

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

Minutes of a meeting of the Governors' Finance and Pay Sub-Committee held on 19th April 2021 at 5.30pm held via Zoom.

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

Quorum per Terms of Reference - 4 Governors

Governors present: 7

Visitors: none

1. Apologies for absence

Mr Shephard was not present at the meeting.

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes from the meetings held on February 22nd 2021

The minutes were unanimously approved as a true record and Mrs Boving-Foster will sign these the next time she visits school.

5. Matters Arising

As per the previous minutes, despite the agreement of Governors to the Bike to Work scheme there has been no progress on this due to other pressures arising from Covid-19.

6. Management Accounts to 28th February 2021

The Management Accounts for both January and February were previously circulated to Governors and Mrs Scott proposed to go through the February accounts as these are the most up-to-date. Overall, she reported that the accounts are looking healthy and added that now school has re-opened she will be re-forecasting this month. She highlighted the following from the accounts:

- There is a shortfall of around £14,000 in the academy grants section, as there are three grants that the school are no longer entitled to. However, this is offset against a different furlough grant amounting to £6,400 (with more possibly to come), £7,300 funding from the Council and a further £16,400.

- Overall, there is a negative of £5,600 but there is £6,000 worth of money to come in from Covid testing which covers the period up to the 5th March. Mrs Scott is hopeful for more to cover the period from 8th March but this is unknown presently. All costs have been incurred for this now so any money that comes in is a bonus.
- Additionally, there is circa £6,500 worth of Gift Aid money to be applied for. This is not yet reflected in the budget as there are issues with logging in but once this is overcome there will be no problems in claiming the money back. **Thus, taking the above into account Mrs Scott reported that the school will be back into a surplus for the year.**
- With regards to expenditure, the school is quite comfortable owing to the period of time it has been shut. There have been gains as have not had to use much of the supply budget and there will be no exam invigilator fees to pay.
- Whilst the school has been shut, compliance testing and work has been caught up on. There are maintenance overspends due to the phasing of the budget, but this will be covered under the maintenance report.

There were no questions or comments.

7. Bank Accounts and Cash Flow

Mrs Scott reported that the cash position for the school was very healthy. She added that it is the end of the VAT quarter and so there is a repayment due of £22,000 due this month. The cash is spread amongst the various accounts with HSBC holding the largest amount as is normal. **The Governors unanimously confirmed that they were happy with the amounts held in each account.**

Mrs Rae gave her thanks to Mrs Scott for such a comprehensive update on the accounts, which meant that the Governors did not have any questions.

8. Maintenance Update

Mrs Scott circulated a lengthy report prior to the meeting, as per the action in the February meeting. Mrs Scott wanted to note how proud she is of how smoothly the lateral flow testing had gone when the school re-opened, completing it two days ahead of schedule. She gave her thanks to all involved including the Governor volunteers and the Cumbria Fire and Rescue service as well as the amazing resolve of all staff and students.

On a general basis, Mrs Scott reported that she and the team are continuing to work on the buildings, ensuring that Health and Safety compliance is up-to-date. Due to Covid-19, there are on occasion issues with having contractors on site but that the school is doing the best it can.

Mrs Scott went through the 'future works' spreadsheet section of the report. The intention of this is to give Governors a flavour of what the school is trying to achieve and that she felt the team are becoming more pro-active. There are a number of big jobs that need doing, subject to being able to fund them, which are as follows:

- Top and crown trees at the front of the school (a copy of the tree survey conducted forms part of the previously circulated report).
- The kitchen area needs re-addressing, inclusive of the equipment.
- I.T. survey has revealed that the cabling is an issue. There is money in the I.T. budget for this but if it is not enough, will look to the capitation budget.
- In September there is a partially sighted student joining the school and thus some changes need to be made to the building. These are not major jobs and Guide Dogs for the Blind have been in school to assist in what could be done to help.
- Additional toilets are needed in school, which has been mentioned in previous meetings.
- CCTV needs updating though this is rarely used.
- Issues of flooding, though there is a cheap solution and this will be addressed in the summer holidays.
- £20,000 from the devolved capital fund is earmarked for the pavilion and roof repairs. Three quotes have been obtained for the roof (cost circa £13,000) and this should happen in the first week of the summer holidays.
- One of the biggest issues is the playing field / running track. There is a drainage issue, which has led to a very soggy patch in the middle of it. United Utilities are coming to look at this next week and it is the hope that they will pay for the work. However, the issue with this is that they will do the work when they choose too.

Questions and comments were as follows:

- *Correction to make that have not been in to do a full safety audit – just looked at some departments (GM).* This was noted.
- *Are the Covid measures, including the lateral flow testing, up-to-date in the Risk Assessments (GM)?* Yes and this is displayed on the website (JS)
- *If extra toilets were put in, would there need to be planning permission (KR)?* If there was to be a dedicated block then permission would have to be sought or; the quicker alternative is to extend what is in place already (JS).
- *Is there a plan of where the drains and water pipes are (PA)?* No there is not – hopeful that this is the issue (JS). **It was agreed that it would be a good idea to try and obtain plans for this.**
- *Clarification that the anti-social behaviour referenced in page 2 is not the school's Sixth Form students (TBF).* That is correct (JS).

There was a short discussion about whether it would be useful to have a costed list of each project, alongside which jobs take the highest priority. It was noted that costing things can be unrealistic, as quotes will quickly become outdated. In response to a question, there is £40,000 in the devolved capital grant but £20,000 of this earmarked for the roof and pavilion. **It was agreed that it is too difficult to sign off any projects that are not low value until the position is clear with the EFSA. Thus this will be re-visited as and when appropriate.**

9. School Resource Management Self-Assessment

Mrs Scott stated that this is an annual activity the school has to undertake and that it was circulated for information purposes. Mrs Boving-Foster added that the data should be looked at, as it is a comparative tool to compare data between schools.

There was a discussion around the usefulness of benchmarking data. Mr Buckland referenced a benchmarking tool he used last year to present information to Governors which was much more useful as it is set up to compare similar schools. **Action point: Mr Buckland to show this tool again. Mrs Rae said that she would also check the composition of the EFSA data.**

10. Headteacher's Report

Mr Buckland opened his update by thanking Mrs Scott for doing such a great job with the Management Accounts and the maintenance team. An answer is expected from the EFSA by the end of this month.

It was reported that the re-opening of the school after the Easter break has gone well. There has been no update on education, despite the Prime Minister saying there would be so Covid rules remain the same as they did prior to the Easter break. It is hoped that at the next update (15th May) there will more news on the next steps for schools.

The interviews for the new Assistant Headteacher (in budget) are taking place this week. Once an appointment is made, it will make it clearer as to what departments need staffing (the advert did not specify a subject in order to attract the best range of candidates).

There were no questions or comments on the update. Mrs Boving-Foster asked if there is a date for the internal audit. Mr Ray said that there is not but that it will be completed this month.

Mr Worrall updated the committee on the progress in adopting the updated version of the Articles of Association. In short, the DfE have set an expectation that the Funding Agreement also be updated to the 2014 model. However, advice sought from the NGA states that this is not a legal requirement to do so and Mr Worrall asked if any of the Governors had any knowledge of the differences between the Funding Agreements. Mrs Rae thought that a clause whereby can retain and roll over up to 12% of GAG has been removed and also that if a school moves from a single academy trust to a MAT, they would need to update to the new version. **Action point: Miss McMann to send the two versions to the committee to see if any differences can be noted. Additionally, Mr Buckland said that he will talk to other Headteacher's of academies to see if they have any advice to offer.**

The next meeting will be held on June 28th 2021 at 5.30pm

The meeting closed at 6.35pm.