



GOVERNING BODY OF HIGHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

FINANCE AND PREMISES COMMITTEE

TUESDAY 31 JANUARY 2023

Members: Bevin Betton, (Chair) , Nikesh Tailor, David Wilson (Headteacher), Tim Guha and Di Wren,

Italics denote absence

Also Attending: Catherine Moens (Business Manager), David Young (Count On) , Mandy Newell (Minute and Advisory Clerk).

MINUTES – PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

NOTED that all Governors were in attendance.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors were given the opportunity to declare any prejudicial interest they might have in respect of items on the agenda. No declarations were made.

3. MINUTES AND ANY MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

RECEIVED the Minutes of the Finance and Premises Committee meeting held on 18 October 2022 which were agreed as a correct record.

NOTED there were no matters arising, not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

RESOLVED the Chair sign the minutes as agreed on GovernorHub.

ACTION:CHAIR

4. BUDGET 2022-2023

- (a) **RECEIVED** the Third Quarterly Return, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book and available to view on GovernorHub

REPORTED that David Young guided Governors through the third quarterly return and the following was highlighted

Income

- (i) the total revenue balance brought forward was £156,337. David Young was pleased to inform Governors this meant the budget was balanced although the figures showed the School had spent slightly more than they had received. Overall the results were very good when taking into account things such as the unexpected pay awards. [In response to a query from the Chair about where the overspend was, David Young explained that there were small variations in a number of areas;](#)
- (ii) there had been some changes to I01 – delegated funding with a £8,966 increase. £53,334 had been moved from I03 (ARP) and there was an estimated early years adjustment of -£20,421. [Following Governors’ questions, it was explained that the LA had a new approach to funding Early Years.](#) The SBM explained that the figure had been based on around 58/59 children but at present they only had 30-32. David Young explained this was a pattern being seen across the Borough with Early Years numbers reducing. [Governors asked for an explanation of Early Years provision at the School](#) and the Headteacher said that they provided am and pm provision. Numbers for each session had been capped at 22 which meant less staff were required. The SBM explained they did not have a waiting list. The Headteacher said they had considered offering all day provision and would ideally want 2 nursery classes of 30 to run all day but they did not have the space to accommodate this so planned to remain with am and pm sessions;
- (iii) I03 – High Needs top up funding was considered. There had been a £4,914 increase autumn term adjustment. £50,248 had moved to I01 (ARP);
- (iv) I05 – Pupil Premium had seen at slight increase of £704 for out of borough pupils.;
- (v) I08 – income from facilities and services showed there had been a £6000 additional monies from breakfast club, bank interest, miscellaneous income and income from Herts received a month in arrears. [Nikesh Tailor asked for confirmation as to what the £6000 was and was informed this was money paid by parents.](#) Governors discussed the fact the uptake of breakfast club had increased. [Following queries about the cost it was clarified that](#) breakfast club was £3.50 and teatime club was £8.50. [In response to a question from Di](#)

Wren, the Headteacher said they did their best to focus on trying to make as many places available as possible rather than the numbers that would make the most profit;

- (vi) I09 – catering showed that income was on target;
- (vii) I12 – David Young explained that income from contributions/visits etc was £35,000. The income for the 2023 school journey would be accrued;
- (viii) I18 – Additional grant for Schools showed a £20,453 increase. Part of this was for the PE grant for 2023/24 as well as funding for the household support grant. In response to a question from the Chair, it was confirmed that these grants were provided by the Government but the School did have to be apply for some of the money. The tutoring grant was also being given again this academic year;

Expenditure

- (i) E01 – Teaching Staff – there had been a £1,150 increase for staffing updates;
- (ii) E02 – Supply Teachers – there had been an underspend due to the minimal use of supply staff. Nikesh Tailor asked if the SLT were covering roles that would have been filled by agency staff and was informed that support staff and the SLT covered where required. The Headteacher explained they had to think about the needs of the children and outside cover was not always the ideal solution. It was often better to have cover provided by staff the children knew but if there was a lot of absence or long term sickness there was a need to get agency cover. Covering did impact on the SLTs work so they were not used for long term cover;
- (iii) E03 – Education Support Staff – there had been a £4,763 increase for staffing updates including settlement;
- (iv) E07 – Other Staff – there was a £2,723 decrease for staffing updates. Overspend had been offset by underspend;
- (v) E09 – Staff development and training showed there could be a possible underspend in this area. The Headteacher explained that training needs had been identified and the figures had been based on what had been spent previously. No new staff had joined the School so the need for training in some areas had reduced. In response to a queries from Nikesh Tailor and Tim Guha, the Headteacher explained that the Haringey Education Partnership (HEP) provided a great deal of training. Governors were assured that any training that was required by an individual staff member that would be deemed to be beneficial was offered and all CPD needs of the staff were being met;

- (vi) E12 – Building Maintenance and Improvement figures were discussed. [Tim Guha commented on the increase in this expenditure](#) The Headteacher explained that additional building works that had been needed had been undertaken such as refitting the toilets and repainting areas in the School along with fixing areas in the APR and other small jobs. David Young assured Governors that savings had been made in other areas which meant the budget did balance despite the increased expenditure in this area. The decision to invest money in the building had been assessed carefully to ensure the budget allowed for the works that had been undertaken and were planned;
- (vii) E13 – Grounds maintenance and improvement were reviewed and it was explained that ARP works were to be undertaken next year. Money was being ringfenced for this;
- (viii) E15 – Water and Sewerage costs showed that water charges had been greater than expected;
- (ix) E16 – Energy – bills had only been received up until October and expenditure had been on target but it was from October that a significant increase was seen in energy tariffs. Once more recent bills were reviewed it would give a better idea of costs moving forward. David Young stated that other school's recent bills had been much higher than in the past but the projected expenditure of £68,000 was the worst case scenario;
- (x) E22 – Administrative supplies were discussed. The SBM explained that the cost of paper had risen sharply and there had been overspends on paper and printing. The Headteacher assured Governors that the SLT were looking at ways to reduce the use of paper and the amount of photocopying being done. [Tim Guha considered the Eco Council might be able to help with this](#);
- (xi) E24 – Special Facilities - £1,886 from donations had been paid to charities from the income collected;
- (xii) E25 – Catering figures showed that catering costs had been greater than expected but this could have been due to the fact that original budget was set too low. Take up of this service had increased. The SBM said that they were now serving approximately 460 meals per day which was around 50 more than this time last year. This included both Free School Meals and non-Free School Meals;
- (xiii) the School projected revenue balance was £151,477 (3.8% of the budget);
- (xiv) Governors discussed the £14,000 that was being given to the School by the Friends for new playground equipment and areas in the ARP. The Headteacher explained they were going to ask for this money to be given in the next financial year;

- (xv) **Nikesh Tailor wondered what the main threats were to the budget moving forward and was told that** inflation and staffing costs were a concern. Staff who had left had not been replaced recently and there had been no one on maternity leave but this could change and maternity cover could result in high costs to the School. David Young explained that the Government had given schools a new grant called the Mainstream Schools grant for 2023/24. The amount was quite considerable and came on top of a sizeable increase in base funding. A tool was available for Schools to predict what their grant was likely to be. **Following Governors' queries, it was explained that this grant was** being given as a top up to help with the cost of inflation, utilities and pay awards and the details had been announced on 12 January. The grant was for both primary and secondary schools and was effective from the 2023/24 financial year;
- (xvi) David Young informed Governors that the employers contribution for support staff pensions was being reduced by around 1% so costs to the School in this area would reduce from April 2023. **Tim Guha asked if this would make a difference to the staff and was informed it would not.**

(b) Expenditure:

REPORTED

- there were no potential purchases over the Headteacher's Delegated Limit;
- there had been no urgent expenditure previously approved via Chair's action;
- there were no Waiver of Contract Procedure Rules (prepared in exceptional circumstances only) to consider;
- there were no virements.

RESOLVED to agree the third quarterly return.

(c) Financial Benchmarking data

<https://schools-financial-benchmarking.service.gov.uk/>

NOTED the contents.

(d) SFVS

RECEIVED a copy of the SFVS checklist and SFVS and KPI Summary report, copies of which are included in the Minute book and available to view on GovernorHub.

REPORTED that Governors discussed the new system in depth and the fact that it was not proving to be very beneficial. **In response to Governor' queries, it was clarified that the purpose of the tool was to be able to see where a School was spending more than similar schools in certain areas of the budget.** David Young said it was analytical.

Governors discussed the issues that other schools had highlighted with the new tool and recognised that it should be helpful but whilst the context was good there were issues in the system that meant it simply wasn't fit for purpose. David Young and the SBM explained some of the continually conflicting advice that had been given. David Young had spoken to Peter Nathan, Director of Education, about the fact schools felt the system had lost its credibility despite the fact the LA were keen for it to be of use. [Nikesh Tailor asked if the SFVS was a statutory requirement and was told it was not but the LA did recommend schools to complete it.](#) The Headteacher said that other Heads had been very clear they were not happy with the new system and assured Governors Peter Nathan was fully aware of this. David Young and the SBM determined that the guidance being given was too open to interpretation. Governors considered that they should not be using the system until all the flaws were rectified.

5. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS (SLAs)

RECEIVED details on the Catering Contract, a copy of which is included in the Minute Book and available to view on GovernorHub. .

REPORTED that the Headteacher explained the situation to Governors and the following matters were highlighted;

- (a) the current contract for catering services with Hertfordshire Catering Limited (HCL) was due to end on 31st March 2023. HCL had confirmed that they were willing to extend the contract by 1 year;
- (b) the original contract was procured as a part of a 9-school group, collectively known as the 'Enfield Cluster Schools' for the purpose of the tender. The schools within the contract varied in size (1, 2 and 3 form entry). The main purpose of the tender was to secure value for money and quality of the catering provision. A group meal price of £2.17 was contracted and fixed for the initial term of the contract (3 years), available to all schools regardless of their size and uptake. HCL had already advised that the cost of meals would increase due to the rise of inflation. This would result in the meal prices being similar to other schools and other providers. This increase would need to be passed on to parents who had not had a meal increase for a significant period. HCL, like all providers, would consider investment into the dining hall if the contract length was long enough. Currently, they would not consider any investment with our existing length of contract;
- (c) the Local Authority gave notice to all schools (including non-Enfield Catering Schools) that they would be ceasing to operate from March 2023. The LA had offered to pay for a mass procurement for any Enfield school that wished to join. The Headteacher explained that as the School was not an Enfield Catering School, the LA announcement did not immediately have an impact. However, there were some serious questions to answer: these were whether the School entered into the mass procurement process with Enfield LA and whether the School extended the HCL contract until March 2024 and then do its own procurement then. Consideration also had to be given to whether

the School should join a smaller cluster of schools to conduct their own procurement process or whether the School conducted its own stand-alone procurement process which would enable a more bespoke package.

- (d) [Following Governors' questions](#), the Headteacher explained that entering into the mass procurement process with Enfield LA posed a number of potential challenges. Highfield was one of the larger Enfield schools, particularly in terms of meal uptake. There could potentially be over 50 Enfield schools joining this mass procurement, meaning that there were no options for bespoke services. Whilst the meal price might be slightly lower than other options, the decision was likely to be made by a panel from the LA with the School having little say;
- (e) the Headteacher explained that a decision had to be made as to whether the School extended the HCL contract until March 2024 and then do its own procurement then. He considered that this was the simplest decision that could be made and would mean the School would continue with the status quo for another year. The downside of this was that the School would not be able to invest in the dining hall experience. Equally, it would be necessary to conduct a procurement process from March 2024 and the School might likely be left with fewer options if LA colleagues had already entered long contracts with other providers;
- (f) Governors considered whether the School should join a smaller cluster of schools to conduct their own procurement process. The Headteacher explained that this was an option if it was felt that the Local Authority mass procurement process was sensible. Companies during a tender process would assess all schools participating within the procurement based on their size and meal uptake. Smaller schools with a lower uptake would benefit from this process, where larger schools could subsidise. However, whilst this was beneficial to a smaller school it was not the same for a larger school. In addition, there would be less control/ flexibility for the individual school and Company, as the contract extensions/ terms etc. must be agreed by all/ majority of the parties involved. Additional investment from the Company into the provision was not usually offered as it was difficult to agree how this would be split between the schools;
- (g) the Headteacher explained that the School could conduct its own stand-alone procurement process which would enable a more bespoke package. The advantage of tendering alone would be that it would be possible to achieve maximum benefit based on the size and meal uptake of the School. The evaluation criteria could be tailored to meet the school's vision. The evaluators would be made up solely of the school SLT, Governors as well as inviting children to be part of the process – all of whom had the same intention. The School's Procurement Management Company (SSC Partnership), for which the School paid a small annual fee to manage its facilities (including catering and cleaning) had changed their charging system to assist with school finances/ budget constraints and offer the procurement at no direct cost to the school. The procurement cost would be paid by the successful company once the contract had been awarded;

- (h) Governors discussed the options available to the School and agreed with the Headteacher that the last option discussed was the best one for the School. Tim Guha asked about timings and was assured there was enough time to sort this out as they would be looking at a September start. The current contractor would be able to be part of the tender process. The Headteacher explained that HCL would be increasing their costs and a procurement process meant there would be fair competition. In response to a question from the Chair, the Headteacher said that SSC would manage the procurement process and it was advisable to use a company to manage this.
- (i) Nikesh Tailor asked what the situation might be if the School decided to join an academy. The Headteacher considered they might be able to help with procurement but he did not think there would be massive financial benefit as any catering deal would be completed before the School joined an academy if they made the decision to do so. Following further discussion the Headteacher assured Governors he had taken advice about the best option for the School. Tim Guha commented that his children loved the food currently on offer at the School and the Headteacher agreed that overall it was acceptable but KS2 sometimes found the portions too small and this was being addressed. A food tasting would be available at parents' evening.

RESOLVED that the other SLAS be discussed at the next Governing Body meeting

ACTION: CLERK/SBM

6. POLICIES REVIEW

NOTED there were no policies due for review.

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY

NOTED there were no urgent health and safety issues to consider

8. PREMISES WORK PLAN

RECEIVED the Premises work plan, a copy of which is included in the minute book and available to view on GovernorHub.

REPORTED that following a query from Tim Guha it was confirmed that areas in yellow were completed and paid for, areas in blue had not yet been paid. It was pointed out that the last two areas in yellow should in fact be in blue. Following a further question the Headteacher stated that he would be speaking to Jane Hill (Site Manager) about this prior to finalising the budgets for next year. Tim Guha felt that the actual spend and date of this would be a useful addition to the update.

NOTED the contents of the work plan.

9. CLERKING

RESOLVED to refer this item to the Governing Body.

ACTION: CLERK/SBM

10. TRAINING

NOTED that that there is an introduction to finance session Part 2 on the 6 Feb 2023 6.30-7.30pm
<https://traded.enfield.gov.uk/thehub/professional-learning-portal/governors>.

11. LOCAL AUTHORITY REFERRALS

NOTED the information in the termly financial briefing.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

NOTED the date of the next meeting as Tuesday 23 May 2023.

CLOSE OF MEETING