



## AUTUMN 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 2 December 2020 at 18.00.

**PRESENT:**

Mr P. Davies (PD)(Chair)	Ms F. Kiss (FK)
Mrs T. Ellis (TE)	Mr S. Pilgrim (SP)
Mr T. Green (TG)	Ms S. Stewart (SS)
Mr E. Hillyard (EH) (Headteacher)	

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

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>
<p><b>1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked everyone for attending and opened the meeting. There were no absences.</p>	
<p><b>2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></p> <p>The following interests were declared specifically in items on the agenda:</p> <p>Ms Kiss declared an interest in agenda items 12 and 13.5, concerning staff pay.</p> <p>The following standing declarations were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mr P. Davies and Mrs S. Stewart are both employed by Buckinghamshire Council.</li><li>• Mr T. Green is a Member of Buckinghamshire Council.</li></ul>	
<p><b>3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b></p>	
<p><b>3.1 MINUTES</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2020, having been circulated, were confirmed subject to the following amendment:</p> <p>Mr T. Green is a Member of Buckinghamshire Council (no longer a member of the Shadow Executive).</p>	<b>Clerk</b>

### 3.2 MATTERS ARISING

#### 3.2.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Minute No. 3)

ACTION: LJ reminded anyone who had yet to do so to forward their declaration of pecuniary and other interests form to her as a matter of priority.

all Governors

#### 3.2.2 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT (Minute No. 6.2)

EH referred to those projects listed in the Premises Report as being out of scope for the Expansion Plan:

- Re-tarmac of existing tennis courts
- Staffroom improvements (£5,000)
- Changing Room re-furbishment for Fitness Suite (£8,000)
- Reception extension (£160-200,000)
- Sixth Form Dining Area (£5,000)
- Immersive Room (£15-30,000)
- Recording Studio Equipment
- Expansion of the library
- MUGA (£350-700,000)

LJ reported that it is not yet possible to give reliable estimates for some projects without plans being drawn up first.

**ACTION:** Discussion deferred to the next meeting once all costings are known

LJ  
Next Agenda

### AUDIT

#### 4 AUDIT REVIEW

LJ reported that despite sending chasing emails and phone calls she had yet to be sent the Statutory Accounts and, as such, it was not possible to share this information with the committee yet. She had been advised the Landau Baker have suffered with software problems and this is the reason for the delay.

**ACTION:**

- PD to be invited to the virtual review meeting with Landau Baker week beginning 7 December 20
- LJ to circulate the statutory accounts to the committee as soon as they are available. In any event, they will be presented to the governors and Members at the AGM on 16 December 20.

LJ/PD

LJ

## 5 PROPOSALS FOR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIT WORK 2020/21

### Internal Audit

It has not been possible to have anyone on site conducting scrutiny exercises due to the COVID restriction in place. As such, LJ has produced 3 scrutiny reports on the provision of facilities for Full Opening in September 2020 following COVID 19, Laptops for Students and Managing the school during the COVID pandemic as circulated to governors, which the auditors have said they are happy with.

Due to the scope of internal scrutiny being widened under the latest Academies Financial Handbook, LJ is working with other Business Manager colleagues to investigate other options going forward.

#### ACTION:

- Landau Baker to be asked to give the governing board assurance that they are happy with the school's approach to internal scrutiny this year. LJ
- LJ to share the outcomes of her investigations into other options for internal scrutiny at the next meeting. LJ
- The focus of internal scrutiny to be influenced by the discussion on the Risk Register (see item 13.2 below)

## 6 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

LJ reported that despite the issues of not receiving the statutory accounts in a timely manner, Landau Baker had compared favourably to other providers when the contract had been tendered 2 years ago and their approach was less disruptive to the school's working arrangements than the previous auditors. She felt it would be too disruptive to change auditors this year with the current stresses of COVID and with the school still coming to terms with the new SAGE Finance package.

Governors were concerned that this was not the first year that the accounts have been late and, with the poor customer service support for LJ and her team, they did not consider this to be acceptable nor good value for money. A governor suggested that it was best practice to retender for auditors on a three yearly basis.

*Is this leaving the school in an exposed position?*

LJ did not believe so and was confident that the final accounts would be available to be presented at the AGM on 16 December. This will be the second year that Landau Baker have been used by

the school. The accounts will be simpler to audit next year without the change of financial system to factor in.

The following action was agreed:

**ACTION:**

- PD to attend the Review Meeting with the Auditors and LJ
- Landau Baker to produce the statutory accounts as a matter of urgency.
- Governors make clear their expectations of the auditors going forward and question their performance at the AGM;
- The commitments given by Landau Baker will determine their re-appointment.

PD, LJ

LJ

All

All

## FINANCE

### 7 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

LJ explained that she intended to liaise with SAGE to ensure that future reports are more accessible. In response to a comment, LJ agreed to replicate the alpha identification codes on the spreadsheet with her financial commentaries. She would also sort the Trial Balance by account reference rather than departmental reference to make it easier for governors to read.

*Can we split the non-staff costs out and include sub-totals in future reports?*

LJ agreed to take on board this suggestion.

*There appears to be heavy growth projected on forecast reserves. Is that correct?*

LJ reported that as a growing school, HGSS is now able to benefit from economies of scale which were not possible as a 5 form entry school. The caveat to this is that we are approaching challenging economic times and it is likely that grants such as for teachers pay and pensions will be included in the budget share going forwards. It is possible that the school will need to find almost £300,000 next year as a result. HGSS Has been fortunate in not being too badly affected to date by the impact of COVID but if the situation changes this will be very expensive.

A governor commented that having good reserves at a time when the school is expanding is prudent and a justification for them.

LJ asked the committee how they would wish to receive the monthly management accounts?

It was agreed that the Finance Officer would email the management accounts each month at month end to the members of this committee together with a rolling 12 month cashflow forecast.

*Are we happy with the bank figure?*

Governors said they were – it had been circulated with the reconciliation statement.

*Are we confident there is this cash in the bank?*

A governor commented that this was the case but it would be helpful to see the rolling forecast to be confident that there is enough money before the pay and pension grants are received

**ACTION:**

LJ to replicate the alpha identification codes on the spreadsheet with her financial commentaries and sort the Trial Balance by account reference rather than departmental reference.

LJ

LJ to split the non-staff costs out and include sub-totals in future reports.

LJ

The Finance Officer to email the management accounts each month to the members of this committee with a rolling 12 month cashflow forecast.

LJ

**7.1 INCOME/EXPENDITURE 2020/21**

Governors noted the information in the Business Manager's report.

**8 16-19 STUDENT SUPPORT FUND PAYMENTS 2020/21**

Governors noted the information in the report and the fact that the number of applications had increased this year.

*How is this fund generated?*

The fund is allocated by the EFSA but EH explained that it is possibly influenced by the number of Pupil Premium students and those with an EHCP.

*Do sixth formers lose their entitlement to Free School Meals?*

LJ explained that this was no longer the case.

**9 FUND RAISING FOR INDOOR TENNIS CENTRE – UPDATE**

LJ reported that this has been paused until the school has secured planning permission.

**PREMISES, HEALTH AND SAFETY**

## 10 PREMISES REPORT

Governors noted the information in the Premises Report and discussed the following:

### **CIF Bid –Roofing**

This project is going well and will be mostly complete by Christmas. Some changes have been needed to the windows and they are on order for delivery in January. This work will have a 20 year warranty.

Governors discussed whether to pay the school contribution of £38,100 from Reserves or the School Development Fund.

#### *Why are we taking out a loan for £38,100?*

The CIF bid process is more likely to be successful if a project involves a Salix loan and has school contributions included.

Governors agreed to fund the school's contribution of £38,100 with the use of Reserves.

### **CIF Bid 2 (2020/21) – Replacement of the main boilers.**

The CIF appeal has been successful and, as such, the school has now secured the funding for this project. Buckinghamshire Council had previously agreed to pick up the cost of this project and the school has asked Buckinghamshire Council to keep with this commitment to prevent the school needing to take out a Salix Loan and make a school contribution to the project. The Commissioning Team are discussing this with Members and will report back.

### **Air Dome**

Governors noted the information in the Premises Report including the fact that retrospective planning permission was refused on 17 November 2020. A planning consultant has been appointed to advise on next steps.

The remainder of this item is contained in the Part II Confidential Minutes.

**Dojo** – there is no update on this.

**Art Block Roof** – due to on-going issues related to a design problem with the roof this matter has been referred to legal.

#### *When was this work undertaken?*

The roof was replaced in 2007 and has always leaked. It should

not have been signed off by the developer and so is not the school's responsibility to fund remedial work.

### **10.3 ICT- LAPTOPS FOR STUDENTS – UPDATE**

LJ reported that another portal had been opened for parents to purchase laptops.

### **10.4 THIRD PARTY LETTINGS PROVIDER**

Governors noted the information in relation to the previous lettings company which had gone into administration in July 20 and the subsequent contractual arrangements with the replacement - Bookings Guru.

## **11 HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTERS**

### **11.1 TERMLY VISIT – SUMMER TERM SITE INSPECTION REPORT**

**Fire Doors** – the site team have now completed a full fire door audit and an update will be made to Mr Green, as Health and Safety Governor, on a termly basis.

**LJ  
TG**

Governors reiterated their request for a timeline to be added to the Site Inspection report so that all action can be tracked – urgent action with an actual date and non-urgent action with a best estimate date.

TG stated that he had been impressed at the measures which have been put in place to keep the site COVID-secure as far as possible for students and staff.

It was noted that the school has now purchased fogging machines which are being used around the school in communal areas.

**ACTION:** LJ to add timeline to the Site Inspection report

**LJ**

### **11.2 HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT UPDATES**

LJ reported that a Health and Safety Audit had taken place last week – particularly focusing on COVID arrangements. He had been very impressed at how it is being managed at HGSS.

### **11.3 COVID RISK ASSESSMENT**

Governors asked whether it would be possible to highlight changes in the report to make their review of this document easier.

**ACTION:** LJ to highlight changes in future versions of the COVID Risk Assessment.

**LJ**

## **OTHER MATTERS**

### **12 TEACHING STAFF PAY REVIEW**

Governors noted the information in the Management report on the impact of appraisal and decisions on performance related pay progression for teachers.

*What does 'impact sustained with mentoring teachers' mean?*

EH explained that staff on the Upper PayScale are required to undertake whole-school work. This comment relates to someone who has mentored other teachers.

*What is exams concessions work?*

This relates to managing the process of screening students to ascertain if they need support with exams.

*Are staff aware of the appraisal process and how it relates to pay progression?*

It was confirmed that they do. Progress towards targets are reviewed at the mid-year point and support given where necessary.

*This year has been very difficult for staff and they have worked very hard in difficult circumstances. Has anyone suffered, in terms of their pay progression, as a result?*

EH explained that this was taken into account and the appraisal process was adjusted as teachers were not able to prove data outcomes due to the Centre Assessed Grading process. No one's pay has been adversely affected due to COVID.

The committee approved the pay recommendations as outlined by the Headteacher.

### **13 POLICY REVIEWS AND APPROVALS**

#### **13.1 RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY**

It was agreed to approve this policy.

#### **13.2 RISK REGISTER**

LJ asked governors whether they would wish to review the Risk Register termly or annually.

Having discussed this, they agreed to monitor the register termly.

Governors agreed the items they would wish the next internal scrutiny reports to focus on (as influenced by the Risk Register) and agreed the following focus:



1. The organisation reaction to the COVID pandemic
2. The Curriculum – unable to deliver, poor student performance, changes to sixth form, facilities.
3. Information Technology – impact of availability.

**ACTION:**

- Risk Register to be included on the agenda for this committee on a termly basis.
- Internal Scrutiny to focus on the topics outlined above.

**Chair/Clerk**

**LJ**

**13.3 RESERVES POLICY**

*Is the policy set at a level that is appropriate for the School?*

LJ confirmed that it is.

**13.4 FINANCIAL MANGEMENT POLICY**

LJ reported that the policy has been updated with operational matters only.

*Is the Asset List threshold appropriate and manageable for the school?*

LJ explained that although it is set low - £500 – it enables the school to retain a thorough record of assets on site in case of fire. The person who is responsible for placing orders is also responsible for updating the Asset Register on a termly basis.

*A governor referred to the statement on page 3 about OFSTED's judgements on the efficiency of the school and questioned whether this judgement might be impacted by the late receipt of the accounts.*

LJ stated that this would not be a concern for OFSTED as the school could demonstrate in other outcomes that it was operating efficiently.

*Does the school have separation of duties in terms of purchasing arrangements?*

LJ confirmed that different people have responsibility for ordering and verifying purchase orders and signing invoices. EH is the final arbiter.

**ACTION:** LJ to share her system notes with PD.

**LJ**

**13.5 PAY POLICY**

EH explained that HGSS is currently described as a Group 6 School but will move to a Group 7 school in time which will have an impact on the leadership pay scales.

**14 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Dates of meetings are as per the meeting schedule for 2020/21, the next one being Wednesday 17 March 2021 at 18.00.

**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.

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

The Chair thanked EW for stepping in to pick up the role of clerk in the hiatus before the new clerk, Jenny Knight commences.

The meeting closed at 20.35

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