

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF LONDON ACADEMIES TRUST

THURSDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2022

CONFIDENTIAL

By virtue of **paragraph 3** of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

1. **APOLOGIES**
2. **DECLARATIONS**
3. **MINUTES**
4. **PROPOSED ANNUAL MEETING PLAN**
5. **QUESTIONS**
6. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**
7. **EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**
8. **NON-PUBLIC MINUTES**
RESOLVED, that the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 9th December be approved as a correct record.
9. **OUTSTANDING ITEMS**
10. **CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S UPDATE**
The Committee received a Report of the Chief Financial Officer concerning key assurance and risk issues.

Trustees asked officers to ensure that the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist included, when appropriate, details of all of the meetings associated with the Board, including the Sub-Committees, away days, and any additional extraordinary meetings of the Board, before submission of the finalised Checklist to the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in March 2022.

The academies will be reviewing their insurance arrangements in March 2022 for risks that are not covered by the Risk Protection Arrangement (RPA). The current provider for this additional insurance is AON. The Trust has a live insurance case (RPA) where legal advice is being taken – this was in relation to a parental complaint of discrimination at Redriff Primary.

RESOLVED – that the Committee:

- Approved, with the caveat above, the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Checklist for submission to the ESFA by 15 March 2022.
- Noted the other updates within the Report.

11. **INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATE**

The Committee received a Report of the Chief Financial Officer concerning internal and external audit issues for the Trust.

Highlighting asbestos concerns at Highgate Hill, officers informed Trustees that remedial action can only take place in the summer holidays when pupils and staff were away for a prolonged period; in the meantime, officers are getting on with the relevant actions including ensuring that temporary measures are in place in order that the asbestos is not disturbed. There will be an update at the July meeting of the Committee.

Officers highlighted the concerns expressed by Buzzacott around the maintenance of fixed asset registers, and informed Trustees that work was being undertaken with the respective business managers; in the medium-term, consideration was being given to a specific project to support an Asset Management Database, however, this would need to be resourced.

Turning to Buzzacott's sole Red Risk (MAT wide), officers informed Trustees that, whilst best practice was for schools to upload pdfs of invoices to PSF, this was not mandated, with some schools choosing to retain hardcopies instead, consequently, officers were of the view that the red rating was unwarranted.

RESOLVED – that the Committee noted the Report.

12. **HEALTH AND SAFETY MONITORING IN TRUST SCHOOLS**

The Committee considered a Report of the Director of Estates & Facilities Management concerning Health & Safety monitoring.

Trustees welcomed the updates on fire drills but requested that they should include a set of target dates for milestones.

In response to Trustees requesting a greater role in the policy, officers advised that whilst this specific committee should be listed, it was not appropriate to include the names of individual Trustees.

In response to Trustee's expressing concerns about there being no reference to the specific status of, and responsibilities to, students in the policy, officers, whilst welcoming the point, highlighted that the 1974 Health and Safety at Work Act did not include specific provision for students, so the wording did need to be carefully considered.

Highlighting paragraph 3.11 (Testing of Emergency Procedures), Trustees requested some additional wording about the frequency of testing.

Trustees were keen that, in addition to the induction sessions outlined in the Policy, refresher sessions were also embedded as best practice.

Trustees were also concerned about staff not being aware of lockdown and critical incidents practices, and that these should be given more consideration in the policy.

RESOLVED – that the Committee asked the Director of Estates & Facilities Management to incorporate these amendments and resubmit the revised City of London Academies Trust Health and Safety Policy under Delegated Authority procedures for approval.

13. NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS

There were no non-public questions

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND THE COMMITTEE AGREES CAN BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There was no other business.

15. TRUST STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Committee received a Report of the Chief Financial Officer concerning the strategic risks to the Trust.

The Likelihood of Risk 4 (Behaviour) has been increased. Behaviour has been identified as an area requiring improvement in the recent COLAHH Ofsted inspection.

Officers highlighted that whilst some students at COLAHH had complained that bullying had not been taken seriously, however, it was pointed out that the questionnaire used to gather these responses was poorly designed. To compound matters, it was also unfortunate that the Ofsted inspector had refused to review the findings of interviews of victims of bullying as these had presented a more robust and comprehensive picture of the issues in the school. Officers emphasised their discontent with both the inspector's specific findings and the current inspection process as a whole.

Despite these misgivings, it was highly likely that Ofsted would back the findings of its inspector, and as a consequence, officers were proactively working on a response;

- Seeking to challenge the Ofsted inspection process and the validity and robustness of the evidence the lead inspector was using to make judgements. Ultimately, an appeal at the High Court was a possible option if all others were exhausted.
- Clear action plan in place to demonstrate to parents/carers that the findings in the report are being addressed (if not already addressed).
- Development of a communications plan once the report is published to engage parents/carers (of current students and those seeking to join in Years 7 and 12 in September), the local authority, and the wider community. Officers were working with Bob Roberts' team on this.

- Regular communication with the DfE/ESFA on the above, especially concerning the potential impact on Year 12 admissions given the DfE/ESFA investment in the expansion at the COLAHH site.

Officers added that this presented a significant risk to the School and the Trust as whole, Ofsted's findings were still viewed by parents as cast iron, and the inspection for Highgate Hill would inevitably have a negative impact on the school's reputation. It was also highly unfortunate that this came at the same time as the serious challenges faced at Highbury Grove.

An update Report on this specific issue would be brought to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED – that the Committee noted the Report.

The meeting ended at 11.00 am

Chairman

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