

## QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

### Minutes of a meeting of the Governors' Finance and Pay Sub-Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at 6pm.

Present:	Mr P Buckland	Miss R McMann (Clerk)
	Mrs G Gravett	Mr Airey
	Mr R Dawson	Mrs Boving-Foster
	Mr R Shephard	Mrs Warner
	Mr Ray	Dr E Mawson

Quorum per Terms of Reference - 4 Governors

Governors present: 7

Visitors: none

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted for Mrs Rae (work commitments) and thus, in her absence Mrs Gravett chaired the meeting.

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Finance and Pay Meeting held Monday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2019 Paper: F&P20718(1)

With the exception of adding Mr Shephard to the attendance list, the minutes having been previously circulated were unanimously agreed and signed as a true record.

4. Matters Arising

Mrs Boving-Foster queried if the bank signatories had been sorted out. Dr Mawson said that this was in progress but is proving to be a time consuming process.

5. Management Accounts to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2019

Mr Buckland presented the accounts stating that the school is in a strong position with a positive variance of £42,000 against the projection of minus £148,000. He reported that the contributing factors to this are:

- Extra income from the teacher's pay grant due to a lot of the teaching staff being at the top of the scale.
- More income from lettings
- Turnaround in catering
- Refund on water bills of £7,000 as had been overpaying

With regards to costs, Mr Buckland reported a deficit in supply due to two significant long-term absences in the teaching staff and one within the administrative staff. He also reported the new build is yet to be signed off and so have not started charging for

the CIF loan. To conclude, he assured the Governors that the leadership team have gone through the accounts line by line and are satisfied that they are a true reflection of the school's financial position. Questions and comments were invited:

- *Given that the Governors have only seen two sets of accounts, is Mr Buckland satisfied with the school's financial position (GG)?* Yes, it is felt that the school is in a much better position (PB)
- *The balance sheet does not appear to balance and would like this to be queried as it is probably just a reporting error but it is detrimental that the balance sheet balances (JR)* **Action point: this needs to be checked, though it was thought that it could be to do with the restricted funds.**

Mr Buckland concluded by saying that he was hopeful that the Kirkby Stephen Business Manager would be able to attend the next meeting as she would be better served to answer questions. The Governors asked that their thanks and appreciation were passed onto her for her time and efforts.

**As the accounts need to be signed off and submitted as up-to-date, the Governors unanimously agreed that Mrs Gravett could do so, subject to the balance sheet being checked / rectified.**

## 6. Budget

The paper previously circulated shows a three year summary, with the first page showing a slight improvement. Mr Buckland gave a brief overview of the document stating that as student numbers increase, the school begins to see a positive surplus.

Responding to a question challenging the accuracy of student numbers, Mr Buckland said that they were 100% accurate, with 160 students joining next year and the year after. However, he did point out that the Sixth Form has taken a hit in numbers but hopefully an increase in main school numbers will in time reflect upon the Sixth Form.

A short discussion followed on the numbers in Sixth Form and the drivers behind a post-16 drop off. Dr Mawson explained that for next year there are 19 external applications and 103 internal applications and the type of year group has an impact on numbers. For example, if there a number of main school students from outside the catchment area, they may decide against the logistics of this at Sixth Form and less academic year groups might see the school lose pupils to apprenticeships. However, the school remains committed to retaining its breadth in the curriculum and in response to Mrs Boving-Foster's question, Dr Mawson answered that when asked the students occasionally say they would like to see psychology offered but it has not altered their choice in choosing QEGS. In short, the school loses very small numbers to apprenticeships. Mrs Gravett concurred that apprenticeships are becoming ever more attractive and in response to this Mr Dawson said that the school supports this as they have a responsibility to do the right thing for each pupil.

Mrs Boving-Foster asked if the budget includes the potential pay back of CIF monies. Mr Buckland summarised that this is still ongoing with difficult conversations with the EFSA and it looked like there may be a sum of £42,000 to pay back. However, this would not be paid as a lump sum and thus, would be manageable. Additionally, there is £60,000 in capital funds which is not in the budget but can be carried forward so there is no need to worry too much as any pay back would affect cash and not the school's reserves. Mr Ray asked if E3Cube would not be liable for some of this money given the school acted upon their advice. Mr Buckland said that unfortunately nothing had been written down.

Though Mrs Rae was not present at the meeting, as the Chair of the Committee and having had sight of the papers she had emailed a number of questions and Mr Buckland gave the following points to the committee to answer them:

- The teachers' pay grant was received after the budget was set
- The ICT budget has £33,000 allocated and set to increase year on year, totalling £65,000 which Mr Buckland felt is sufficient to do what is required in response to her concern that money needs to be invested into this.
- Figures are on track being £46,000 surplus.

**As the budget has to also be signed and submitted, the Governors unanimously agreed to accept it and Mrs Gravett signed a copy.**

7. Bank Accounts and Cash Flow

The Governors were satisfied with the report. Mrs Gravett queried the £180,000 currently in the Virgin account based on the understanding that it was agreed that ideally each account should hold no more than £85,000. **Dr Mawson thought there was a reason for this but would look into it.**

8. Maintenance Report

There were no reports available for this meeting due to a lack of capacity due to the ongoing staff issue. However, Mr Buckland reassured Governors that he meets with Martyn and there is not a lot going on presently. With regards to the new build, there are still snagging issues to work through.

**Action point: Mrs Gravett asked that for the next meeting could there be a document presented showing plans for the summer holidays.**

9. CIF

It was felt that this had been covered in sufficient detail during earlier items.

10. Catering Review

Dr Mawson presented this item stating that the driver for the whole review was a move to cashless catering and so looked at three options:

- A fully managed system
- Consultancy approach
- Get someone else to fund it

The recommendation was to adopt a consultancy approach and changing the consultant to one which offers a more hands on approach with the particular aim of looking at the quality of meals provided. Thus, Dr Mawson met with three different companies and the one which suited the school's ethos the most was also the best price. It would almost be a managed service without having to pay for it. Currently, the school is paying £5,000 per annum and this would decrease to £4,000 and would get better value for money as they will provide the school with more practical support.

With regard to the cashless services, Dr Mawson reported that she found they were all very similar and the recommendation was to go with Cunninghams as this was the best deal. The school would take out a three year contract that would be paid over two years (£8,000 per annum) and at the end of this the school would own the equipment. In the third year all that would be to pay for would be the software license and any maintenance. This company also offer training and 3 days support when they equipment is installed. Additionally, this comes with an app at no extra cost.

Mrs Gravett queried how the app would fit in with the schools mobile phone use policy. Dr Mawson answered that they can use it in the queue and check it in the zones they are allowed to use their phones.

Dr Mawson cited the other advantages of this as:

- Can put allergy information into the system
- Parents can control the spending
- Better stock control which should save money

Mrs Gravett asked if something could be done for the Sixth Formers. Dr Mawson said that at the moment the priority is to get the main school sorted but in the longer term they may look at putting a coffee bar for example in the Sixth Form.

Other questions and comments included:

- *Have you spoken to other schools about this (PA)?* Gordon in the kitchen used to work with them and it is attractive as they are a small firm, more personalised and understood the school's ethos (EM).
- *What is the timescale for this (PA)?* Early June when there are less students in school. The school was advised against doing it in September (EM)
- *This could be used also as a platform for discussions on food including responsible sourcing (TBF)*
- *Look to local businesses such as Frank Bird or Cranstons and if had a two-page short document would happily canvas to them (JR) **Dr Mawson was happy to produce this and pass on.***

**The proposal presented by Dr Mawson was nominated to be adopted by Mr Buckland and seconded by Mrs Boving-Foster. The Governors unanimously agreed to accept it.**

10. Headteacher's Update

Mr Buckland updated the Governors on the cleaning contract reporting that he has taken on another contract for 1 year with Orian at a reduced rate from £96,000 per year to £86,000 (inclusive of cleaning both the English and the new block). Unfortunately when going out to tender this year, the bids took longer than anticipated to come back and thus ran out of time to be able to TUPE staff across. However, Mr Buckland felt that this was a good deal for one year and that he would go out to tender again next year.

An increase in the minimum wage has meant an increase in the NJC administrative scale staff's wages. This is at a cost of £1700 per month (there is a 2.5% increase built into the budget) and has been paid from April as per legislation. **Action point: put the 1<sup>st</sup> April minimum wage increase and support staff wages onto the February agenda going forward.**

There are two job adverts both of which are budgeted for.

Mrs Boving-Foster gave an update on the parent governor vacancy. There have been four applications and thus there will be a vote.

A presentation was made to Mrs Warner who has served her term of office and decided to step down at its end on May 8th. Mrs Boving-Foster thanked her for her hard work and input into the Governing Body.

Date of the next meeting: Monday 2019, 6pm

The meeting closed at 7.18pm