

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCE COMMITTEE OF ST MATTHEW'S GOVERNING BODY,  
HELD AT SCHOOL ON Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019 AT 5.30 P.M.**

**Present:** Kevin Blencowe (KB) (Chair), Lucy Walker (LW), Zoe Thorn (ZT), Debora Lucarelli (DL), Ricardo Herbane (RH), Richard Warwick (RW), Julie Murphy (JM), Christina Bates (CB), Tony Davies (TD) (Head teacher)

Clerk: Lis Silver

**1. Apologies for absence:**

There were no apologies as all members of the committee attended the meeting. Debora had given apologies that she would be late as she could not attend until 6pm, as advised in the previous Resources Committee Meeting.

**2. Declarations of direct or indirect pecuniary interests relevant to any of the Agenda items**

There were no declarations of interest related to agenda items. TD advised that he is now a trustee of Cambridgeshire Music Trust.

**3. Minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

The minutes of the last meeting of the Resources Committee were agreed as an accurate record.

**4. Matters arising and agreed actions update**

Item 4: From March 2018 meeting: **Working party on pollution** – Rosa has been in contact with Milton school to find out the action they took to reduce pollution near their school. Environmental survey for parents/local residents has been agreed and will be sent out shortly. Using the information from the survey a decision will be made about the appetite for a working group

Item 6: LW advised the Board that she had been unable to attend the demo in London on the 28 February.

Item 7: LW has met School Business Manager Adrian Strowger (AS) and report has been circulated to the meeting. Overall, she concluded that Book keeping is meticulous and excellent paper trails on areas where there was additional spending versus budget – these were followed up as requested by Board. The 2 key areas of interest were as follows: E05 – expenditure on admin staff was above budget as a result of pay rise for School Business Manager and overtime for both Manager and office staff. Staff are given overtime to cover sickness absences and ensure that work is done in an efficient timescale.

E27 - £16k difference was tracked to spending on agency staff to cover absence of TAs – in some cases this will be offset by another area of the budget where there is a reduction in expenditure e.g. a nursery nurse was employed through an agency whereas this expenditure would normally be from the teaching staff budget.

LW reported that this exercise was well worth doing and gave a high level of confidence about the financial records that the school is keeping and the ability to track the reasons for budget discrepancies – AS keeps both electronic and paper copies of all records and they are very clearly labelled. He also has very close liaison with office staff. If AS were to be absent for an extended period it is clear that someone who understand the systems would very quickly be able to pick up the workload and this could be the member of office staff who is trained or someone from the local authority. She noted that all the school spreadsheets are checked monthly by the County Council and/or our advisor Ray Byford.

*Debora Lucarelli arrived at 17.55.*

*The Head apologised since there had been some confusion as to whether the meeting was starting at 17.30 or 18.00.*

*Julie Murphy joined the meeting at 18.00*

Item 8: TD reported that he had written to Ian Ross at the Council (at the suggestion of KB) about possible funding but had not received a reply.

**Action: KB agreed to follow up to get a response from Ian Ross**

Item 9: TD thanked those governors who had returned the Skills Audit and asked the outstanding governors to do this as a matter of priority. The Chair advised that she will send an electronic link to the relevant people.

Item 9: **Disaster Recovery plan** – action still outstanding

**Outstanding Action from February 2019: Disaster Recovery plan (with redactions) to be circulated to Resources Committee by Headteacher**

**5. Review of March 2019 BCR/Draft Budget for 2019/2020**

The Chair advised that because of the strong link these 2 agenda items would be taken together.

TD advised that the end of year carry over is larger than anticipated at £63K due to:

- i) Extra unexpected income received late in the year
- ii) Reduction in spending in all areas as soon as financial crisis for following year was identified

This increased carry over means that the predicted deficit for the coming year can be managed and it has been possible to put together a break-even budget. However, this budget has almost no contingency funding built in for unexpected disasters such as the recent boiler breakdown. AS will need to continuously analyse the cash flow situation to ensure that there are no points in the year where this will be a problem. The office staff have been working on tracking lettings and ensuring bills are paid promptly.

The following questions were asked about specifics in the budget/accounts:

- Taxi costs -when would these be needed – taxis are used in the following situations
  - for sporting events when 2 large taxis are cheaper than a minibus
  - transporting a child to school or to a special unit visit
  - For office staff carrying very large amounts of money for security
- Boiler replacement was done at half term – essential because it was affecting hot water for the school kitchens, but corrective work also done to give separate flow of hot water to the kitchens. It was noted that there are 2 boilers but it is not anticipated that the other boiler will need to be replaced immediately. This is paid for out of the capital budget rather than the revenue budget.
- Status of work on ICT equipment – potential move from Laptops to Chromebooks (the latter approximately 50% than laptops) would give a saving on hardware but since everything needs to be cloud based will lead to extra on-line license costs so project needs to be carefully evaluated. Governors expressed concern that this would mean all ICT work was wi-fi dependent and there is likely to be a significant increase in license fees each year that needs to be factored in but is difficult to anticipate. TD advised that the school has the final decision as to whether they make this change and it will only be done after a robust exercise to look at the pros and cons of both alternatives, but another factor that will need to be taken into account is that much of the school's ICT software is obsolete and needs replacing. The school will employ David Trent (ICT Leader) to do this work using money from the Capital budget and he will be expected to visit other schools/ technicians who have undertaken similar projects. He noted that there is a piece of work that is needed to evaluate the ICT curriculum and the skills being taught at each age group since the current curriculum lags behind where the children are actually in terms of skills. In addition, staff will need training so that they feel confident in managing all aspects of the Chromebooks and supporting the children in the change. A full audit will be needed to understand what is critical. In terms of current equipment TD noted that the school ICT technician has worked hard to update laptops and keep them running long after their usual shelf life. A staff governor asked if equipment could be leased but the meeting was advised that many schools have found that this has not been a positive experience financially.

One of the governors asked about the following areas where there is a significant difference between the amount spent in the previous year and the budgeted figure:

- “Extra Funding” in the budget is the income from the grant from the DfE to partially fund the teacher's pay rise
- Pupil premium payments are done as staggered lag funding, based on the census each January

- SEND funding – reduction in budget for coming year – figure is based on income that the school knows they will get for children with educational healthcare plans. This varies from year to year and is subject to change within each year.
- Miscellaneous contributions is significantly above budget – this refers to work done for Cambridge Primary Heads group which TD led in the previous academic year;
- Insurance claim – budgeted as zero since can't be predicted; any income would be offset by associated costs
- UIFSM grant reduction in coming year – stands for Universal Infant Free School Meals; refers to money given to school to pay for free school meals (all children in Reception, Year One and Year Two are entitled to a free school meal; the actual amount is established by uptake on the October and January census days).
- Variations between the amount paid to Caretaker and cleaning staff – due to seasonal changes in requirements and contracts
- Admin staff costs reduced – the budget figure does not include the overtime paid in the previous year and wherever possible costs have needed to be minimised to bring in a balanced budget.
- Lunchtime supervisor costs are higher in the budget because there were vacancies in the previous year and the school are planning to recruit staff
- Sport – apparent increase in budget is due to the timing of receiving the funding and the expenditure
- Educational visits – difference in income/costs is due to the income and parental contributions for educational visits, particularly the residential visits, not being included as these figures net out
- Agency staff budget is reduced – the school will need to reduce cover costs wherever possible and this is likely to be for support staff e.g. TAs. Insurance only kicks in after 2 weeks absence. Insurance premiums are included in employee costs line E10.
- ELH – Education Learning Hub support services provided by County Council for ICT and financial advice.

TD advised that whilst he is aware that there is little contingency in the budget, he does believe it is realistic. However, it is vulnerable to shocks as there is very little contingency built into the budget. In answer to a question he advised that if there was a major capital problem that required significant expenditure then the school would be forced to discuss the matter with the local authority.

The money being raised separately by parents is not included in this budget since it is unclear how much this is likely to be, but this money will be used where additional expenses are identified. It was noted that the PTA have requested that parents make a regular monthly contribution to the Just Giving account that has been set up so that some planning can take place. This money will be paid into a separate bank account and the PTA will claim Gift Aid and then donate the money to the school although there has been no agreement about how often this will be done.

TD advised that the school is already aware of one area where significant capital spending will be needed since a problem has been identified with the Victorian drains, but no estimate has yet been received for the work. The survey work with cameras has established that the damage was not due to the building works so the school will be required to pay the full costs for the work which it is planned will be done at half term. There is a Capital budget of £37k so it seems unlikely that this work will take the budget into deficit but it may limit other planned capital expenditure that is not as urgent. If work were to prove very expensive then would need to discuss with Local authority since the building is their asset and in the past they would have found some money but this may no longer be possible. The project is likely to be complex because of the location of power cables and the anticipated cost will be in the region of £5-10K but the school will be getting more than one quote to ensure value for money. This is an area of expertise for AS. The problem has been identified from problems with the toilets in reception which regularly block up and a rat has been seen so it is important that it is sorted out as quickly as possible.

The lack of long-term capital funding makes planning these bigger projects very difficult. The school received an additional payment of £20k last year from the government but have no knowledge about whether this will be repeated in the coming year. The Budget will be managed with monthly review of actual expenditure and reports each Resources Committee meeting. If a major discrepancy was identified, then an additional meeting would be arranged if critical. In the longer term it is a question of the school staying on track until the upcoming Comprehensive Spending review where it is hoped that there will be an increase in funding. If it had not been for the reduction in numbers the school was on track financially and assuming that the pupil numbers are more accurate next year and there is a small increase in funding then the school could cope with a small deficit this year of up to £20k (which would be clawed back

in the following year). If for any reason funding is not improved in subsequent years, then a significant review of structure will be needed to reduce costs further.

**The Resources Committee unanimously approved recommendation of this budget to the FGB**

## **6. School Funding**

### **Update on correspondence with Hazel Belchamber (HB) School Admissions Team and impact on school funding**

The correspondence between the Headteacher and Hazel Belchamber was circulated to the Committee with the papers. TD explained that there are two issues:

- i) That the Admissions service has not been effective in filling spaces quickly
- ii) That this deficit has led to a loss of approximately £30k of funding for the school and the school is seeking compensation of this amount

HB is keen that TD meets with the Admissions Team manager to identify where improvements in the service can be made and this meeting is scheduled for next week. However, there is no mechanism for compensation so she has agreed to speak to Martin Wade (MW), Head of Finance for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough to see if any action is possible. TD advised that through his work with CPH, MW was familiar with TD and the school.

TD advised the governors that the irony of the funding for reduced numbers this year is that he has been told by Admissions that St Matthews is the most oversubscribed school in Cambridge, however the central location means that there will always be a lot of movement over the summer as families finish short term contracts in the city and return home.

## **7. Suggested Letting Rates for 2019-2020**

Governors were circulated information on the current letting fees and the impact that a 3% or 5% increase would make to the figures. The budget figures are based on a 3% cost of living increase. It was noted that there had been a significant increase in the previous year and therefor agreed that the increase should be limited to 3% inflation increase with a larger increase to be considered the following year.

**The Resources Committee unanimously approved recommendation of a 3% increase in letting fees for 2019-20 to the FGB**

## **8. Budget covered with agenda item 5**

## **9. School Funding Campaign**

TD advised the governors that the march on April 1<sup>st</sup> had attracted 1000 people from a wide range of schools in the city showing the strength of feeling locally about school funding. He commended the parents involved on all that they had done to publicise the issues. There is a debate in Parliament on 25<sup>th</sup> April about school funding. Tony had written to all Cambridgeshire MPs on behalf of CPH to ask them to attend the debate and to make them aware that school funding will be a significant issue at election time. One local MP has publicly stated that he is not interested in school funding, so it is important that the group keep up the pressure so that the issue is resolved at national level. To get more involvement nationally TD is suggesting to the campaign group that they put a pack together about organising a march which will be sent to all Headteachers that have joined the Worthless Campaign. It is important that the strength of feeling about school funding is understood so that it influences the Comprehensive Spending review. In the meantime, the PTA have set up a fund that parents can contribute to which will be given to the school to spend as needed. Parents were sent a letter about donating but governors recommended that the letter should be recirculated. There has been no communication about the likely level of support or how frequently money will be given to the school and this is an area where further clarification is needed.

**Action: RH to follow up with PTA and suggest that a follow up to the letter is sent to thank/remind people who have forgotten to set up a donation.**

**Action RH to follow up with PTA regarding likely amount of money that will be raised and to ask about arrangements for transfer of the money raised**

#### **10. Any other Business**

**Recruitment** – in answer to a question TD advised that following interviews at which a governor was present the school has recruited

- a full time NQT
- a Reception teacher for 2 days a week
- Maternity cover for 1 term

There is one outstanding vacancy which was not known about at the start of recruitment for a full-time maternity cover post for a year (from September).

#### **11. Dates of future meetings and agreed agenda items**

FGB Meeting – Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May at 18.15

Resources Committee – No further meetings this term