

SIR JOHN CASS'S FOUNDATION SCHOOL

Minutes of a meeting of the Staffing and Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27th April 2016 at 4:00pm

Membership: Mr A Wright*
Ms A Godas*
Mr D Williams
Deputy H Jones (Chair)
Rev L Jørgensen*
Mr T. Wilson (Head)*
Mr T Mullee

In Attendance: Mr M Paddon – School Business Manager (SBM)
Ms M Maywood – Clerk

Mr T Wilson opened the meeting with a prayer.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Mr H Jones.
The meeting was chaired by Rev L Jørgensen.

Declarations by governors of any personal and pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda

There were no declarations of interest.

Dates of the forthcoming meetings

Governors noted the dates of forthcoming meetings.

Minutes of the previous meeting (circulated)

The draft public minutes of the Staffing, Finance and General Purposes meeting held on 10th February 2016 were received and were approved as a correct record for signing by the Chair.

Page 6, item 5 – The Head advised that the catering contract was working out well as the food was of a good standard and proper crockery and glassware had been made available.

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1. Updated Financial Procedures Manual (circulated)

Mark Paddon advised that under the School's Financial Regulations any financial commitments that exceeded the Head's authority of £10,000 had to be brought to the governor's attention and had to be signed off.

Since April three orders for staff had been raised and these were for:

1 Teaching Assistant - £12,348

1 Supply teacher - £ 13,930

1 SEN support cover - £13,150

It was confirmed that the Teaching Assistant did lead the lunch time activities.

RESOLVED – That the Committee shall approve the presented costs.

2. Draft Outturn budgets 2015/16 – DSG & CCFS

The outturn information had been circulated.

Mark Paddon advised that a budget surplus of between £90,000 to £100,000 would be expected at the end of the financial year.

The school would be in a better position this new financial year due to its cost control.

The reasons for this surplus were cost savings achieved in the staffing budget arising from vacancies and the support staff restructure in addition to an underspend in the maintenance budget.

The school had also received additional SEN and grant funding.

There had been an overspend in the equipment and furniture budget due to the purchase of new AV equipment and the double base instruments, but some of these costs would be reimbursed.

The catering underspend was due to the transfer of the nursery meal costs to the Children's Centre.

Achieving this higher surplus should be credited to the Head.

Whilst the school had some debts regarding school meals the free school meals (FSM) income had increased to £33,000.

Mr A Wright arrived at 4:15pm.

The increase in free school meal income in 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 was due to the phasing in of the grant with only 50% being received in 2014/15.

The outturn position for the Children's Centre was an overspend of some £50K although this is broadly in line with last year's outturn budget.

The school was still in discussion with the Local Authority (LA) with regard to Children's Centre Budget with the expectation that

In future shared site costs would be apportioned between the school and the Children's Centre in order to obtain realistic cost information and this would help with refining both of the budgets.

Governors enquired whether the LA would seek to recover the deficit from the School but it was confirmed that this had not been the case in the past. It was confirmed that the school would expect to retain this funding.

The Head advised that the SLA for the Children's Centre was being re-written, however the LA's long-term strategy for the Centre was still unknown.

More information could be available in time for the Curriculum meeting.

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3. Aged Debt Report for Invoice income

The Debt information had been circulated.

Mark Paddon advised that governors had requested that debt recovery should be a standing agenda item at future Committee meetings. Since the last report to governors the debt had reduced by £9,075. Although there is work to be done on reducing the 60 plus day debts, Most of the £9,075 reduction could be linked to payments made by Christ Church, who had been in a soft federation with the school. Settlement of this debt was a protracted process over a period of three years. The total Christ Church debt at the beginning of 2015/16 was some £20,000. The school had looked at the original records and had identified errors and had issued a £2,000 credit with Christ Church settling the remaining balance.

The Head advised that Mark Paddon was still trying to resolve all the debts, with the school having withdrawn essential services to families who were not managing their debts.

The school had not previously acted in such a way; however parents would need to understand that the school was not a credit facility.

Parents were also confused by the payment system as this focused on reducing the oldest debt first.

Parents were being encouraged to make online payments.

Mark Paddon advised that parents would be able to pay by standing order for their child care and this system would initially be phased in with new parents then be expanded in the future.

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4. Schools National Funding Formula Consultation

The information had been circulated.

Mark Paddon advised that the first part of the consultation process had been launched on 7th March and the deadline for responses had been the 17th April.

It was expected that the second part of the consultation would be more extensive and a request had been made for this to be a 16 week consultation.

The Head advised that the Government's timeframe for the consultation was very ambitious as the National Funding Formula would have to be in place by April 2017.

The school had submitted its response, as included in the report, by 15th April.

Governors thanked Mark Paddon for organising this response.

The Head advised that at a recent Head's meeting there had been discussions on how much school budgets could be reduced as there would be a cap to the reduction.

The City would be funding a consultant who would be undertaking some future funding projections for the school.

Governors asked how this would fit in with the academisation program.

The Head advised that the recent proposal that all schools had to convert into an academy had not been well received and the element of compulsion might be removed.

Further discussions were being held with the LA and the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS) and this information would be shared with governors at a future meeting.

Governors enquired whether the City would hold on to Education if the compulsion to academies would cease.

The Head advised that he did not expect the City to continue to be responsible body for education; especially as the governors were responsible for the school.

It could well be that the services delivered by the City might reduce and the school might have to purchase these via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in future.

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5. Update on premises matters

The refurbishment information had been circulated.

The Head advised that a decision had to be taken on how to spend the £90,000 that had been delegated to the school.

The tenders for the project had come in well above the available money.

Mark Paddon would be holding a meeting with Wilby & Burnett to identify non-essential elements and to ensure that building regulations could still be met.

A decision would also have to be taken whether some of the school's surplus funding should be used to top up the £90,000.

The focus should be on installing teaching walls, as the current equipment was no longer fit for purpose.

The whole project would comprise of 4 classrooms, the kitchenette and the staffroom that was in a state of disrepair.

It was confirmed that the school had to use Wilby & Burnett to manage the project as LDBS had commissioned this company.

Governors discussed the refurbishment proposal and the following comments were made:

Independent quotations could be sought and these could be compared with the Wilby & Burnett quote.

Wilby & Burnett had advised that the project had been reasonably priced as it also had included their management fees and the VAT.

LDBS had to sign off the project and they would only do this if this company would be engaged.

It would be important to have a breakdown of the costs in addition to independent quotations to evidence that the costs were too high and this could help with placing pressure on Wilby & Burnett.

Mark Paddon advised that multiple contractors would be involved in the project, making it difficult for the school to project manage the work.

The Head commented that the Diocese would not be minded to approve different people/ organisations to manage the project

Concerns about the costings had already been fed back to the Chief Executive of the LDBS.

The school's preferred option would be to spend the £90,000 on the project, with the school paying for the teaching walls which would cost approximately £10,000 per wall.

Non- essentials would be taken off the project to make it more affordable.

Governors commented that there should be an aim to have all the works completed by Christmas.

Mark Paddon commented that the cost of the flooring was still unknown as initially parquet flooring had been identified, but an alternative finish could be chosen.

The Head added that priority would need to be given to the Years 3 and 4 classrooms as they were in a greater need of refurbishment.

Governors agreed that the priority should be the classrooms; including the teaching walls, and the refurbishment of the staffroom.

The Chair advised that the quotes for this project would have to be presented to the Governing Body.

RESOLVED – That the Staffing, Finance and GP Committee shall agree to support the refurbishment project with £70,000 from the school budget.

6. Main playground design

Two playground proposals, one from Wicksteed playgrounds and one from Creative Play had been circulated.

The Head advised that the school had £25,000 to spend on this project, unless some of the school's surplus funding would be used as a contribution.

The Chair recommended that a grant application to the Sir John Cass Foundation should be made, stating the benefits of the playground in tackling children's obesity.

Governors commented that it might be useful to have the whole area Blue Wetpour laid, with some shade and a screen included.

Mark Paddon advised that there were times when the school had to have vehicles entering the playground and the Blue Wetpour surface would not be suitable to withstand this traffic.

The Head advised that the bandstand did provide shade; however a decision had still to be made on whether this should remain.

The Sir John Cass Foundation could be encouraged to fund the lower playground at £35,000, whilst the school could fund the top playground as it already had the £25,000 plus an additional £10,000 from the bulge class and the possibility of another £10,000 from one of Henry Jones's contacts.

During further discussions the following comments were made:

It would be important to check whether the depths of the Blue Wetpour surface would be appropriate and whether permission for this surface would have to be obtained.

The sandbox might not be required, as the focus should be on setting up one good piece of play equipment that appealed to a wide age group of pupils. Pupils might need to be consulted on their preferences for the playground.

RESOLVED – That the Working Party shall meet to identify the best piece of play equipment and that the Staffing, Finance and GP Committee shall agree to commission Creative Play to lay the Blue Wetpour.

7. Staffing update

The Head advised that the new Deputy Head, Alex Allan, had been appointed and her strengths were in the Early Years.

The school had still to clarify the roles of the Deputy Heads, especially as one of the school's Assistant Heads had obtained a headship.

A decision would have to be taken whether this Assistant Head's post would be required, or whether it might be more advantageous to have a class teacher who would also be an Assistant Head.

It would be necessary to focus on succession planning.

Governors commented that splitting the post might not be the best option.

The Head commented that it would be important to have teachers in class who held management positions.

The school would be devising a staffing structure that could be supported by the school's budget.

The Communication post had still to be graded by the City; however the funding for this post had been included in the school's budget.

The Communication post would be a stepping stone to a Business Manager post.

Governors recommended that the post be named Assistant Business Manager (Communications) as this could help in attracting the right person.

The school has received proposals for a managed cleaning service from Aquarius and the City, with the City contract being slightly more expensive, though they might offer a higher standard of cleaning.

Should governors choose the City as their preferred option, it was hoped that the current staff could be retained.

An additional cleaner had been placed in the Early Years to ensure that a good cleaning standard could be maintained.

Mark Paddon advised that the City had reviewed the cleaning standard at the school and had found it to be of a good standard.

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~~A copy of this report would be send to the Sir John Cass Foundation.~~

RESOLVED – That the staffing structure shall be an agenda item at the Governing Body meeting.

8. Any other business

A copy of the Private Funds audit was tabled at the meeting.

Mark Paddon advised that this fund was used to support school journeys, school occasions and any other areas the school budget could not be used for.

The income did comprise of donations and some grants; though this account had been less active in 2015/16.

The school fund account had previously been resolved and all the money had been transferred to the Private Fund.

The auditors had signed off the account, but the statement of the account would be presented at the end of the summer term.

RESOLVED - That a statement of the Private Fund be presented to Governors.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for her work and wished her well for the future.

The meeting closed at 5:50pm.

CHAIR..... *Laura Jorgensen* DATE..... *9/11/16*

