

Minutes of a meeting of the ESPO Management Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 20 March 2024.

PRESENT

Leicestershire County Council

Mrs. M. Wright CC (Chair)

Mr. J. Poland CC

Peterborough City Council

Cllr. D. Jones

Cllr. C. Hogg

Lincolnshire County Council

Cllr. S. Rawlins

Warwickshire County Council

Cllr. P. Butlin

Norfolk County Council

Cllr. J. James

Apologies

Apologies were received from:

Cllr. S. Ferguson (Cambridgeshire County Council), Cllr. A. Hagues (Lincolnshire County Council) and Cllr. A. Jamieson (Norfolk County Council)

In attendance

Cllr. N. Shailer (Cambridgeshire County Council – online)

Cllr. R. Baxter-Payne (Warwickshire County Council – online)

ESPO

Kristian Smith – Director

David Godsell – Assistant Director

Dave Goodacre – Financial Controller

Maurice Campbell – Assistant Director

Gary Ford – Assistant Director

Leicestershire County Council

Lauren Haslam – Consortium Secretary

Simone Hines – on behalf of the Consortium Treasurer

Rosemary Whitelaw – Democratic Services Officer

37. Minutes.

The notes of the inquorate meeting held on 15 November 2023 were taken as read, confirmed, and signed.

38. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

39. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

40. Items referred by the Finance and Audit Subcommittee.

There were no specific items referred by the Finance and Audit Subcommittee. The issue 'Budget 2024/25', considered by the Subcommittee, was addressed as part of agenda item 10 (minute 45 refers).

41. Director's Progress update.

The Management Committee considered a report of the Director which provided an update of the actions and progress made since the previous ESPO Management Committee meeting held on 15 November 2023. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 5', is filed with these minutes.

Members welcomed the report and the positive trading position. Customer service staff were congratulated on their performance.

In response to questions, the Director explained that:

- (i) The new dash cams and sensors had been installed on delivery vehicles in addition to reversing cameras to provide 360 degree visibility for the drivers. This was felt to be safer for when deliveries were made to schools. In response to a query regarding negative feedback from drivers, it was explained that they had been involved in the changes. There had been a short adjustment period for drivers and minor issues, such as the sensitivity of the sensors, had needed to be resolved.
- (ii) The costs for the catalogue were treated as a lump sum in March to be consistent with previous budgets. The catalogue was printed and distributed in March.
- (iii) There was no indication that health and safety incidents increased during the night shift. Due to it being a quieter shift with less moving parts, a lower proportion of incidents took place during the night shift when compared to the other shifts.

RESOLVED:

That the update on actions and progress made since November 2023 be noted.

42. Date of Next Meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday 12 June 2024 at 10.30am at County Hall, Glenfield.

43. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

It was agreed that under Section 100 (A) (iv) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the remaining items of business on the grounds

that it will involve the disclosure of exempt information as defined in the Act and that in all of the circumstances the public interest in maintaining the exception outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

44. Supplementary Information Informing the Progress Report of the Director's Progress Update.

The Management Committee considered an exempt report of the Director which set out further supplementary information regarding the Director's Progress Update. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

The exempt report was not for publication as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The Director responded to questions related to customers, the Smart Solutions brand, stock turnover and engagement with the Department for Education.

RESOLVED:

That the update on actions and progress made since November 2023 be noted with support.

45. Budget 2024/25.

The Management Committee considered an exempt report of the Director and the Consortium Treasurer which provided an update on the 2023/24 financial outturn and sought approval for the 2024/25 budget. A copy of the exempt report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

The report was not for publication as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the authority holding that information).

In response to questions, the Assistant Director explained that:

- (i) ESPO's principle was to set a consistent price to give certainty to schools.
- (ii) ESPO currently had two electric vehicles on trial. As part of the fleet replacement programme an electric vehicle offer would be considered.
- (iii) Recent increases in the National Living Wage were welcomed and there was some flexibility in the budget to accommodate the 2024/25 Pay Award if it was higher than expected.
- (iv) The pressures on the nursery market were recognised.

The Committee welcomed the positive tone of the report and ESPO's attitude towards seeking new opportunities.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed budget for 2024/25 which projects the following be approved:

- (a) An anticipated outturn of £7.8m - £8.1m for 2023/24;
- (b) A budgeted surplus of £7.1m for 2024/25;
- (c) Budgeted financial reserves of £20.1m at the end of 2024/25.

10.30 - 11.42 am  
20 March 2024

CHAIRMAN