fit for purpose, and installation of fibre lines and 'Connect the Classroom' Wi-Fi for 3 primaries, St Peter's, ECPS and Hanborough Manor. One CIF bid has been successful this year: a £200k grant to fund roof works at St Peter's.</p>
3	<p>Appointment of the auditors for year ended 31 August 2021</p> <p>Members noted that the EPA had appointed auditors James Cowper Kreston (JCK) last year, for 3 years. Therefore there is no need to appoint new auditors. The new Academies Handbook 2021 states that Trusts should tender for auditor every 5 years; therefore, the EPA is meeting statutory guidelines. JCK has commenced the interim audit of the current financial year's accounts.</p>
4	<p>Appointment of Members' Chair 2021-22</p> <p>Members agreed to appoint GR as Chair for the next academic year.</p>
5	<p>Update from/Q&A with, Chair of EPA, in particular re EPA Growth Strategy & School Standards Covid: Members were assured that the Trust continues to meet all statutory guidelines with risk assessments regularly updated to align with government advice.</p> <p>EPA growth strategy and the new EPA 5-year Strategic Plan 2021-26</p> <p>The new 5-year Strategic Plan is being finalised for approval by the Directors at their July Board meeting. All EPA stakeholders will be invited to attend a briefing in the Autumn Term when the Plan will be presented. Current focus of work is on expanding the EPA provision of secondary and primary education in the local area, mainly through the Eynsham Garden Village (Salt Cross) as well as via other upcoming Eynsham developments, as well as introduction of an Early Intervention Hub for all EPA KS1 children, based at ECPS. Alongside this, the Trust's senior leaders continue to support schools outside the Trust in school improvement, thereby also increasing the EPA's reputation and income, and the CEO's contract has been extended.</p> <p>Members asked for, and received, assurance that safeguarding, respect for others, wellbeing and mental health of staff and pupils were all central to the ethos of the Trust and its leadership works hard to ensure issues and concerns raised are addressed robustly, as well as sensitively and professionally, with special focus of attention on pastoral care of pupils' and staff welfare and safeguarding during and after the Covid lockdown periods. More work is being planned to look in depth at long term effects on staff and pupils.</p> <p>Members emphasised the need for succession planning, and were assured that the leadership and Board are working actively to fill vacancies on the Trust's Board of Directors, focusing on recruitment of new Trustees with specific skills to steer the EPA through the next period of growth, including finance, IT, Cyber Security, science, marketing and publishing.</p> <p>In response to Member question, it was confirmed that IT in schools has been a major focus for</p>

	<p>improvement of application and consistency across the Trust. There is now one provider for all the Primaries, with Bartholomew and HPS supported by the Bartholomew IT team. Good work continues to be done to build on the pandemic lockdown remote learning work to expand online education provision.</p> <p>School Standards</p> <p>All schools continue to focus on catching up pupils' education following pandemic lockdowns. Bartholomew and Heyford Park Schools' leaders have worked hard to ensure robust systems were in place to meet the requirements for pupil assessments at Y11 and Y13 (replacing national examinations). For the Primaries, pupil progress/attainment data collection has continued throughout the year, via three assessment points.</p>
6	<p>Member vacancies – to note</p> <p>The EPA Articles allow for 8 Members but it is not a requirement to have 8. There are currently 6 Members. There are thus 2 vacancies, one of which is a Diocesan appointment. Members are not actively seeking recruits to these vacancies but suitable candidates would be welcomed.</p>
7	<p>Thanks to Clerk</p> <p>Members noted KH is retiring from her role as EPA Clerk at the end of this academic year, and thanked her for her long-standing support of the EPA since its inception.</p>
8	<p>Dates of meetings 2021-22</p> <p>While it is not necessary for Members to meet other than once a year for the AGM, Members agreed the benefit of keeping fully in touch with the Trust's work, and thus agreed to meet three times, as this year with meetings scheduled in the Autumn, Spring and Summer (AGM) Terms. In addition, Members will be invited to attend the EPA Strategic Plan presentation to stakeholders, in September (date to be confirmed). Action: CEO/Chair Dates of meetings 2021-22 to be set <i>Dates proposed since meeting: 24 Nov, 10 Feb and 15 June (Wednesdays), 6 pm. Members to note</i></p>

Meeting closed: 19:30
KH/2.7.21