

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S SCHOOL
MEETING OF THE GOVERNORS' FINANCE & RISK COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 13TH MARCH, 2019 AT 6.30 PM IN THE WORMESTALL MEETING ROOM

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Campbell Smith (CS)	Finance Governor (Chair)
Julia Mortimore (JAM)	Headteacher
Catie Colston (CC)	Co-opted Governor
Steve Foyle (SF)	Appointed Governor
Karen Sadler (KS)	Vice-chair of Governors
Helen Strutt (HSS)	Finance Manager

IN ATTENDANCE:

Kate Lefever (KL)	Appointed Governor
Gary Norman (GN)	Parent Governor
Ian Peddie (IP)	Chair of Governors
Helen Sutherland (HLS)	Clerk to the Governors

1. APOLOGIES Bruce Steiner (BS) Co-opted Governor

2. DECLARATION OF AOB

HSS added Bank Mandate for KS to the agenda.

CS welcomed GN to his first Governor meeting and all present introduced themselves.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING – 24TH JANUARY, 2019

The minutes were agreed and signed.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Increase to the PAN – note to Governors

CS' note to Governors regarding the financial strategy was tabled. Amendments were agreed.

ACTION: HLS to update and circulate to all Governors.

SF joined the meeting at 6.42 pm.

CC reported that this item had been on the agenda for the Education Committee meeting. At the moment, it is difficult to have clear milestone measurements and feedback is anecdotal. JAM responded that updates can be given in June/July when more information is known. All staff have now been informed and no issues have been raised so far.

Academies' Financial Handbook

- Key Performance Indicators

CS reported that these are covered in the annual report.

- Review of statutory returns

HLS explained that there is a requirement for Governors to approve, in advance, the budget forecast outturn due for submission in May and the three year budget forecast that needs to be submitted by the end of July.

As Governors see regular reports from HSS, it was agreed that CS will review the submissions, record that he has done so and report to this Committee.

ACTION: CS

6. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

Summary Management Accounts for 2018/19

The Management Accounts for January and February were circulated in advance of the meeting. As those for February were circulated just before the meeting, the January accounts were considered by the Committee.

HSS highlighted:

- The revised forecast at the end of January shows a deficit of £258,000, improved from the original annual budget forecast of £345,000 for 2018/19;

This is largely due to:

- teachers' pay grant of £86,000 towards the cost of pay awards over and above the budgeted 1%;
- an additional one-off capital funding of £95,000 to be spent on projects such as building improvements, equipment, IT and other facilities. This has been forecast to be spent in the year: £50,000 on IT, £22,000 for a second hand minibus, with the rest currently unspecified;
- there is an approximately 50% increase in statemented students attracting a higher amount of SEND funding; £37,000 has been forecast. However, whilst this attracts additional funding, the first £6,000 - £7,000 has to be covered by the School before that additional funding is received;
- changes to teaching staff salaries has resulted in additional costs of £26,000 due to staff progression, maternity cover, staff leaving, as well as changes to teaching posts since June 2018. These have been offset by the increase in Teachers' Pension Scheme contributions which has been delayed until September 2019;
- changes to Educational Support Staff, such as a reduction in Assistant Teachers, has resulted in savings of £31,000. There may be further savings if vacancies aren't filled immediately;
- changes to other staffing in the year resulting in savings of £4,000;
- the budget for teacher training was based on seven trainees and we have nine which has realised increased grant income;
- an increase in the energy forecast of £67,000 due to an increase in the cost of wholesale energy.

Key Areas of Focus/Concern

- New energy contracts are being investigated; it is anticipated that new agreements due to start in the autumn will result in savings of approximately £40,000;
- The Pupil Premium Grant has seen a reduction of £10,000 - £20,000 per year so difficult decisions need to be made. 80% of costs in this area are for staffing. JAM confirmed that these costs are tracked against each student;
- It was agreed that Note 5 on the Budget Accounts Summary will not be included in future as the guidance on percentage of costs attributed to staffing is not statutory so gives a misleading picture about the School's position.

Finance Governor's Report

CS' report was circulated in advance of the meeting.

CS confirmed that he sees the spreadsheets that underpin the reports that HSS complies for Committee meetings.

Questions

CC asked about a five year forecast. JAM and HSS confirmed that it would not be realistic to do this accurately (a three-year forecast is required by the ESFA) as there are too many assumptions and variables, in particular it is difficult to predict the staffing model five years in advance. The model assumes the same staff and assumes those that can progress, do progress through the pay grades. Therefore, a five-year forecast would include a very high percentage of staff on UPS which is too inaccurate to use as a basis for strategic decision making.

7. ANNUAL PLAN OF WORK REGARDING RISK

Risk Register

HLS has re-ordered the non-financial risk register. Julie Shepherd and HLS have met to discuss it further; the Leadership Team will be reviewing the register and updating it in two weeks' time. It will then be considered by each committee next term.

Finance Governor's Review of the Financial Risk Register

CS and HSS will liaise over the Financial Risk Register (FRR).

ACTION: HSS to send the FRR to CS.

Internal Control Checks

It was agreed at the last meeting that CS would carry out internal checks again next term.

ACTION: HSS and CS

8. BENCHMARKING

HSS confirmed that benchmarking with local academies is currently underway. There will be a meeting in April to consider data and reporting.

ACTION: HSS

CS asked how other schools and bursars are managing with the current funding situation. HSS replied that they are all struggling; they are running out of areas to cut costs. Curriculum areas are now being considered such as larger class sizes, options etc. Local bursars are more concerned with curriculum, rather than financial benchmarking at the moment. HSS added that some figures in the Kreston Report do not provide much value as it is sometimes not clear how they have been arrived at.

CS asked if the Bursars' Group represents academies only. HSS responded that there are a mixture of academies and maintained schools but noted that it is more difficult to benchmark financial data between academies and maintained schools. Curriculum comparisons are possible, although in many cases there is a large variance between the minimum and maximum benchmarked values and therefore little value in comparing in these areas without further specific details.

9. PROPERTY/PROJECTS

Browns Meadow

SF:

- Planning permission has been granted with some conditions that are being considered by the Buildings Steering Group, along with Newbury Athletic Club and Jonathan Gratton;
- These conditions included restricted hours of use for the pavilion (although not the field);
- Advice is being sought regarding an appeal against the conditions;
- An "informative" issued as part of the planning consent requires marshalls for traffic management but school staff have no authority to direct traffic on the public highway;
- Jonathan Gratton is preparing the Invitation to Tender which is due to be issued imminently;
- Termination of utility services needs to be considered.

JAM added that the planning conditions have been set due to residents' fears and misconceptions over use.

IP noted that planning officers had been asked to liaise with St Bart's over the hours of use but that this did not happen.

JAM confirmed that construction will start after the fundraising window has closed, although it is possible that not all necessary funding will have been raised by that point.

Sixth Form

SF:

- The extension is complete;
- The project is within budget;
- Snagging is on-going;
- The project has met the list of requirements.

JAM reported that the Wormestall Meeting Room and Conference Centre are now being promoted for lettings.

ACTION: HLS to arrange a walkaround for the Resources Committee before their next meeting on 23rd May.

10. REPORTS ON FORMAL COMPLAINTS, FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION REQUESTS

JAM's report was circulated in advance of the meeting and the contents noted.

11. AOB

It was agreed that KS, as Vice-chair of Governors, will be added to the bank mandate.

ACTION: HSS

These minutes are subject to final approval by the Finance & Risk Committee at its next meeting.

SignedDate

Chair of the Finance & Risk Committee