Dorset Centre of Excellence Shareholder Committee

1 December 2025

Report from Chair of Board

For Review and Consultation

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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, in collaboration with colleagues from Dorset Council, continues to make progress towards its objectives. The Board is mindful that the ongoing support of Dorset Council to deliver the next phases of growth required to deliver the business plan through cooperation with the Council is ensuring the viability of the Company.

1. **Background**

1.1 The Company continues to perform well against its business plan, growing the pupil roll of Coombe House School, improving its quality and developing its wider commercial and community offer.

2. **Coombe House School**

2.1 In the last Shareholder Committee meeting, the most recent Ofsted report for Coombe House School had recently been published but was not included in the papers as it had missed the deadline for inclusion. This meant that attendees were able to discuss the report informally but did not have a copy included in their papers. For that reason, the Ofsted report is attached to this report for completeness.

2.2 The School has begun the 2025/26 academic year positively, with new staff and pupils who joined at the start of the year settling well.

2.3 Further analysis of the School's examination results has now been completed and are detailed within the Company's Annual Performance Report.

3. **Commercial and Community Activities**

3.1 The team leading our community swimming pool offer has rejuvenated the environment and has ongoing plans to further enhance the guest experience for its users.

3.2 Following successful pilots in previous school holiday periods, the Company is exploring further bespoke swimming lessons for local children and adults.

4. **Business Plan Implementation**

4.1 The Company is engaging with Council colleagues regarding the next steps around the implementation of the approved Business Plan.

4.2 Work is underway to ensure that the next phases of the required development will best facilitate the Company's planned growth and represent value for money for all stakeholders.

5. **HR**

5.1 Recruitment and retention leading up to the beginning of the new academic year was positive, providing ongoing stability and assurance of quality / continuity for pupils.

5.2 Training continues to be a priority, with a number of externally accredited courses now offered to staff for their learning and development.

5.3 The Company's People and Remuneration Committee meet regularly to review HR matters and scrutinise the quality of its response.

6. **Financial Implications**

6.1 The Company's draft financial report that followed the independent audit in June 2025 has now been finalised and published.

6.2 The Company's accounts shall be given an unqualified report. The Company will share these with the Shareholder at the appropriate point in line with the Shareholder Agreement and they shall be submitted to Companies House by the auditors once signed off by the Board of Directors.

6.3 The Company has recently completed a mid-year reforecast which reflects a positive start to the 2025/26 financial year. The reforecast is predicting the Company shall finish the financial year ahead of budget.

7. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

7.1 The Farming in Protected Landscapes (FiPL) grant funding from Wiltshire Council has furthered the improvements that were planned for the site. Work to install new composting technology, progress pond restoration and the restoration of wildflower meadows has commenced at pace.

7.2 The ongoing work to maximise the efficiency of our biomass and solar panel portfolio continues, and the work is having significant impact, as evidenced by meter readings.

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

8.1 The Company continues to prioritise the health and wellbeing of the members of its community and carefully monitors the feedback we receive in this regard.

9. **Other Implications**

9.1 No other implications have been identified.

10. **Risk Assessment**

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

Current Risk: Medium
Residual Risk: Low.

11. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

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

12. **Appendices**

12.1 Ofsted Report.

13. **Background Papers**

13.1 There are no background papers to be included with this report.