

Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee of Wheatcroft C P School
Tuesday 14th November 2023 at 4pm

Present:

Mr G Dyer
 Mr C Baxter
 Mr R Hirst

Mr M Parkins
 Mrs C Webster
 Miss V Lewis (Clerk)

FC01/23	Welcome from the Clerk The Clerk welcomed members to the first meeting of the school year.
FC02/23	Apologies All members present.
FC03/23	To invite governors to declare confidentiality or any interest in items of business on the agenda None declared.
FC04/23	Appoint Committee Chair The Clerk asked for expressions of interest in being Committee Chair for this school year. Mr Baxter was nominated by Mr Hirst which was seconded by Mrs Webster. He accepted the nomination, with no other nominations received. Chris Baxter will act as Finance Committee Chair for the 2023/24 school year.
	Action: Update records to reflect Chairship By: Clerk
FC05/23	Minutes of the previous Finance Committee meeting – 28.6.23 Actions from Minutes 28.6.23 have all been completed. Governors agreed the Minutes as a full and proper record of the meeting. Proposed by Mrs Webster and seconded by Mr Parkins. All agreed.
	Actions: File and publish agreed Minutes as per procedure By Clerk
FC06/23	Matters Arising No matters arising not covered by this Agenda.
FC07/23	Correspondence None received to note. Mr Baxter advised that following the mandatory Financial Governance Meeting to discuss our year 3 predicted deficit from the Start Budget we have not yet received any Minutes. The meeting was very positive and school were advised the options for recovery put forward were acceptable. Governors feel it appropriate to have the Minutes on file as an outcome to this meeting to evidence our compliance and adequate preparation.
	Actions: Request Minutes from Financial Governance Meeting from Sally Dunn By SBM
FC08/23	Safeguarding Update All staff and governors should recognise that there is a corporate responsibility for safeguarding. This remains a standing item on all Full Governing Body and Committee meetings. Nothing new to report since the previous FGB meeting and report. Mr Dyer drew the Committee's attention to the number of SEND registered pupils and those with safeguarding needs and the implied impact on school finance. In the process of applying for additional EHCPs; Miss Glass is being given specific time working from home to prepare the applications. One completed and submitted so far with a second awaiting parent/carers views before submission. The priority is to apply for EHCPs for pupils who are already receiving 1:1 or increased support without associated funding, in age order youngest to oldest. Will be further considered at the next SPAM and FGB meetings.

Q: is it likely they will be approved?

A: there is a clear and high level need in the case of all those being applied for. However, the funding is stretched and we will have to see. It may be that they are funded at a lower Band or decisions appealed. There is a process to follow but we are positive about likely successes.

FC09/23

School Business Manager Report

- A Budget Monitoring and Revised Budget / Budget Forecast
- B Financial Governance Meeting / Update
- C Pupil Premium Strategy Statement 2023-26
- D Staffing Updates
- E Premises and Health & Safety Updates
- F Benchmarking Reports

Budget Monitoring and Revised Budget / Budget Forecast

- Pay awards have now been agreed by the government and unions for both teaching and support staff.
- Support staff have received a backdated pay award of flat rate £1925 (pro rata as appropriate for hours and term time only etc). This equates to a 9.42% raise for the lowest pay scale point to 3.88% for those on the highest pay scale point.
- Teachers have had a 6.5% increase agreed following lengthy negotiations which will be funded 3.5% from school budgets and 3% from direct government funding. We are still awaiting payment into the budget of the government's 3% contribution to the agreed 6.5% raise. This should be around £13,000 but nothing has been circulated to schools giving allocations.
- These (mostly unfunded) pay increases are on top of the 5.4% awarded to teachers and £1925 for support staff in 2022/23 which and have added approximately £40k to the staffing expenditure budget.
- Pupil Premium numbers remain relatively stable however the forecast has been revised down from 2024/25 onwards as a cautionary measure.
- Wheaties remains popular and well attended.

Q: was there any negative feedback from parents following price changes?

A: not negative. Only 2 comments from parents about it being much more expensive now if it was only needed for a half hour etc. Parents were reminded of the fact the price is very competitive compared to other schools' provision. Overall, no issues at all.

- PE Grant has been spent largely on staffing and training with additional funds allocated to resourcing and improvements to the site, MUGA, marking and equipment.
- The Year 4 East Barnby and Year 6 London Visits are going ahead again. Governors will discuss subsidy levels at the time of next year's start budget for future visits.
- Energy costs remain a bit of an unknown as the government is still offering some support but with lots of provisos and lack of clarity. It is hoped the new boilers will make a difference to the costs of heating the school. They already seem to be very efficient in terms of heating the school more quickly and keeping it warm for longer but with less time in actual use. The November bill will hopefully offer a proper comparison as to unit usage and associated cost.

The revised budget includes:

- staff savings from natural expected wastage (we are expecting a retirement in Summer 24)
- two fixed term support staff contracts extended for a further year and one ending 31.8.24. Should we receive more EHCP awarded funding than currently predicted the loss of this fixed term may not be required
- fixed term HLTA post ending 31.8.24
- SENCo pay scale reviewed to UPR3 wef 1.11.23
- +£20k additional EHCP funding 24/25 onwards – hopefully higher but included a cautious estimate
- +£17k NFF adjustment for 23/24

Therefore by the end of year 3 in 25/26, as shown on the Financial Forecast we are predicting a carry forward balance of £36k into year 4.

Governors are asked to consider the Draft Revised Budget and approve for submission.

Governors agreed the Revised Budget 2023/24 as proposed.

Financial Governance Meeting / Update

We were informed in late Summer that we were required to attend a meeting with the Financial Governance Team due to submitting a start budget for 23/24 showing a deficit by 25/26. Miss Lewis drew up a range of scenarios and options for reducing the staffing expenditure and other savings in order to bring the budget back in line (the Draft revised Budget for 23/24 is an amalgamation of these). The meeting was very positive in so much as Sally Dunn was satisfied with our plans to recover from the predicted deficit. The question was raised by the school at this meeting as to how and why schools were being asked to undertake these meetings when they are in this position through no fault of their own after unfunded pay rise – even those schools who have been very frugal in the past. The Authority are also under financial pressure and need to be seen to be managing schools with high risk accounts. However, the meeting was very brief and the LA representatives seemed happy with the proposals put forward.

Staffing Updates

- Recruitment has taken place to replace the 3 days cover time left vacant by Mr Bowes. Interviews were held on Monday 13th November and we have appointed Mr Collins to fill this role and then a second candidate, Mrs Laura Gildea to backfill Mr Collins' existing duties plus additional PPA and HLTA cover. Mrs Gildea is very experienced and delighted to be joining the staff. These posts are fixed term until 31.8.24.
- Miss Smith has resigned in order to focus on her own health. At this stage we are not recruiting to replace her, as we will have additional flexibility after Christmas when Mrs Silby and Mrs Chapman are no longer 1:1 with a high need pupil who is leaving us.
- After discussions about Miss Glass's role and responsibilities it is proposed to uplift her pay scale pre-emptively from UPR 1 to UPR 3 (she would normally not be at UPR 3 until 1.9.26). This early uplift would cumulatively cost the school £7833.58. It would also be awarded on the agreement that Miss Glass be formally installed on the SLT and act as the proxy for the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher in their absence. This pay scale and responsibilities were discussed with the previous leadership when Miss Glass was appointed, however it was not actioned at the time. It is felt that the role Miss Glass does and the high level decisions she makes around pupil safeguarding and in the absence of the other SLT members warrants the higher pay scale point.

Governors are asked to consider this pay award for action wef 1.11.23.

Q: does Miss Glass have all the formal training to be on the SLT / act in the Head's place?

A: yes, she is fully qualified as DSL, NaSENCo and obviously QTS.

Q: what is Miss Glass's teaching obligation? Could she be asked to cover classes if necessary? If so, can this be built into the new job description?

A: no teaching obligation, but she is not full time. She could definitely cover emergency short term absences. Miss Lewis will add this into the job description.

Q: if Miss Glass isn't full time, will she be able to ensure she is onsite at times when needed to cover HT and DHT absence?

A: She can be very flexible and it is unlikely any absence of both the HT and DHT would be unplanned so this should be no issue. We can build this in as a caveat to the job description.

Governors agreed with the recommendation re pay scale for Miss Glass, subject to the above additions to her new job description.

Premises and Health & Safety Updates

- Devolved Capital for 23/24 will be clawed back by the LA as our contribution to the very costly new boiler works.
- MUGA has had a gate fitted for added security, and to prevent unauthorised use and access.
- KS2 playground has had new markings painted.
- Monkey bars have been replaced due to being deemed unsafe.
- New boilers are in and SBM has had controls handed over. Just awaiting final sign off of the project.

GB Comment: Please put on record our thanks to Andy Purdy for organising these works so promptly.

- Fire Risk Assessment and HandS paperwork review both found very little wrong with school systems and all action points have been completed.
- New Emergency Response Plan and Emergency Grab Bags are in place.

- The LA has agreed to fund fencing to the rear of the school to secure the site. It will close off rear access to the playground, MUGA, classroom but would allow for deliveries to the kitchen, bin lorries etc without having to use multiple gates for access. This would also ensure that when we have larger vehicles on site such as these lorries and refuse trucks the children are fully secure and safe. Children would not be able to leave the playground/field and disappear down behind the bungalow when dysregulated. The order has been placed with Brian Thompson Fencing and this will be completed around Christmas time all being well. The work falls under the level required for tender.
- We are also in the early stages of planning the refurbishment and redesign of The Zone. The intention is to erect stud walls within the main room to create 2 small group working spaces in addition to a larger group learning or meeting space created from the remaining half of the room. Works will be funded by a contribution from the PTA and also a portion of next years devolved capital. We have submitted a Building Control Application to NYBCP and we are hoping works will be able to start in January.

GB Comment: Please put on record our thanks for their support with this project to Miss Harper and the rest of the PTA.

Benchmarking Reports

Governors considered the benchmarking report and appendices and commented that it seems unbelievable that we can be in line or spending less per head with our comparator schools and still be in the position of needing to make further adjustments. The data, analysis and contextualising comments show that we are not spending any more than other schools of our size on staffing etc yet still face issues. This would suggest that school finance and its current restrictions are not limited to any one school and are a national issue.

View My Financial Insights (VMFI) shows we only have two ‘amber’ items which are the ones which could be looked at to achieve efficiencies and savings. However, both of these are almost in line with the median anyway. Any slightly anomalous data picked up by the online benchmarking tools can be explained; for example:

- the higher than average admin costs are explained by having a full time SBM – however, if there was no SBM in post we would need increase expenditure on additional administrative staff, the Headteacher workload would increase and we would have to spend money on buying into a bursar service.
- Premises cleaning costs are high – however, this is explained because as a school we buy into a management contract where other schools may directly employ premises staff and pay those salaries from within staffing budgets which would be reflected in an increase to their non-educational support staff costs instead.

Overall, our benchmarking data is broadly green and we are listed as being in the median 20% of schools within our comparator range group from all three benchmarking tool sets.

Action: Add additional content to SENCo job description as agreed.	By: SBM
Action: Submit Revised Budget 2023/24	By: SBM
Action: Letter of thanks to Andy Purdy	By: SBM
Action: Letter of thanks to Miss Harper and the PTA for their ongoing support	By: SBM

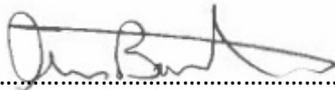
FC10/23	Schools Financial Value Standard – Governor Representative The SBM will prepare the SFVS document with input from Mr Hirst at a meeting after Christmas. Following this assurance meeting, the completed document will be presented for reflection at the FGB meeting on 18.1.24 in advance of the 31.3.24 deadline.
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Action: Agree a date to meet with Mr Hirst	By: SBM
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FC11/23	School Development Plan – verbal update Mr Dyer Deferred for discussion at SPAM and next FGB meetings.
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FC12/23	<p>Policies to Review:</p> <p>FMS003 Budget Management Policy FMS007A Wheaties Charging Policy 2023.24 FMS012 Lettings Policy HR021 Pay Policy 2023.24 HR023 Parental Leave Policy and Guidance (incl. Changes document) HR024 Appraisal Policy HS003 Health & Safety Policy HS004 Missing Child Procedures HS010 First Aid Procedure</p> <p>All policies listed are model policies approved and agreed by Unions and the LA. They have been personalised for the school and personnel / staff / responsibility holders. Governors carefully considered the named policies and agreed to accept and adopt.</p> <p>INF005 Staff Mobile Phone Policy This is a new school policy designed to cover staff use of mobile phones in school. It is in line with KCSiE guidance regarding practice and will be shared with staff at the next available staff meeting. Governors carefully considered the Policy and agreed to accept and adopt.</p> <p>Action: File and publish Policies as per procedure By Clerk</p>
FC13/23	<p>Dates of the Next Meetings</p> <p>Date of Next Finance Meeting – 17.4.24 4pm Date of Next FGB Meeting – 18.1.24 5pm</p>
FC14/23	<p>A.O.B.</p> <p>None to note.</p>

Meeting closed at: 5.10pm

Signed (Chair):  Date: ...1.5.24...

Actions:

Agenda Item	Action	Responsible	Completed
FC04/23	Update records to reflect Chairship	Clerk	✓
FC05/23	File and publish agreed Minutes as per procedure	Clerk	✓
FC07/23	Request Minutes from Financial Governance Meeting from Sally Dunn	SBM	✓
FC09/23	Add additional content to SENCo job description as agreed.	SBM	✓
FC09/23	Submit Revised Budget 2023/24	SBM	✓
FC09/23	Letter of thanks to Andy Purdy	SBM	✓
FC09/23	Letter of thanks to Miss Harper and the PTA for their ongoing support	SBM	✓
FC10/23	Agree a date to meet with Mr Hirst	SBM	✓
FC12/23	File and publish Policies as per procedure	Clerk	✓