

**Finance Committee**  
**Minutes of the Meeting held on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023**  
**at 6pm at the Sherwood Hill Campus and via Google Meet**



Robin Dear (RD)	Foundation Governor	Present	
Gemma Davies	Co-opted Governor	Present	
Claire Hadcocks (CH)	Co-opted Governor		Absent
Brian Ikin (BI)	Co-opted Governor (Chair)		Absent
David Murden (DM)	Ex-Officio Governor / Headteacher	Present	
Chris Williams (CW)	Local Authority Governor	Present	
Debbie Sinclair (DS)	School Business Manager	Present	
Barry Walder (BW)	Finance Consultant; Schools Management Support Ltd		Absent
Rosemary Viggiani (RV)	Clerk	Present	

	Item	Action
1.	<p><b>Welcome; Apologies for absence and quorum (3)</b></p> <p>RD opened the meeting at 6pm and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from CH and BI for personal reasons. It was noted that Matthew Grew had resigned from the Board.</p> <p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest regarding items on the agenda.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023</b></p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> Governors approved the minutes of the meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2023 as a true and complete record of the meeting.</p> <p><b>Matters arising (see action list below)</b></p> <p><b>Action 52:</b> DM cautioned that capping TA's at point 10 may appear to save money but would make recruitment difficult as this could be below existing salaries; this is linked to the budget arguments re the unique nature of the school.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you get value for money from all TA's?</b></p> <p>DM: Yes, without doubt. TA's at our school need a higher level of skills and experience re trans-disciplinary working than TA's at other schools.</p> <p><b>Q: Does the budget assume capping?</b></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> DM to formalize the rationale re the TA pay scale for approval by the Committee / GB</p>	55
3.	<p><b>Management Accounts</b></p> <p><u>Management Accounts to end of June 2023 (M3 / Q1)</u></p> <p><u>Matters arising</u></p> <p>DM reported that he had met Karen Cunningham today to review the Premises budget. £50k has been budgeted for Premises for the current year and the LA had noted that it had doubled from £25k last year. However, this was because the budget last year was very low for two campuses. The rationale for setting the budget at £50k was not clear and there is a risk that this may not be sufficient to cover the needs with regards to boiler maintenance / replacement and tree maintenance.</p> <p>One replacement boiler should be covered by the LA but the other may cost c£6k.</p>	

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	<p>The school have received complaints from neighbours regarding the trees and there is a need to reinstate the tree maintenance contract.</p> <p>The maintenance of the Swimming Pool is expected to be c£8 - £10k.</p> <p>The school is already further into the premises budget than expected at this point in the year. Ian Cullen is providing a three-year plan for the IT Network and this is due this week – although this will span into future years.</p> <p>DM wished to notify the committee that there may be the need to vire into the Premises Budget from other areas a little later in the year.</p> <p>Governors emphasised the importance of monthly monitoring of the budget noting that there is no room for an overspend on the total budget this year. Any over-expenditure in one area will need to be off-set by savings elsewhere. The Committee / Board will sign off virements if necessary.</p> <p>DM concurred and agreed that the school need to develop management processes to be able to forecast and sign off accounts monthly. Some opportunities for savings have already been identified.</p> <p>It will also be helpful to review opportunities for raising additional income.</p> <p>It was noted that DM is managing the operational budget and accepts that it cannot be overspent.</p> <p>Governors also questioned:</p> <p><i>Q: Do you receive all the money you should get? Does the school pay for tree maintenance or does the LA pay for this?</i></p> <p><i>A: As the SET own the land it is believed that this is the school’s responsibility.</i></p> <p><i>Q: Do the school regularly check the tree safety? For instance, is there a two year cycle?</i></p> <p><i>A: DM: We are aiming to sign up to a tree maintenance contract including checks in this cycle.</i></p> <p>DM noted that, as regards the swimming pool, he will make a bid to the LA special capital funding committee to cover costs such as the new boiler. As the pool is required for SEND students to access their education the LA may cover the expenditure.</p> <p><i>Q: Governors asked whether there were savings to be made through joint procurement within the SET?</i></p> <p><i>A: There is an SBM Group with the SET that manages such actions. DS will join this group which is chaired by Havard.</i></p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> DS to join the SBM Group within the SET.</p> <p>It was further noted that it will be challenging to remain within the budget for sickness.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> DS to establish a process to monitor sickness (both long and short-term sickness) on a weekly basis.</p>	<p>56</p> <p>57</p>
4.	<p><b>Budget for 2023/24</b></p> <p><u>Update re progress with the LA re the budget for 2023/24</u></p> <p>It was agreed that CW will provide an update on this meeting to FGB as RD cannot attend.</p> <p>DM reported that he had held a meeting with Kieran Holiday on the basis that he needed some form of guidance as he did not have an agreed budget; he requested advice as to how to resolve the situation to allow the governors to agree a budget.</p> <p>DM had also received the outcome from the moderation which involved Jack Cutler, Carol Warne, Nick English and James Kearnes, the Head of Carew Academy. This was a constructive process and a number of questions were asked re staffing levels. The report was received two weeks later but only half-an-hour before the meeting which would report on the findings. DM was reading the report during the meeting.</p> <p>As a result of the moderation it was agreed that the budget would be looked at again before the end of term. The report was positive and agreed that the staffing levels are correct.</p>	



**Item****Action**

It also agreed that the school is providing excellent provision for our pupils and that there is no similar school to benchmark us against as we provide a unique provision at the Hill and in part at the Park.

All things considered the report agreed that the provision and staffing levels are correct and there is a need to increase the high needs block funding per pupil on each campus. However, it was also apparent that this would only raise it to the amount we have already been receiving including the additional top up and placement funding. That is frustrating as this still leaves the school with a £500k in-year deficit.

The school did not have the time or opportunity to share its views at the end of the meeting which was frustrating.

In preparation for the meeting the following week DM wrote a four-page letter highlighting the savings that the school are making on behalf of the LA. The governors congratulated DM on the letter.

At the meeting with the LA on the Monday they agreed with the letter and essentially agreed to fund according to Option 1 in the letter – effectively funding the school to run the provision we all want.

The outcome from the meeting was that the LA agreed to present this to the School's Forum in the Autumn Term to lobby the group to fund the school at the appropriate level. The presentation will be comprehensive and include a video to support of the case.

This essentially agrees to the staffing levels and wiping out the cumulative deficit by transferring it to the High Needs Block Deficit with the hope that central government will agree to fund this.

In summary, the latest report will say that the LA agree with the budget but cannot fund the school in the way they recognise that is needs to be funded and therefore take it to the School's Forum.

However, at the meeting of the Finance Group involving Vicky Goddard, Richard Simpson, Carol Warne, Kieran Holliday, Jack Cutler; Robin Dear, Claire Hadcocks, Debbie Sinclair, Barry Walder and David Murden, the agenda was sent through and it was not the meeting we expected. It indicated that they would again be reviewing whether the school should adopt Option 1 or 2 again and were asking the school to justify some of the rows in the budget.

We wrote back to state that this was not the meeting we had agreed to and that the governors would not attend. The meeting was then agreed to be the signing off of the budget that the governors had seen with Richard cross-examining some of the rows and they have asked today for clarification on some of the points.

DM has asked for reassurance around that as it still felt like we were carrying the risk and deficit. Kieran has clarified that this will only be until the Schools' Forum; it is not the Forum's decision but the LA would like their blessing.

Thus, it is still not agreed in writing and therefore there are still risks around that.

Carol provided a copy of the document that the LA send to the ESFA as to how they are supporting schools in deficit in the Borough and DM has some concerns that the ESFA will focus their attention on the largest deficit and send in an SRMA. The concern is that this is a general review that is not tailored to our provision; the deficit has not arisen due to mismanagement. DM is still hopeful that we will get to October and get the funding to match the provision and eliminate the deficit. However, it is disappointing that there were opportunities in sheet sent today for them to stand alongside us – and they have not done that; I have again had to advocate for us.

Governors noted that the process has significantly moved forwards; the school have set out the situation quite starkly. At no point have the LA suggested reshaping the school and, in this regard the meeting was positive. The school have asked what they should do in the interim and Richard has agreed that, once he is happy, he will sign it off.

	Item	Action
	<p>It was agreed that, if we get to October and the budget is still not agreed then we need to stand behind the argument and support it. The school is operating as instructed by the LA.</p> <p>The background to the wider issue was discussed and it was noted that Sutton have to save £50million from their budget so are in a difficult position. However, it would cost the LA more if the school were re-shaped such that it did not meet the needs of the current cohort, many of whom would then need to move to an alternative provision.</p> <p>Governors remained very encouraged but reinforced the fact that, once the budget is agreed, the school have to work within it and cannot overspend.</p> <p>At the current time it was agreed that, as there is a map through to a decision in October the school should monitor the accounts against the budget as presented.</p> <p><u>Approval of the budget for 2023/24 if possible</u></p> <p>Governors have inherently approved what is in the budget but cannot formally approve it as per the funding agreement. However, all is moving in the right direction.</p> <p><u>Out of Borough charging proposals</u></p> <p>The proposals for the out-of-Borough charging were discussed.</p> <p>It was agreed that other authorities should be informed that charges will be increasing from 1<sup>st</sup> October as the moderation has shown that the charges are not covering the costs. The date can be reviewed if the other Boroughs challenge the decision.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> DM to write a letter to other Boroughs quoting the findings of the Moderation Report and confirming that fees will increase from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023.</p> <p><u>Update re the capping of TA scales / Update re the support staff structure</u></p> <p>See Matters Arising in Section 3 above.</p>	58
5.	<p><b>Risk Management</b></p> <p><u>Update re key risks</u></p> <p><i>Q: Governors noted that the Risk Register now needs further review and asked who owns the Risk Register within the school?</i></p> <p><i>A: DM said that it will be the School Business Manager in due course.</i></p> <p>RD stated that, when DS is ready to take over responsibility for the Risk Register he will be happy to meet with her.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> RD and DS to meet to re-structure the Risk Register into a more usable format.</p> <p>It was noted that it may be helpful to involve new governor(s) in this process.</p> <p>The position regarding the budget should be included as a risk given that the school are running with a non-agreed budget</p> <p>It was also noted that some open HR cases also provide potential reputational / financial risks</p> <p><u>Standing item: reporting re any GDPR Breaches</u></p> <p>There were no GDPR Breaches to report</p>	59
6.	<p><b>Update re Policies</b></p> <p><u>Finance Policy</u></p> <p>The Finance Manual was reviewed and the changes proposed were agreed.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> The Committee approved the Finance Manual for recommendation to FGB</p> <p><u>Pay Policy</u></p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> The Committee approved the Pay Policy for recommendation to FGB</p>	



Item	Action
<p>It was noted that the Policy Review schedule is being updated and will be presented to FGB for approval.</p> <p>It was noted that the following policies were not yet ready for approval:            GDPR Policies (Data Protection);            Procurement and Sustainability Policy;            Governors Allowances and Expenses Policy;            Charging and remissions policy.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> The Committee agreed to defer the review of the GDPR Policies to the Spring Term; the other policies will be reviewed in line with the updated Policy Review Schedule.</p>	
<p>7. <b>Review of Terms of Reference for the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee</b></p> <p><u>Review of ToR from 2023/24</u></p> <p><u>Review of Meeting Structure for 2023/24</u></p> <p><u>Scheme of Delegation for 2023/24</u></p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> The drafts were approved for presentation to FGB for approval.</p>	
<p>8. <b>Confidential items</b></p> <p>There were no confidential items</p>	
<p>9. <b>Any other business / Dates of future meetings</b></p> <p>There was no other business.</p> <p><u>Forthcoming Meetings:</u> FGB: 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023            Finance: tbc</p>	
<p>The meeting closed at 8:25pm</p>	

Signed:  Print Name: ROBIN SEAR

Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 1-11-2023

## Action list

Item	Action point	Who	By when	Update
Actions arising from the meeting of 12 <sup>th</sup> July 2022				
21	Action transferred from FGB to explore how the school can have ownership of the land returned to it. DM to approach Browne Jacobson for advice.	DM	Ongoing	The SET own the land having been passed the land by the LA. Action closed
Actions arising from the meeting of 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2023				
47	RV to schedule in review and re-approval of the Finance and GDPR Policies for the Autumn Term.	RV	Sept 23	The Finance Policy is presented to the meeting. The GDPR Policies will be reviewed no later than the Spring 2024. Action remains open.
48	DM to follow up regarding the outstanding parent debt for school dinners and report back to Governors at the next Finance Committee. Management to ensure that the school follows its published process for managing payment/non-payment for school meals. Also to explore support for families to claim free school meals and to signpost to support to enable them to access wider benefits as appropriate.	DS / DM	Fin. Cttee April 23	DS is working on this and recouping of the money has commenced; DS to report back to the next meeting; all families have been contacted; action remains open.
Actions arising from the meeting of 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2023				
49	DM to initiate a review of the non-classroom based support staff structure at the earliest.	DM	Autumn 2023	Exploring the roles of the admin team. . Action ongoing
Actions arising from the meeting of 24 <sup>th</sup> May 2023				
52	DM to bring forward a paper with a recommendation for capping the scales for TAs and STAs. This should include advice re any requirements for new contracts or consultation.	DM	FGB 7 <sup>th</sup> June	Action replaced by Action 55; Action closed..
53	DM and BW to bring a revised budget to the FGB on 7 <sup>th</sup> June; this needs to be realistic, allowing the school to deliver on the Commissioning Agreement. It needs to be succinct and include benchmark comparisons with a figure for the cost per pupil and including out of borough charging proposals.	DM/BW	FGB 7 <sup>th</sup> June	The budget was presented to FGB and subsequently discussed with the LA. Action completed and closed.
54	DM to reach out to Kieran and arrange a meeting with the LA no later than 9 <sup>th</sup> June.	DM	FGB 7 <sup>th</sup> June	Action completed and closed.

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<b>Actions arising from the meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>				
55	DM to formalize the rationale re the TA pay scale for approval by the Committee/GB	DM	Spr Term 2024	
56	DS to join the SBM Group within the SET.	DS	Spr Term 2024	
57	DS to establish a process to monitor sickness (both long and short-term sickness) on a weekly basis.	DS	Spr Term 2024	
58	DM to write a letter to other Boroughs quoting the findings of the Moderation Report and confirming that fees will increase from 1 <sup>st</sup> October 2023.	DM	July 23	
59	RD and DS to meet to re-structure the Risk Register into a more usable format.	RD / DS	Aut Term 2023	

