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## Little Paxton School Governing Body

### Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday, 19th October 2015, at 7:05pm

#### Present:

Ellen Barrett	Co-opted Governor	Diane Hawkes	Staff Governor / Head Teacher
Sophie Carroll	Parent Governor	Graham Hiom	Co-opted Governor/ Chair
Penny Conway	Authority Governor		

**In attendance:** Alison Gatward Clerk to the Governing Body

1. Apologies for absence received and accepted - David Jones Parent Governor  
No apologies received and not in attendance - Nick Folkard Co-opted Governor
2. Declaration of interests – as updated summary attached to minutes.
3. Minutes and Matters Arising
  - NF has reviewed the Emergency Management Plan alongside the Business continuity plan templates to ensure that all aspects are covered and recommended adding a sentence to the school's existing Emergency Plan (see FGB minutes 13/7/15).

**ACTION:** AG to circulate final version.
  - Rent details supplied by DH to be covered under item 6.
4. BCR Introduction and overview for new committee  
GH gave a brief explanation of the information found in the BCR and what to look out for. In the Period End Report the key information is whether the bank account reconciles at zero. The projected carry forward at the end of the year is £127,331 this should be in the region of where we have said this should be. Currently this stands at £149,000. See item 5 for further discussion regarding reserves.  
On the tab Reports GH explained the comments in bold are from Rob Cottle our Financial Advisor and the smaller font is the response from Mary Parnham the school Finance Secretary.  
Governors were invited and encouraged to attend a meeting with Rob Cottle to fully understand and become familiar with the budget and accounting practice for the school. The next meeting with the Finance Adviser is scheduled for 9.30am on 25<sup>th</sup> November at school.
5. School Reserves (Cambridgeshire Governor Services Suggested Item)  
Our reserves are current projected to be 9.7% at the yearend (£127,331), the current level is 12%. It is recognised that this level of reserves is high. However, the school is entering a period of growth and change for which it is prudent to maintain this level of reserves. **QU:** Is there anything that is not being done that should be being done or that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) would like to do, due to lack of funds? There is nothing that is being missed in order to maintain these levels of reserves – we are not avoiding spending money to keep it in the pot. DH explained, for

example, that the TA hours are continually being assessed and when the need arises then extra hours are being invested to meet a specific need. The reserves are therefore being dipped into when required. Governors confirmed that they are happy for DH to be able to do this and have this flexibility with staffing. **QU:** Does this mean you can react quicker to meet a need? As soon as a need is identified an intervention can be put in place without having to wait for agreement to at the next governors meeting. It is recognised that the funding is for these children for this year and it is being spent as it is required.

It was also acknowledged that as the development begins there may be a need for need additional staff to manage the process of the extension of the school (for example it may be prudent to recruit an additional teacher prior to the arrival of pupils to ensure that no class gets unacceptably large), as well as other requirements regarding ensuring the rest of the school is equipped as well as the new build. This will always be on the agenda for this committee to review.

## 6. School Lettings

DH shared information regarding the groups who regularly hire the school relating to the rates and hours per week. It was explained that the rent for Swifts was set at a favourable rate to support the startup of the business. This was several years ago and now the business is established. Governors using Swifts shared that they see this group being run as a commercial business and Swifts themselves have made changes in the way that they charge their customers. **QU:** Was the rent set as a formal introductory offer? There were verbal discussions but probably not recorded as a special rate. However, they have not had any rent increase in the last 3 years since they started. They have the same deal as the Pre-School in terms of facilities. It makes good business sense as a landlord to increase their rates. **QU:** Will Swifts be advised that the rent has not previously been reviewed but that it will be now on an annual basis? It has been reviewed annually, but just not increased because school was aware that, initially, numbers were too low for it to be a viable business proposition. They will be advised that it will continue to be monitored each year. It was recommended to increase to £7 an hour from January 2016 – this was agreed by all governors.

The Children's Centre rent their office space on a per annum basis. In fact they currently hardly use the office so it was agreed to leave the rent the same.

There will be no changes to the rents of any other group using the school.

It was minuted in a previous meeting that all groups will be contacted to be advised that the rent has been reviewed and the decision has been made not to increase at this time.

**ACTION:** DH to arrange for correspondence to be sent to each tenant advising of the above decisions.

## 7. Review of policies

### a. Charging and Remissions

**QU:** Has this policy been effective since it was previously reviewed or has it prevented something happening that you would have like to happen? It has worked well and enabled us to support Pupil Premium children. **QU:** The policy gives provision for “twins or triplets” but what about when siblings fall in school years for whom there are residential trips in particular? Whenever letters are sent home about trips it is always made clear that should finances be an issue school may be able to offer support. The office does a great job in identifying overlapping trips for families and if children choose not to go on trips it is sensitively explored whether this is for financial reasons and help is offered. It was agreed to update the policy to replace “twins or triplets” with “siblings.”

Subject to agreed amends the policy was approved and adopted.

**ACTION:** AG to amend.

### b. Pecuniary and Non Pecuniary Interests

Amendments to be made in line with the forms now collected.

**ACTION:** AG to amend.

Summary now attached to these minutes.

### c. Lettings

Reviewed fully last year, no changes proposed.

**QU:** Has this policy been effective since it was previously reviewed or has it prevented something happening that you would have like to happen? It supports the requirements.

Policy was approved and adopted

### d. Freedom of Information

Requires updating, for example no. 5 paying for information needs to be clarified.

No requests have ever been received since this was written.

A governor volunteer was requested to review and propose updates. SC volunteered and will report back to this committee at the next meeting. GH offered to advise and support as required.

**ACTION:** SC to propose updates to policy

AG to add to policy list for regular review

### e. Governor Allowances

This was previously reviewed in October 2013 and it requires updating. It was recognised as an important policy as it ensures accessibility to all to the Governing Body – eg. A single parent can claim for child minder to enable them to attend governor meetings. It was confirmed that there is a governor line in the budget which pays for governor services and the clerk. More funds could be allocated if required; it was again noted any such claims come from the school budget; there is no separate source of revenue for expenses.

Proposed amends – include mileage at 45p per mile (or maximum Inland Revenue rate). All expenditure must be agreed in advance eg. parking, subsistence, etc. Expenses may be claimed for journeys exceeding 5 miles. Maximum amounts to be removed. All claims to be authorised by chair of finance, supported by receipts and submitted to finance secretary in school.

**ACTION:** AG to amend policy

AG to add to policy list for regular review

## 8. AOB

Correspondence was received from a parent who tripped on a plastic hoop on the playground and fractured her ankle. She received first aid at the time and all the required health and safety documents were completed. She has written to ask the school to pay for a replacement lens in her glasses which broke when she fell, at a cost of £19.50. Although Governors were initially happy to pay for the replacement lens this did lead to concern and debate regarding this becoming an admission of liability and then leaving the school vulnerable to a subsequent claim. There was concern that even to pay for the lens as a gesture of good will to maintain relationships with the parent may not be the best course of action in the long run. It was agreed that DH should consult legal advice before proceeding. Governors agreed to DH acting according to the legal advice received.

**ACTION:** DH to seek legal advice and act accordingly.

*POST MEETING UPDATE – DH received advice from the LA about how to pay for the lens as a gesture of goodwill which has been followed.*

### **Members of the Personnel Committee Joined the meeting**

#### **Present:**

Neil Donoghue	Co-opted Governor
Mike Kendall	Co-opted Governor
Gemma Manning	Parent Governor

#### **Agreement on Staff increases.**

At the FGB meeting on 5th October 2015 there was some confusion over the increase level for M6 whether it should be 1 or 2%. EPM advised that not everyone on M6 requires the 2% increase but it can be discretionary. Governors agreed as all other staff were to receive a 1% pay rise this would be the appropriate level for M6 also.

Meeting closed 19.56