



**Whitchurch Primary School and Nursery**  
**Finance & Resources Committee Meeting, 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023**

**Meeting Attendees:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Matt Bradley (MB)	Headteacher
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.	<p><b>Welcome and Introductions</b>                      RS welcomed Governors.</p> <p>PS raised his concerns regarding the impact of strike actions and disappointment that certain children, including his child, continued to be disproportionately and adversely affected. PS requested that the matter be brought to the FGB and re-visited for solutions. MB agreed to explore options outside of the meeting.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Apologies</b>                      None.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b>                      None</p>	
4.	<p><b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>Minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true and accurate record.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● RS and SS took an action to meet to review the SFVS before FGB – complete</li> <li>● Finance Governors to complete and return the skills audit – complete.</li> <li>● RS noted that he had emailed MB and SS regarding interest rates. SS has requested that the LA confirm where the interest goes. There has not yet been a response, however, this was likely because the LA were busy with the end of year preparations. <b>ACTION: SS will continue to chase this.</b> It was noted that there was no interest received on the outturn. <b>PS noted that a decent</b></li> </ul>	<p>SS to follow up with the LA re interest.</p>

	<p>amount of interest could be generated with higher interest rates. RS felt that the key priority was for the LA to account for the interest in the first instance.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>Finance Report</b></p> <p>MB noted that SS was working very hard to put a suitable budget together. MB noted that time has been spent reviewing budget lines. MB would also like to use part of this meeting to present some context regarding school finance. There are two documents submitted – Budget Plan 5 (without the nursery capital project) and Budget Plan 6 (with the nursery capital project). Column L shows additional comments by SS and MB. There have also been areas identified where costs could, <i>in the future</i>, be considered to raise revenue or reduce expenditure. This would be for Governors to consider with a future leadership team.</p> <p>SS highlighted the following key aspects in respect to income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Gobs noted the contributions from parents for visits. Income also included music tuition. These were largely in and out items.</li> <li>- There has been a reduction in expected letting income last year.</li> <li>- The school also pays significant funds for caretakers services which limits the profit from the lets. SS suggested that this was not good value. MB noted that the total cost was £17k were year. However, with good keyholder arrangements, there is no need to have a person on site. This needs to be clearly agreed with the renter. PS also noted a possible key holder arrangement with Avanti.</li> <li>- After School and Breakfast Club – SS projected no profit. Staffing have increased. There has been lots of overtime to make sure the correct ratios are in place and food prices have also increased. Prices are the same. This means that the final position is a modest profit. SS felt that price increase would need to be considered. PS noted that CR was previously offering children free places for certain reasons – was this marginal? SS confirmed it was a very small number, less than 5. PS noted sensitivity regarding price increases but was clear that it should not be run at a loss. PT asked if this was the first or second year of operation? SS confirmed it was the</li> </ul>	

second. PT was uncomfortable about making excess money from parents but there needed to be a sensible margin to cover costs. SS noted that any profits were planned to be reinvested back into the building.

SS highlighted the following key aspects in respect to expenditure:

- SS confirmed that staffing costs were c. 83% which is quite healthy. MB noted that across Harrow schools, there is not a single school that meets the target of 80%. MB felt that in relation to the size of the school, Whitchurch has a relatively low level of staffing. MB felt that the quality of teaching and learning was at times hampered by staffing levels, for example, during strike days. MB suggested freeing up money in the budget when looking at staffing over the next term and the future. MB suggested adding funds to the line on agency teacher/supply (£100,000). MB felt that with a little bit of extra money, very valuable work could be done. This would allow future leaders to be free to strategically plan and recruit and would have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning. MB noted high levels of cover – it would make more sense to have this internally covered with in-house staff who know the school procedure and children well. This also improves accountability.
- MB noted that in respect of benchmarking, Whitchurch spends less than other comparator schools on staffing. It appears at the bottom of the comparator schools list and could indicate that the staffing level is insufficient. PT thought that when staffing comparisons were looked at, Whitchurch was high. SS explained that this related to 2021 when there was an SLT restructure.
- RS was mindful not to create a structural reduction in the balance, as the balance was used to fund capital works.
- PS asked for clarification – is the solution to substitute supply cover with in-house staff? MB felt that while a lot of money was spent on supply cover, with the appointment of staff, the overall cost of staff would be more. PS felt that the leadership of the school should decide how best to manage supply cover arrangements.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- PT agreed with PS that this was an operational issue. He would, however, like to see comparison benchmarking figures.</li> <li>- MB explained the local reality of every school. When a budget is set, it is set with imperfect information. It is not clear how much money the government could provide. Additionally, there are EHCPs which are not put in the budget in case of student movement. The LA is very conservative in terms of how they would like budgeting to be formulated – a good example of this would be the actuals vs budgeted figure for energy. MB felt that the budget was very healthy, from a very healthy starting position.</li> <li>- SS noted that when breakfast and after school club staff were removed, the staffing budget goes to 80%.</li> <li>- MB also suggested HR policies which allow staff to generate TOIL – this is popular with staff and also reduces the impact of leave such as medical appointments.</li> <li>- PS could theoretically buy the argument for setting a deficit budget with the expectations of funds in the year. How do we know that a deficit is appropriate. <b>ACTION: PT asked for a comparison of the planned budgets vs actual income received to understand what would be appropriate.</b> MB explained that in Newton Farm he could set a deficit budget of £100K and end in a £100K surplus position. There were of course, specific variables.</li> <li>- MB noted that due to the variability in terms of how funding is received, very typically, the end year position was more favourable than originally planned at the start of the year due to unforeseen additional pots of funding which comes in. SS also noted that there was flexibility throughout the year in terms of whether or not to proceed with certain works which meant there were levers to control the budget.</li> <li>- MB noted that the reserves were significant and all options to create a world class education were possible as a result at Whitchurch. This would be a strategic decision for the next leadership team and the governing body. This could be well trained and experienced staff and world class digital devices.</li> <li>- RS noted that there was a risk regarding funds not being spent and costs rising.</li> </ul>	<p>Comparison of the planned budgets vs actual income</p>
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- MB also noted the ethical consideration to spend public money for the benefit of the children on roll.
- SS noted that there was a list of projects. These are items which needed to be done (ie health and safety). This works out at c. £111k. Some of the funds will come from formula capital (line 200). The proposal was to take 2021-22 and 2022-23 balance (£50k) to put towards these projects, leaving £100k.
- MB referred Governors to the two budget plans. MB noted that he met with people involved in tendering processes and building works. In terms of the kitchen work, MB felt the work was an absolute necessity for health and safety reasons. The Mayor of London has funded KS2 meals and so the demand for meals would increase. The contractor Cuttles have reviewed the work but there are some omissions to the design, for example, the hatch access point to the boiler. Cuttles have not done design work. These are necessary works which need to be carried out correctly. MB suggested that Academy Consulting be brought in to review the scope and ensure that the process was carried out. This would include looking at design elements. MB is aware that the works span a number of headteachers and their involvement would provide consistency. In addition to the work being carried out this time, there are some additional considerations. Renovation should also be considered for the future, for example. The exact cost was not yet known.
- The other capital project is the Nursery which have been put together with Academy Consulting. The costs are becoming concerning and spiralling – it has been paired down to £640k (at a peak of £1.2million). MB spoke about feasibility of works taking place over the summer but it was not seen as possible to even start (primarily due to the planning). MB is aware that the project was started under a previous Headteacher. A future headteacher may wish to utilise the money differently. The amount being spent is significant there needs to be significant buy in by the new Headteacher. MB felt that the costs spent so far were trivial in terms of the overall costs. It may be that the future headteacher wishes to proceed. MB suggested that this should be allocated and maintained in the budget.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MB suggested that every capital project which requires approval by the Governors and includes builders should have oversight from an external agency to make sure that the work was undertaken properly. The value of this was significant at a modest additional cost.</li> <li>- RS asked about energy costs? SS noted a planned decrease in following years. RS clarified that Harrow predict a 60% increase in 2021-22 rather than 2022-23. Energy prices should now be coming down. MB noted that while energy prices go down, the LA buys energy in bulk and in advance. <b>ACTION: SS to double check which year the energy increase applied to.</b></li> <li>- On Premises costs (line 99), SS noted that lots of work had been undertaken last year on premises and so anticipated that less funding was required for this year.</li> <li>- MB noted that curriculum costs have been maintained at about the right level.</li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>CFR return</b></p> <p>SS noted that the LA have not completed the CFR return. This would hopefully be shared at the next meeting. SS noted that it had been very challenging this year, particularly due to Data Plan and staff changes. MB commended SS for her excellent work.</p>	CFR to be presented at the next meeting (if made available by the LA).
7.	<p><b>Tendering</b></p> <p>MB explained that the tendering process for school meals is taking place - the price set is £2.40. MB noted that Mayors funding at £2.52 for lunches (most recent figure – tbc). There may be additional money for supporting the cost of works to accommodate increased meals. Depending on the number of meals taken, the school may generate additional revenue for KS2.</p> <p>RS asked for the timeline on contracts? MB noted that he had reviewed the two tenders with meetings with the company managing this. The cleaning tender had been done satisfactorily. Three bids will be likely to be received for the caterers, including the current catering company. MB felt that the tendering contracts were well in hand and needed to be guided by who provides the offers service.</p>	

8.	<p><b>Personnel Report</b></p> <p>MB shared general reflections. There is likely to be more movement this year than previously expected, which is usual when there are new Headteachers. MB will work with Martin to look strategically at staffing. In terms of leadership, there are new leaders of Maths, EYFS and English. MB asked Governors to consider if there was pressure on leadership – MB felt that this could possibly be alleviated through use of the additional staffing budget to ensure that leaders wellbeing could be supported and leaders could be released to focus on strategic matters. MB felt it was important for Governors to be aware of how well leaders are doing and their wellbeing.</p>	
9.	<p><b>School Financial Benchmarking Service</b></p> <p>MB asked how confident Governors were in comparing Whitchurch with other schools. RS felt that throughout the year, benchmarking has been undertaken on key areas. SS provided an overview of the areas which had been explored. SS explained that in terms of the SFVS, sections were discussed at each meeting and then validated by the Chair each year.</p> <p>MB suggested that at the next meeting, Governors review the VMFI to inform strategic financial planning (this replaces the schools report card). There was also the schools financial benchmarking which was publicly available.</p> <p><b>ACTION: VMFI to be reviewed at the next meeting.</b></p>	VMFI to be reviewed at the next meeting.

**Post Meeting Action Log:**

No	Item
1.	SS to follow up with the LA re interest.
2.	Comparison of the planned budgets vs actual income based on previous years.
3.	CFR to be presented at the next meeting (if made available by the LA).
4.	VMFI to be reviewed at the next meeting.

Accepted as a true and accurate record by the Chair \_\_\_\_\_