

QUEEN ELIZABETH GRAMMAR SCHOOL, PENRITH

Minutes of a meeting of the Governors' Finance and Pay Sub-Committee held on 25th April 2022 at 5.30pm held via Zoom.

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

Quorum per Terms of Reference - 3 Governors

Governors present: 5 until item 6 and 6 thereafter for the remainder of the meeting.

SLT present: Mr Dawson, Mrs Scott

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 from the meetings held in February 2022

It was unanimously agreed that the minutes are a true record. Mr Worrall will sign these when in school.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Network Upgrade Update

Mr Dawson gave a verbal update on the status of this, listing the work that needs to be completed. This will be completed by September but added that some of the work will have to be done over the summer holidays on a carefully calculated date where the server can be off. Mr Worrall commented that this all sounded very positive.

6. Management Accounts to 31st January 2022

Mr Ray joined during this item due to experiencing technical difficulties.

The management accounts for month 5 are looking positive and that they are ahead in terms of income. Mrs Scott is aiming to have the February accounts finished by the end of next week and warned Governors that there will be hits to expenditure for recruitment and power bills.

It was also noted that salaries are as expected with some savings due to no Deputy Head. Maintenance is also as expected. Exam bills are coming in but this should not affect the cash flow as credit notes are being used to pay for these (exam fees were paid for during Covid and instead of a direct refund for cancelled exams, credit notes were issued).

Mr Worrall ask if exam fees are the same and would the credit note cover the cost entirely. Mrs Scott said she would find out if there has been a price rise but noted that there are more students taking exams so the cost will not be like-for-like.

7. Bank Accounts and Cash Flow

The previously circulated report shows that the cash flow is good. However, Mrs Scott reported that her department have been spending a huge amount of time resolving issues with signatories and bank accounts, which she wanted to talk through and seek approval for her proposed actions.

The NatWest account which held £52,000 has been the most problematic with NatWest making it dormant and consequently being closed, due to issues with signatories. However, the money has been identified / recovered and will be moving into the HSBC account which is secure. Mrs Scott proposed that a Skipton Account be opened and this amount be placed there. The Skipton Building Society is local and it is much easier to manage an account when you can go into the branch and discuss things face to face. She did note that the interest rates are low but this is the same across all banks at the moment. **A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to open a Skipton Building Society account and place the £52,000 from NatWest into this account.**

With regards to the Virgin accounts, there are two both with very small amounts in. Currently, Mrs Scott is removing Mrs Rae as a signatory and replacing her with Mr Dawson. This would mean that there are two members of SLT and one Governor who are signatories (Mr Buckland as Headteacher and Mrs Boving-Foster as Chair of Governors). It is the intention to move the money from the Virgin Accounts into either the Penrith Building Society or the Skipton Building Society in order to have less bank accounts which are online, as they have proved to be troublesome. Mr Worrall said that he felt it was a good idea to reduce the number of bank accounts.

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

8. Credit Cards

Mrs Scott reported that despite the committee agreeing to up the limit on the credit cards to £10,000, this has not been done. Currently there is one card with £5,000 in Mrs Scott's name and another with £2,000 on in Mr Buckland's name. A query was raised if the previous approval should be kept and Mrs Scott said it would be useful for emergency situations. Mr Airey asked if the policy was to pay it off each month and Mrs Scott answered that yes it is and there is a direct debit set up to ensure that each card is cleared.

9. Updates to the Preferred Suppliers List

Mrs Scott proposed to add the following companies to the Preferred Suppliers List:

- Brabners – they have been used recently to assist on a specific issue
- TES – there are no alternatives to TES for advertising
- MyTutor – part of the catch-up premium
- Border City Scaffolding – local firm with very competitive rates.

Mr Ray added that any expenditure over the value of £10,000 still necessitates three quotes.

There was a short discussion as to whether it was appropriate to have Brabners on the list, as different issues require different legal expertise and cannot have a carte blanche approach. Also, there is also the potential of a conflict of interest with a Governor. Mr Buckland pointed that out that even though Brabners may be on the list, it does not mean the school is compelled to use them. Mrs Boving-Foster suggested adding a specific reference alongside it to mitigate any conflict of interest.

Mr Worrall also cited that at the end of the academic year the catch-up monies will come directly to school and thus, will not be bound to MyTutor which has had mixed success. Mr Dawson said that he felt they have been reasonably good and also they are considering using it to help support a long-term absence so it would be useful to have it on.

A vote was taken and subject to their being a note against Brabners regarding legal firms and expertise, as well as notifying Governors of any expenditure here given the potential conflict, it was unanimously agreed to add the above companies to the list.

10. Update to the Financial Procedures Manual

Mrs Scott referenced two changes that she needed to make to this:

- Page 35 – need to take Dr Mawson off as a signatory and add on Mr Dawson
- Page 39 – with regards to the security of buildings and master keys, need to remove Dr Mawson's name and add on Mr Atkinson.

Mr Ray suggested that the ratifying of this should be carried over to the next meeting, as he will be conducting an internal audit once the February Management Accounts are ready. He added that this a live document and will be evolving regularly.

11. Maintenance Report

A report had been circulated prior to the meeting with Mrs Scott citing the great work and commitment of the maintenance team. Photographs of the pavilion had also been circulated and Governors were impressed, especially by the crest which was made in house by a DT technician.

Mr Miller queried if the emergency stop button in DT was now working. Mrs Scott was pleased to say that it was and the Head of DT is very happy.

Mrs Scott also updated the committee that although the process has changed, she is happy to say that the school is on the list to be audited by Cumbria County Council.

12. Headteacher's Update

Mr Buckland updated the committee that despite three candidates being interviewed for the position in the Finance Department, none of the candidates were suitable. However, there is one more candidate to interview this week so the hope is that this will be resolved by the end of the week.

The next meeting date is Monday 27th June 2022 at 5.30pm via Zoom. The Risk and Audit meeting will follow straight after. Mr Ray requested that the Due Diligence process to be added to the most suitable agenda.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.