



## SPRING TERM 2020

**MINUTES** of the Finance, Premises, Health and Safety Committee meeting of the Governors of Holmer Green Senior School held remotely by email on Wednesday 18 March 2020 at 18.30.

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Mr P. Davies (PD)(Vice-Chair)	Mr A. Jones (AJ)(Chair)
	Mrs T. Ellis (TE)	Ms F. Kiss (FK)
	Mr T. Green (TG)	Mr S. Pilgrim (SP)
	Mr E. Hillyard (EH) (Headteacher)	
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Mrs L. Jackson (LJ)	Director of Finance, HR and Resources
	Ms E. Walker (EW)	Clerk
<b>ABSENT</b>	Ms S. Stewart (SS)	

NB. Governors' questions are highlighted in *italics* throughout these minutes. The decision to hold this, and other governors meetings, remotely has been taken in light of Government guidance regarding social distancing in response to the COVID-19 virus.

	<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for logging on and opened the meeting. He thanked LJ for preparing the documents for the meeting during very difficult circumstances in school. There were no apologies for absence.</p>	
<p><b>2 NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>The following items of Any Other Business were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• COVID-19 Update (see item 4 below)</li><li>• Gas Pricing (item 13.1)</li><li>• Effectiveness of meeting (Item 13.2)</li></ul>	
<p><b>3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>There were no interests declared specifically in items on the agenda but the following standing declarations were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr S. Pilgrim is a Governor at Manor Farm Community Infant School.</li><li>• Mr P. Davies and Mrs S. Stewart are both employed by Bucks County Council.</li><li>• Mr T. Green is a Member of the Shadow Executive of Buckinghamshire Council.</li></ul>	
<p><b>4 COVID-19 UPDATE</b></p> <p>EH updated governors about the implications to the school,</p>	

**ACTION**

students and staff of the COVID-19 situation as outlined in the Part II Confidential Minutes.

**5 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**5.1 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2019, having been circulated, were confirmed and would be signed at a later date. These minutes would be made available for display in the School.

**LJ**

**5.2 MATTERS ARISING**

**5.2.1 SIXTH FORM ENRICHMENT (Minute No. 4.2.1)**

LJ reported that the situation with enrichment classes is fluid as some classes are now having to be cancelled.

EH stated that in terms of sixth form numbers, the school has received 45 external applications and 79 internal applications in comparison to 33 and 82 respectively last year.

**5.2.2 19/20 GROWTH FUNDING INCOME (Minute No. 5.1)**

*Has the growth funding analysis been received and is there any outstanding from phase 1?*

LJ reported that 7/12s has been received and there is still no breakdown available...

EH explained that there have been 16 EHCP applications for year 7 this September. The ARP has 26 places (6 ASD and 20 Speech and language). The school has been in discussion with the Head of SEN at Bucks County Council as this is an over-whelming number for one school. It may be necessary to review whether the school continues with 6 ASD places in the ARP as BCC are suggesting the school needs to staff it all the time which is not the advice that was given when HGSS agreed the 6 places.

**5.2.3 BUDGET – ICT (Minute No. 5.1)**

It was noted that there was an error in the minutes and that the figure quoted should state £130,000 and not £130,00.

**5.2.4 TERMLY HEALTH AND SAFETY VISIT (Minute No. 13.1)**

The Health and Safety visit has been conducted now, see Minute No. 10.1 below.

**5.2.5 HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT UPDATES (Minute No. 13.2)**

It was agreed to defer consideration of this to the next meeting.

**LJ**  
**Next agenda**

**ACTION**

**5.2.6 RISK MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATION REPORT** (Minute No. 13.3)

*Has the risk register now been updated for environmental risks (including pandemics)?*

It was agreed to defer this to the FGB for consideration and approval.

**FGB**

**5.2.7 LETTINGS** (Minute No. 14.3)

LJ confirmed that the Lettings Policy has been amended to include vaping as well as smoking.

**5.2.8 RETIREMENT** (Minute No. 14.6)

LJ confirmed that the Retirement Policy had been amended to delete references to contracting in and out.

**FINANCE**

**6 BUDGET MONITORING**

**6.1 YEAR END 2019-20 AND PROVISIONAL 2020-21 BUDGET**

Governors noted the reports and commentaries that they had already been sent. The Chair invited questions on the provisional budget for 2020-21.

The following questions were submitted prior to the meeting:

*I am not sure we need the budget 2018/9 column anymore.*

This will be removed after this meeting.

*Will this forecast be submitted to the DFE in May?*

Yes, it will unless there is a significant variance which we become aware of.

*Where are we up to with processing closing entries and re-stating the comparative profit and loss account figures please? The reserves on the spreadsheet at 1 September 2019 show £494,687.32 whereas the statutory accounts show £595,105. We need to adjust any differences to get correct opening entries on the new system.*

The school was given an explanation of this difference by Audit which related to items that we do not include. Due to current work restrictions, LJ did not have this detail to hand.

*Please can you confirm the current cash balances and outstanding capital grants = tennis courts?*

LJ agreed to provide this detail after the meeting when she is able

**LJ**

to access the office again.

*In terms of the commentary, where does the £4,442k come from (should it include bursary + Ex PU?) and what is the £71k difference?*

It was explained that this is just a comparison of our GAG funding year to year.

*Presumably the actual outcome this year, currently forecast at +£154k, will be approximately £100k lower for brought forward IT costs in August 2020. Also, will we need to deduct contributions from reserves towards capital costs if the CIF bids are successful as per premises report? (but these may not fall in this year).*

LJ confirmed that is the case as represented in the commentary and spreadsheet – an adjustment of £110,899 was made for August 2019 IT costs.

*Can you elaborate on the “several parental complaints” and new clerk please?*

LJ reported that there have been quite a few complaints for which the school sought legal advice – they are now dealt with. The new Clerk has been appointed to take over for the last round of meetings in the Summer term. She is very experienced and, whilst we regret we will be losing Liz Walker, we are confident the new Clerk will provide an excellent service.

*When do we have to report this to ESFA?*

LJ reported that the actual budget figures had arrived today. An initial analysis shows that income is £400K more than expected and providing all our understanding about funding for Teacher Pay Grant and Pension Grant is correct HGSS should be in a good position. This is reported to ESFA in July after our FGB meeting.

EH reported that

- there is £7725 on line E22B as a result of permanent exclusions and legal advice for one of these. We are looking into whether we should be investing such money proactively to avoid these situations going forward.
- The expansion plan has a part to play here. The school has agreed to accept 210 year 7s this September 2020 but cannot agree any more bulges until the expansion plan has been confirmed as we do not have the space. Also, if BucksCC are not going to be able to hold meetings to decide this, then we will not have the build ready for September 2021 and we cannot take on another 210 pupils.

TG stated that he had raised this issue with the Chief Executive who has forwarded his enquiry on but he had yet to receive an answer.

*Presumably planning will continue but it will be contract and execution that will be delayed?*

LJ explained that the issue is that currently any planning decision has to be made face to face – the school has made the point that they need to urgently change the legislation to reflect situations like the current one.

TG agreed that the issue is that the meetings currently need to be physically held. Objections have been raised against the expansion so BCC wants the decision to be determined by Members.

EH explained that the other concern for income next year is Sixth form numbers. Year 11s will not now be doing their GCSEs this summer. We use their grades to put them on courses in September. It is presumed at this stage that students will be awarded predicted grades and hopefully numbers will not vary much.

## **6.2 DEVOLVED FORMULA CAPITAL**

This is covered under Minute No. 8 below.

## **6.3 2019 ACCOUNTS**

The Chair stated that he gained the impression that the audit in school went well and the audit letter was more insightful than past letters. However, the last stages, including the audit closing meeting where we did not have a management accounts/statutory accounts profit reconciliation to discuss and the statutory accounts, particularly the incorporation of the property revaluation which gave rise to material errors in the cash flow presented to members, (later corrected between myself and the auditors) left room for improvement.

*The chair asked if everyone was happy for him to discuss the audit experiences with the audit partner and could the committee have a written record of the current year internal audit instructions please to approve as per AFH?*

LJ reported that she felt it was unlikely that the Audit partner would want to discuss the 2019 accounts further as their accounts have been signed by the Governing Board. Internal Audit is now in the form of Scrutiny Reports which the school

prepares - the first one will be on the introduction of SAGE.

AJ reported that the Academies Financial Handbook (AFH) states that the Audit Committee should have access to the external auditors. The reason to talk further to the Auditors now is to highlight what can improve so that the same mistakes are not repeated. AJ did not think that the auditors would have an issue with this suggestion.

*Should it not be the role of the Director of Finance, HR and Resources to liaise with our audit partner?*

LJ agreed and offered AJ the opportunity to prepare some notes for next year which she could then forward at the appropriate time.

*AJ reminded the committee that the school is obliged to have some form of internal scrutiny which the Committee has agreed will be performed by external audit. There should be written instructions approved by the Audit Committee per the AFH?*

LJ offered for AJ to suggest a subject for the scrutiny report as one is being prepared each term.

*How do auditors audit if we are giving them instructions? If we are unhappy with them, don't we change them?*

AJ explained that the instructions concern the internal audit work which the school asks them to do rather than the external audit itself which the auditors plan and execute. He suggested that he should continue this discussion off-line with LJ as there have been changes to requirements to consider.

#### **6.4 BUCKS PAY AWARD**

The Chair asked if there were any comments on the proposed pay award for Bucks Pay Staff and if they approved the proposal.

It was agreed to approve the recommended pay award for Bucks pay staff.

#### **6.5 UPDATE ON SAGE ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE**

*I note in the cost comparison document that the software involved is described as Sage 200 for education, ie not the more common Sage Line 50 or current equivalent. We have a triangle of Sage / Dayta / HGSS and I would like to understand the relative contributions of the first two regarding software content, implementation support including data transfer and ongoing support. Is there a contract, proposal, implementation plan etc which can be shared with the committee to give us greater*

*understanding as clearly this is a very important project for us all. The new system is crucial to providing compliant and informative accounts in future and it is natural that we should want to understand how it will work. A copy of the contract may reveal much more about that and we would normally approve significant contracts as a committee so I would ask for that to be circulated please?*

LJ explained that the contract could be circulated but that it is not normal to do that as this is an operational, rather than strategic, matter and that it should be for the school to make such arrangements as it feels are needed to fulfil our requirements.

*How much history will be transferred and how is this affected by adopting the new DFE standard ledger coding? Is the reporting package fixed or variable, what does it look like, can we download data into Excel to manipulate ourselves?*

LJ explained that the data can be exported to excel but, again, this is an operational question and a matter for the school.

*How many school clients and employees does Dayta have?*

It was explained that they work with more than 200 schools and MATs.

*Do the costs quoted in the comparisons include Sage licenses and support?*

It was confirmed that they do.

It was agreed that the work with Sage/Dayta should continue as outlined.

## **AUDIT**

### **7 AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Chair reminded the committee that audit functions are currently carried out by this committee. The requirements for external and internal audit are becoming more onerous and technical each year and in order to provide more focus on this area TG had suggested whether it might be an appropriate time to set up a separate committee. Suggested Terms of Reference (TORs) have been drafted.

TG explained that establishing a new committee is the responsibility of the FGB and an audit committee would report to the FGB, not Finance. We need to make sure that it has a clear remit that does not duplicate that of the Finance Committee. TG suggested that AJ, LJ and he discuss further outside of the meeting.

## ACTION

*Does it have to be a committee, can it just be a working group?*

The Audit functions would need to be carried out by a committee with agreed TORs.

*Is it possible to add another committee within the scope of the current Articles of Association?*

LJ agreed to investigate whether this would be possible.

*What is it felt is not covered by the Audit section of our Finance TORs?*

The Chair stated that the AFH sets out a significant number of duties for an audit committee to perform and also there are special requirements for attendance and voting and it is difficult to give sufficient focus when it is absorbed within the Finance Committee. The suggestion is to simply separate out the audit functions as many schools already do.

TG reiterated that it was a suggestion to separate audit from finance - not to duplicate anything.

*Given the timing and time, is there merit in deferring this important discussion?*

Other governors agreed that this matter needed more thought and discussion.

**ACTION:** It was agreed that

- AJ, LJ and TG would have a further discussion about this before bringing a proposal, if appropriate to the FGB.
- LJ would check whether it is possible within the remit of the current Articles of Association to add a further committee to the constitution

**AJ,LJ,TG**

**LJ**

## PREMISES, HEALTH AND SAFETY

### 8 PREMISES REPORT

*In respect of the roof, it is noted that £38k will come from school reserves. What is the expected timing if successful? This will affect when we have to charge the £38k. What will be the cost to the school if we are unsuccessful? Please quantify the savings and payback.*

It was explained that works are expected to take place over the summer – some of £38K may come from the PTA and there will be no cost if unsuccessful.

*In respect of the boiler, it is noted that £8k will come from school funds. Is there a more environmentally friendly viable option to a gas fired central heating system?*

It was explained that there is no viable alternative at present for a commercial boiler system.

*In terms of the Expansion Plan: what is the status of the out of scope areas?*

It was explained that this is just highlighting options.

*Have we received any clarification of the First School shared land?*

It was confirmed that this is on hold until planning is approved.

*Do we have concerns re parent drop-off and staff parking?*

It was confirmed that the school does not want a parent drop off zone.

Please keep us informed regarding the planning application for the tennis courts and the 23 March outcome for the expansion.

It was explained that Sport England have removed their concern about the tennis courts and so we expect this now to be formally approved

LJ added that the school has included a 15% contribution for the CIF bids because the criteria required that for maximum points to be awarded. It is possible that the school will not be successful for both bids.

The chair commented that the school is in a fortunate position having sound reserves but that it just needs to ensure the amounts are included in the forecast / budget.

**9 EXPANSION PLAN UPDATE**

This is covered in Minute No. 6.1 above.

**10 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

**10.1 TERMLY VISIT**

Governors noted the information in the Health and Safety report, previously circulated.

*Were you happy with progress and responses?*

It was confirmed that the situation is good, so far.

**TG  
Next Agenda**

**10.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT UPDATES**

This is covered in Minute No. 4 above.

**OTHER MATTERS**

**11 POLICY REVIEWS AND APPROVALS**

There were no policies for review at this meeting.

**12 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Dates of meetings are as per the circulated schedule of meetings for 2019/20, the next one being on 10 June 2020.

**13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**13.1 GAS PRICING**

Governors noted the information circulated by LJ in advance of the meeting about fixing the gas price now when prices are low for when the contract renews.

It was agreed to approve this proposal as outlined.

**13.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF MEETING**

*As we are going to need to have more virtual meetings can we ask IT to find a better way than by email as there are plenty of good online meeting tools Teams, Sharepoint etc and it would make this experience much more effective.*

**ACTION:** Governors agreed that the school be asked to investigate alternatives in time for the FGB meeting scheduled for 1 April 2020.

**EH/LJ**

**14 EVALUATION OF MEETING**

Governors confirmed that the meeting was conducted in an open manner and that all governors were invited to participate and contribute to discussions. Other comments about the effectiveness of the meeting are outlined in Minute No. 12.2. It was confirmed that all members of the Governing Body would have access to these minutes.

In terms of impact, governors:

- noted the impact/likely impact of the current situation with COVID-19 in relation to staffing and finance in particular.
- questioned senior leaders about variances in the budget forecast figures and use of the reserves.
- agreed to proceed with Dayta to implement Sage.

**ACTION**

- approved the recommendation to fix gas prices now.
- received and questioned updates in relation to plans for the premises.
- agreed to investigate more efficient remote meeting arrangements.

The chair thanked everyone for their attendance. He wished EH and LJ and their teams all the very best in dealing with the current unprecedented crisis. The Chair also thanked Liz Walker for her help and support during her time as clerk and wished her well for the future.

The meeting closed at 20.30

Signed ..... Date .....  
CHAIR