

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

Minutes of a meeting of the Governors' Finance and Pay Sub-Committee held on 17th September 2020 at 5.30pm held via Zoom.

Present: Mr P Buckland Miss R McMann (Clerk)
Mr Airey
Mrs T Boving-Foster Mrs J Scott
Mr G Miller Mrs K Rae
Mr M Worrall
Mr J Ray Dr E Mawson

Quorum per Terms of Reference - 4 Governors

Governors present: 7

Visitors: none

Mrs Rae welcomed all to the meeting, explaining that this was primarily to discuss and approve the budget and also ratify pay progressions.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were accepted for Mr Shephard (work commitment)

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Changes to the bank mandate

A request was made to remove Mrs Chapman as a bank signatory and replace with Mr Martin. Additionally, it was requested that Mrs Scott also becomes a signatory in her role as Business Manager. Mr Airey queried if there was always the requirement for two signatories. Mrs Scott answered that there is always two signatories needed for a cheque and with internet banking it is dependent on the value of the transaction as to whether one or two authorised persons need to log on.

It was unanimously agreed to remove to Mrs Chapman and add Mr Martin and Mrs Scott.

4. Pay Progression – teaching staff

Mr Buckland explained that the government guidance due to Covid-19 is that all teaching staff due to progress through the payscale do so automatically. This is due to not being able to assess performance and also staff have not had the time to meet the requirements set out in their last appraisal. Therefore, Mr Buckland sought ratification from the Governors that this be awarded to all teaching staff with the exception of two teachers. He requested that SLT have the flexibility to make the decision in these two cases.

Mrs Rae queried if the two individuals had performance related issues. Mr Buckland answered that in part this was the case but also they had not requested to progress. In response to Mr Ray's question, Mr Buckland said that a teacher may not request to progress due to performance issues, targets not being met or in some instances moving up the scale can mean extra responsibility which not all staff want.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to delegate the decision for the two individuals to SLT.

Mrs Rae asked for an approximate value in approving the pay awards. Mrs Scott did not have the exact figure to hand but reassured all that it was included in the budget. In response to Mrs Boving-Foster the two individuals where a decision is yet to be made are also included in the budget.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to approve the teaching staff pay progressions.

5. NJC Pay Scales – Support Staff

As the school follows the NJC pay scales for support staff, Mrs Scott sought ratification from Governors to award a 2.75% payrise backdated to 1st April 2020. The cost of this is circa £5,000 in September and this increase is included within the budget. Mr Ray asked if this pay increase was mandatory? Mrs Scott answered that the school follows the NJC agreement and a decision not to award this would result in very unhappy staff. Mr Airey asked if there was any allocation of money to schools to fund pay increases and Mr Buckland answered there are no contributions to costs – this is carried in the budget.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to award the 2.75% pay increase which is backdated to 1st April 2020

6. Budget

Mrs Rae introduced this item saying that herself, Mr Ray, Mrs Boving-Foster and SLT had met earlier in the week to gain an understanding of the budget. She explained they went through the budget line by line and changed very little. Both Mrs Rae and Mr Buckland gave thanks to Mrs Scott for producing this budget. Before handing over to Mrs Scott, Mrs Rae highlighted that the EFSA are pushing for Governors to take full responsibility and oversight of the finances, counting costs and challenging where necessary.

The main points of Mrs Scott's overview were as follows:

- The format has been left as it was prior to Mrs Scott's appointment but once budget agreed, this will be tidied up.
- Catch-up premiums (£54,544 if awarded) are intended to be used for extra tutoring services. However, should this money not come in for any reason it will not be expended. Mr Buckland added that this money is to fund students

who have dropped behind and those who are vulnerable. There is a process to identify these students but will not be committing any money until it has come in so is a wait and see scenario presently.

- Other income – quite harsh and prudent due to no lettings and catering has been cut back. Previously catering would take £800-£900 a day and this has reduced to between £400 and £500. This is due to Covid and reduced services. However, there are cost savings in this area as there is less overtime.
- £100,000 has been taken out of reserves and it is hoped that this will be built back up.
- Furlough bonus will kick in in January / February (this includes 7 catering staff and 1 site team member – 6 out of the 7 furloughed are now back to work). The figure for this sum of money could go up but a cautious estimate has been given,
- Budget missing one piece of revenue - the children on EHCP. The amount for this will be confirmed after the census on 6th October. However, this is effectively neutral to the budget as it will be compensated with expenses going out.
- SEN and pastoral costs have been worked separately for transparency.
- Training budget has not been cut drastically.
- Recruitment is always a difficult cost to gauge.
- As soon as it is safe to do so, after school clubs will commence.
- £6,400 spent on maintenance with all gutters being cleared and also some outside painting work has been done.
- The Achilles heel in expenditure are occupancy costs due to two extra toilet blocks needed for Year 7 in order to maintain ‘bubbles’. Additionally, the employment of an extra day-cleaner at a cost of £465 per week to clean down all touch-points, toilets etc. The cost of extra cleaning materials and sanitiser is around £5,500.

Questions and comments from this are summarised as follows:

- *What is the impact on the supply budget if teachers are off having to self-isolate (TBF)?* This is an unknown quantity at present (PB). Over the last two weeks have had to use supply and it is tricky as may arrange supply due to a teacher self-isolating. For example, supply may be arranged for that day but a staff member then gets their test result back mid-morning and are back in school. Thus, the school is thinking carefully and creatively about how supply teachers are used in this instance. One possible idea is that they may be used to help those that need to catch up (EM).
- *Can the catch-up fund be used to cover supply costs (PA)?* Whilst the supply teachers are all qualified, the right teacher for the right subject is needed and it is about finding who is appropriate for each student. However, this is all in its infancy and will continue to think of ways to be creative with supply (EM).
- *What are Mr Buckland’s feelings on the catch-up fund (JR)?* It would be very useful and also be used for mental health support. Overall, excited about using it if the money comes in (PB).

- *Is there no prospect of any extra money for schools given the cost of Covid (JR)?* No and so far it has cost the school around £70,000 as well as losses in lettings and catering (PB).
- *The risk of supply costs is a risk area (PA).* These areas are out of our control and all we can do as Governors is keep an eye on costs. The real challenge will be trying to turn things around in term three (KR).
- *The school having to close due to Covid cases could be a financial advantage for the school (TBF).* The school would financially benefit but clearly we do not want the school to close. The worst case scenario for the school would be having some year groups at home and some at school

Mrs Rae concluded by saying she was pleased that there is a balanced budget albeit a tight one. However, some more income may be gained throughout the year. Both Mrs Rae and Mr Buckland expressed their thanks and appreciation to Mrs Scott, not only in producing this budget but also for all her work on revolutionising the site in light of Covid-19.

A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to adopt the budget with no changes. Mrs Scott reported that her next plan is to look at the three-year budget which from an audit perspective will satisfy the demand to have a budget up to at least December / January 2022.

Mr Ray reported that he has agreed to conduct an internal audit prior to the external one which is due to take place in November. He asked if any Governors had a scope of work to get in touch with him.

Mrs Boving-Foster requested that the Academies Financial Handbook be covered in the next meeting, specifically the updates relevant to the Governing Body.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.