

Finance, Premises and Personnel Committee – Minutes

13 October 2021

Attendance – online Zoom meeting

Governors - Claire Bolderson, Sajni Patani, Ashley Smith, Dan Hamilton, Bhavini Shah, Mandy Leatham

Mark Owen, Headteacher

Sara Wright, Business Manager

1. September 2021 budget monitoring

- Governors reviewed September 2021 budget monitoring docs, and noted that the updated c/f is expected to be £10.7k, compared to an expected £32.4k at budget setting stage. For future budget setting, we need to likely set a surplus budget (unlike 21/22 where we had in year deficit predicted of £16k due to sufficient b/f budget) – there is very little room for error in future years.
- Certain items on the budget were discussed, in particular:
 - o I07 income lower than budgeted – lower nursery fee paying parents than expected, estimate for rest of year has been based on current number of fee paying parents. At budget setting stage – estimated income was based on what was earned in the previous 2 years, but actually fee paying parents have been lower than expected. However the nursery does have more hours filled than anticipated which is good.
 - o I08 – Breakfast club numbers lower than expected resulting in lower income than budgeted
 - o I10 Maternity cover errors were not a miscalculation from the school, it was at the authority level. At budget setting stage, the authority works out maternity number automatically based on formula, which school is asked to use, but this is incorrect. This has happened in the past. This year Sara used the formula without editing, as it was a new formula. Sara has discussed with someone in Finance, and will not plan to use the formula in future – she will adjust number to a more appropriate number.
 - o I18 – catering grant resulted in additional £12k income
 - o I18C – Additional covid related grant of £3k that was not expected; much smaller than last year – for children in catch up program.
 - o E01 reduced staff expenditure, partly because of lack of salary increases; also partly because of staff on maternity leave who are not being paid monthly
 - o School has still not seen financial benefit of restructuring, as we have paid salaries up to August, and further redundancy and pension costs.
 - o Sara included redundancy and pension costs in E28 rather than E07. Sara can see all redundancy costs have been paid to staff; cannot tell if pension contributions have been paid yet. In E07 there are also extra costs that are not budgeted for as midday meals supervisors are doing some additional work with children (£3.5k)
 - o E19 extra costs are due to late PE invoices which were not budgeted
 - o E26 relates to agency supply costs – there is £10k planned expenditure for rest of this year, which means we will go over on agency supply costs budgeted by £16k.

- Some invoices in March did not go through BACs run until April – so there were extra invoices that we thought had been paid at budget stage (£9.2k)
 - SEN Supply and TA were not budgeted for – invoices received very late, staff left in March, so we assumed they had been paid (£4.8k)
 - Now there is only one member of staff that is agency, and her salary is already budgeted in E01
 - There should not be any more agency costs this year, except for sickness absence (as no other known agency teachers planned). Should not cost more than £10k.
 - A governor asked if we should reflect on whether we are too optimistic on agency supply cost when budgeting, as we always seem to overspend – should we have a contingency at budget stage? It was agreed that for future budgets, Sara will factor in a contingency for the agency supply when setting budget.
- **Action: Sajni to check in with Sara on budget monitoring in November, and consider if further discussion with Finance committee is needed. Otherwise next Finance committee meeting to be arranged in Spring term.**

2. Final CFR budget for 21/22 to be approved, with increased c/f balance of £2,505

- Governors agreed with new carry forward number of £49,205 as at the beginning of the 21/22 year – per Sara this relates to VAT

3. Capital

- £2k has been spent on SOS – water heater, nursery, ground floor toilet and cleaners cupboard
- 5Y electrical work testing needs to be done – expecting to be c. 2.5k
- It was noted a piece of tower roof is loose, may need work which will not be cheap – TBC how much this will cost

4. Science for Life

- C/f of £90k
- Meg has some additional projects, £6k spend is expected.
- School is expecting to spend more going forwards. Project will fund 2 more part time scientists, but not yet sure how they will be employed, to be resolved with LEA. Gillespie has made clear these employees should not be on our school books (as we do not want to be liable for their possible redundancy in future). This spend will be out of the c/f 90k balance, but school needs to make sure that this money should not come out of Gillespie account and go directly to individuals (as then we are in effect their employer) – money needs to go elsewhere before paying the individuals.
- A governor made the point that Dame Alice Owen Fund also needs to agree that the funds donated can also be used for these purposes (to indirectly have resident scientists, but that are not employed by the school itself).
- Previously there were concerns about the fact that budget increased, but we were not spending so worried it would be taken away. It was noted that the steering committee is

happy with status of project, and were encouraging school to make savings during Covid, so no concerns that there is a large c/f balance.

5. Premises

- There is no expected emergency funding on premises from school budget
- School has a relatively small capital budget for premises (and we try to keep surplus)
- Some work was undertaken: flat roof over children's toilets were re-roofed with new skylights, upgrading of kitchens, minor leaking roof issues – these were all funded separate to school budget (i.e. school did not have to spend on these)
- If there are excess capital funds, Mark will commission redecorating classrooms

6. Personnel

- No personnel issues
- All teachers that were recruited have joined
- New Y3 teacher
- 2 Staff have return from maternity
- Staffing is tight, after restructuring in particular, Mark thinks school is coping fine with reduced lunch time cover (and Mark himself and Katrina involved in part of the lunch time activities). This does put pressure on staff being sick/out of school, with reduced levels of cover.

7. Audit report actions

- Per Chair of governors – the audit is causing some concern, as there is a long list of items from report – but it is not clear how much of this list is statutory requirements, vs best practice. The report suggest that the governors are expected to micromanage lots of items, which governors do not agree with – we should not be involved in every item (and no capacity to do so), unless these are actually statutory requirements.
- **Action: Sara to get guidance on what is actually required from statutory perspective, learn about what other schools are doing, and then we will have another discussion on what is required and how school will report on that to us as governors.**
- One item of focus on audit was the raising of POs – this has always been done by school, particularly for items that are not regular items (but not for regular things like subscriptions etc). The inspector is now expecting school to raise POs for every single item. The inspector noted he found that these were not being done consistently – per Sara, they were, but were not all POs were put on FMS as new staff member during Covid was not trained up. Per Sara, it is not feasible for 2 part time staff to do POs for everything, and she will talk to Finance about this and agree exactly what it is that POs are needed for. This will be included in the financial regulations. Per Mark, there are also concerns as there needs to be a separation of duties.
- Pupil premium statement should be approved by Governors (at FGB meeting) rather than at Finance Committee – this will be led by Mandy at next week's FGB meeting.
- **Action: Sara will prepare the following policies for governor review at Spring Finance committee meeting: a) School emergency plan, b) Financial Regulations, c) Schedule of financial delegation d) asset disposal policy e) contract list.**

8. Review of Leaver's checklist

- Governors reviewed leavers checklist prepared by the school and approved
- It was noted that exit interviews are done by governors – independent to school

9. Approval of prior Finance Committee minutes

- Governors agreed that minutes of the meetings on 4 May 2021 and 24 May 2021 are approved.

10. FOG update

- Mark organised informal Autumn fair, and recruited 3 parents who wanted to be on committee
- Raised £2000 from Autumn fair in cash donations
- Organised AGM last week – very positive, there are 2 people who volunteered to be treasurers, Mark is positive that we can move forwards and get active participation in FoG.
- One of the parents has volunteered to arrange for collection outside Arsenal station in the run up to Christmas on home match days
- Once FoG Committee is known, can invite them/Chair to a governing board meeting to explain what they have been doing.