

**THE SHAREHOLDER COMMITTEE FOR THE DORSET CENTRE OF
EXCELLENCE (DCOE)**

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2023

Present: Cllrs Byron Quayle (Vice-Chairman), Laura Beddow and Jane Somper

Apologies: Cllrs Spencer Flower and Gary Suttle

Also present: Cllr Stella Jones

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Ian Comfort (Chairman of the Independent Board – DCoE)

Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151)

Chris Harrod (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Andy Holder (Managing Director - DCoE)

Theresa Leavy (Executive Director - People - Children)

Stuart Jones (Board Member - DCoE)

Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer)

Claire Shiels (Corporate Director - Commissioning & Partnerships)

Claire Webb (Strategic Commissioner)

24. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Spencer Flower and Gary Suttle.

25. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 September were confirmed.

Matters Arising

The Chairman queried if there was an update relating to the usage of the on-site Walled Garden and it was explained that the school was continuing to develop the way the garden was being used and that its key usage centred around horticultural lessons. The school was also working with pupils to understand how they would like to utilise the space to further enrich their curriculum.

26. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

27. Public Participation

No participation requests had been received.

28. **Councillor Questions**

No councillor questions had been submitted.

29. **Forward Plan**

The forward plan was noted.

30. **Dorset Council Commissioning Report**

The Corporate Director – Commissioning and Partnerships introduced her report which gave a summary of the period's commissioning activity.

Officers responded to Members' comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- There was no longer a need for the Council's officers to maintain a presence on-site following a significant improvement programme at the school.
- The school was on target to reach 72 pupils by the end of the term and the council was working with the families of pupils with additional needs and their schools to establish if Coombe House School would be an appropriate placement for them.
- Cllr Jones would be informed of the costs for placements outside of the meeting due to the commercial sensitivity of the figures.

The Chairman was pleased to note the improvements made at the school and the good reputation that it had acquired over a relatively short period, particularly within the local community. He added his thanks to the Corporate Director for the work that she'd done assisting the school with its improvement programme and wished her well in her new job role.

NOTED

31. **DCE - Report of Chair of the Board of Directors**

The Chairman of the Board of Directors introduced the report which set out the progress made by the company since the previous meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr Comfort and the team for their report and welcomed the Chair of the Board's comment relating to the inclusion of comments from students and their parents at the next committee meeting. He added that he regularly received positive feedback on the work done by the school in terms of outcomes and experiences of pupils, but also in relation to the provision of the swimming pool and the positive effect that it was having on the community.

For the sake of transparency, Cllr J Somper declared that her husband was a user of the on-site swimming pool.

Board Members in attendance and Officers responded to Members' comments and requests for clarification, details included:

- Staff turnover had reduced over the past 12 months and the school was focussed on securing the best people for the school and ensuring that they remain there, feeling part of something special. Looking after the wellbeing of employees was a strong focus. The school had also recently undertaken a very successful recruitment drive, during which it appointed 13 members of staff, all of which were performing well.
- The school was continuing to review its recruitment strategy to ensure that it was seen to be an attractive employer. Significant growth was expected with the school over the next few years, particularly in September 2024, and so a timeline was being strategized.
- The school was looking at developing a strategy to attract staff from outside the local area, if required including relocation packages if required and how it could market to and attract applicants from further afield than Dorset as the school grew and popularity. Training was a huge priority, particularly in terms of induction of new staff – the recent cohort of new starters had given good feedback on the quality of the induction programme that they had received. Further to this, the school had a comprehensive training plan to ensure that all staff had the ability to progress their development.
- The company was not ready to discuss the timeline in relation to the proposed residential care home provision at this point, as there were still a number of matters to address, but there was a strong desire to ensure that such provision could be offered and it was hoped that update could be given at the next meeting of the Committee.

The Chairman commended the work that had been undertaken by the company in terms of the progress made and its future ambitions, before highlighting his continued support.

DECISION

1. That the report be noted
2. That the company be allowed to file abridged reports to companies house, as per the request in paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2 of the report

32. Report to Full Council on performance of the trading activities of the company

The Chairman of the Board of Directors introduced the report which set out the performance of the trading activities of the company, that was due to be submitted to Council.

Members were pleased to note the inclusion of feedback quotes from parents and students within the performance report and explained that it gave a user's perspective as to the success of the company, which therefore added an additional layer of information that wasn't always included in such reports.

The Monitoring Officer advised that this report would now be submitted to Cabinet instead of the Council, following a change to the constitution, which he had reported to the Audit and Governance Committee since the publication of the agenda.

NOTED

33. Urgent Items

There were no urgent items.

34. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

Duration of meeting: 10.01 - 10.50 am

Chairman

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