



Whitchurch Primary School and Nursery
Finance Committee Meeting, 10th March 2023

Meeting Attendees:

Name	Role
Caroline Rowley (CR)	Headteacher
Martin Thompson-Lawrie (MTL)	Deputy Headteacher / Contributor
Paul Smith (PS)	Governor
Rupen Shah (RS)	Governor and Chair
Seema Supeda (SS)	SBM
Peter Tenconi (PT)	Governor
Rickesh Samani (RSa)	Governor
Bobby Dixit (BD)	Governor

Clerked by Deepti Bal, Clerk to Governors

Meeting Record:

Governor Scrutiny/Governor Question (GQ)

Meeting Action

Decision

	Item	Action
1.	Welcome and Introductions CR welcomed Governors. The two new Governors introduced themselves: Rickesh Samani – Chartered Accountant with Deloitte Bobby Dixit – Has two children in Years 4 and 6. An engineer by profession, and a banker. Runs a company that teaches STEM to primary and secondary children.	
2.	Apologies None.	
3.	Declarations of Interest None	
4.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true and accurate record. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CR to look at interest rates available. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ item closed. Cannot move the funds and is all held centrally. ● CR to consider a review of the levels of financial approval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Done ● SS to organise an energy review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Harrow LA are carrying this out. ● CR to circulate a financial skills audit so that this can be considered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ included in the documents. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CR to share kitchen quotations in the coming days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Done ● SFVS tabled at the next meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Done ● SS to consider permissions in relation to virements and review any changes required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ SS confirmed that it was a requirement which auditors checked to ensure that virements were approved. CR explained that Harrow use an antiquated system of cost centres which does not align with the DfE or CFR 'e-codes' system. ● Governor appointments – DB confirmed that this is complete. 	
5.	<p>Finance Report</p> <p>SS gave an update:</p> <p>Analysis will be updated again next week. Outturn is already listed on GovernorHub and is (an in year deficit of) £153k. The LA have attended, during half-term, and confirmed this value to SS.</p> <p>There was a deliberate choice to overspend slightly in year, with the objective of somewhat reducing the carry forward - main spends, in this regard, are found under capital works.</p> <p>Governors were content that the deficit is inclusive of capital works expenditure.</p> <p>Governors noted the deficit budget set last year to reduce the £1.4m reserves figure. CR confirmed that there is no structural overspend which has been built in - it is a one-off expenditure of c.£250k (excluding nursery works).</p> <p>Other overspends relate largely to salary uplifts and support staffing. SS explained that more teaching assistants have been employed. Additionally, pay rises have been of a record level and were unfunded.</p> <p>There has been an underspend on utilities costs (due to the government subsidy for energy costs).</p> <p>CR updated Governors on the offer of a £30 annual cost with respect to the running of enrichment trips. SS noted that the school would make a loss under this proposal, and it was noted that a significant number of</p>	

	<p>parents have not yet paid this. It was recommended that this be discontinued, given the level of lack of payment.</p> <p>PS asked about the percentage of parents who have not yet paid. SS explained that so far £10k of £26k (c.40%) has not been received.</p> <p>CR explained that the idea is to ask for £30 as a flat fee, thus reducing administrative workload. She added that the proposal would not work if it lost £10k per year.</p> <p>Re. catering FSM requirements for primary schools have been confirmed, making kitchen work essential. SS is liaising with contractors and requesting that work starts, where possible.</p> <p>A new dishwasher will need to be purchased – the first quote is for £16k which seems too high.</p> <p>MTL is regularly communicating that meal prices will increase in the event that the London Mayoral policy does not go through. CR explained that this will have a positive impact on the school. At others, where there are larger PP groups, it will disincentive sign-ups for PP.</p> <p>PS added that, a year later there will need to be a substantial increase in pricing.</p> <p>SS felt that there will need to be clarification of whether there is support available to help with infrastructure to deliver the meals.</p> <p>The kitchen extension was approved by governors by email - Cuttles Construction will complete this work.</p> <p>Four classrooms are to be renovated by Cuttles and this was approved by Governors.</p> <p>PS noted that it may be difficult to get other contractors to quote in future if use same one each time. CR explained that, in the Summer, the school used another contractor and they were not particularly good. Cuttles have been much more reliable.</p>	
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	<p>Early Years Reception furniture has been purchased in two lots – a comparison was undertaken and the supplier offered good value.</p> <p>Re. benchmarking - Learning Resources in E19 illustrate to governors how much the school spends on children's learning resources compared with other similar schools. E19 expenditure is relatively average, which is a massive improvement on previous years and demonstrates the recent investment in Learning resources. Learning Resources remains overspent, however. CR cautioned that governors should take the benchmarking report with a health warning, due to the nature of benchmarking.</p> <p>Governors reviewed spending from similar schools.</p> <p>CR offered to also give Governors access to the benchmarking website and asked the Committee to consider if there were any areas they would specifically like reviewed.</p> <p>Governors had no specific areas which they requested be brought to their attention at the next meeting.</p>	
6.	<p>Tender</p> <p>Both tenders are underway, with the plan to continue outsourcing both services. Cleaning tenders have been returned by Evergreen, IFS and Lakethorne Group (catering is not due for tender submission until April 2023). Coombes have been used for a number of years.</p> <p>The next stage is for governors to review all cleaning tenders against the specification provided. The current contract is due to end in October 2023, so tender review could be done in Summer 2023.</p>	
	<p>SVFS</p> <p>SS and CR have reviewed final questions on behalf of governors and have attached a draft response. This will need to be reviewed by the Governing Body and submitted at year end. SS confirmed that this was a document which Governors are responsible for - by ensuring accuracy.</p>	<p>RS and SS took an action to meet to review the SFVS.</p>

	<p>PT added that Governors must review the process and evidence collected to support the statements made.</p> <p>RS and SS took an action to meet to review the SFVS.</p>	
7.	<p>Indicative Budget</p> <p>There is a £180k uplift in expected income next year, due to the percentage uplift in the budget and slight increase in pupil roll.</p> <p>SS and MTL have attended a budget setting meeting. The aim is to not exceed 83% of the budget on staffing. This year, staff costs accounted for 79% of total spend.</p> <p>Approval for the sign-off of the service level agreement package with Harrow for '23/24 has been sought. All budget holders have been consulted – this is broadly in line with last year.</p> <p>RS asked about the governance audit.</p> <p>SS explained that this has been shared. It took place in 2021/22 and areas for development have been completed. e.g. policies has been updated.</p>	
8.	<p>Financial Delegation to the Headteacher</p> <p>Governors have previously highlighted the need to consider revised levels of expenditure approval for the Headteacher. The previous level was £5k and governors felt, with prices rising, this level is now insufficient with a negative impact on purchase speed.</p> <p>The financial delegation for the Headteacher was raised to £8k.</p>	
9.	<p>Financial Skills Audit</p> <p>Governors agreed to complete the financial skills audit and return to DB</p> <p>SS felt this was important as part of the SFVS.</p>	<p>Governors to complete and return the skills audit by 31st March</p>

	Governors took an action to complete and return the skills audit by 31st March	
10.	<p>Performance Management</p> <p>Mid year reviews for teaching staff are taking place, which will give an early indication of developing needs in terms of CPD. Discussions with teachers about their plans for next year are taking place so the school is better able to make plans around staffing.</p> <p>Support staff (Admin, site, SMSA) are currently completing their annual performance management reviews in accordance with the school policy and schedule. The majority of these reviews will be completed by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher, and will be complete this term.</p>	
	<p>Update on Industrial Action</p> <p>Teachers have been asked if they plan to strike, although teachers are not required to inform the school and they are not expected to do so.</p> <p>CR currently plans to write to each parent where their child(ren)'s teacher is a member of the NEU. Staff are entitled to join the NEU (by switching unions) right up until the day of the strike action.</p> <p>Break duties can be covered for health and safety reasons but main classes cannot be communicated.</p> <p>CR felt that managing the school during strike action would be difficult, therefore.</p> <p>RS agreed that early communications to parents would be beneficial – particularly in the event of emergency plans being required.</p> <p>CR agreed that late communication would add to the level of disruption.</p>	
11.	<p>Policies</p> <p>CR explained that governors need to approve and ratify six key personnel policies, annually, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grievance 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary • Capability • Sickness absence management • Whistleblowing • Staff code of conduct <p>CR advised that Governors use Harrow policies as these have been negotiated with trade unions through collective bargaining mechanisms. There is no mechanism to facilitate individual negotiation, given that the unions are required to approve each policy to make them enforceable.</p> <p>Each of the above policies were approved.</p> <p>Other policies include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCTV Policy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This has now been updated. • Antifraud, corruption and bribery policy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ This has now been updated. <p>Both policies were approved by Governors.</p>	
12.	<p>Capital Works</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All outside playgrounds work has now been completed and the play spaces made safe (A number of areas had been identified for some time as a potential health and safety risk). • Main front entrance works to improve security have been completed - Installation of the new doors and secure entry system have taken some time but only cosmetic work now needs to be completed. • The sensory room was completed on 6th and 7th March. This is a major development for Whitchurch and will help more effectively support the growing number of pupils with ADHD, autism, sensory processing needs and anxiety. • Large Capital Nursery project - The current nursery can only support 26 children in morning and 26 in the afternoon. This is not sufficient- Expansion would allow all Reception pupils to attend the nursery and for the waiting list to be reduced. Space is not a blocker for this. It would also be helpful to provide a 	

	<p>dedicated toilet block, meeting space, etc. Reconfiguration and expansion has been considered for some time and will go ahead at a cost of around £640k. Planning permission has been granted for this reconfiguration and a doubling of the floor space (phase 1). CR added that providing a nursery provision for only two hours in either the morning or afternoon is not workable for the vast majority of parents. It was noted that the initial budget set was £500k (for everything), but there are considerable reserves.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SBM to provide an update during the meeting. 	
	<p>Health and Safety</p> <p>MTL gave an update:</p> <p>The team meet monthly to review health and safety across the site - Carstens and Robinson are the health and safety provider and they completed an audit giving an overall rating of good. Actions include: the nomination of a health and safety governor, completion of risk assessments (done), training re. manual handling and working at site (schedules).</p> <p>An LA audit was completed in January, with a score of 88% being achieved. Catering was not previously included but most actions relate to this area.</p> <p>MTL was of the opinion that Harrow should provide most training, but this is not currently happening.</p> <p>An unscheduled hygiene inspection took place yesterday.</p> <p>Fire evacuation took place two weeks ago, completed in under three minutes. There are no significant concerns.</p> <p>Lockdown procedures will be tested next term - the idea being to test safety procedures in relation to school invasion, etc.</p>	
	<p>Policy Matrix</p> <p>CR explained that there are two pages - statutory and non-statutory. The policies are colour coded based on which of the three committees are required to review them.</p>	

	GDPR SS explained GDPR requirements to new governors - the school report on whether there have been any data breaches, etc. There was nothing to bring to governors' awareness.	
13.	AOB None	

Post Meeting Action Log:

No	Item
1.	RS and SS took an action to meet to review the SFVS before FGB - Done
2.	Governors to complete and return the skills audit by 31st March

Accepted as a true and accurate record by the Chair _____