

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

Minutes of a meeting of the Governors' Finance and Pay Sub-Committee held on 25th February 2019 at 6pm.

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

Quorum per Terms of Reference - 4 Governors

Governors present: 7

Visitors: none

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Finance and Pay Meeting held Monday 12th November 2019 Paper: F&P20718(1)

Mrs Rae went through the minutes. It was confirmed that the pay awards had been implemented since the last meeting.

With regards to the absence in the Finance Department, Mrs Rae informed the Governors that whilst Mrs Armstrong is doing a fantastic job, and has had good assistance from the Kirkby Stephen School's Business Manager, more practical support is needed in the Finance Department. Whilst it is not the ultimate solution, Mrs Rae reported that she has drafted in support and a Mr Weakly will be starting as soon as possible. It is anticipated that he will do 4 days a month and will invoice the school. He will purely concentrate on pulling together the finance reports. The school will also retain the support of the Kirkby Stephen Business Manager on a Friday who will look at the Business Manager function (i.e. from an operational and strategic point of view)

However, Mr Buckland reported that this will be less regular as she has other commitments coming up. He added that this was a concerning and difficult position to be in with a number of staff having to take on extra work. Mr Buckland wanted to thank Mrs Grindrod in the Finance office for her hard work as well as Mr Henderson and Martin who have stepped up in managing the site. Governors queried if there were any other options available to the school, such as using a locum, an agency or someone from Saint and Co. for instance. It was deemed that Saint and Co. would be too expensive at around £550 per day (estimated that Mr Weakly will cost £350 per day). Mr Buckland reported that he has tried to find a locum but without success but

welcomed anyone who had any contacts. Dr Mawson said that the school was making the best of what is available with SLT picking up the management workloads, which they do not really have the capacity to do, but are going with it for the good of the school.

Mr Ray suggested that LinkedIn may throw up some retired accountants that might be willing to undertake some work which Mrs Rae said she would look into. Mrs Boving-Foster questioned how flexible Mr Weakly was and could he undertake more hours if necessary? Mrs Rae anticipated that he probably would be able to facilitate this.

The audit has been submitted and Mrs Rae noted the great support Saint and Co. provided to Mrs Armstrong. **Action point: Dr Castles needs to be removed as a signatory for the bank accounts and Mrs Boving-Foster added. Also, the Scheme of Delegation is to be checked in respect of access.**

The minutes having been previously circulated were unanimously agreed and signed as a true record.

4. Matters Arising

There were no further matters arising.

5. Health and Safety Policy

Mr Buckland reported that this is the annual review and there were only very minor changes. The Health and Safety Committee have also been through the policy.

Mrs Gravett asked if the new fire policy referenced on page two had been produced. **Action point: Mr Buckland to look into this and report back.**

Mrs Boving-Foster asked that instead of just roles being listed, could specific names be added against them as it is reviewed annually in any case. Mr Buckland agreed that this could be done.

There is a vacancy for a new Health and Safety Governor, which needs to be filled and must be a Governor for OFSTED purposes. Health and Safety audits are done via the Local Authority every three years. Mrs Boving-Foster reported that she had someone apply to be a Governor with a background that would suit this role. She said that she had tried to contact them but had not heard back but that she would try again before the Full Governors' meeting on 7th March and report on her progress then.

Subject to adding names to the policy, the Governors' unanimously agreed to adopt the Health and Safety policy.

6. Review of Management Accounts to 31st December 2018

Mrs Rae highlighted that the management accounts, albeit only go up to the end of December, show a deficit of £16,071 in comparison to the budget. She told Governors that she felt there was no cause for concern at the moment but would feel more

reassured if there was a balance sheet to accompany the accounts. It was noted that Governors should also take into account the twelve month variances when looking at the accounts.

However, Mr Buckland had updated information, some of which had been presented to Governors in the meeting on 31st January. He circulated a document detailing this information (appendix 1) and these figures have been produced by the Kirkby Stephen School Business Manager and show a more positive picture. There was some confusion over a sum of money (£86,000) being ring fenced as restricted funds which the school could therefore not spend. Mrs Rae explained that this £86,000 is SEN and pupil premium monies and thus can be accessed but the purpose of the money is for the benefit of the SEN and pupil premium students. With this in mind the bottom table shows that at the end of August 2021, there would be £65,000 in reserves.

Mrs Rae felt that the accounts are a work in progress and at the next meeting there should be more clarity. The only risk is by then the school will be about 9 months into the accounting year but she was fairly confident that the figures thus far show that the school should be ok for this year. The Chair of Governors should be looking at the Management Accounts on a monthly basis but the school finds itself in exceptional circumstances and the context of this will be explained to the auditors.

7. Bank Accounts and Cash Flow

There were no reports available for this meeting. Mr Ray asked if it was known what the cash balance was and sought reassurance that the bank reconciliation was being done. This figure was not to hand but Dr Mawson estimated that the HSBC account had around £700,000 in it and was confident that the bank balances were as they should be. However, Mrs Rae reassured the Governors that the appointment of Mr Weakly meant that the report would be available for the meeting in April.

8. Maintenance Report

There were no reports available for this meeting.

9. CIF

Mr Buckland reported that with regards to the issue with the auditor, that E3Cube had just emailed their version of what had happened which would be submitted to the EFSA and hopefully this would resolve the matter. On the basis that it does, the school's loan amount would be reduced and anything left over would be returned. Mr Airey questioned if this was reflected in the budget forecast. Mrs Rae answered that it would be in the balance sheet as it is accounted for.

10. Headteacher's Update

Mr Buckland reported that he has taken over looking at the cleaning contract. The current provider, Orian has quoted a sum of £96,000 annually. This up from £86,000 and they are attributing this to the new build. Mr Buckland felt that this was too much and has told Orian that he is going out to tender and asked them to quote their best price. Lara Nichols have come back with a price of £68,000 annually. Mrs Rae warned that they do not have a very good reputation. However, Mr Buckland said that

for the saving of £20,000 he was tempted to try them for 1 year (cleaning companies normally like a 3 year contract). Mr Ray suggested that given the huge saving that would be made as well as their reputation could Mr Buckland not offer them a bonus should they do a good job as an incentive? In response to Mr Airey's question, Mr Buckland confirmed that there is a detailed service agreement with a contract. To conclude, Mr Buckland was waiting on another quote from another company, as well as Orian's best price, and would report back to Governors.

Dr Mawson reported that she has been looking after the catering and has been exploring different options relating to putting in a cashless catering system, setting a target for implementation of September 2019. She explained that she is in the process of obtaining quotes for standalone cashless systems and managed systems as well as exploring Caterite (who are one of the school's main suppliers) who have offered to look at a deal which incorporates the cashless catering. Dr Mawson outlined the rationale and advantages of this:

- Financially beneficial for the school as pupils will have to spend their money in school as opposed to going across the road / elsewhere
- Parents have asked for it
- Parents can see what their children are eating
- Reduces stigma attached to free school meals
- Parents can set limits, for example, £3 per day but can also top-up 'live' if necessary.
- Done via ParentPay which is already used in school to pay for trips etc
- Till process is much quicker and lowers risk as reduces amount of cash on site
- Better food tracking / stock control and so in theory should save the school money

Dr Mawson finished by saying that she is looking at many different options and will bring this back to the committee in due course.

To conclude, Mrs Rae asked if Governors were happy to wait until the end of April for the next meeting, given the circumstances in the Finance Department. It was agreed that once the next lot of management accounts were available that these would be emailed across the committee and if necessary an emergency meeting could be called.

Date of the next meeting: Monday 29th April 2019, 6pm

The meeting closed at 6.55pm