



## SUMMER TERM 2020

**MINUTES** of the Finance, Premises, Health and Safety Committee meeting of the Governors of Holmer Green Senior School held remotely by Zoom on Wednesday 10 June 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)	Ms S. Stewart (SS)
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Mrs L. Jackson (LJ)	Director of Finance, HR and Resources
	Ms E. Walker (EW)	Clerk

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 in response to the COVID-19 virus.

	<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b> The Chair thanked everyone for attending and opened the meeting. There were no absences.	
<b>2 NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b> The following items of Any Other Business were raised: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Succession Planning – Chair of FPH&amp;S</li></ul>	
<b>3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b> There were no interests declared specifically in items on the agenda but the following standing declarations were noted: <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>	
<b>4 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b>	
<b>4.1 MINUTES</b> The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2020, having been circulated, were confirmed and would be signed by the Chair at a later date and made available for display in the School.	<b>Clerk AJ</b>
<b>4.2 MATTERS ARISING</b>	

## ACTION

### 4.2.1 RISK REGISTER (Minute No. 5.2.6)

It was noted that, as well as including environmental risks such as pandemics, the Risk Register needed to be adapted to reflect the more specific risks associated with the further opening of school.

**ACTION: to defer to the FGB.**

LJ

FGB agenda  
item

### 4.2.2 BUDGET FORECAST (Minute No. 6.1)

In response to a question about the Budget Forecast return, LJ reported that, due to the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on education settings, the EFSA have cancelled the Budget Forecast Return for 19/20 and increased the deadline by two months to 29 September 2020 for the 20/21 Budget to be submitted. A three-year budget is not required this year so there is no requirement to submit provisional budgets for 21/22 and 2022/23 (for this year only).

## PRIORITY ITEMS

### 5 IMPACT OF COVID-19

LJ reported that her financial commentaries outline the financial implications of COVID-19 – both positive and negative – and associated risks on the school budget. Not all of the implications are known yet.

*Presumably we are only meeting the 20% of the salaries of contracted furloughed staff which is not being underwritten by Government?*

LJ confirmed this is the case but that it only refers to the catering staff. HGSS families have been less impacted by the Free School Meals system complications because the school took the decision early on to pay lunch monies for FSM eligible pupils straight into the parents' bank accounts.

There are some other matters relating to catering which are still to be bottomed out as it has been difficult to get answers to some queries as so many staff are furloughed.

*A governor asked that the Board be kept informed of any developments in this area and offered support with negotiations as necessary.*

LJ explained that the contracts are negotiated on an annual basis with the caterers paying the school for use of the premises. There is potentially a negative situation of £2600.

LJ stated that she was aware that some catering companies are asking schools to pay a management fee but Innovate have said that they are not intending to do this but the situation is very uncertain. Schools are not currently allowed to claim for financial loss unless they can evidence a detrimental effect on Reserves.

*It appears from the forecast figures that the majority of financial impacts are positive. Is that the case?*

LJ said that some staff left at Easter and the school has saved on agency fees to replace them.

*What is happening about the exam fees?*

EH explained that the situation with regard to exam fees – both those that have already been paid and those relating to future exams - is unclear and still a matter of discussion. It is possible that exams in the Autumn term will be restricted to GCSE core subjects – Maths, English and Science.

*Will there be costs associated with catchup efforts over the summer holidays?*

EH stated that guidance around summer catch up has yet to be published. Staff have been working hard before and since lockdown - including over the holiday periods and so need a break.

*Is there any exposure for the school in relation to school trips?*

LJ stated that school trips have been underwritten by the Government. Where possible, trips have been moved forward by one year and there has only been one trip which the school has submitted a claim for reimbursement for.

*Are you booking new trips?*

Yes. The trip to Ypres has been moved to May half-term 2021 and it was full within 2 hours of the details being released. The Ski Trip has also been confirmed for 2021 and Duke of Edinburgh expeditions have been scheduled. LJ explained that the school is trying to reach a balance between offering extra-curricular opportunities and not over-stretching resources.

## **6 BUDGET MONITORING**

### **6.1 YEAR END 2019-20 FORECAST**

Governors noted the accounts and commentaries that they had already been sent. The following questions were asked:

**ACTION**

*Can you explain why the difference between the actuals for 2018/9 and 2019/20 at the top of the commentary is not the £71,000 mentioned in the schedule but £215,000?*

LJ stated that she did not have the details to hand but would circulate an explanation.

Post Meeting Note:

LJ provided the following clarification of how the commentary should have read:

Final Income Figures now released:

**HGSS Original Estimate for 2019-20 - £4,586,353**

Forecast 19-20 - £4,657,370.35

Actual 18-19 - £4,442,863.18

Difference Estimate and forecast 19-20 = + **£71,017.35**

*Has the second Growth Funding payment from Bucks Council been received yet?*

LJ stated that she had not heard anything further despite chasing.

**LJ to confirm  
when received**

*How are the SEND pupil numbers looking?*

EH explained that the current known situation is that 6 SEND students will be leaving in Yr11, 2 will be leaving in Yr13. 8 students will be coming into Yr7 in September 20 with EHCPs. 1 is moving from Yr11 to 12 and there are 4 SEND students who are in the process of appealing to get into Yr7. This does not include any student who might be under assessment for their SENDs.

EH advised that the percentage of the school population with EHCPs is 2.5% nationally but is 4.8% at HGSS, which is higher than for any other senior school in Bucks. The situation is compounded locally by the selective nature of education in Bucks and the fact that schools with an RI judgement cannot accept new EHCP cases. The Head of SEN at Bucks Council had visited school just prior to lockdown and EH explained that they had discussed issues relating to parity of distribution amongst schools as well as funding implications. A review of SEND funding is being undertaken and it is likely that the ARPS will also be reviewed.

*Are you satisfied that the school and ARP can cope with the numbers?*

EH said that in all honesty he was not. Along with other schools, HGSS is awaiting the outcome of appeals and inevitably any additional pupils will add to the existing stresses on resources.

*Is the cleaning contract specification sufficient for the current circumstances relating to COVID-19?*

LJ explained that the fact that the number of rooms in use in school has been restricted has allowed the cleaners to concentrate on thorough cleaning of those rooms which are in use. They are also using a specialist cleaning product. Ordinarily, the cleaning contract would have been put out to tender in the summer but this is being delayed to ensure that there is consistency of service at such a crucial time.

*Why are the cleaners not affected by furlough?*

It was explained that this is because they have been cleaning the school throughout lockdown because children have been on site.

*Do we collaborate with other school regarding contract negotiations?*

LJ explained that this does happen where appropriate but it can be quite complex to enter into collective contracts.

**ACTION:**LJ agreed to reinstate the missing column in the accounts for prior year actuals and just delete the column relating to the prior year's budget.

**LJ**

*Do you have a balance sheet you can share with the committee?*

LJ said that she did not have one as yet but hoped to be able to do so as soon as SAGE is embedded.

*What is the current bank balance?*

It was explained that the reconciled Bank Balance is £791,976.

*Are there any outstanding capital monies to be received from Bucks Council?*

LJ explained that all monies have now been received from Bucks Council with the exception of a small outstanding amount relating to food technology.

It was noted that the current forecast in year surplus is approximately £100k, after allowing for potential IT expenditure in August, which is some £50k better than reported at the last meeting thanks to net savings identified during the period, partly Coronavirus related.

## **6.2 APPROVAL 2020/21 BUDGET**

Governors noted the accounts and commentaries that they had already been sent. The Clerk apologised that the accounts and IT

budget request had not been included with the original email circulation of papers for this meeting.

*Why is the ratio of staffing costs in comparison with total expenditure so low (64%)?*

EH explained that the benchmarking exercise undertaken in June 2019 revealed the staffing ratio at HGSS to be 81%, with the pupil : teacher ratio being 8.14. The average teacher cost is quite high as HGSS has quite a few staff on the Upper Pay Scale and due to the size of the leadership team.

Post meeting note:

The Governor raising this issue subsequently confirmed that the 64% figure related to teaching costs only, and the budgeted staff costs ratio is 83% with both teaching and total staff costs being slightly above recommended levels.

It was felt that having the KPIs included in the accounts would be very helpful.

The Chair reminded the meeting that the Academies Financial Handbook requires the Trust to prepare management accounts (including an income and expenditure account, variation to budget report, cash flows and balance sheet) every month setting out the financial performance and position and to select key financial performance indicators and measure its performance against them regularly.

**ACTION:** The following KPI's to be included in the accounts/commentary going forward in line with the Financial Handbook:

- Pupil Numbers
- Teacher cost/ pupil
- Percentage of staff costs against total expenditure

It was noted that other useful KPI's can be added as agreed over time.

*Do you have plans of how to spend the additional reserves?*

EH stated that there are a number of projects that are being considered:

**IT Devices for students** - the effectiveness and cost implications of purchasing devices for students to use in school is being investigated in the light of a recommendation by the Learning and Curriculum Committee.

**LJ**

## ACTION

**Cover for Tennis Courts** - The purchase of a cover for the tennis courts will give another classroom space for use.

**School expansion** - Bucks Council are considering the planning application associated with the school's expansion plans and if this is agreed, there may well be other related costs to cover.

**IT Developments** – The IT Manager has submitted a maintenance and capital plan totalling £170,000 which includes the timely replacement of the servers.

The in-year surplus included in the 20-21 budget currently stands at some £450k following a significant increase in projected revenue compared with the current year, and it was noted that a number of additional expenditure proposals were being looked at as a consequence.

It was agreed

- that potential projects be outlined to the FGB at the meeting in July when the budget will be presented for approval.
- to recommend approval of the budget to the FGB.

LJ

FGB Agenda

### 6.3 SAGE IMPLEMENTATION – UPDATE

LJ reported that the training and support which has been provided remotely has been very useful and enabled the team to get up to speed quickly with SAGE. Staff are in the process of moving the actuals across from the old and into the new structures. It is hoped that the system will be able to provide management accounts by the end of the month.

*Are you running the old and new systems in parallel at the moment?*

LJ reported that this was not the case. The old system had a cut off of 31 March 2020 with a start up with SAGE from 1 April 2020.

*What is the target for the provision of Management Accounts which are compliant with the Academies Financial Handbook?*

LJ stated that this is the end of June.

*There appears to be a difference of £100,000 between the information presented in the statutory accounts and the opening balance on the reserves in the management accounts. Why do these figures not tally?*

LJ stated that audit have approved this and she was under the

<p>impression that they had also provided this information. She would seek further clarification.</p>	<p><b>ACTION</b></p>
<p>The Chair stated that he did not believe that an explanation had been given for this difference and asked for further clarification.</p>	<p><b>LJ</b></p>
<p><i>Does SAGE allow us to match the actuals to the budget?</i> LJ confirmed that SAGE gives this profiling capability.</p>	
<p>A governor stated that he would be concerned if the new SAGE system does not give governors the confidence of greater transparency, efficiencies, and ease of use as expected.</p>	
<p>LJ stated that she would not confirm the balance sheet until she has confidence in the accuracies of the information to be shared with governors.</p>	
<p><b>7</b></p>	
<p><b>AUDIT COMMITTEE</b></p>	
<p>The Chair reminded the committee that it had been agreed at the last meeting that he would meet with EH, LJ and TG to discuss further whether a separate Audit Committee was warranted. Due to other more pressing matters, this meeting had yet to take place.</p>	<p><b>AJ,LJ,TG</b></p>
<p>LJ clarified that the Articles of Association do allow for another committee to be created but this would be a matter for consideration by the FGB rather than this committee.</p>	
<p>The Chair reported that he had sourced model terms of reference for an Audit Committee as part of the Internal Scrutiny in Academy Trusts Guidance.</p>	
<p><a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-financial-management-good-practice-guides/internal-scrutiny-in-academy-trusts">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/academy-trust-financial-management-good-practice-guides/internal-scrutiny-in-academy-trusts</a></p>	
<p>He had also separately drafted bespoke possible TOR for HGSS which he had provided to the FGB Chair.</p>	
<p>It was agreed to defer further discussion to the next meeting.</p>	<p><b>Next agenda</b></p>
<p><b>7.1</b></p>	
<p><b>INTERNAL SCRUTINY</b></p>	
<p><i>What are the arrangements for internal scrutiny currently?</i></p>	
<p>LJ reported that Interim Audit has been deferred due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Landau Baker have said that they would try to conduct the interim audit remotely although they have yet to provide a timescale to do this. LJ would continue to chase.</p>	<p><b>L</b></p>



**ACTION**

In terms of Internal scrutiny, LJ stated that the emphasis has changed in that the school now drives this process. She had agreed to bring scrutiny reports to this committee three times a year which would also be looked at by the External Auditors. The Chair stated that the AFH was clear that the Finance/Audit Committee should ultimately direct the internal scrutiny process and should also have direct access to the auditors.

The committee discussed possible topics for internal scrutiny as follows:

- Selection of SAGE (not a priority as already implemented)
- Procurement (not a priority as no particular concerns)
- Implementation and integrity of SAGE and impact on management reporting
- School's Business Continuity planning during COVID-19 and lessons learned for the future

**ACTION:** It was agreed to defer the discussion about how to carry out the process of internal scrutiny and by whom to the next meeting. LJ agreed to report back on the timescale for the interim review by the External Auditors.

**Next Agenda**

**LJ**

**8 EXPANSION PLAN UPDATE**

EH reported that the Planning Committee would be considering the Expansion application on 11 June. If permission is granted work will not commence, unfortunately, until August at the earliest. This may jeopardise the September 2021 timeline.

Mr Hillard stated that HGSS is in discussion with the First School about a matter pertaining to Section 77.

An update over both matters will be given at the FGB meeting.

**EH/LJ**

**9 PREMISES UPDATE**

Governors noted the information in LJ's Premises report including CiF bids, expansion plan matters and projects which are out of scope for possible consideration. Further discussion on these projects was deferred.

**Next agenda**

**10 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

**10.1 TERMLY VISIT**

Governors noted that it had not been possible for the Health and Safety governors to conduct a termly walk around due to the site restrictions imposed by COVID-19. This will be scheduled in when

**TG**

it is appropriate to do so. LJ agreed to keep TG informed of Health and Safety matters in the interim.

**10.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT UPDATES**

There are no further matters to discuss.

**OTHER MATTERS**

**11 POLICY REVIEWS AND APPROVALS**

**11.1 HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Health and Safety Policy was unamended and, having been reviewed, was approved.

**11.2 PAT TESTING**

The PAT Testing Policy was unamended and, having been reviewed, was approved.

**11.3 GDPR**

The GDPR Policy was unamended and, having been reviewed, was approved.

**11.4 GDPR - SUBJECT ACCESS**

The GDPR Subject Access Policy was unamended and, having been reviewed, was approved.

**11.5 GDPR – BREACH**

The GDPR Breach Policy was unamended and, having been reviewed, was approved.

**12 GDPR**

Reports on the following matters had been circulated. The following matters were highlighted:

**Breach Log**

There have been very few incidents. One was reported to the ICO.

**ICO Decision**

Governors noted the report from the ICO.

**DPIA Online video lessons**

Live lessons are only held for the Sixth Form currently.

*Is this going smoothly and safely?*

EH explained that the remote learning is working well although students and parents have differing experiences to report.

**13 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Dates of meetings are as per the meeting schedule for 2020/21, the next one being Wednesday 30 September 20 at 18.30.

**14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**14.1 SUCCESSION PLANNING – CHAIR OF FPH&S**

AJ reported that this would be his last meeting as his term of office is due to expire in July.

TG thanked AJ on behalf of the committee and Governing Board for his expertise and knowledge and hard work as chair of FPH&S as well as a governor.

*PD, Vice-Chair of this committee, asked TG what the succession planning arrangements are for AJ as a governor and as committee chair? He thanked AJ for chairing this committee.*

TG reported that all governors are appointed for 4 years and it is their prerogative whether or not they put themselves forward for consideration by the FGB for reappointment. The committee will continue with its rolling programme of agenda items and work.

**ACTION:** It was agreed that the membership of committees and appointments to key roles would be a matter for consideration by the FGB at its next meeting.

**FGB agenda**

**15 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. It was confirmed that all members of the Governing Body would have access to these minutes.

In terms of impact, governors:

- noted and discussed the impact/likely impact of the current situation with COVID-19 in relation to finance in particular.
- questioned senior leaders about the robustness of the new accounting software and nature of future management reporting arrangements.
- questioned senior leaders about apparent disparities in the accounts and reserves.
- agreed that KPIs be included alongside management accounts in future.
- received and discussed possible project proposals to be funded from the increase in reserves.

**ACTION**

- questioned senior leaders about arrangements for internal scrutiny and agreed that this needed further discussion.
- considered and agreed policies to ensure compliance.
- agreed to discussed succession arrangements for this committee at the next FGB meeting.

The chair thanked everyone for their attendance and thanked EH and LJ for their work in supporting this committee.

The Chair also thanked LW 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