Meeting	Seaford Learning Trustees
Date	Wednesday 4th December 2024
Time	5pm – 6.30pm
Venue	Board Room, Seaford Head School, Arundel Road site
Trustees	Jon Dilley Bob Ellis James Hollingsworth Margaret Rooms Sarah Speedie
In attendance	Jane Branson (Guest) Sally Laidlaw (Chief Finance Officer) Gaynor Newnham (Clerk) Sue Silvester – Member Simon Webber – partner Kellie Goodwin – lead auditor
Apologies	Jacky Cross Chris Mercer
Absent	

Minutes

Item	Item Outline
1.	**Welcome & Apologies for Absence** JD opened the meeting.
2.	**Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary Interests in Proceedings** There were no changes to the published declarations.
3.	**External Audit Report** SW and KG presented the Draft Financial Statements and Draft Key Audit Findings. Trustees raised the following questions: Question: Who made the donation for IT? Answer: Wolfson Trust Question: Can you elaborate on the difference between restricted and unrestricted funds? Answer: For a MAT the restriction relates to educational purposes. Income generated through lettings would be unrestricted. Historically there were sizeable income streams, but the GAG is restricted, though wide. Question: Is the use of capital reserves a one off? What it the longer-term trend? Answer: Reduced funding and rising staffing costs have had a negative impact on the budget. There has been investment in the building and IT and there are unspent CIF funds. Spending at the same rate would deplete the reserves, but there is a plan not to run them down further. SL gave an update on the CIF bid and explained that work started on the permitted development in November (fence under 2m) and embankment work will need planning permission. Baily Garner is managing the revised planning application with Lewes District Council. The note on the report will be revised. Question: Could the names of previous staff governors be removed from the accounts? Answer: They will be removed next year.

Question: Are there separate sets of accounts for each school?

Answer: Yes.

The Lead Auditor asked if any Related party transactions are expected, and SL confirmed that they are not.

SW explained that:

- the Key Audit Findings Document is not public but will go to the ESFA
- Benchmarking – based on 2023 – shows slightly higher than average staff costs.

Question: Would the proposed PAN adjustment impact on future benchmarking reports?

Answer: Yes

Question: Is the level of transactions normal?

Answer: Relatively. SLT is not unusual having reserves and starting to approach a deficit. SLT is an outlier at the better end of the spectrum.

SW and KG reviewed the audit recommendations from the previous year and reported that:

- The website remains slightly out of date.
- There are two outstanding declarations of interest
- Attendance was not an issue this year.

New recommendations:

- There is no fixed asset register for CS
- There was an issue with trip approval

Question: Does the Exeunt system approve trips, or does it only create an action plan?

Answer: Both, but there are external steps relating to school systems.

Question: Is the next step for Trustees to respond and the response to be incorporated into the document?

Answer: Yes

Will approve subject to final changes at the AGM.

SW and KG Left at 17.46

SL summarised the management response and explained that not having people in school at the crucial point impacted on the audit. The points are minor, and process driven.

- The Senior Executive Team will ensure the website is kept up to date
- The clerk will ensure Declarations of Interest (DOI) are completed and shared with SL. They will be checked for continuity, such as whether Governors and Trustees have children in school. There will be a line in the response to say DOI are shared with the CFO to ensure compliance.
- The CS fixed asset register could not be located, though there is one. There is a template available from the auditors. The response will be to ensure the register is maintained.
- The wording related to tendering processes will be adjusted, as there is a framework agreement around tendering.

	• There is an internal process for trips at each school. There were some issues last year which are being addressed. The new way of working should ensure this is not an ongoing issue. Question: Is this related to the list approved by governors? Answer: No – there will be a better system in place. There is a generous offer for trips at SHS which creates work. • Accounting of income will be worked on with the auditors. • Systems around contracts and salary update letters will be improved for next year. BE pointed out that the timing of pay increases has been unhelpful. • Bank account inputting errors went uncorrected due to a lack of time. Governors noted investment income of £87,000, which is interest on investments. *JH left at 18.00*
4.	**Feedback from the Audit and Risk Committee:** SS updated Trustees on the regular meetings looking at finance and risk in rotation and confirmed that CM is now a member of the committee. **Trustees approved the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference.**
5.	**Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** **October 2024** **The minutes were approved, subject to one amendment.** **The summary of actions was reviewed, and all were noted to be complete, or on the agenda, except confirmation that all have signed the Code of Conduct.** This could not be checked at the meeting due to connectivity issues. The Clerk checked after the meeting and, as one Member has not Registered for Governor Hub, the Trustees' confirmations and compliances are not complete. **Action: GN to contact Trustees and Members about signing up to Governor Hub and completing Codes of Conduct**
6.	**Finance and operations:** Focus on Premises and Health and Safety The CFO reported that: • Work on the safeguarding projects has begun • Quotes are being sought for the additional safeguarding works, including replacement fencing and gates, and doors. Question: Is funding reserved for the cricket field? Answer: There will be money available. Question: Is the CIF grant funding for Seaford Head? Answer: Yes; the CFO will apply for a 25-26 CIF bid for Chyngton, to include the roof and further safeguarding items, additional to the money spent on the fob system and buildings, and regular gate repairs, and will resubmit the previous fire safety bid for Steyne Road. Trustees noted that the accounts, CIF bids, and nursery capital funding bids all need to be submitted this term. Some Trustees challenged whether the nursery capital funding bid should be made before Trustees approve the project. SL explained that there is an opportunity to bid for up to £150k to make redundant spaces in schools into nurseries, due to reduced PAN, by 19 December.

	Question: Will a business case be submitted? Answer: Yes, after the bid. The Trust should take advantage of the funding. The LA will provide support, and a needs survey has been completed. The school has the space for the provision. Question: What form is the application? Answer: Online Question: What information and supporting documents are needed? Can Trustees see the applications when they are submitted? Answer: They will be shared. The Chair was concerned that there has been no proper discussion and Trustees are being rushed into a decision with insufficient supporting information. The CEO explained that the application is an expression of interest and there will be no decision from the LA until April, and the process involves the LA and the DfE. The CFO explained that the proposal will be shared at the Term 3 Trustee meeting, and will include the needs' survey, and information on how having a nursery may avoid redundancies because of the reduced PAN. The LA has confirmed that there is a need for the right type of provision, as in longer days and holidays. This would be a unique offer. Trustees noted that growing the Trust is a key priority that might be met differently to the original plan.
7.	**CEO Verbal Update** The SHS and CS dashboards and Committee meeting minutes had been circulated with the agenda. The CEO gave an update on progress since the October meeting: • the audit came at a busy time and there was a missing staff member – thanks to SL for the work done. • SL is also working on the nursery offer with Amy Clarke. This is an exciting move for CS. The LA is behind the nursery, but not the specialist provision in this round, as this is not an area of need. • Both schools are moving forward. This is a positive and challenging time. • SHS positives include attendance and outcomes, and significant outreach work, generating nearly £40k from school improvement work. This is also good for the CPD of staff and consideration of succession planning. • The CS dashboard is strong. • Seaford cluster is working effectively and SLT is building a good place for itself. • The change of government heralds a new approach to academisation, including talk about taking back failing trusts, though LA's may no longer have capacity to support schools. Trustees broke here, for the AGM. *BE left at 18.46* *SS left at 18.48*
8.	**Safeguarding Report** The Safeguarding Lead Governor: • thanked JH for his work as the Safeguarding Link Governor for SHS. • Tabled the Safeguarding Report to Trustees and highlighted that: • There is a Trust safeguarding meeting each big term and the process is helpful • The CS Link Governor is keen to look at succession planning, though the most eligible candidate is an Associate Member with expertise, who she is being pressured to resign by her work team. • Strengths and areas for development.

	• Statutory training requirements will be checked with the East Sussex Governance and Clerking Service. Combined training could be considered. • Policies will be addressed • The level of disadvantaged students' severe absence is concerning though other students' attendance is high. Question: Has attendance worsened since the pandemic? Answer: Yes, though the data will include holidays, or young carers' absence, for whom a punitive approach would be inappropriate. • Mental health concerns at SHS were noted to be significant. Trustees discussed Self-harm was discussed, and SS explained that this is a complex issue. The secondary school needs to be aware of issues at primary. • Attendance at both schools is positive nal. An attendance/ FTE/ PEX report could be considered. Mobility and EHE were also discussed. JB confirmed that the CS Link Governor checks the Single Central Record (SCR), and the report is shared with governors. JD – thanks for the positive report. SS commended the SG teams in both
9.	**Agenda items for next meeting:**
10.	**Any other business**
11.	**Next meeting:** Wednesday 29 January 2025 **Closed at 19.04**

No	Action	By	Notes
1	GN to contact Trustees and Members about signing up to Governor Hub and com Codes of Conduct	GN	

Seaford Learning Trust – draft meeting schedule for 2024 2025				
Term	**SHS LGB**	**Chyngton LGB**	**Trustees**	**AGM**
1	Tuesday 24 September 8-10am	Thursday 26 September 9-11am	Wednesday 09 October 5-7pm	
2	Tuesday 12 November 8-10am	Thursday 14 November 9-11am	Wednesday 4 December 5-6.30pm	Wednesday 4 December 6.30-7pm
3	Tuesday 14 January 8-10am	Thursday 16 January 9-11am	Wednesday 29 January 5-7pm	
4	Tuesday 4 March 8-10am	Thursday 6 March 9-11am	Wednesday 19 March 5-7pm	
5	Tuesday 29 April 8-10am	Thursday 08 May 9-11am	Wednesday 7 May 5-7pm	
6	Tuesday 24 June 8-10am	Thursday 10 July 9am-3pm	Wednesday 11 June 5-6.30pm	

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