

Extraordinary GB Meeting including Finance and Resources Committee Update Minutes

School: St Agnes C of E Primary School

Quorum: 3 (met at this meeting)

Chair: Helen Thompson

Clerk: Andrew Crosbie

Date of meeting: 21st May 2020

Venue: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Attendance

Name	Governor type	'End of Term of Office' date	Present (P)/apologies (Ap)/absent (A)
Charlie Mok	LA	31/10/23	P
Shoab Uddin	Head Teacher (HT)	NA	P
Helen Thompson (Chair)	Foundation	07/09/22	P
Cath Collinson	Parent Governor	01/03/21	P
Afeefah Ali	Co-opted	01/03/22	P
Bethan Jones**	Co-opted	01/09/22	P
Lesley Gutteridge	Co-opted	22/03/21	P
Sarah Oxley*	Staff Governor	01/03/22	P
Muna Chowdhury	Parent Governor	02/04/24	P
Bunnessa Haque	Parent Governor	02/04/24	P
Rev Eugenia Adoyo	Foundation	N/A	Ap
Margaret Taylor	Foundation	01/09/20	Ap

*Joined meeting for item 6

**Left meeting after item 6

Others present

Name	Role
Nadra Bukhari	School Business Manager (SBM)
Andrew Crosbie	Clerk (One Education)

Agenda Items

1	Apologies and welcome
<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially new parent governor, Muna Chowdhury attending her first meeting. Chair thanked everyone for such a high attendance. There were apologies from Margaret Taylor and Rev Adoyo. It was explained that whilst this is an extraordinary GB meeting, there will be a key focus on Finance & Resources with a full review of year end accounts and 2020/21 budget.</p>	

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

2	Declaration of Pecuniary Interests		
There were no pecuniary interests expressed regarding any of the agenda items.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

3	Minutes of the last meeting (06.02.20) and matters arising		
The minutes of the last meeting (06.02.20) were approved as an accurate record and a copy was signed by Chair for retention on file. There were no matters arising.			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of the last meeting approved and signed. 	F&R Committee	

4	Finance Report – for review and approval		
The School Business Manager (SBM), presented the financial reports for governor review and approval. The following points were raised/highlighted in discussion.			
<u>4.2 2019/20 Budget Closedown (Period 12 Monitoring)</u>			
Revenue Income - £2,412,618			
Revenue Expenditure - £2,451,673			
Cumulative c/f- £204,081 surplus			
Capital income £ 41,395			
Capital expenditure £ 77,878 deficit			
B/f from 2018/19 £39,418			
Cumulative c/f to 19/20 £2,934			
Year-end cumulative balances, to be carried forward to 2020/21			
Revenue £201,146			
Capital £2,934			
Total Cumulative Balance £204,081			

SBM confirmed that this preliminary closedown balance is a healthy amount and the final closedown figure needs to be submitted to the Local Authority by 3rd June.

Chair of Governors to sign and return copy of approved 2019/20 Budget Closedown.

4.3 Commitment of 19/20 Surpluses and Analysis of Reserves

The closing balance is £204,081, of which the allowable 8% balance is £169,002. This means that the amount in excess of the allowable balance is £35,079. Although there was an LA clawback last year of 50%, because of the pandemic crisis there will be no such claw back this year. However, the school has worked hard to reduce excessive surplus as much as possible.

The Governing Body needed to decide on the school's Justification of Surplus and where to allocate the £35,079 excess balance.

HT advised that, earlier today, there had been some major developments in terms of the roof leak, with several senior people, including the chief executive of Willmott Dixon, representatives from the LA, and several other parties all in the school assessing the roof situation. Their analysis concluded that the roof leak has caused much more extensive damage to internal woodwork than first realised, and that this is a situation that now needs urgently addressing and will require some degree of expenditure.

Acknowledging this, the GB agreed that all of the excess balance should be allocated to item 3 – Planned work (capital works) not yet begun or completed. Analysis of Reserves and Justification of Surplus document to be signed by HT and Chair and returned to LA by 1st June deadline.

4.4 2020/21 Budget

Income Revenue -	£2,430,644
Expenditure Revenue -	£2,444,196
In Year deficit -	£13,552
Surplus brought forward -	£201,147
Cumulative surplus -	£187,595
Capital income total -	£9,051

Q. Is a deficit budget allowed?

Yes, advice was sought on this and, because of the school's large carry forward figure, an in-year deficit figure is seen as positive confirmation that the school is trying to reduce surplus.

Q. Why is the I04 code 'Funding for Minority Ethnic Pupils' shown as a zero amount?

This funding is still received but falls within I01 code 'Funds delegated by the LA' and is no longer itemised separately.

HT advised that staffing costs are some 66.7% of total expenditure budget, against a national average of between 70 and 80%, so this does allow some maneuverability on staffing moving forward.

Q. Why is the proposed Agency Supply Teaching Staff figure of £23,550, so much less than in previous years, for example £83k in 2019/20?

There has been a conscious decision taken to try and remove a lot of agency staff and replace with permanent staff. Anticipating the potential impact of Covid-19 on teacher absence as potentially one day per week, the school is allocating in the budget for 2 new supply teachers from September 2020 to March 2021 to provide cover for staff on long term sick leave.

4.5 Service Level Agreements 2020/21

Governors reviewed proposed SLAs for bought in professional and curriculum services/

Q. Are any of the SLAs new?

No.

Q. Have any of the costs significantly increased?

No, most have remained the same, especially the professional services costs. There is some annual variation in Ed Psych and Speech & Language costs.

The Site Management costs of £20k are a significant reduction on the total amount of c.£50k that was being spent with Manchester Working up to that business ceasing to trade in March 2018. Facilities Manager, Kane can take great credit for approaching Manchester Working's third party contacts and negotiating individual contacts with each.

Governors approved the SLAs.

4.6 3-5 Year Budget projection

Governors reviewed the budget projections for each year through to 2024/25 with the following highlighted in discussion:

The budget shows an in year deficit in 2020/21 of £13,552, but then, thanks to the carry forward figure, a surplus for the two years after until a return to a deficit of £12,770 in 2023/24.

Income and expenditure will obviously remain estimated at this stage and will vary year to year but it gives an indication that is considered fairly accurate for at least the next 3 years.

The 3-5 year budget submission was approved and is to be signed by HT and Chair ahead of submission asap.

4.7 LA 3 Year Budget Assumptions

The final item reviewed was a new document from the LA asking schools to submit budget assumptions for the budget forecast 2020/21 to 2022/23. This is likely to be a document requiring annual completion. It does not need to be approved by governors and is shared for information only.

The document is similar to the Analysis of Reserves submission but goes into much more detail. It is likely that it has been produced in response to last year's claw back issue, which highlighted some major variances between different schools. The document will provide LA with a clearer picture of the financial situation across all local authority schools.

Q. Why has the additional 15 hours Nursery funding not been included in the income forecast? There was only a very minimal amount of funding, for one Nursery parent, provided in 19/20 and school is unsure whether any will be received in 20/21.

It was noted that a new 20/21 cost centre has been set up for Covid-19 and an initial £21,500 allocated.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Period 9 Budget Monitoring approved and signed.	F&R Committee	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of Reserves and Justification of Surplus approved and signed. • 20/21 Budget forecast approved. • 3-5 year budget forecasts approved and signed. • 20/21 Service Level Agreements approved. 	F&R Committee	
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5	Asset Register		
<p>SBM explained that the full Asset Register is a comprehensive document of some 70 pages and so, for the purpose of this meeting, she has presented a brief summary listing item numbers of all assets within the school, everything from chairs and desks through IT equipment to kettles and microwaves.</p> <p>Q. What is a Pizza Desk Top PC? A child-friendly PC.</p> <p>Q. Does the full Asset Register take into account the depreciation of, for example, IT equipment? Yes, all of this is captured in the full report. It is a full record of what assets are kept where within the school and is updated if assets are moved from one classroom to another. Full records of obsolete equipment, and how it is disposed of, are also kept. SBM and Facilities Manager have responsibility for maintaining this register on a daily basis.</p> <p>Chair thanked SBM for her comprehensive update.</p>			
	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset register approved by governors. 	GB	

*Sarah Oxley joined the meeting.

6	Covid-19 Update		
<p>HT updated governors on the school's latest response to Covid-19 and the lockdown, with the following highlighted in discussions:</p> <p>Since Easter, the school has continued to offer provision for Key Worker and Vulnerable pupils and has devised a staff rota to accommodate this. Currently, only two sibling pupils are attending school full time and one other child intermittently. Most children on EHC plans have preferred to, or been advised to, stay at home.</p> <p>For the two siblings that are attending school, it has been a success story, with both making fantastic progress in their personal and social development, having essentially been non-verbal at the start of this provision.</p>			

The national Edenred voucher scheme for families on Free School Meals has been very problematic and led to many families struggling to access their vouchers online and having to wait too long to receive their food. The school has therefore taken the decision to independently organise FSM vouchers for these families, at a cost of £2,100 through to half term. After half term, the school kitchen will re-open and packed lunches will be provided for children to collect.

Staff members, together with local community groups and charities, have all rallied round to ensure that food packs are being provided on a rolling, weekly basis to all families that need them, via home visits.

Remote IT access for teachers which was initially a problem, has now been resolved and staff can access information online as well as attend school if necessary.

Support at home for parents and carers is provided in terms both of online daily learning and physical home learning packs. Safe and welfare calls, which are made each week to families, have highlighted some internet and IT issues amongst families and so provision of more home learning packs will be stepped up after half term, especially for Early Years and younger classes.

Staff wellbeing remains a priority and there are weekly and bi-weekly meetings of the SLT and Phase Leaders to check on this. Every two weeks all staff are contacting their own class children and keeping a record of any incidents or concerns on CPOMS. A dedicated Covid-19 button has been added to CPOMS to capture relevant information on, for example, bereavement issues or food concerns.

Q. Is there any evidence about precisely how much home learning work is actually being done?

The school tries to establish this during the regular safe and welfare calls but there is no way of accurately knowing how much work is being done and there are concerns that some families are not engaging with online learning. The introduction of hard copy weekly learning packs post-half term will hopefully help with this.

Staff Governor advised that, during initial lockdown, there were concerns, but most recent calls suggest that at least 50% of pupils are regularly accessing daily learning.

It was suggested by Parent Governors that the mixture of online and hard copy learning packs help to break up teaching and learning delivery for parents. It was also acknowledged that internet access issues are a problem and that learning packs will therefore be even more vital. Although, for health reasons, the return of work books to school for marking is not advisable, parents thought the publication of work samples on the school website was a very effective way of incentivising children.

Chair thanked Parent Governors for their positive contributions on this issue and agreed that the weekly learning packs being planned will not only help parents to better plan their children's work timetable, but will also reduce stress and alleviate pressures on less technologically savvy families.

The school is now following government and DfE advice on a phased re-opening in June and the SLT meeting regularly to discuss progress. There will be some changes to the school environment required, as well as health and safety considerations. External and internal signage and spacing directions are being sourced and a local company has quoted £1,190 to

supply. Sourcing hand sanitisers and dispensers is proving difficult. It is very much a seller's market at present and quotes for this equipment have ranged from £4k to £9k. The school's usual supplier of hygiene products is overwhelmed with orders and not currently responding to enquiries. Cleaning equipment is clearly a vital requirement ahead of any re-opening.

A questionnaire was issued to parents of children in Nursery, Reception, Y1 and Y6, the first classes recommended for return by the government. Of parents surveyed, 83% said they would not want their child to return, 7% were undecided and 10% said they would be happy for their child to return, all mainly Y6 children.

Based on these results, any re-opening of Y6 would likely see just 6 children return to school, out of 60 in total. In line with guidance, 'bubble' classrooms would be established, with no more than 11 pupils and one Y6 class teacher in each bubble.

Currently, plans are to have the site ready to accept pupils by 1st June, with the first Y6 children returning w/c 8th June. Initially this will be for a half day only, 9am – noon. Children will remain in one classroom only to minimise cross-infection and will then collect a packed lunch to take home at midday. After a one week trial, a second bubble may be introduced. Nursery and Reception parents are all adamant that they will not return their children yet and these are unlikely to re-open before September.

The school currently has staff capacity to handle the Y6 pupils and staff suitability will be RAG rated, from able and willing (Green) through those with anxiety or childcare issues (Amber) to clinically serious staff still having to shield or self-isolate (Red).

The LA sent HT a risk assessment form for completion and this will need to be shared with and approved by Governors before being returned.

Q. Is this not a lot of effort to open up for just 6 pupils?

Yes, it is a lot of work for such low numbers but Longsight as a community is probably quite different to the national picture. There are many more stay at home parents, or multi-generational families living together so childcare at home is not an issue. This will have an influence on keeping children away from school.

Q. With reference to any potential impact of social distancing or isolation on children's mental health, how can the school ensure they will get the same feeling of safety and wellbeing when they return to school and can/will this be monitored?

The setting will be very unusual and this will take time to adjust to, but the school will reassure pupils and families that it has followed guidelines to ensure risks are minimised as much as possible. Pupils returning will not be immediately getting stuck into academic work, rather the vast majority of the time will be on developing and supporting their mental health and wellbeing. St Agnes excels in this respect and there are excellent resources planned for this. The first week back will be a review and trial of how this works and SLT and staff involved will be closely monitoring pupils with one to one drop-ins scheduled with each pupil to air their worries and concerns

Q. With regards to responsibilities to teachers and other staff, will Governors be held responsible or liable for the prevention of infectious diseases under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and should schools be looking at liability insurance against Covid-19 or reviewing its insurance policies?

The Governing Body should be aware of the practices in light of Covid-19 and how the school is responding to it. The LA is issuing guidance on this to support schools further as this was

raised in today's Central heads meeting. On a national scale there would be arrangements to protect schools in light of Covid-19 and following DfE guidance and appropriate risk assessments should cover this. There is more guidance from LA coming up. A review of insurance policies is a very good suggestion and will be looked into.

HT confirmed he has drafted a letter for issue 22nd May to parents. This will keep the messaging simple, explaining what the school will look like in practice when it re-opens and explaining that the decision to return a child rests entirely with the parents. There will be no impact on a pupil's attendance marks.

The school that children return to, either now or in September, will never look like it did before, simply because of the social distancing and increased hygiene measures. It is particularly sad that Y6 children will miss out on all the traditional end of year celebrations and events.

It was noted that the LA has left final decisions on phased re-opening to individual schools. Over half of Greater Manchester councils have indicated they will not re-open at the start of June, with Stockport and Trafford indicating their earliest return date will be 10th June. Union recommendations also have to be taken into account and ensuring that all staff are on board with any decisions.

A Governor advised that her husband works for a company that produces hand sanitisers and can therefore, subject to declaration of interest regulations, be put in touch with HT as a potential supplier.

***Bethan Jones left the meeting*

Q. Will the proposed letter to parents include explanation of the difficulties being encountered sourcing PPE and sanitisers?

No. The school has sufficient hygiene product provisions for the initial opening but it could become an issue in the future if additional year group 'bubbles' were introduced.

Chair reminded governors that the school's re-opening is an operational matter that does not require formal governors' approval. However, it is the role of governors to support the school, review what is planned and provide questions and challenge where necessary.

HT to share risk assessment document with governors before returning to LA.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk assessment form to be completed for review and approval by governors. 	GB	

7	Premises Update
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As previously mentioned, investigations of the school rooftop playground leaks are still ongoing and a meeting has recently been held involving Willmott Dixon, Everlast (membrane work) and Bauder (roof construction). While investigating the leak, Willmott Dixon have uncovered some new issues in the main hall and boys' toilet on the first floor. Because the building is a wooden structure, leak damage is a major concern.

Q. Has there been any suggestion that the recent investigation work will incur any costs?

There has been no discussion on investigation costs and nothing has been billed to date. It appears that Willmott Dixon has finally accepted responsibility for this problem as a long term issue which now desperately needs to be resolved.

Q. Is there anything officially in writing which confirms Willmott Dixon's acceptance of responsibility?

No. Governors agreed that it would be good to have something formally in writing.

Governors agreed that this is now a dire situation and, whilst the lockdown has minimised operational disruption recently, it urgently needs to be resolved by the time the school completes its re-opening. They thanked Kane and Nadra for their continued diligence and perseverance in chasing up this issue.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale

8 Any Other Business

Recruitment

Chair confirmed that, following a virtual Zoom interview attended by several governors, HT and DHT, an existing teacher, Leanne Brown has successfully been awarded a Teaching & Learning post for KS2. The process, involving an interview and presentation, had worked very well online.

There will be further recruitment next week, with 'virtual' interviews for a new NQT position, for which the school has received 62 applications.

Chair again thanked all governors for their attendance and contributions to today's meeting.

	Actions or decisions	Owner	Timescale
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Virtual interviews for NQT position to be scheduled. 	GB	

Date and time of next meeting:

The next GB meeting is provisionally scheduled for Thursday 2nd July but will be confirmed nearer the time. An extraordinary meeting to approve the return to school Risk Assessment has since been confirmed for Thursday 4th June at 4.30pm.