



# The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)

**Date:** Monday, 13 March 2023

**Time:** 10.30 am

**Venue:** Council Chamber, County Hall, Dorchester, DT1 1XJ

## **Members (Quorum: 3)**

Cllrs Laura Beddow, Spencer Flower (Chairman), Andrew Parry (Vice-Chairman), Gary Suttle and Peter Wharf

**Chief Executive:** Matt Prosser, County Hall, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1XJ

For more information about this agenda please contact Democratic Services Meeting Contact [chris.harrod@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:chris.harrod@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

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## **Agenda**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Pages</b>
<b>1. APOLOGIES</b>	
To receive any apologies for absence.	
<b>2. MINUTES</b>	5 - 8
To confirm the minutes of the previous meeting.	
<b>3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>	
To disclose any pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interest as set out in the adopted Code of Conduct. In making their disclosure councillors are asked to state the agenda item, the nature of the interest and any action they propose to take as part of their declaration.	
If required, further advice should be sought from the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting.	

#### **4. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Representatives of town or parish councils and members of the public who live, work, or represent an organisation within the Dorset Council area are welcome to submit up to two questions or two statements for each meeting. Alternatively, you could submit one question and one statement for each meeting.

All submissions must be emailed in full to [chris.harrod@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:chris.harrod@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) by 8.30am on Wednesday 8 March 2023.

When submitting your question(s) and/or statement(s) please note that:

- no more than three minutes will be allowed for any one question or statement to be asked/read
- a question may include a short pre-amble to set the context and this will be included within the three-minute period
- please note that sub divided questions count towards your total of two
- when submitting a question please indicate who the question is for (e.g. the name of the committee or Portfolio Holder)
- Include your name, address and contact details. Only your name will be published but we may need your other details to contact you about your question or statement in advance of the meeting.
- questions and statements received in line with the council's rules for public participation will be published as a supplement to the agenda
- all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

[Dorset Council Constitution](#) Procedure Rule 9

#### **5. COUNCILLOR QUESTIONS**

To receive questions submitted by councillors.

Councillors can submit up to two valid questions at each meeting and sub divided questions count towards this total. Questions and statements received will be published as a supplement to the agenda and all questions, statements and responses will be published in full within the minutes of the meeting.

The submissions must be emailed in full to [chris.harrod@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:chris.harrod@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk) 8.30am on Wednesday 8 March 2023.

[Dorset Council Constitution](#) – Procedure Rule 13

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|------------|--|---------|
| <b>6.</b>  | <b>FORWARD PLAN</b>  | 9 - 14  |
|            | To consider the Forward Plan.  |         |
| <b>7.</b>  | <b>REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS</b>   | 15 - 22 |
|            | To consider the report.  |         |
| <b>8.</b>  | <b>DORSET COUNCIL COMMISSIONING REPORT</b>   | 23 - 26 |
|            | To consider the report.  |         |
| <b>9.</b>  | <b>URGENT ITEMS</b>  |         |
|            | To consider any items of business which the Chairman has had prior notification and considers to be urgent pursuant to section 100B (4) (b) of the Local Government Act 1972. The reason for the urgency shall be recorded in the minutes. |         |
| <b>10.</b> | <b>EXEMPT BUSINESS</b>   |         |
|            | To move the exclusion of the press and the public for the following items in view of the likely disclosure of exempt information within meaning of paragraph x of schedule 12 A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)              |         |
|            | The public and the press will be asked to leave the meeting whilst the item of business is considered.   |         |

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

### MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 5 DECEMBER 2022

**Present:** Cllrs Laura Beddow (via MS Teams), Spencer Flower (Chairman), Andrew Parry (Vice-Chairman) and Peter Wharf

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

Kate Critchel (Senior Democratic Services Officer),  
Aidan Dunn (Executive Director - Corporate Development S151),  
Chris Harrod (Senior Democratic Services Officer),  
Theresa Leavy (Executive Director of People - Children),  
Jonathan Mair (Director of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer),  
Matt Prosser (Chief Executive)  
Claire Shiels (Corporate Director - Commissioning, Quality & Partnerships)

**24. Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Suttle.

Cllr Beddow had advised that she would be unable to attend the meeting in person, but would take part in discussions via MS Teams.

**25. Minutes**

The minutes of the previous meeting, held on 19 October 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**26. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**27. Public Participation**

There was no public participation to report.

**28. Councillor Questions**

No councillor questions had been received.

**29. Forward Plan**

The Forward Plan, as amended in the Agenda Supplement Pack, was received and noted.

### 30. **Appointment of Non-Executive Directors**

Claire Sheils, Corporate Director for Commissioning & Partnerships, advised that there had been three new Non-Executive Director appointments to the Board: Hilary Morris, Diane Grannell and Anil Patel and set out the experience that each would bring to the Board, which the committee noted and agreed.

Although there were no questions from Committee Members relating to this item, it was requested that Board Members from both Dorset Centre of Excellence and Care Dorset Holdings Ltd were introduced to elected members.

The Executive Director for Children's services agreed that this would be appropriate and would liaise with the Chairs of both respective Boards to arrange.

#### **Resolved:**

That the three non-executive directors referred to in the report be appointed to the Board of Directors.

### 31. **Update Report from Chair of the Board**

The Chair of the Board introduced his report which set out:

Officers responded to comments and requests for clarifications, details included:

- Before the facilities could be offered for community use, there was a small amount of maintenance work to be undertaken and the wording of terms of use agreement for hire also needed to be finalised. Once this had been completed it was anticipated that the 'dry' facilities would be available for the community to use from January 2023, with 'wet' facilities to follow shortly after.
- The newly appointed Managing Director had observed that was a lot going well with the curriculum and that children were engaging well with it most of the time, although there was some work to be undertaken to ensure that it offered more variety to some pupils with EHCPs and that the provision met the needs of individual plans.
- The Board was seeking to expand the provision of what was currently offered by the School, particularly that of creative arts and sports, in terms of curriculum delivery and develop it so that became more embedded in the school day.
- There was a strong belief held by the Managing Director that all schools should live and function within their communities and that once the foundations of the school's operation were in place, partnerships were built on and that the local community and groups were invited to assist the school in achieving this. There was a strong community interest in utilising the school's music facilities in facilitating community activities, although it would need to ensure safeguarding remained robust.

- A short progress report indicating the key milestones and achievements of the school could be circulated to Members to act as a helpful narrative and ensuring that they were kept informed. It was also further suggested and subsequently agreed that a short video could be produced to add to the value of such reports.

**Noted**

**32. Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

**33. Exempt Business**

It was proposed by Cllr Parry and seconded by Cllr Wharf:

**Decision**

That the press and the public be excluded for the following item in view of the likely disclosure of exempt business information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**34. Commissioning Report**

The Committee received an update on the commissioning activity being undertaken at Coombe House School, including that related to its recovery plan, future ambitions, media protocol and human resources support.

**Noted**

**Duration of meeting:** 2.00 - 2.42 pm

**Chairman**

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## The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) Forward Plan For the period MARCH 2023 to SEPTEMBER 2023 (Publication date – 14 MARCH 2023)

### Explanatory Note:

This Forward Plan contains future items to be considered by the Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence. It is published 28 days before the next meeting of the Committee. The plan includes items for the meeting including key decisions. Each item shows if it is 'open' to the public or to be considered in a private part of the meeting.

### Definition of Key Decisions

Key decisions are defined in Dorset Council's Constitution as decisions which are likely to -

- (a) to result in the relevant local authority incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the relevant local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates (**Thresholds - £500k**); or
- (b) to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority."

In determining the meaning of "*significant*" for these purposes the Council will have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 9Q of the Local Government Act 2000 Act. Officers will consult with lead members to determine significance and sensitivity.

### Committee Membership 2022/23

<b>Spencer Flower</b>	Leader / Governance, Performance and Communications
<b>Peter Wharf</b>	Deputy Leader / Adult Social Care and Health
<b>Gary Suttle</b>	Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy
<b>Laura Miller</b>	Culture, Communities and Customer Services
<b>Andrew Parry</b>	Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
<b>Standing items for consideration</b>				
<b>June</b>				
<b>Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference</b>  <b>Key Decision</b> - Yes <b>Public Access</b> - Open	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>5 Jun 2023</b>	Leader of the Council	<i>Director of Legal and Democratic Services - Monitoring Officer (Jonathan Mair)</i>
<b>Dorset Council Delegated Decisions</b>  <b>Key Decision</b> - Yes <b>Public Access</b> - Open	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>5 Jun 2023</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i>
<b>Dorset Council Commissioning Report</b>  <b>Key Decision</b> - Yes <b>Public Access</b> - Fully exempt	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>5 Jun 2023</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help	<i>Claire Shiels, Corporate Director - Commissioning, Quality &amp; Partnerships            claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk            Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i>
<b>DCOE - Report of Independent Chair of Board of Directors</b>  <b>Key Decision</b> - Yes	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>5 Jun 2023</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i>

<b>Subject / Decision</b>	<b>Decision Maker</b>	<b>Date the Decision is Due</b>	<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	<b>Officer Contact</b>
<b>Public Access</b> - Fully exempt	<b>Excellence (DCOE)</b>			
<b>Business Plan</b> <b>Key Decision</b> - Yes <b>Public Access</b> - Fully exempt	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>5 Jun 2023</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i>
<b>September</b>				

<b>Dorset Council delegated Decisions</b> <b>Key Decision</b> - No <b>Public Access</b> - Open	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>18 Sep 2023</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i>
<b>Dorset Council Commissioning Report</b> <b>Key Decision</b> - Yes <b>Public Access</b> - Fully exempt	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>18 Sep 2023</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help	<i>Claire Shiels, Corporate Director - Commissioning, Quality &amp; Partnerships claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk Executive Director, People - Adults</i>
<b>DCOE - Report of Independent Chair of Board of Directors</b> <b>Key Decision</b> - Yes <b>Public Access</b> - Fully exempt	<b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b>	<b>Decision Date</b> <b>18 Sep 2023</b>	Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help	<i>Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i>

Subject / Decision	Decision Maker	Date the Decision is Due	Portfolio Holder	Officer Contact
Annual Reports				

<p><b>Report to Full Council on performance of the trading activities of the company</b></p> <p><b>Key Decision</b> - Yes <b>Public Access</b> - Open</p>	<p><b>Decision Maker</b> <b>The Shareholder Committee for the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE)</b></p>	<p><b>Decision Date</b></p>	<p>Portfolio Holder for Children, Education, Skills and Early Help</p>	<p><i>Executive Director, People - Children (Theresa Leavy)</i></p>
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### **Private/Exempt Items for Decision**

Each item in the plan above marked as 'private' will refer to one of the following paragraphs.

1. Information relating to any individual.
2. Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.
3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.
5. Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
6. Information which reveals that the shadow council proposes:-
  - (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
  - (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.
7. Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.

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## **Dorset Centre of Excellence Shareholder Committee**

**13 March 2023**

### **Report from Chair of Board**

#### **For Decision**

Report Author: Ian Comfort

Title: Director and Chair, Dorset Centre of Excellence Ltd

**Report Status:** Public

#### **Brief Summary:**

This report provides an update on the current situation at the Dorset Centre of Excellence (“the Company”) and the Coombe House School (“the School”). It considers progress made in relation to governance, leadership, staffing, estate, community use and finance.

The Shareholder is asked to note the content of this report and to continue its support for the Company.

#### **Reason for Recommendation:**

The Board, with the significant support of colleagues from Dorset Council, has looked to address the issues that affected the successful opening of the School. It has looked to swiftly and systematically recover the position to ensure that it can deliver a safe and rewarding learning experience for its pupils. The Board is mindful that the ongoing support through enhanced cooperation with the Council is ensuring the viability of the Company.

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Shareholder is aware of the background to the opening of the School in May last year and the issues and challenges that arose.

## 2. **Governance**

- 2.1 The Board has welcomed three additional Non-Executive Directors, who were appointed following a robust recruitment campaign. Their backgrounds and expertise complement those already present and their impact has been positive.
- 2.2 Board activity has been significant, with the formation of new/re-established committees overseeing 'commercial and community' and 'financial' activities.
- 2.3 Board members have visited the site regularly as part of their duties, which has included engaging in new routines developed to enhance levels of quality assurance.
- 2.4 The Chair has accepted resignations from two Board members, who have found themselves unable to continue with the commitment for various reasons.
- 2.5 The Board is considered complete and there are no current efforts to undertake further recruitment.

## 3. **Executive Leadership**

- 3.1 The Managing Director, who was in their first fortnight in post at the last committee meeting, is now well established in their role. Until 30 January 2023 they focussed primarily on the development needs of the School, including acting as Interim Head during January 2023.
- 3.2 Since the commencement of the new Headteacher on 30 January 2023, the Managing Director has transitioned into his substantive strategic leadership role for the Company.
- 3.3 Other substantive new leaders, overseeing finance, HR, health & safety and estates. who joined between October 2022 and December 2022 continue to establish themselves and are having a strong impact on the strength, depth and effectiveness of the Executive.
- 3.4 The Interim Managing Director/Headteacher, the Interim Projects Officer and the Operations Manager have left the Company since the last committee meeting.
- 3.5 The Company considers its Executive Leadership Team to be complete and there are no current efforts to undertake further recruitment.



#### 4. **Coombe House School**

##### School Staffing

- 4.1 The School's new Headteacher took up post on 30 January 2023. The Managing Director continues to offer additional leadership capacity during this important time.
- 4.2 An experienced Deputy Headteacher has been appointed, who is expected to join in June 2023.
- 4.3 Careful planning is underway to ensure that suitable leadership capacity shall be available to the School as it grows
- 4.4 The Company has noted that data suggests that morale, engagement, retention and sickness/general absence have all improved as the new leadership structure has become more established.
- 4.5 A staff survey (along with a pupil and parent version) is being undertaken during February 2023, with the intention of sharing findings with the Council upon completion.
- 4.6 Recruitment continues to be challenging with a combination of factors, including those impacting the wider economy and the teaching profession as a whole, with some legacy reputational issues from the School's initial months and the character and density of the local population contributing.
- 4.7 A 'People Strategy' is being developed to overcome these barriers and to ensure the School is not limited in its ambitions to grow by its ability to recruit and retain staff.

##### Ofsted

- 4.8 On 9 December 2022, the Department for Education wrote to Coombe House School formally requesting the completion and sharing of an action plan by 9 January 2023, following a visit to the School on 18 October 2022 that had found that some Independent School Standards had not been met.
- 4.9 The visit was an unannounced inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

- 4.10 It was requested that all necessary actions required to ensure that all Independent School Standards are met should have completion dates no later than 7 March 2023.
- 4.11 Upon appointment, the Managing Director finalised the action plan to ensure it met requirements.
- 4.12 The action plan was submitted on 9 January 2023. The Department for Education has acknowledged receipt.
- 4.13 Ofsted has said that it will re-inspect to assess progress against the action plan at 'an appropriate point'.
- 4.14 Ofsted commit to undertaking a full inspection within a year of the registration date for newly registered independent schools.
- 4.15 The registration date for Coombe House School is 6 May 2022.
- 4.16 The two inspection processes (the monitoring inspection and the full inspection) may be carried out jointly.

#### Growth

- 4.17 Careful but ambitious planning is underway in partnership with the Council to ensure that the School grows safely from Summer term 2023.
- 4.18 Identification of appropriate pupils is being undertaken in partnership with the Council and is proportionate to the School's current operational capacity, given its stage of recovery and development.
- 4.19 Longer term plans for growth are being developed as part of the wider business planning processes that are ongoing in preparation for the next Shareholder Committee.

#### Quality Assurance

- 4.20 The Company has developed its quality assurance processes to ensure it remains compliant with all relevant standards, regulations and expectations.
- 4.21 The Curriculum and Quality Committee is carefully scrutinising the work of the School and is offering effective support and challenge. The committee undertook a detailed review of the Ofsted action plan that was submitted to the Department of Education on 9 January 2023.

4.22 The School is welcoming external validation of its development work. For example, a Dorset Council Safeguarding and Standards Advisor reviewed the School's safeguarding audit and development plan in January 2023 and noted significant progress. The School has also commissioned an external audit of its Single Central Record. The Curriculum and Quality Committee has commissioned an independent 'School Improvement Advisor' visit in Spring 2023 to aid its work.

## 5. **Commercial and Community Use**

5.1 A Commercial and Community Committee has been set up and is focussed upon the peripheral (non-School) activities of the Company.

5.2 There has been some excellent collaborative work with colleagues from the Council, who are outlining their commissioning needs.

5.3 The drafting of a new Business Plan, for consideration by the Shareholder Committee in June 2023, is being developed based on the above, and includes provision for day and residential short breaks, residential care, commercial use of leisure facilities and training/conferencing.

5.4 Local community partnerships continue to develop. Liaison with a local Town Council has progressed and firmer plans are now being made for some community focussed initiatives that are aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of the local community.

5.5 A partnership with a local Rotary Club has been developed through the organisation of a family bike ride for charity at the site in May 2023.

## 6. **Finance**

6.1 The Company submitted its statutory accounts for the financial year 2021/22 in December 2022.

6.2 The Company has re-established its Finance Committee, which is providing suitable and effective support and challenge to the Executive. All three of the newly appointed Non-Executive Directors sit on this committee.

6.3 The new Finance Manager is providing effective capacity for financial management and scrutiny that is aiding the Company in its reporting and forward planning.

6.4 The Board is now receiving monthly management accounts and is able to have much better oversight of the Company finances. The Company is

working closely with the Council to review and revise the business plan and develop appropriate budget estimates.

#### Capital Investment/Forward Planning

6.5 The Company has welcomed opportunities to plan for further development of the Dorset Centre of Excellence site through potential capital investment.

6.6 Work to scope growth opportunities is being carried out in partnership with the Council.

6.7 The Company is undertaking careful due diligence of the proposed opportunities in order to maximise its confidence in the proposals within its business plan.

#### **7. Financial Implications**

7.1 The Company is working with the Council on financial modelling and business planning to reach a financial position that allows it to securely continue with plans to grow.

#### **8. Climate Implications**

8.1 There are no climate implications associated with this report.

#### **9. Well-being and Health Implications**

9.1 The Board has a duty to ensure the health, safety and well-being of its staff and the children attending the School. It has been mindful of this when considering the transition of children into the School; how it builds numbers; and how it provides community use of facilities.

#### **10. Other Implications**

10.1 No other implications have been identified.

#### **11. Risk Assessment**

11.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: Medium.

12. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

12.1 The Board has not conducted an Equalities Impact Assessment for this report.

13. **Appendices**

13.1 There are no appendices to this report

14. **Background Papers**

14.1 There are no background papers included with this report.

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## Shareholder Committee Dorset Centre of Excellence

13 March 2023

### Commissioner's Report

#### For Review and Consultation

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr A Parry, Children, Education, Skills and Early Help

**Local Councillor(s):** Cllr

**Executive Director:** T Leavy, Executive Director of People - Children

Report Author: Claire Shiels

Title: Commissioner's Report

Tel: 01305224682

Email: [claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:claire.shiels@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk)

**Report Status:** Public

#### Brief Summary:

This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to the enhanced cooperation between Dorset Council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence (DCOE) and the progress made in the recovery plan previously described in earlier meetings.

#### Recommendation:

Shareholders are asked to note the progress made and support the continued cooperation between the council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence.

#### Reason for Recommendation:

Following initial challenges with the opening of Coombe House school, progress continues to be sustained enabling the company to begin focusing on welcoming more children to the school and consider the wider use of the site.

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of the current position in relation to the enhanced cooperation between Dorset Council and the Dorset Centre of

- Excellence (DCOE) and the progress made in the recovery plan previously described in earlier meetings.
- 1.2 Regular contract review meetings have continued focused on tracking the recovery plan, with continued engagement between the Managing Director of DCOE and the Strategic Commissioner for SEND and Commissioner attendance at the Board has continued. Regular operational meetings are in place to support conversations about individual children and to plan for additional children to join the school in the summer term.
  - 1.3 The Managing Director has updated the recovery plan and commissioners are assured that this covers appropriate matters and progress is being reported through the fortnightly contract review meetings. Although early days for the new leadership team, they are making progress against priority issues, including:
    - Leadership of staff and development of positive and stable culture
    - Improved sickness absence rate
    - Implementation of a staff retention plan
    - Support to employees through regular meeting cycles
  - 1.4 A new permanent experienced headteacher started at the end of January and this is having a positive impact, enabling the Managing Director to focus on the development of the company as a whole. An experienced deputy head teacher has been appointed and will take up their role after May half term.
  - 1.5 The most recent school safeguarding monitoring visit conducted by Dorset Council Safeguarding and Standards Advisor (undertaken in January 2023) reviewed all areas of safeguarding practice. The visit showed significant progress made and noted the wealth of experience that the Managing Director brings and the support that is being offered to the Designated Safeguarding Leads in the school to ensure they are equipped to fulfil that role.
  - 1.6 DCOE submitted an action plan to the Department of Education following the unannounced inspection in line with the guidance for Independent Schools and progress is tracked through contract review meetings. The company is focused on preparations for a full Ofsted Inspection, which in line with regulations, will be completed by the regulator within the first year of operation.



- 1.7 Work is progressing on the development of a suite of indicators that will enable full oversight of all contract Key Performance Indicators as outlined in the service specification. Reporting at contract review meetings includes the progress of individual pupils and in particular the response of the school to children who had previously experienced challenges. Examples of this include the implementation of creative curriculum, including more offsite activity and evidence of good engagement by children.
- 1.8 The DCOE board continues to meet regularly. On-boarding of the Non-Executive Directors approved at the last board has taken place and sub-committees are meeting regularly, with the re-establishment of the finance committee.
- 1.9 The enhanced co-operation agreement remains in place, however the level of officer involvement from Dorset Council is reducing as the Company's leadership team strengthens. A summary of the position against each is provided below:
- Fortnightly contract reviews continue
  - Regular operational meetings continue but are not required weekly
  - Admissions process – joint working is taking place to identify new pupils for the summer term and beyond
  - On-site presence of DC officers – this is at the levels expected
  - Commissioner attendance at the Board continues
  - Joint approach to complaints and communications – DCOE now take the leadership on these issues, with support from DC if required
  - Recruitment activity – this is now led and owned by DCOE
  - Support offer – all DC support offered was accepted and action taken as a result
- 1.10 Plans are now being developed for the building works required for Phase 2 of the development of the site.

## 2. **Financial Implications**

- 2.1 Following the decision to focus on Coombe House school and to slow down growth in pupil numbers work has been ongoing to reprofile the growth plan for the school. This modelling continues to be refined but is slower than in the original business plan and this will have an ongoing impact on pace of the High Needs Block Reduction Strategy.

2.2 Council officers continue to work alongside the company on business development opportunities on the rest of the site, including children's residential care, and to develop a timeline for implementation as agreed at the previous Shareholder Committee. A revised Business Plan will be submitted for decision by Shareholders at the June Committee meeting.

3. **Environmental Implications**

None identified at this stage.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

The health, safety and wellbeing of children and employees is of paramount importance so close collaboration between Dorset Council and the Dorset Centre of Excellence will continue.

5. **Other Implications**

None identified

6. **Risk Assessment**

6.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium

Residual Risk: Medium

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

Not required for this report

8. **Appendices**

Not applicable

9. **Background Papers**

None