

Business Committee Minutes

Meeting	Business Committee	Date	23 November 2023
Location	Folkestone – Executive Boardroom	Time	9.30am
Membership	Charles Buchanan (CB), Miranda Chapman (MC), Gail Clarke (Chair), Graham Razey (CEO), <i>Karen Wilks (Staff Governor), Joanna Worby (JW)</i>		
In Attendance	<p>Chris Legg, (CL) Chief Financial Officer Dan Shelley (DS) Chief Infrastructure and Transformation Officer Kerry Hickmott, (KH) Group Director of Business Support & People Development - item 10 Sharon Hollingsworth (SH) Group Director of Governance Georgia Shelton (GS) Executive Support Officer - Minutes Clerk</p> <p>Paul Butler, External Board Reviewer (observed the meeting via Teams)</p>		

**Italics denotes absence*

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and apologies for absence	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their time with GR and Paul Butler joining via Teams.</p> <p>Apologies were received for Karen Wilks and Joanna Worby.</p>	
2	Declarations of Interest	There were no additional declarations to the meeting other than those declared as standing.	
3	Minutes of the meetings held on 22nd June 2023 including confidential minutes	The minutes and confidential minutes of the Business Committee meeting held on the 22 June 2023 were reviewed by the Committee and approved as a true and fair account. The minutes will be duly signed following the meeting by the Chair.	
4	Matters Arising not covered by this agenda:	<p>The Chair asked for any matters arising.</p> <p>It was suggested that in the previous meeting, discussions around lettings ending in Canterbury College were discussed; it was questioned whether these have been discussed further. The Chief Infrastructure and Transformation Officer explained that Block B tenants are on an annual lettings</p>	

		<p>cycle, and that the Group are looking at NHS requirements in this building and the possibility of moving the International provision into this space to allow for Sixth Form growth as part of the wider property strategy.</p> <p>The Committee also discussed the reported decline in Sheppey student numbers last year, and questioned whether growth at Sheppey will come as a result of the new build. It was suggested that this year's enrolment target was surpassed by 12, but that the new offer and build should cause growth and better retention.</p>	
5	Terms of Reference for the Business Committee	<p>The Group Director of Governance presented the Terms of Reference for the Business Committee.</p> <p>The following key updates were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There has been an update to the number of independent governors from 5 to 4 (2.1). - The approval of the Gender Pay Gap Report has been added to the delegated responsibilities (5). - The change of minute taker to the Governance Officer. <p>APPROVED – Business Committee Terms of Reference.</p>	
Strategic items			
6	Contract Renewal – Waste Management	<p>The Chief Infrastructure and Transformation Officer summarised the Waste Collection Service Tender outcome with members.</p> <p>Governors noted that the best choice would be Countrystyle Recycling due to its value, positive impact on students, social value strategy, and support for the existing EKC sustainability strategies.</p> <p>It was recommended that Countrystyle be awarded the contract, and they continue with their current service to the Group. The Committee was comfortable with the recommendation.</p> <p>APPROVED – Countrystyle to be awarded the contract for Group Waste Management Collection.</p>	
7	Capital Programme update	<p>This item was considered confidential and will form Confidential Minutes PART A.</p>	

	Property Sub-Committee minutes: 18.09.23 and 17.10.23		
Reporting			
8	July 2023 Management Accounts	<p>The Chief Financial Officer presented the July 2023 Management accounts and highlighted the following key matters to the Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Savings are high due to provisions put in at Q3 for restricting costs in response to reduced forecasted income, and the fact that the agency staff and re-structuring budgets were not needed. - Financial Health rating is good. - The local government pension scheme is in surplus, but the accounting standards do not allow this to be shown as an asset. - There is one remaining loan with Santander due to be paid by January 2028. <p>NOTED – July 2023 Management Accounts</p>	
9	October 2023 Management Accounts to include Q1 re-forecast	<p>The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) presented the October 2023 Management accounts and highlighted the following key matters to the Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Q1 forecast has not been produced yet due to the implementation of a new Business Planner; the Q1 position will be reported in the November management accounts . - Governors were impressed with the new business planning tool and complimented the CFO on its development, suggesting that he looks into marketing this to other CFOs in the sector. <p>It was questioned whether new staff would be able to use this bespoke system in the case of staff absence or leaving. The CFO suggested that it is not a difficult system to learn how to use, and that new hires could be trained to do this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A monthly cash flow tool has been created to show the closing bank balance every month. This is a useful tool for identifying potential risks; it would be beneficial for this to show budget alongside the actual spending. 	<p>CL</p> <p>CL</p>

		NOTED – October 2023 Management Accounts	
10	Update on Gender Pay Gap position	<p>The Group Director of Business Support & People Development was welcomed into the meeting.</p> <p>KH presented an update on the Gender Pay Gap position and actions being taken.</p> <p>The following key areas of focus were summarised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Encouraging women to take part in leadership programmes and establishing mechanisms to support this. - Promoting flexible working arrangements, and shared parental leave arrangements. - Training hiring managers in the fair recruitment process. - Reviewing gender distributions. <p>Governors questioned whether we ask part-time/flexible workers if they would prefer full time roles. It was suggested that this is not currently done, but employees have the option to increase hours when vacancies arise.</p> <p>It was queried whether job shares are encouraged, rather than just flexible working. Flexible working is generally offered, with the adjacent job role taking applications; this is a job share but it is not marketed as such.</p> <p>A governor asked whether there have been any challenges from staff in taking positive action around recruitment campaigns, Staff are reminded that taking positive action to reach out to an under represented minority is acceptable , but positive discrimination is not.</p> <p>Governors were supportive of the action plan presented.</p> <p>The Chair thanked KH for her report and KH left the meeting.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED – Update on Gender Pay Gap position</p>	
11	Staff survey results and management action plan	<p>The Chief Executive Officer presented agreed next steps following on from the staff survey, as shared with the Full Governing Body in October 2023.</p>	

		<p>It was noted that action plans with each business unit are now in place following staff feedback; this focused on leadership actions around improving environments. Senior leadership are being mentored by Catherine Carden, external consultant, and positive progress has been made.</p> <p>It was questioned how this progress is being monitored. It was suggested that staff surveys take place on an annual basis, so progress is not formerly monitored until the following year. Progress has been seen informally in progress and performance reviews however, specifically in Sheppey and EKC Training in terms of their behaviours and approaches. Group Executives have also been more present in the business units to provide support where needed.</p> <p>The 10% dip in survey participation from last year was noted, and governors questioned what would have caused this. It was suggested that this dip is due to commercial staff and staff who work across unsocial hours e.g. housekeepers. It is important to think about how these staff could be surveyed in the future.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED - Staff survey results and management action plan.</p>	
12	Report on HR matters	<p>The Chief Executive Officer provided a verbal update on the position of current HR matters explaining that we now have 5 high level cases, which are being progressed. This represents an all-time low from when records began.</p> <p>Communicating the impact of the Harpur Trust v Brazel decision reversal to staff may be difficult; it is important to be mindful when informing staff of changes to holiday entitlements and salary. This is planned for implementation on 1 August 2024, which is in-line with legal recommendations.</p> <p>Following the increase to the minimum wage, governors questioned whether the Group operate age discriminatory on minimum wage. The CEO suggested that pay is based on role rather than age, however this is not the case for apprenticeships and student roles.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED – Report on HR Matters.</p>	
Procedural			
13	Any Other Business	The Chair asked members for any other business and the following was noted:	

		<p>The Microsoft 365 campus licenses are due to end on the 31 December 2023. Currently negotiations with Microsoft are being led nationally on behalf of the sector by Jisc, but nothing has been confirmed yet. The price is likely to be above the threshold for both CEO and Business Committee, as the Group are looking to get a three-year contract to reduce prices in the long term, and therefore the Full Governing Body will be informed once the price has been confirmed for their approval.</p> <p>A governor questioned whether Sheppey Junior Colleges could transfer under EKC Schools Trust to attract higher student funding rates. The CEO suggested that this is not possible, as this would reduce flexibility in terms of the curriculum we can offer.</p>	
14	Matters Considered Confidential	Item 7 was considered confidential.	
15	Date and time of next meeting	The next meeting will take place on Thursday 14th March 2023 at 9.30am.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10:58am.

Signed: 

Print: GAIL CLARKE

Date: 14/03/2024