



Northern Arch

LEARNING PARTNERSHIP

Finance, Audit and Risk Committee
held at 5.00 pm, Tuesday 24th June 2025, at Longfield Academy, Longfield Road,
Darlington DL3 0HT

MINUTES

Directors present:	Emma Chawner (Chair), Tim Fisher (CEO), Geoff Liddle, Mavis Lord and Tarryn Lloyd Payne.
In attendance	Lisa Marron: Chief Operating Officer Glen Hart: Chief Financial Officer Nikki Wade: Strategic & Development Officer Sarah Jones: Operations Business Manager Laura Hawksby: Trust Governance and Policy Officer

Item	Description of discussion	Action
	PART A: Procedural items	
1.	<u>Welcome, Introductions and confirmation quorum present</u> The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting. It was confirmed that a quorum was present.	
2.	<u>Apologies for absence and their acceptance</u> There were no apologies for absence.	
3.	<u>Notification of items of urgent other business</u> There was 1 item of other business – Hurworth Resource Base Minute 17 below refers.	
4.	<u>Declaration of Personal and Pecuniary Interests</u> None	
5.	<u>Approval of minutes/review of actions/matters arising – Finance, Audit and Risk Committee 27th March 2025</u> Draft Minutes of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee held on the 27 th March 2025 had been shared with Directors prior to the meeting, a copy of which is held on file.	

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	<p>All actions have been completed or included for this meeting of the Committee as requested by Directors.</p> <p>Directors requested that at Minute 6 the following additional wording be added at the end of paragraph 7 'and apply a realistic uplift.' They also requested at action point 6 the word 'profiling' be used instead of the word 'considerations.'</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee held on the 27th March 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record and should be signed by the Chair, subject to the inclusion of the amendments as detailed in the paragraph above.</p>	Chair/ Governance & Policy Officer
	PART B: Business Items for Discussion	
	Finance & Resources	
6.	<p><u>Money ADEMSS Report:</u></p> <p>2025-26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan;</p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) reported upon the 2025-26 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan. The main purpose of the financial forecast is to ensure that the objectives as set out in the Strategic Plan, are achieved whilst at the same time, maintaining the financial viability and sustainability of Northern Arch Learning Partnership. Key risks, budget sensitivities and pupil numbers were considered and the proposed 2025/26 key performance indicators. Plans were set out in the report to explore future actions to address any deficit and potential efficiencies or savings within the medium-term financial plan.</p> <p>Directors requested that further information be added to the budget setting process to ensure a clear profiling methodology and clear coding of budget lines.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the Budget 2025-26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan be recommended for approval at the Full Board of Directors meeting on the 1st July 2025, subject to amendments to the budget setting processes to ensure clear profiling methodology and clear coding of budget lines.</p> <p>School Resource Management Advisor (SRMA) – progress update</p> <p>The CFO advised that progress had been made across the three schools (The Rydal Academy, Longfield Academy and Hurworth Academy) towards the SRMA's report recommendations. Work had been undertaken with the Head Teachers to understand the report and to fully embed the metrics of the integrated curriculum financial planning in future years' budget setting.</p>	CFO

	<p><u>Mowden Schools Closing Accounts</u></p> <p>Directors noted The Federation of Mowden Schools accounts had now been closed, with their remaining Directors due to consider the accounts and audit findings report for the period ending 1st March 2025. It was noted to be a clean audit with no significant issues.</p> <p><u>Investments</u></p> <p>Northern Arch Learning Partnership's current investments were noted by the Committee.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Management Accounts – April 2025</u></p> <p>The CFO (Chief Financial Officer) presented the management accounts to 30th April 2025. It was noted that significant progress had been made in receiving payment from outstanding debtors.</p> <p>Directors asked if the Partnership had been successful in any CIF (Conditional Improvement Fund) bids? The Operations Business Manager advised that the latest round of CIF bids had been unsuccessful.</p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the management accounts be received by the Board of Directors at their meeting on the 1st July 2025.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Environment ADEMSS Report</u></p> <p><u>Estates update:</u></p> <p>Directors noted new guidance has been issued in April 2025 to Schools by the Department for Education on the School Estate Management Standards. The aim was to ensure school estates are managed effectively. The Partnership has self-assessed where each establishment is in relation to these standards to inform the Estates Strategy and Asset Plan which will be reported back to Directors when complete. Directors asked how the improvements/investments in the strategy would be prioritised? The Chief Executive Office advised that it would be based upon the greatest risks and identified priorities within the strategy.</p> <p>Since the last report there have been no major estates issues. Directors noted that there was a current insurance claim for the repair of the hot water pipes for the pipes at Hurworth School located beneath the concrete floor. Directors asked if all costs would be covered by insurance and the Operations Business Manager advised that the majority would be but there may be additional costs that would not be covered.</p> <p><u>Capital works/Condition Improvement Fund Bids update:</u></p> <p>It was noted the schools will be carrying out summer works in relation to decorating, carpets, ceiling and tarmac repairs. It was noted that the CIF (Condition Improvement Fund Bid) at Hurworth and QE had been confirmed as unsuccessful in May 2025.</p>	COO/OBM

The Hurworth application was not viable for appeal, however the QE bid was with an outcome expected in August/September.

IT:

It was noted I.T at QE has had its annual re-certification of Cyber Security Accreditation. I.T at Hurworth, Rydal and Longfield academies are focusing on the domain works to move the schools onto one network.

Procurement:

QE-iMac Devices – Further to Minute 12 (27th March Finance, Audit & Risk Committee) it was noted the Department for Education contract has now been issued, with the tender approved outside of Committee by the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee Directors

Schools IT Refresh – In order to remain windows 11 compliant there is a need to refresh IT across Hurworth, Rydal and Longfield academies. The budgeted value of this investment was £152,000 for 220 desktops and 80 laptops. The tender for these works had been received and evaluated and approval for the award of the tender was considered further at Minute 9 below.

Cleaning Tender (Hurworth, Rydal and Longfield) – Further to Minute 12 (27th March Finance, Audit & Risk Committee) it was noted the procurement exercise was carried out via the YPO (Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation) framework and with guidance from the Department for Education 'Buying for Schools' team. Three applications were received and a full evaluation exercise completed. A successful supplier was identified and authorisation provided from the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee to appoint the new incumbent. A 10-day legal standstill would follow from 11th June 2025 to allow any of the applicants to contest this decision. As soon as this ends the handover period would commence which included TUPE transfer of existing staff.

QE photocopier contracts – it was noted the QE photocopiers are being delivered in July 2025 to commence the new contract.

Audit – it was noted a tender has been issued for Internal and External Auditors, (Minute 15 below refers).

School Estate Management Standards:

The School Estates Management Standards Self-Assessment Dashboard, which had been completed by the Partnership, was noted by the Committee.

Health & Safety Audits Report:

An overall health and safety audit was conducted at each academy throughout April 2025 with positive feedback being provided. Rag rated recommendations for actions were set out in the report, which were considered and noted by the Committee.

	<p><u>Asbestos update</u></p> <p>RCBC (Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council) were appointed as the Trust wide Asbestos Management Company and have commenced the annual re-inspections and have assessed the current need for full management surveys and refurbishment surveys.</p> <p>As part of a new requirement training on asbestos awareness has been delivered to the Trust Executive Team.</p>	
9.	<p><u>Procurement – Schools IT Tender</u></p> <p>Further to Minute 12 (27th March Finance, Audit & Risk Committee) the results of the 12 tenders offers received in relation to the computer refresh for Longfield, Hurworth and Rydal schools was considered by the Committee.</p> <p>After careful consideration, Directors RESOLVED that Vendor 4 (Dell) be approved.</p>	CFO
10.	<p><u>DfE Financial & Governance Audit</u></p> <p>The Strategic Development Office advised that the Department for Education Financial & Governance Audit had taken place earlier today on the 24th June 2025. It was a successful audit and any recommendations would be reported back to Directors along with any necessary actions.</p>	SDO
11.	<p><u>Policies:</u></p> <p>The following policies were reviewed by the Committee:</p> <p>a) Procurement: Directors RESOLVED that the Procurement Policy be approved, subject to further reference to the Accounting Officer.</p> <p>b) Trust Health & Safety Statement of Intent: Directors RESOLVED that the Health and Safety Statement of Intent be recommended by approval by the Board, subject to reference to the external health & safety advisor.</p>	CFO/SDO Governance & Policy Officer
12.	<p><u>Audit & Risk</u></p> <p><u>Risk Management Policy</u></p> <p>The Risk Management Policy was reviewed by the Committee and Directors RESOLVED that the Risk Management Policy be recommended for approval by the Board.</p>	Governance & Policy Officer

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13.	<p><u>Trust and Academy Risk Registers</u></p> <p>The Strategic Development Officer advised that following a review of the Partnership's risk management approach, and in line with the new draft policy, the Academy Operational Risk Registers and Partnership level Risk Registers (Operational and Strategic) had been updated and refined. Directors advised that they had found the new format really helpful of both the Partnership Operational Risk Register and Partnership level Risk Registers.</p> <p>The Finance, Audit & Risk Committee advised they had no recommendations for amendments to the Partnership Risk Register.</p>	
14.	<p><u>Internal Audit Update</u></p> <p>The Chief Operating Officer provided an update and an overall view/opinion on the systems and controls reviewed in the 2024/25 internal scrutiny programme.</p> <p>The programme included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longfield Trading Review • VAT Review • Website Review • Roll out of Partnership Wide Health & Safety/Fire and Asbestos SLA <p>Directors noted that no fraud had been identified in the year. The internal audit support was noted to be going out to tender (Minute 15 below refers.)</p> <p><u>Internal Scrutiny Programme 2025/26</u></p> <p>Directors considered potential areas for internal scrutiny for 2025/26 based upon identified potential risks in the Partnership and review of the Partnership Operational Risk Register. These were as follows and would be reviewed again at the Autumn Term Finance, Audit and Risk Committee when the 2025/26 programme would be approved:</p> <p>Audit 1 – Information Governance Audit 2 – Procurement Audit 3 – Business Continuity</p> <p>Additional areas of scrutiny could include: VAT check and catering review.</p>	
15.	<p><u>Internal and External Audit Tenders</u></p> <p>The Chief Operating Officer advised that both the provision of Internal and External Auditors was out to tender. Companies which were approached for tender were based upon them having a local presence, academies experience and being highly ranked in their fields. The timeline for the Internal Audit tender and External Audit tender were considered by the Committee and Directors RESOLVED to approve the timelines and process.</p>	

	<p>It was noted further information would be reported back to the Full Board of Directors on the 1st July 2025.</p>	
16.	<p><u>Fraud Statements/Data Breaches</u></p> <p>There have been no instances of fraud since last reported to Directors.</p> <p>There had been 1 data breach since March 2025. The ICO had advised that the breach had not been reportable as the information was not sensitive, likely to cause distress or harm.</p>	
<u>Part C: Concluding Items</u>		
17.	<p><u>Hurworth Resource Base:</u></p> <p>The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) provided a verbal update regarding the Hurworth Resource Base. The partnership was exploring with Darlington Borough Council the funding of the base and facilities.</p>	
18.	<p><u>Approval of documents for inspection</u></p> <p>Directors RESOLVED that the agenda, approved minutes and supporting documents be made available for public inspection with the exception of information concerning identifiable pupils and/or teachers/staff and tender information due to commercial sensitivity in relation to Minutes 9 and 15 above in accordance with Articles 125 a.) b.) and c.)</p>	Governance & Policy Officer
19.	<p><u>Dates, times and venue of future meetings</u></p> <p>Directors advised that they did not have a preference in relation to days and venues for future meetings, commencing at 5.00 pm where possible.</p>	Governance & Policy Officer
	<p><u>The meeting concluded at 7.15 pm</u></p>	

Action Log

5.	Signed Minutes – 27 th March 2025 by the Chair and added amendments to the minutes	Governance & Policy Officer
6.	Further information added to the 2025-26 budget and MTFP – to ensure clear profiling methodology and clear coding of budget lines prior to submitting to the Board for approval.	CFO
8.	Estates Strategy and Asset Plan to be reported back to Directors at a future meeting.	COO/OBM
9.	Schools IT Tender – approved Vendor 4	CFO
10.	DfE Financial & Governance Audit – Any recommendations & actions brought back to Directors.	SDO

11.	Procurement Policy - further reference to Accounting Officer added. Trust Health & Safety Statement of Intent – reference to the external health & Safety Advisor and forwarded to Board on the 1 st July 2025 for approval.	SDO/Governance & Policy Officer Governance & Policy Officer
12.	Risk Management Policy – forwarded to Board on the 1 st July 2025 for approval.	Governance & Policy Officer
18.	Approval of Documents for Inspection	Governance & Policy Officer
19.	Circulation of approved dates for 2025/26 Finance, Audit & Risk Committee	Governance & Policy Officer

These Minutes were approved by the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee of Northern Arch Learning Partnership as follows:

8/12/2025 (date)

signature (chair): 

name: MAVIS LORD.

APPROVED

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