

Gillespie – Finance Committee meeting notes

Meeting at 6pm on 30 March 2022, held by Zoom

In attendance:

- *Sajni Patani (Chair)*
- *Mark Owen*
- *Sara Wright*
- *Ashley Smith*
- *Dan Hamilton*

Not in attendance – *Claire Bolderson and Jodie Reed.*

Initial discussions

Mark mentioned that discussions had recently taken place with the Local Authority, which would be covered later.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The draft minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

2021/2022 Budget Monitoring

Sajni referred to the potential deficit of £27k. Are there any potential changes to this number?

Sara said that this is now unlikely to change; she is just waiting for the final statement of income and charges from the Local Authority. That will come after the Easter break, but in any event this is still likely to lead to a deficit of £26k - £27k.

Mark – based on discussions today there is unlikely to be further funds from the Local Authority.

Question from Sajni/Ashley – is the £32k grant for this year or next?

Sara – this is for next year and is in the budgeted numbers for 2022/2023.

Mark – we held a meeting with the Local Authority today. They have an emergency fund but will make no commitments to any schools. In any event this is only £130k between all schools. This is for next year (2022/2023). The Local Authority said that if a school is going to be setting a deficit budget we will need to write to them, with the process being as follows:

- A request in writing, to the Director of Education.
- This will then allow us to set what is described as a licensed deficit budget.
- We must also submit a deficit recovery plan.
- That plan becomes a live document and the school then gets advice and support on it.
- We must attend a termly Budgeting Meeting with the Local Authority (with various departments) and we will need to provide them with updated budget monitoring and the deficit recovery plan.
- This meeting may need to be attended by the Chair of Governors.
- We would need to report the outcome of those meetings to the main Governing Body (and confirm that we have done so to the Local Authority).
- Time period – there is a period of three years to recover the deficit and return to the level position.

Mark reported that an initial discussion had taken place on measures that might be taken to reduce costs.

A discussion took place on the £32k grant – it was concluded that it is a little unclear whether this is intended to cover (in theory) all of the centrally-mandated pay rises and energy price increases. There is however thought to be no (current) prospect of a further grant to cover the wider salary increases.

It was noted that salary increases had been imposed centrally, and energy prices had gone up, without a commensurate increase in income. It was also noted that, if salary increases were stripped out, it may have been possible to set a balanced budget.

The possibility of Governors writing directly to the Local Authority, in order to explain their concerns, was discussed.

Mark explained that one of the challenges for the school was its ability to raise income. The lack of vehicle access to the premises had hampered this in the past, as planning applications for parking facilities and other use for the outside space had been declined. Mark explained that one area he wanted to work on is the relationship with Elizabeth House and how this might fit in with wrap-around nursery care at the school.

Mark explained that emergency funding applications have also been put in, in respect of children with Special Educational Needs, and a response from the Local Authority is awaited. It is possible that any response/outcome might be factored into next year's budget. The annual amount could be around £12,000.

2022/2023

It was agreed that the next steps from here would be, in the first instance, to look at potential costs reductions. Mark and Sara agreed to go away and look at potential options, alongside discussions with the Local Authority. It was noted that staffing costs may need to be considered.

It was agreed that a further informal discussion would be held (potentially in a smaller group) in the week of 25 April, with a further formal Finance Committee Meeting to follow in May, prior to the setting of the budget.

AOB:

None.

Next meeting:

Next Finance Committee Meeting will be scheduled for May.

Meeting closed at around 18.45.