David Ross Education Trust
Broadening Horizons

Finance & Resource Committee
27 March 2026 –10:00am – 1:00pm
MS Teams

Minutes

Co-Chairs: Richard Emerton and David Hall.	**Clerk:** Victoria Linthwaite.
Invited Officers: Simon Rose (Chief Executive Officer), Jon French (Director of Operations), Maria Maltby (Director of Governance), Rachel Ridgill (Director of Human Resources), Jane Spencer (Chief Finance Officer). **Attendance:** Nick Teagle. **Apologies:** Mick Elliott.	

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1.	**Welcome and Apologies**
1.1	The Chairs opened the meeting at 10:02am.
1.2	Apologies were received from Mick Elliott (ME).
2.	**Register of Interests and Declarations of Business interests relating to the agenda**
2.1	No declarations of interest were reported in relation to the agenda.
3.	**Minutes (accuracy, matters arising and actions) of the Finance & Resources Committee held 4 December 2025**
3.1	***Minutes:*** The Committee approved the minutes of last meeting as a true and accurate record of the meeting. There were no matters arising.
4.	**HR Director's Report**
4.1	Rachel Ridgill (RR) highlighted salient points from her report:
4.2	***Workforce Profile and Labour Turnover:*** Phase two of the restructuring process had commenced on 23 March 2026.
4.3	RR was pleased to report that there was an overall reduction in headcount. This demonstrated that current interventions including Executive Board review of all vacancies was proving impactful.
4.4	***Labour Turnover:*** Labour turnover was stable and continued to track at around 17% on average. Nevertheless, RR recognised that some schools were tracking above this figure and flagged that these schools also had higher than average absence rates. The HR Team were working closely with identified schools and were formulating detailed plans to look to address this.
4.5	With improved reporting capabilities, the HR Team were also scrutinising other HR metrics closely such as

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	EDI, Wellbeing etc. and were working with schools to improve as necessary.
4.6	***Absence:*** Due to the annual flu outbreak absence peaked significantly in December 2025.
4.7	RR reminded the Committee that the Trust offered free flu jabs to all staff. To encourage take up during the current academic year the HR Team had arranged for medical team to deliver jabs to staff in school but unfortunately there was a shortage of stock so this could not be implemented. For the coming academic year, RR looked to plan early and was exploring the possibility of purchasing a supply of the vaccine for the Trust.
4.8	When asked by the Committee, RR confirmed that if it purchased its own supply of flu vaccine the Trust would be responsible for stock management and appropriate storage.
4.9	***Mental Health Absence:*** Further to a request made by the Risk & Audit Committee, RR discussed data in relation to mental health related absence. Whilst this was not the case in all schools, there had been a slight reduction in the number of days lost due to mental health reasons.
4.10	The Risk & Audit Committee had also asked for the Finance & Resource Committee to review the usage levels and reasons for use of the Trust's EAP, Health Hero. Health Hero provided the Trust with quarterly usage figures, and there were high spikes in January 2026 and June 2025, but uptake had been relatively low up until this point.
4.11	Cases referred for counselling were categorised by root cause such as bereavement, relationship issues, work related bullying, changes in work demands etc. Over the course of the year 39 employees had used the counselling service. Of these, 30 were related to personal problems, whilst 9 were work related. In January 2026 all instances related to personal issues.
4.12	Following a question from the Committee, RR clarified that 39 employees referred only to those accessing counselling through the EAP and did not reflect the total usage of the platform including on areas such as self-led activities and financial guidance etc.
4.13	The Committee explored whether cultural issues, particularly in secondary settings, may be impacting absence levels. RR advised that the initiation of performance management processes can sometimes be associated with increased sickness absence, which may affect engagement with the process.
4.14	Developing this further, SR acknowledged that performance management and appraisal processes were not as robust as they should be. He noted that a key priority was driving cultural change, particularly within the secondary phase, through increased visibility, clear leadership messaging and a strong emphasis on shared responsibility across the Trust.
4.15	In response to a question from the Committee, RR explained that while she did not have numerical data available at the meeting, her experience indicated that it was uncommon for employees to be dismissed following performance management processes. In most cases, colleagues were signed off on sickness absence and did not return to work. The Committee expressed disappointment that colleagues were not engaging with a process intended to support improvement in their role. RR stated that this was often influenced by the approach taken by the line manager leading the process.
4.16	SR drew on his recent visit to STAR Academies Trust, highlighting their use of Steplab and a forensic approach to performance management. He agreed with the Committee that performance discussions should be viewed positively and noted that he was actively working to embed this cultural shift.
4.17	***LMS:*** RR outlined the link between performance management and the proposed LMS, highlighting the National College's platform as an example enabled teachers to identify areas for development through self-assessment against the Teachers' Standards. She confirmed that the LMS specification had been

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	drafted and would be taken to tender, with the aim of supporting cultural change by embedding regular feedback and a coaching-led approach to development. RR added that she was progressing work to source a coaching provider for the Trust
4.18	***Wellbeing Pulse Survey:*** It was noted that the Trust had adopted an approach of running multiple wellbeing pulse surveys during the year, rather than a single survey, with some questions remaining consistent to allow trends to be monitored.
4.19	In the most recent survey, 79.43% of respondents indicated that they would recommend DRET as an employer, representing the highest score achieved for this question to date. Responses across the surveys remained broadly consistent in relation to questions on workload and behaviour.
4.20	It was noted that, in addition to established Mental Health First Aiders, the Trust had introduced volunteer Wellbeing Champions to proactively share and promote wellbeing initiatives, including menopause support.
4.21	***Recruitment:*** RR reported that vacancy levels across the Trust remained relatively low and that the Applicant Tracking System, MyNewTerm, was performing effectively, with a strong calibre of applicants. By way of example, a recent Headteacher recruitment exercise resulted in two appointable candidates, both of whom were successfully appointed to existing vacancies. Given the low vacancy rate and quality of applicants, RR advised that she had not yet considered it necessary to reinvest the savings achieved by moving away from TES. Feedback from both candidates and administrators on their experience of MyNewTerm continued to be positive.
4.22	RR advised that comparative time-to-hire data for TES was not available, noting that the Trust's 74-day average included a 28-day advertising period. She highlighted that most vacancies were filled within one advert round, reducing the need for repeat advertising.
4.23	***HR/Payroll Platform:*** In anticipation of the current contract ending in May 2027, RR advised that she was beginning to consider the procurement specification for the Trust's HR and payroll system. She confirmed that the intention was to retain payroll provision in-house and to source software that would support this approach.
4.24	Since the previous Committee meeting, the Trust had transitioned to the Evo platform, which provided enhanced reporting and AI functionality building on the existing PeopleXD system. RR explained that the AI features enable colleagues to self-serve by asking routine queries, such as pay-to-date or maternity leave timelines. It was anticipated that this increased self-service capability would reduce workload for HR colleagues who currently respond to these enquiries.
4.25	***Restructure:*** Phase one of the restructure had concluded, with some changes to the original proposals, resulting in one redeployment and a further redeployment anticipated. Phase two was launched on 23 March 2026 using a Trust-wide communications plan and standardised scripts to ensure consistent messaging. Colleagues had largely anticipated that roles may be placed at risk. Following the 30-day consultation, approximately 40 roles were proposed for removal.
4.26	RR advised that two at-risk colleagues had resigned since the launch of the consultation, with others indicating interest in alternative roles. She noted that a further teacher resignation date in May 2026 may result in additional resignations. A dedicated FAQ area has been created on the HR intranet to support colleagues during the process.
4.27	The Finance team applied the CBB model to identify over-supply in teaching capacity, with findings shared with Headteachers. Impacted subjects varied by school, with the largest anticipated savings from Assistant Principal roles across three pools. RR noted that while up to 40 roles were proposed for removal, around 95 individuals were at risk. JS confirmed that estimated redundancy costs were c.£200k–

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	£450k for phase two, and £350k–£600k across phases one and two, excluding pension strain.
4.28	SR commended RR on her leadership of the restructuring process and confirmed that all vacancies were approved by the Executive Board prior to advertisement. He added that Principals had been involved in decision-making on savings, working with SW to ensure consistency with Trust-wide priorities.
4.29	In response to a question from the Committee, JS explained that, in order to bridge the gap between the current FY26 P6 position and P1 of the draft FY27 budget, c.£400k of savings were required from structural staffing costs. She outlined the methodology used to calculate this figure, noting that adjustments had been made to reflect NJC and teachers' pay awards, as well as changes to employer contributions to the LGPS. As in previous years, assumptions had been applied that experienced leavers would be replaced by colleagues appointed at the lower end of the pay scale. JS advised that approximately £300k of savings had already been identified through the phase 1 and phase 2 consultations, along with some natural leavers not being replaced, and expressed confidence that the remaining £100k could be achieved by the end of the academic year through further opportunities, including natural turnover.
4.30	SR advised that financial pressures were being felt across the sector, with CST identifying this as a key priority for Trust CEOs. He suggested that some smaller trusts may struggle to remain financially sustainable, potentially creating growth opportunities for DRET. While noting that reserves were finite, SR highlighted that DRET was currently well positioned and that some additional funding was expected through local authorities to support SEND and inclusion. He recognised, however, the need for the Trust to be more proactive in managing lag funding challenges.
4.31	The Committee thanked the Executive Team for their efforts in addressing the financial challenges and encouraged a focus on achieving larger savings early, to minimise the need for multiple phases of redundancy and potential impacts on morale. Discussion followed on the scale of savings currently achievable. It was recognised that demographic changes may necessitate further restructuring in future years. The Committee also noted that there may come a point at which the financial viability of smaller schools, as well as some sixth forms, would need to be reviewed.
4.32	Recognising that this formed part of a wider strategic discussion, the Committee encouraged the Executive Team to reflect on whether the current sixth-form provision continued to meet local community needs or whether this might be better delivered by an alternative provider. SR indicated that he would welcome a more detailed discussion once Aron Whiles (AW) had taken up his role as Executive Director of Secondary Education.
4.33	Returning to longer-term strategies, RR suggested that broadening job descriptions, for example, using "Teacher of Humanities" rather than "Teacher of RE", could provide greater flexibility. She also proposed the development of a Trust-wide strategy for Early Career Teachers (ECTs), enabling the Trust to recruit colleagues at the lower end of the pay scales. RR acknowledged that the effectiveness of this approach would depend on the capacity and capability of existing staff to support ECTs, but expressed confidence that teams were well placed to do so.
4.34	*Nick Teagle (NT) briefly left the meeting 10:54am.*
4.35	***NJC2:*** Although this had not been included in the papers for the meeting, RR advised that NJC2 would be removed with effect from 1 April 2026. She confirmed that the HR team was in the process of moving affected colleagues to NJC3.
4.36	***Turnover in the First Year:*** In discussion on first-year turnover, the Committee expressed disappointment that staff attrition remained high within the first year of employment and asked RR for her perspective on the underlying causes. RR advised that there was no single factor, but rather a combination of contributory issues, including the quality of induction and, in some cases, recruitment decisions driven by

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	availability rather than overall suitability.
4.37	*NT rejoined the meeting at 10:58am.*
4.38	RR noted that a further priority was ensuring that colleagues' early experiences within the Trust were positive and consistent. While a new-starter questionnaire was in place, she acknowledged that this was not always effective. She highlighted the need for a stronger induction programme and clearer mandatory learning requirements, noting that there was currently no consistent way to deliver or track this. RR advised that the introduction of the LMS would support this, particularly through a role-based approach to learning.
5.	**EDI Report**
5.1	***EDI Report:*** The Committee noted and approved the EDI Report for publication on the Trust's website.
5.2	*Richard Emerton (RE) briefly left the meeting at 11:01am.*
5.3	***Gender Pay Report:*** RR highlighted that the presentational style of the report had been changed for this year, and this provided additional commentary beyond the raw data that the Trust was required to publish via the Government's website. The Committee praised the revised format of the report, which they felt was simpler than previous iterations.
5.4	In response to a question, RR advised that there had been some press coverage when the gender pay reporting regime was first introduced, but none subsequently. She confirmed that the Trust's data had been submitted to the statutory reporting portal. RR noted that benchmarking against other multi-academy trusts would be undertaken and reported back, and that she had contacted trusts with stronger gender pay positions, although only one had responded and had not implemented any specific actions to drive improvement. RR highlighted that the Trust's executive reward scheme had adversely affected the reported figures.
5.5	**ACTION: Benchmarking data for gender pay to be presented to the June Finance & Resource Committee meeting (Rachel Ridgill).**
5.6	As in previous years, RR highlighted that the gender pay gap within teaching roles remained relatively small and noted that the Trust has a higher proportion of female leaders than male leaders. She also flagged that women were more highly represented within the lower pay quartile.
5.7	*RE returned to the meeting at 11:05am.*
5.8	The Committee acknowledged that some trusts report a more favourable gender pay gap where services such as cleaning, traditionally undertaken by women and typically sitting within the lower pay quartile had been outsourced.
5.9	In response to a question from the Committee, discussion explored potential factors contributing to the gender pay gap within teaching, including the higher proportion of female teachers in primary settings. It was recognised that classroom teachers were paid on the same scale in both primary and secondary phases; however, secondary structures could offer greater opportunities for leadership roles. The Committee also noted that some female colleagues were lost due to misconceptions about returning from maternity leave, and RR outlined a number of interventions in place to address and challenge these perceptions.
5.10	Following discussion, the Committee approved the publication of the Gender Pay Report on the Trust's website.

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5.11	***Equality Impact Assessment for Restructure:*** RR confirmed that an Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out for the restructure, noting that the higher proportion of women identified as at risk reflected the Trust's workforce profile.
6.	**Director of Operations Report**
6.1	Jon French (JF) highlighted points of note from the Director of Operations Report:
6.2	***Catering:*** The Committee was provided with an overview of the procurement process currently underway to source a catering provider for the Trust's schools.
6.3	In response to a question, JF reported that during a recent visit to Skegness Grammar School (SGS) he observed that the continued availability of "grab and go" food options appeared to be driven by the catering provider's operational convenience and commercial considerations, rather than pupil reluctance to choose healthier options. While current contractual arrangements limited the extent to which this could be challenged, JF expressed disappointment that such options continued to be offered. Post meeting note: SGS have removed all grab and go at brunch time and are now delivering the offer as it will be in September in the new contract.
6.4	JF advised that while a healthier catering offer may initially affect demand in secondary schools which had been acknowledged with suppliers, he was confident that demand would increase as students adjusted to the change and recognised that healthier options could also be appealing and good quality.
6.5	***Health & Safety Audits:*** Following a procurement process, Atkins Réalis had been selected as the Trust's external Health & Safety auditor. JF noted that, given Atkins Réalis' previous audit work for the Trust, there was confidence in the consistency of the scoring methodology.
6.6	Of the previous audit actions, two development points remained outstanding.
6.7	***Physical Assaults:*** JF reported that incidents of physical assault on staff remained high at Eresby Special School (ERE) and Fairfield Academy (FAIR). He outlined the investigations undertaken at both sites to better understand the underlying causes, including a review involving Kimberley Lawton (KL) and an HR Business Partner.
6.8	At ERE, the review identified instances of over-reporting, limited staff awareness of individual education plans (IEPs) for some pupils, and aspects of the building design that enabled pupils to move freely through the site when distressed. Actions taken in response included additional staff training on IEPs, the installation of air-lock doors, the reassignment of reporting responsibilities, and revisions to the reporting process.
6.9	To support consistent reporting and close the feedback loop, the Committee encouraged the Executive Team to ensure that where an incident was assessed as play or communication rather than an assault, clear feedback was provided to the reporting staff member explaining the rationale. JF agreed to feed this back to the Education Team.
6.10	**ACTION: Suggest to Education Team that where an incident was assessed as play or communication rather than an assault, clear feedback is provided to the reporting staff member explaining the rationale (JF)**
6.11	The discussion then moved to wider cultural challenges at ERE and the actions being taken to address these.
6.12	SR reassured the Committee that incidents of assault are reviewed regularly, with every fourth Executive Board meeting dedicated to KPIs including this area.

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6.13	***Sustainability:*** The Committee celebrated that the Trust had been shortlisted in the Sustainability category at the MAT Excellence Awards. JF felt that being shortlisted demonstrated that the Trust was sector leading in terms of sustainability. JF flagged that very few trusts had successfully achieved the
6.14	Government's requirement to have a Climate Action Plan in place in every school.
6.15	JF commended Ashleigh McLeod (AML) for leading sustainability work across the Trust. He noted that, supported through the Trust's apprenticeship levy, AML had recently completed a master's degree in Sustainability. It was noted that AML would soon be taking maternity leave, and due to cost challenges the role would not be backfilled. While there would be no dedicated Trust-level lead for sustainability, JF expressed confidence that the Operations Team would continue to oversee and progress sustainability initiatives in AML's absence.
6.16	It was noted that gas consumption and associated costs had reduced, while electricity usage had increased. JF recognised the need to drive a cultural shift in relation to electricity use across schools and advised that work was ongoing with Academy Operations Managers (AOMs). He highlighted that, whilst sustainability champions were in place in each school and were effective in leading action plans, embedding wider cultural change around energy use remains a challenge. JF added that review of Climate Action Plans was supported by Academy Scrutiny Committees (ASCs) and some ASCs interrogated plans more deeply than others.
6.17	JF welcomed the recently published DfE estates strategy, noting that it introduced a number of helpful new ideas while maintaining a strong focus on sustainability. He highlighted the emphasis on carbon reduction, biodiversity and forest schools, areas in which the Trust was well positioned.
6.18	JF noted that trusts were currently unable to use private finance to invest in energy-efficient technologies but indicated that this position may change in the future.
7.	**Chief Finance Officer's Report**
7.1	JS provided updates on key aspects of the CFO Report:
7.2	***FY26:*** The Trust was tracking ahead of forecast and JS noted that, based on latest information, it seemed likely to expect the full year result would be towards the more favourable side of the forecast range, c.£1m deficit.
7.3	JS noted that, despite the recent announcement of the Inclusion Mainstream Fund, this funding would need to be deployed as part of a clearly defined inclusion strategy and could not be treated as a direct contribution to the Trust's bottom line. Based on the recently published funding methodology (for Years R-11), the Trust expects to receive c.£0.3m in FY26 from this new grant funding stream.
7.4	Since drafting her report, the NJC pay award offer had been published at 3.3%. Whilst this offer was well below the Union's ask, the difference from the forecasted figure was negligible.
7.5	In reply to a question, JS shared that the 7+5 forecast would be compiled over the Easter holidays and locked in towards the end of April 2026.
7.6	To improve clarity, the Committee requested that future reports include the surplus or deficit position prior to the impact of redundancies.
7.7	***Energy Pricing:*** Following a question from the Committee regarding energy pricing and conflicts in the Middle East, JF provided a recap and update on the Trust's energy arrangements.
7.8	Owing to the flexible contract for gas whereby 70% was purchased well in advance, 20% purchased in

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	blocks, and 10% at a day ahead rate, the Trust was thus far protected from price rises arising due to the current conflicts in the Middle East. Nevertheless, JF recognised that if the war continued the Trust would face greater exposure to price increases.
7.9	Whilst the Trust initially faced greater initial exposure when the conflict had commenced in Ukraine, JF reminded the Committee that in previous similar circumstances the Government had provided additional financial support.
7.10	In regard to electricity, the Trust currently had a low rate as part of a 6-month bridging fixed contract. This contract was due to end on 1 April 2026, and the Trust would move to a hedged contract set up in a similar manner to the current gas contract with blocks of energy bought at various time periods.
7.11	In response to a question, JF explained that since the onset of the conflict in the Middle East, Inspired Energy had been engaging with the Trust more frequently. He noted that Inspired Energy's Account Manager had advised that market instability meant energy rates were fluctuating on an hourly basis, making it increasingly difficult to secure contracts.
7.12	In response to a question, JF advised that for the current financial year the Trust was tracking below budget for energy costs, reflecting previously lower prices. He noted that whilst there remained limited headroom, a cautious approach was being maintained.
8.	**2026/27 Draft Budget**
8.1	JS explained that the budget was developed with the aim of achieving a break-even position, in order to protect reserves and operate sustainably, while directing as much funding and resource as possible towards driving improvement in secondary and sustaining provision in primary.
8.2	***Free Reserves:*** JS reminded the Committee that there was c. £2.5m of free reserves headroom to the bottom of the target range (5% on income) at 31 August 2025, and based on current performance expectations for FY26, JS anticipated that there would be around £1.5m of free reserve headroom by 31 August 2026.
8.3	***Pupil Number Forecasts:*** In relation to pupil number forecasts, JS did not expect pupil numbers to grow in aggregate again in future years. The Committee queried what was causing the decline, and JS and SR explained that there was a falling birth rate nationally, and schools such as Bobby Moore Academy (BMA) were in areas of high competition.
8.4	***Bridge to 2+10 Forecast:*** In developing the Bridge to the 2+10 forecast, GAG income inflationary growth was budgeted at 2.1% to reflect government inflationary assumptions. Since the budget was drafted, all General Annual Grant (GAG) letters had been received, resulting in income being c.£50k favourable overall to the draft budget. Pay award assumptions were informed by inflation and the information available at the time, with the teachers' pay award budgeted at 2.1%. Overall, inflation was neutral within the budget. The impact of changes in pupil numbers on income had been mitigated through corresponding reductions in staffing and non-staffing costs.
8.5	***Key Investments Included in the FY27 Budget:*** JS signposted the Committee to the investments designed to improve the service delivered on page 13 of her report.
8.6	It was noted that, despite the budget changes being implemented, the Trust's secondary schools would continue to be financially supported by the primaries overall in the coming year, which was not typical across the sector. JS highlighted that this position was not sustainable in the longer term, particularly as declining birth rates were expected to impact primary schools in the coming years. SR emphasised the need to review the Trust's smaller primary schools and ensure that the overall portfolio of schools remained sustainable.

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8.7	***AI:*** In response to a question from the Committee, JF confirmed that two IT colleagues had been assigned to digital innovation work for the past 18 months. JF highlighted that one of the team's first major projects was the development of the DRET Analytics platform, alongside partnership work with TeachGenAI. In addition to these larger initiatives, the team had developed a suite of 25 AI tools, which had been piloted with Academy Operations Managers (AOMs) and were yet to be rolled out more widely across the Trust.
8.8	It was noted that the initial focus had been on the use and development of AI within classroom settings; however, SR had also tasked the Executive Board with identifying opportunities to automate up to 5% of current activity. JF further highlighted that non-education teams, including HR, were also utilising and developing AI-enabled systems, such as through investment in the Evo platform.
8.9	***Key Assumptions:*** Returning to the wider budget, JS advised the Committee that the newly announced IMF grant would provide roughly £750k of additional income to support with inclusion. JS viewed this as a net nil adjustment and intended to include this in the 0+12 rather than adjust the budget.
8.10	Based on available information an assumption of 2.1% had been made for teacher pay. JS advised that, in light of recent higher increases offered to NJC staff (3.3%) and other public-sector roles, acceptance of c.2.1% by union partners was now considered unlikely. Nevertheless, JS felt that, at this stage, it seemed reasonable to assume that any teacher pay award materially in excess of 2.1% would need to be incrementally funded by the DfE.
8.11	JS highlighted an error in the report regarding TPS, the report stated it would remain unchanged. JS added that an assumption had been made that this would not change, but pension rates would be reviewed in the autumn and any changes would come into place in April 2027. At present, JS had not made any budgetary changes in relation to TPS but would continue to consider this closely.
8.12	***Sixth Form:*** Sixth form analysis was currently missing from the budget pack, but JS expected a deficit of around £600k in total.
8.13	SGS was expected to be the main contributor to the sixth form deficit, with a budgeted deficit of c.£200k for its sixth-form provision. However, it was noted that, as the only provider of A-level education in the local area, the sixth form continued to meet an important community need. Other Trust schools operated in more competitive local markets, but each also continued to expect a sixth-form deficit of approximately £100k.
8.14	***Maintenance:*** Following a question from the Committee, both JF and JS confirmed that the £1.5m of unplanned maintenance was ad hoc rather than a capital spend. While the headline figure appeared significant, JS clarified that it reflected the cumulative impact of a large number of small, discrete tasks across all 36 schools.
8.15	***Lettings Income:*** In relation to the £0.5m lettings income swing in the risks and opportunities section, the Committee asked what assumptions had been made in relation to this.
8.16	JF felt that £0.5m was ambitious but achievable and added that Katie Ryder had been appointed to a central lettings role and was already having a significant positive impact, particularly in strengthening culture and increasing the use of Trust facilities.
8.17	JF shared other potential lettings opportunities including: - Padel courts at Charnwood College (CWC) (£200k income was already built into the budget). - Another 3G pitch at CWC. - Letting out the Havelock Academy (HAV) swimming pool in the evenings and at weekends.

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8.18	Alongside these projects, JF was also in discussion with the Football Foundation regarding investing in pitches at Thomas Middlecott Academy (TMA) and HAV.
8.19	***Academy by Academy Slides:*** The Committee considered the budget as it related to each academy.
8.20	As to be expected, across the Primary surplus/deficit, smaller primaries such as Hogsthorpe Primary Academy (HOG) were in greater deficit.
8.21	In Secondary, CWC was showing as much improved financially, as were SGS and Charles Read Academy (CRA). Developing this further, JS shared that as current bulge years left the school, Lodge Park Academy (LPA) would experience greater financial challenges, and King Edward VI Academy (KEVI) was experiencing lower pupil numbers but an increase in pupils with SEND.
8.22	***Lag Funding:*** JS signposted the Committee to the impact of lag funding on academy contribution and discussed the individual circumstances at CWC and LPA. The Committee recognised that the Trust had benefited from lag funding in previous years.
8.23	***Tasking:*** Whilst this had been higher in previous years, the Committee recognised that as yet £900k of tasking remained unsighted. JS highlighted that as it felt too high risk, she had not incorporated a central vacancy rate into the budget this year. On balance, JS felt this was the right budget and stressed that there were a number of initiatives available to ensure this budget was achievable.
8.24	As none of the changes to the budget were material, JS proposed presenting the May Trust Board with the budget in its current format and incorporating the changes into the normal 0+12. The Committee agreed this was a sensible proposal but requested that areas such as inflation and energy prices were closely monitored.
8.25	In reply to a question that drew on discussion earlier in the meeting, JS felt that the £400k structural labour costs were achievable. JS reminded the Committee that whilst the teacher resignation date was after the May Board, the second phase of the restructure process consultation would be complete by the end of May.
8.26	SR suggested that whilst the Board would sign off the budget in May, the Committee could be provided with regular updates throughout the summer period. Members agreed that these updates should be included in the routine Trustee updates provided by SR.
9.	**Review of Banking and Investment Arrangements**
9.1	JS presented a paper outlining alternative options that had been considered to improve the Trust's return without exposing it to unacceptable risk. Proposals from three institutions had been reviewed, with a recommendation for the Committee to discuss to invest some of the Trust's cash with Deutsche Bank.
9.2	The Committee discussed the proposal in detail and recognised that holding the Trust's funds across two banking institutions presented a counterparty risk; however, it was considered highly unlikely that either Barclays or Lloyds would be permitted to fail. The Committee also noted that, while the Trust had historically invested only in AAA-rated products, elements of Deutsche Bank's investment portfolio included BBB-rated investments. This was acknowledged as increasing risk for a relatively modest additional return of approximately 1%.
9.3	The Committee agreed that they were not yet in a position to make a recommendation to Trust Board and David Hall (DH) committed to reviewing investment proposals in greater depth alongside Nigel Langstaff (NL).
9.4	**ACTION: Review of investment proposals to be undertaken (David Hall, Nigel Langstaff, Jane Spencer).**

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9.5	The target approval date for any investment proposal was agreed at before the end of the academic year.
10.	**Procurement Reports – Waiver and Breaches Log and Late POs**
10.1	The Committee noted the Procurement Reports, including the Waivers and Breaches Log and the Late Purchase Orders (POs). Members welcomed the level of transparency and questioned whether performance was improving. JS reported that, in relation to late POs, improvement had not yet been seen, with a lag of approximately two months before corrective action takes effect. Targeted training had been delivered to academies with higher levels of late POs, including a presentation to Academy Operations Managers (AOMs) in February. Further work was underway to review approval thresholds, with a significantly increased focus on this area.
10.2	JS reminded the Committee of the challenges in recruitment and retention within the Procurement Team.
11.	**Annual Review of Insurance Arrangements**
11.1	The Committee noted the Annual Review of Insurance Arrangements and agreed with the conclusion presented noting that the threshold for moving away from the RPA was high. Members queried whether the review was required annually and JS confirmed it was.
12.	**Any Other Business**
12.1	No additional business was raised.
13.	**Date and Time of Next Meeting:** 11 June 2026, 09:30am.

The Chairs declared the meeting closed at 1:02pm.