

**Hoyle Court Primary School Governing Board
Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee Meeting
Held on 01 May 2020**

The meeting commenced at 9:35am.

Present: Val Sheredd (VS), Judy Walton (JW), Tim Phillips (Head), David Pike (DP), Rosalind Sheridan (RS), Roger L'Amie (RL), Ben Dickinson (BD)

In Attendance: Nageena Khan - Clerk to Governors, Nancy Tordoff- School Business Manager (NT)

Welcome and Introductions

Chair introduced the meeting and welcomed all.

F&GP 30/19 Apologies for Absence and their Acceptance

No apologies were received; the meeting was quorate.

F&GP 31/19 Declarations of Interest for Items on this Agenda

DP declared an interest as Regional Officer for the NEU.

F&GP 32/19 Any Other Business and requests for Agenda order variations

None.

F&GP 33/19 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 17 January 2020

Minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting, proposed by JW, seconded by Head. A copy was signed and dated.

F&GP 34/19 Matters Arising from these Minutes not covered by the agenda

None.

F&GP 35/19 2019-20 Budget Outturn

NT reported that the Carry Forward was adjusted to £46k after the last Full Board meeting due to the approval of a further £10k for purchase of some furniture and consultancy support. By the end of March 2020 this figure increased to £60k. NT carried out a thorough analysis and the figures are accurate, the balance is healthier than previously expected. 2021 Budget- with a £60k Carry Forward at the end of financial year 2020 the figure at the end of financial year 2021 is predicted to be £41k. the third year is also showing a positive figure of £254 Carry Forward.

Q: JW- would you say that there are a lot of assumptions being made for the budget this year mainly due to the current situation of Covid 19?

NT explained that she has estimated as accurately as possible using figures from the previous years and provided comprehensive notes to support as evidence. In terms of income the figure has been based on the assumption that 45 pupils will be joining Reception in September 2020 with current numbers in other year groups following a similar pattern to this year.

It was hoped that further income would be received in April, however pupil roll decreased by seven pupils at January census resulting in a decrease of £21k. if the school was full an extra £63k would be received, therefore in future it is important to work on trying to increase pupil numbers to full capacity.

The brought forward balance is £60,420, which has made a marked difference to the budget next year. NT used a number of guidance documents when planning the budget.

Teacher Pay Grant- funding for this has been received for academic year 2020/21. It is envisaged that this will be incorporated into the National Funding Formula going forward.

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High Needs Funding- this has increased due to funding for new EHCPs coming through. This figure is adjusted every month so is fluid; one pupil with an EHCP will leave at the end of July so the budget reflects this.

Pupil Premium- an estimate has been made based on last year's funding. The actual figure has now been made and there is only a £254 difference so the budgeted figure will remain the same.

Pre-school Rent- the school received more income last year due to higher pupil numbers. NT has reduced the amount of income to take into account that there will not be any income from April to July 2020.

Breakfast and After School Clubs- the same concept has been applied as with the pre-school rent. An estimate has been made from September 2020 to March 2021.

Q: VS- is that shown in other income and facilities?

NT replied yes, it is shown in I08.

I10- Staff Absence Claims- One teacher is on long-term sick leave, it is assumed that they will return after Spring Bank, however their sick leave may continue. In expenditure the insurance premium for staff absence has doubled due to this; NT looked at a number of scenarios over the last few weeks and in order to safeguard the school she recommended paying the premium and having insurance.

Q: JW- if a staff member on sick leave resigns would the premium decrease?

NT replied no, the school claims back from the insurer so this covers most of the premium. The claims made in 2019-20 will offset the increased premium for this year.

I12- School Visits- £2.5k more has been included in expenditure, this will be carefully monitored.

FSM- last year's figures were used to project this financial year's budget.

Sports Grant- this is currently only confirmed until August 2020; however, it is expected that it will continue.

SENCo- the role has been costed in as a UPS3 teacher with a SENCo allowance for 3 days a week.

Deputy Head- The new Deputy Head has been costed in for September 2020.

Temporary Contract- One TA is on temp contract until July 2020 and will not be made permanent.

Q: Val- have we resolved the issues regarding salary for the Deputy Head role?

NT replied yes.

Q: DP- why is the TA on a temporary contract?

NT explained that a TA resigned and the school was not sure whether to replace the role so put in a temporary measure. Head provided some further detail on this and stated that he would like to wait until the new Deputy Head and SENCo are in school in order to review the support staff structure and look at the long-term plans. He clarified that he does not want to cut back on the level of support but does not want to place a one-year advert until a review has taken place. DT was satisfied that the school was not planning a reduction in the adult to child ratio.

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Teachers Pay- NT informed that there is a potential significant structural changes on the horizon; School Funding have alluded that an increase in NQT starting salary to £30k per annum could be phased in and there could be the removal of UPS scale so that the pay scale is amalgamated into one bigger scale. She cannot take account of this until further information has been received.

Q: Val- will all the above impact in the third year?

NT replied yes, the predicted Carry Forward is £254 for that year as there is overspend each year. (£19k, £8k in the second year and £33k in the third year).

VS summarised that the school is being cautious regarding income and the worst case scenario has been presented. There are many unknowns however the budget presented is a prudent one.

Support Staff Pay Award- this has not been confirmed, there are still discussions taking place in central government regarding this.

Cleaners- the cleaners were due to commence a TUPE process to Broughton Cleaning Company, however due to Covid 19 this never happened. The cleaners were put back onto the school payroll very quickly so that they were not affected. They remain on the school's payroll and the contract takeover date has been postponed provisionally until September 2020.

Q: VS- is that why we have £10.8k in the budget and then £0 in E04?

NT replied yes, BD added that it is reflected in E14.

Staff Insurance- the addition premium for this year is £5k, this may be claimed back during the year and it is important for the school to safeguard itself. Head explained that the previous Deputy Head was covering a teacher absence and although there was a saving in terms of cover, there was a negative impact on the Deputy Head's workload. Head explained that he and NT will ensure that there is enough cover available for PPA and if there is not enough flexibility then supply costs will increase. There are a number of unknowns and it is expected that the budget will change, however it is hoped that the carry forward will remain healthy.

Q: VS- there are a number of professional services to buy in. Have you had to estimate costs for these?

NT replied that she has based them on last year's figures, the effect of lockdown will have an impact.

Q: JW- what about the partnership with Crossflatts? Is the cost of that unknown?

NT informed that she has not budgeted for any money for Crossflatts. Head explained that funding was allocated for support from Crossflatts up until school closure. The support had a positive impact and marked improvements were seen in teaching and learning. Since then the school agreed to appoint a SENCo that is separate from the Deputy Head role so that the focus of the Deputy Head role will be on improving standards in teaching and learning and helping to improve outcomes. Therefore, Head does not envisage as much support required from Crossflatts.

Q: VS- is the new Deputy Head a SLE?

Head replied yes, she has extensive experience in modelling best practice as well as scrutiny so she can support school leaders, particularly upskilling middle leaders to have whole school impact.

Q: VS- do you think the LA Scrutiny Committee will have a view as well due to the LA partially funding the support? They have continued to ask when we will be able to withdraw from the level of support from Crossflatts.

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Head informed that the school has provided a lot of information to the LA to show that the money spent on support was having impact. There SATs will not take place this year so teacher assessments have been used. Head was working with the Headteacher at Crossflatts an afternoon every three to four weeks so this support might continue focussing on the SDP and SES or another consultant may be approached.

Q: VS- is that included in the budget?

Some funding has been allocated for school advisory or leadership advisory.

Q: Head- does the budget include my performance management?

NT replied yes.

VS highlighted that it is important for Head to receive head to head support. Head suggested increasing this budget by £1k to that this money can be used in a leadership capacity.

Boiler Replacement- NT informed that the boiler needs replacing imminently. If the Salix loan route is opted for repayments can be made under an agreed schedule. The school currently pays £2k every six months for LED lighting and it is envisaged that the boiler repayment may be £1k every six months.

Q: DP- are there any grants you could apply for?

NT replied that grants are currently on hold.

Head stated that the Ofsted window has been delayed. He would welcome some external support factored into the budget.

Q: VS- what about the LA Scrutiny Committee?

Head explained that a significant amount of work took place on improving outcomes for Year 2 and Year 6, however unfortunately these outcomes will not be taken into consideration at all due to the SATs being cancelled this year. The current Year 5 and Year 1 are a stronger cohort so improvements in outcomes should be seen.

Q: DP- under planned expenditure you have a heading for staff training where £5k has been budgeted. Have we based that on any estimates?

NT informed that this is based on last year's expenditure plus a little more. This week the school subscribed to the National College at a cost of £550 for fifteen months; this covers every member of staff and governors for a host of guidance and webinars etc. so it is considered very good value for money and will cover a range of training and support for the year. There will be savings in the training budget as a result.

The following additional expenditure was unanimously agreed:

- £1k for furniture to refurbish the Deputy Head and SENCo office
- £2k for external consultancy support
- £2k for the Salix loan for replacement of the boiler

RL joined the meeting at 10:30am.

F&GP 36/19 Approval of 2020-21 Budget

Item previously discussed. **The budget was approved.**

F&GP 37/19 Staffing Update including Staff Absence

SENCO Applications- five applications for the post have been received so far. The closing date is 07 May 2020. Head explained the remote interview process under the current pandemic.

NT

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Q: JW- are you proposing a panel of four? Usually an odd number on the panel is recommended.

Head and VS discussed this and would like the new Deputy Head’s contribution as she is a qualified SENCo as well as the PPSM’s involvement too. Before the interview process starts Head and VS can agree who will have the casting vote.

Q: RS- I am concerned that this method of interviewing means we cannot see the interaction of candidates with children. That is an important part of the role so what have we planned for this?

NT replied that a six-month probationary period will be in place upon appointment. Zoom will be used to carry out the interviews due to social distancing measures in place. BD informed that there is the option for schools to subscribe to the premium service of Zoom so that there is no limit to a meeting. **Head to explore this.**

Head

Q: JW- I thought that it was essential for candidates to have the SENCo award. Is that no longer the case?

Head explained that legislation states that the SENCo has to be a qualified teacher but also that they attain NANSCO. If someone is appointed to the SENCo role and does not have the qualification, they will be expected to work towards it in three years of being appointed. It is preferred to have someone with the qualification but Head does not want to preclude people who have the experience. Of the current five applications only one has the qualification, however the other candidates are very eager to gain the qualification. Head sought advice from HR and the Deputy Head and they agreed to leave the option open.

Q: JW- how will that work if looking for an experienced person? Don’t they go hand in hand as we want someone experienced?

Head did not want a ‘one size fits all’ approach. A number of the candidates have unique experiences and professional track records.

Q: VS- when I did the SENCo training it is clear in the paperwork that our LA see the qualification as a must. My only worry is that we are giving this job that is a very legalistic area of education to someone without the required qualification. We want someone very experienced.

Q: JW- what commitment is the training?

Head replied that it is a third of a masters. The default position will be always the most experienced and qualified person is appointed.

Q: NT- if the successful person does not have the qualification how much will it cost the school for them to gain it?

NT to explore the costs. Governors were concerned that the majority of the training budget could be used on one staff member.

Long-term Absence of Member of Staff- the school is continuing to hold consultations with the HR advisor, the staff member and their union on this with the aim to support the staff member whilst also looking at them returning to work on a phased return.

Q: VS- do staff members on long-term absence receive all the updates from you?

Head replied yes, all communication continues with staff. If an absence is stress related the staff member is not expected to interact on a work level but they do receive all information that any other staff member may have. DP added that best practice is not to communicate with a staff member if their absence is stress related.

- Two members of staff who have been on formal attendance targets have met their targets
- Another six staff members hit triggers and were placed on staff monitoring before lockdown

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- Six members of staff are self-isolating

F&GP 38/19 Premises Update

- From September 2020 Head will share his office with the Deputy Head and rename it as the leadership office. Many schools do this and Head feels that the team will work better this way as communication will be fluid and a consistent approach will be applied.
- The Deputy Head’s office will become the SENCo office and when it is not in use it will revert to a meeting room or learning intervention room for SEND pupils.
- Kitchen Roof- the roof was repaired however the LA has instructed that the school should bear this cost. The cost for the electric repair of £80 has been paid, however the school has not seen an invoice for the other repair work.

Q: VS- so has the work been completed but the contractor not paid yet?

NT replied yes.

- Hot Water Boiler- the school is unable to progress with this currently due to the pandemic and not being able to receive quotes. NT has spoken to Parkside facilities who are continuing to help with the application process and this will continue to be pursued.

F&GP 39/19 Safeguarding Update including Health & Safety

Head has provided regular updates via email to staff and governors. This item will be discussed further at the next Full Board meeting.

Q: DP- what is the school’s provision of PPE?

The school is keeping up to date with government guidance which states that PPE is not necessary for schools. Hoyle Court provides aprons and gloves for those that want to wear them and appropriate social distancing measures are adhered to. A member of support staff has offered to make face masks however no one has taken up this offer. No member of staff has refused to work.

DP was concerned about the increasing number of staff working in schools who have become ill and died. It is very hard to implement social distancing in a primary school. JW thanked staff members for showing a huge degree of care particularly to vulnerable children.

There was discussion regarding the statistics on the percentage of pupils expected to be returning to school nationally.

Q: DP- is there a way in which staff can raise issues around health and safety? Is there anyone not self-isolating that should be?

Head reported that email communication for staff has been very good. Every single member of staff has to check their emails every day. Some staff members have been very weary of coming into school and they are fully supported. There has also been flexibility shown via the teams of staff members. Those with younger children have remained at home and no concerns have been raised from staff on expectations; the process has been very fluid and open. DP was pleased to hear this; he has contacted every single workplace representative in the country over the last few weeks and the vast majority have reported that the new systems are working really well so this is a credit to the profession and school leaders. VS echoed this, adding that the way the team at Hoyle Court is pulling together can only bode well for the future.

Head informed that the final week before closure was taken up entirely with dealing with Covid 19. The LA tried to put a system in place, however this did not work and school were able to set up bespoke systems that work for their parents. BD reported that a few message groups have been set up; he plans to send a message in words for parents and children from Hoyle Court.

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Q: RS- a lot of parent are anxious about sending their children back to school and there are also others who would like their children to return. When parents drop their children off to school are staff checking if there is anyone at home with symptoms? It might be worth reiterating this message.

Head informed that the school has contact with parents every day and there is ongoing communication with the different teams in school. No one has turned up to school looking unwell and the school has found that there are more parents choosing not to send their children to school.

Q: VS- how many pupils have been attending?

Head reported that this has increased over the past week or so with more vulnerable children returning rather than those of key workers. The level of need has increased and staff numbers have had to increase as a result. BD suggested for Head to send an email to staff members asking them to ask children or parents when they arrive to school if anyone in their household is experiencing symptoms. **Head will do this.**

Head

F&GP 40/19 Policy Review

None.

F&GP 41/19 Any Other Business Referred from item F&GP 32/19 Above

None.

F&GP 42/19 Date of Next Meeting: Friday 10 July 2020 at 9:30am

As there was no further business, VS thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 11:32pm.

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