

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

Minutes of a meeting of the Governors' Finance and Pay Sub-Committee held on 27th September 2021 at 5.30pm held via Zoom.

Present: Miss R McMann (Governance Professional)
Mr M Worrall
Mrs T Boving-Foster
Mr G Miller
Mrs K Rae (Chair)
Mr P Buckland
Mr P Airey
Mr J Ray

Quorum per Terms of Reference - 4 Governors

Governors present: 7

SLT present: Mr Dawson, Mrs Scott

Visitors: none

1. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies of absence from the Governors. Dr Mawson (SLT) sent her apologies for the meeting.

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

Mrs Scott declared an interest in item 5 (Support Staff). It was agreed that she would leave the meeting for this item and return for the remainder of the meeting

3. Minutes from the meetings held on February 28th June 2021

Mrs Rae gave an overview of the minutes and updates were given:

- Mr Worrall updated the committee on the status of the Articles of Association (they have yet to be approved by the DfE but they are also not pushing for the school to adopt a new Funding Agreement).
- Mrs Scott reported that the money from the InvestTech account has been moved into the Penrith Building Society. The NatWest account holding £52,000 is still open.
- Mrs Scott also informed the committee that there is still no resolution with ESH and the retention money. They visited during the summer and they feel that the work is complete and have been chased multiple times since and they have not come back with an answer. In response to Mrs Rae's question, it was confirmed that the retention money is yet to be paid.

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

4. Matters Arising

Miss McMann asked for the expenditure on the new snack bar (which was approved by email over the summer break, as it was urgent) to be formally documented. **All eight Governors on the Finance and Pay committee were consulted over the costs and they unanimously agreed to the expenditure via email over the summer break. Mrs Scott is bringing together the invoices but this project will come in on budget (between £30,000- £35,000).**

5. Support Staff Pay Progressions

Mrs Scott left the meeting.

A report detailing the pay progressions for support staff had been sent to the committee prior to the meeting. Mr Buckland presented this saying that it was the routine of Governors formally approving these pay progressions as there is no justification not to approve these. He invited any questions:

- *What is the total of these increases (KR)?* Unsure of the exact figure but it is budgeted for and they are not huge sums of money (PB).
- *Are there any new roles on this sheet that are not in the budget and query about members of staff moving bands (KR)?* No new roles and those on new bands are members of staff who took on additional work loads and responsibilities, initially on a temporary basis but these were made permanent to acknowledge hard work and dedication (PB).

Subject to the figures (as they are budgeted for), the committee unanimously agreed to all support staff pay progressions as per the paper. Mrs Scott was invited back into the meeting.

Following Mrs Scott's return to the meeting, questions and comments were as follows:

- *How much do these increases total and when are they dated from (KR)?* Will need to work out the exact total but they are in budget and will be dated from 1st September 2021 (JS).
- *Are they in the budget (TBF)?* Yes (JS)
- *Would like a figure before approving these (KR).* Will not be possible at this moment but they are in the budget which was approved by Governors. Also, they are automatic progressions and there have been no issues with the staff to stop them from progressing to the next pay band (JS).
- *If there are no issues with staff and it is in the budget need to approve this and move on (GM).*
- *Governors have a responsibility for approving uplifts and ensuring all Governors are happy with this. Do the figures match the budget (KR)?* Yes they are the same as the budget (JS).
- *Does the school have the income to match the rise in expense? Do any grants cover this (PA)?* There are no grants for staff increases or extra money. Income will be up due to the increase in students and not looking at big increases - most will be £300-£600 per year (PB).

- *Would it be roughly £20,000 in total (KR)? At the very most (PB) Mrs Scott later emailed the committee with a total cost of £7,050.*

The committee unanimously agreed to adopt the pay increases.

6. Management Accounts to 31st July 2021

Overall, Mrs Scott was pleased to report that the accounts are looking healthy and she is confident that she can retain the year-end forecast of a surplus of £26,000 against the £1600 originally predicted. Mrs Boving-Foster said that both she and Mr Ray have been taken through the accounts in detail and are happy with them.

There was a discussion around the technology costs of £27,714 for the purchase of iPads and that it will go through the accounts as PNL, as opposed to using devolved capital finds due to EFSA uncertainties. Some devolved capital money was spent last year on the history rooms and repairing the pavilion, which leaves two years' worth of £20,000. A possible use of this money would be towards new a toilet block but this would be discussed. It was confirmed that any gifted iPads are put through the accounts as income and expenditure. Mr Ray said that there would be more discussion on this but it seems sensible in the circumstances to ring fence two years' worth of devolved capital monies. This was echoed by Mrs Rae and Mrs Boving-Foster. **The committee unanimously agreed to this.**

7. Bank Accounts and Cash Flow

Mrs Scott had updated the committee about the new bank account under item three. Mr Ray thought it worth noting that it is very difficult to open new accounts in the current climate.

The Governors unanimously agreed that they have reviewed and are happy with the amounts held in each account.

8. Maintenance Report

Mrs Scott had circulated a substantial report prior to the meeting and invited any questions and comments:

- *Thanks to all for their hard work over the summer (JR / TBF).*
- *Are there any health and safety updates - though appreciate this is a standing item on the Full Governors' agenda (TBF)? There is a health and safety committee meeting next week. There have been no visits due to Covid but they are looking at how to do these (JS).*

9. Financial Procedures Manual

Mr Ray led on this item, saying that he has taken the time over the summer to read the proposed manual and whilst he is happy with the vast majority of it, he feels that section 9 (contracts) needs to be thought about in more detail. Thus, he concluded that it is not in a position to be approved just yet.

Mrs Rae reported that the new Financial Handbook states there should be a separate Audit and Risk Committee with its own terms of reference (currently this is done as per the terms of reference for this committee). The purpose of this committee is to look at risk assessments, the risk register and the audit for example. Mrs Boving-Foster added that there is only a requirement to meet three times per year and that Mr Buckland may partake in meetings but does not have voting rights. She proposed that this committee be comprised of members of this committee and the meetings, whilst separate, will follow on from one another.

To conclude it was agreed that the Risk and Audit committee (members and terms of reference) will be finalised in the Full Governors' meeting on 14th October. With regards to the school's Financial Procedures Manual, Mr Ray and Mrs Scott will finalise a date to amend this by and it may be that an emergency meeting is called to approve it.

10. Headteacher's Update

Mr Buckland had no further updates. A full report will be sent to all Governors ahead of the meeting on 14th October.

11. Any Other Business

Mrs Scott reported that the external audit has been booked. Mrs Rae asked that the accounts and Management Reports are sent earlier this year and at the very latest this should be Friday 12th November ahead of the meeting on Monday 15th November. It was very difficult last year to have a discussion as they arrived so late on the day of the meeting and Governors need proper sight of them in order to facilitate a discussion and approve them. Additionally, she queried if work had begun on the Trustees report. Mrs Scott confirmed that this is being discussed.

Mr Ray informed the committee that he will struggle to complete another internal audit before the external audit due to annual leave, staff sickness and also the Final Management Accounts are not yet ready. Mrs Rae said that this should not be a problem as long as it is done before 31st December.

The next meeting date is 15th November 2021 at 5.30pm via Zoom.

Save for a confidential item, the meeting closed at 6.34pm.