

Minutes of Resources Committee 17.30 Wednesday 24 November.

Present: Tony Davies, Linda Jones (left 18.26 during item 10), Ricardo Herbane, Chris Jagger, Debora Lucarelli (5.38)

1. Apologies for absence: Richard Warwick, Julie Murphy, Christina Bates.

2. Declarations of pecuniary interest: None

3. Agree terms of reference for resources committee: No comments.

4. Election of Chair and Vice-chair: RH notes his tenure ends Feb, and left room. RH elected chair (proposed LJ, seconded CJ), CJ vice chair (RH proposed, LJ seconded).

5. Minutes of Resources Committee of 28 April 2021: RH asked why there was a confidential minute, as they go on the website. TD said they take that bit off before it goes on the website, and that he would manage that.

6. Matters arising: None.

7. Three documents for raising awareness: TD said no particular actions that we need to take.

8. Review latest budget monitoring reports:

TD said finance potentially very volatile with staff off (approx. £2k for cover for ten days each time a teacher gets Covid). Day to day cover as well eg when a staff member is waiting for PCR test to come back. Previously if one tested positive then the whole class was sent home so no additional cost. Also hard to pull in supply staff, which of course saves money but then existing staff need to cover which is a stress and not always possible. Four staff are absent longer-term with non-Covid issues at the moment. There are also some children needing additional full-time one to one support which is not funded and was not known at the time the original budget was set. Overall not actually as bad as it might be, partly reflecting the fact that we had some wriggle room to make those decisions. In truth little we can do about it, and it will end being what it is. Big focus at the moment is just having enough staff (one nearby school have closed a whole year group as they have run out of staff).

A few questions asked:

- LJ asked about recovery on letting of the outside areas. TD responded that outdoor sports lettings had restarted, but indoor lettings were unlikely to start until the summer.
- DL asked how many teachers we are down. TD says we are managing, hard to say how many down as it varies from day to day. More the day to day pressure when PCR results come in, and there are virtually no supply teachers out there.
- RH asked if supply teacher costs are rising? TD says daily rate hasn't risen – we work with various agencies, have a preferential rate with one of them, but then if they have nobody, then have to go to another one, that could be a different rate.
- DL suggested we appoint someone full time, but TD says no, too variable a need as some days may need two or more teachers and other days no teacher. We have been retaining some supply teachers where it is clear they are going to be needed.
- RH asked are chromebook rollout within IT resources? TD says yes, although they might be able to make some savings on that line, by transferring some expenditure into the capital budget.

- DL assumed swimming had restarted, but where are the costs? TD says within learning resources or could be support services other, but whichever, it was budgeted for.
- CJ asked about Finance Link governor role, mindful of the need not to come into buildings, and the amount of pressure on staff, but also with a view to doing something constructive. TD said we could do the spot checks online (which are key). CJ should report back on this.
- DL asked about special needs. TD said there is at least one that is needing full time support so essentially extra costs needed for this – from general budget.
- Question raised on ICT budget. PTA agreed to fund additional 15 chromebooks, and on fundraising side a parent is keen to donate perhaps £10k per year, and perhaps do match funding to encourage others to donate as well. There was a discussion about who and how this happens – TD does not know who, and pointed out that we have for example been approached in the past by someone wanting to pay for a full time teaching assistant for their child, and that had to be turned down (even if they had wanted to hire one), as it would open up a number of issues.

9. Pay Policy 2021-22: TD said it is late due to the late completion of the model policy by EPM which in turn was late due to the late decision by the government regarding teachers' pay for 2021-2022 (0% pay increase). Policy is an updated version of previous policy, agreed by unions with EPM on behalf of schools. No particular questions asked. Pay policy was agreed by the committee.

10. Review of Teacher Appraisal Policy 2021.

TD said the process was better this year: last year unions had said all teachers should automatically progress up the pay spine as it was too difficult to evidence judgments that a teacher's performance merited not progressing on their pay spine due to the impact of the pandemic. This argument was less valid this year as objectives were set with Covid in mind, but still not that easy, and the pandemic meant some processes or projects did not happen. However, TD felt it had been possible both years to make proper assessments of teachers' performance. It was positive that all the staff could demonstrate that their performance merited progression as it may well have been difficult to refute an argument that evidence of poor performance was the result of factors outside a teacher's control.

LJ asked how you set the targets. TD said assistant heads work with class teachers, which is integrated with pupil progress meetings, really getting to know the teachers and their classes, so close working together, getting a good idea, and knowing where the children ought to be at the end of the year (and children's targets can then feed into teacher assessment). But there is care with targets since with some classes inevitably it is easier to meet certain targets than others. For that reason targets focus on developing practice, with certain measures of performance (e.g. pupil assessment results) incorporated into a range of success criteria.

DL asked how much was appraisals Covid-dominated, and is it linked in with getting a Good rather than Outstanding rating? She added she didn't really want an answer to this just some sense that we aren't slacking off, and still pushing to the future, acknowledging that Covid might be with us for several years and we just need to get past this. TD said that in essence we are not cutting slack, we are setting ambitious targets, and what evidence we have (as reported to the Full Governing Body and TLOC) suggests we have been performing ahead of other schools. DL added that getting a big number of S (children working at a secure level, i.e. at age-related expectations) is good, but are we still really pushing to get maximum number of S+ (exceeding age-related expectations). TD says yes we do comparisons over two years to make sure the good students are making expected progress across the period of the pandemic and targeting support where this is not happening).

11. Staff and Recruitment update.

TD reported that they are looking to recruit two teachers. Looking for someone to run Covid catch up work – current person leaving in January, and spoken to somebody today. Don't want to lower standards of what we want, but may have to.

RH: Asked if governors are being asked to help with the appointments. TD said no, largely being done through agencies and so on. If they later become permanent then we may need to do a more formal procedure and involve the governing body.

RH asked how morale is? TD said people are feeling under a lot of pressure in lots of different ways, there is a degree of uncertainty (eg who is going to be in the building tomorrow etc), as well as some who were very anxious about getting Covid (though some who were previously anxious and have now had it and recovered are saying how they now feel more relaxed). We are currently down on the number of Higher Level Teaching Assistants who provide cover for absent teachers which is putting more strain on those who are left. We are not surprised at the level of difficulty, but there is a lot of complexity, people have been working at high level for a long time, and people are tired. RH asked if could pass on thanks for Hazel for masterminding the cover.

RH asked about how the school office are getting on? TD says they are working flat out, a huge amount of admin, Julie in particular has almost become a full time Covid officer, so people are stretched. Schools are tasked now with functioning as though Covid isn't happening, but of course it is.

12. AOB

RH: PTA funding: How is it going etc? The PTA have got about £10k to release to us, still significant donations coming in to the monthly pot, as well as the parent who may make a significant donation. PTA want it to be tied in to specific projects – basically extras that we might not be able to afford (eg canopies, fencing etc – may sound like small details but actually things that can make a lot of difference). PTA donated about £5k for the fencing and equipment to create the Year Two outdoor learning areas and £5k for chromebooks. TD is in progress of getting costings for projects this year which PTA funding will be allocated to.

RH: How is remodelling the library going to help the children? TD says it currently takes up a lot of space and isn't being used that much as originally intended. Suggestion is to use the current area for the reading scheme books, as a break out space from the classrooms on those corridors and create one/two additional rooms for office space/breakout; the area linking the two downstairs corridors would become the library space for the other books and a "cosier" environment in which children could read/be read to.

RH: Logistics of this meeting – we were rushing towards 6.30 due to small number of people dialling in, until saved by DL. Should we push for more people to come along to Resources Committee. DL adds that a member of staff needs to be in forum, and that while it is dry and boring, so they need someone to recommend them. TD said it is very unusual for Julie and Christina not to be here, which prompted DL to suggest that perhaps Christina has done her bit and perhaps there should be a rotation. CJ said obviously much has been unsatisfactory with Covid and that many of the governors now have only been a Governor during Covid times when we had not been able to meet in person. If we ever do get through this, eg in June next year, is that a time to take stock, revitalise the governors, think about how to do things best, how TLOC and Resources work, and what we can do both to make sure there is solid governance but also to think about things we could look at in a

strategic way which are not a necessary part of governance but could nonetheless help the school in a meaningful way. RH and TD added that not being able to meet in person has all been a bit of a disappointment. Important to keep the continuity since there will be a large turnover of governors since before Covid. TD said despite the frustrations of the last year or more, governors had been a huge support for the school during the pandemic, making key decisions around safety and opening that were as important for the running of the school as those made when the premises redevelopment was happening - so while some governors may have felt frustrated or their role was not as important as at other times, from TD's point of view this was very much not the case.

TD: Updated on parent governors. There were just two nominations, so they were elected unopposed.

RH: How are the kids getting on? TD says they are incredibly positive and it is a joy to be around them. But along side this there are more pupils needing support for mental wellbeing, stress, extra help, etc.

13. Dates of future meetings: 17.30 Wed 9 Feb and 17.30 Wed 27 April.

Meeting closed 19.12