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Little Paxton School Governing Body

Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Monday 29th January 2018 at 6.45pm

Present:
Penny Conway LA Governor Diane Hawkes Head Teacher
Tracey Locke Co-opted Governor James Purser Co-opted Governor/Chair

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies received and accepted from R Fairbairn, D Jones and P Warmington

2. Declaration of interests - no changes were declared.

3. Agree minutes of the last meeting (6.11.17) and matters arising

Minutes were agreed at the last full Governing Body meeting; outstanding actions discussed

- To find list of pecuniary and other interests and ensure updated and then share with Committee for review and sign off – completed at FGB meeting in December
- To recheck total school number trigger point for growth funding and report back to committee – Chair reported that trigger number is 25 pupils or 10% of roll in order to meet basic need (this means the increase must be due to catchment need rather than parental preference).
- HT to update outcome of debt recovery at the next Finance Committee meeting – of the 2 debts one has now been paid in full, the other has been deferred on compassionate grounds and the HT will follow this up at a later date.

4. BCR Review – December 2017

Members of the Committee had received copies of the December BCR in advance of the meeting. The committee confirmed that there were no outstanding unreconciled items. All budgets were under review and any comments made by the SFA had been addressed. The Chair commented that, from this BCR, it appeared that the financial position looks better than previously expected. The HT agreed and neither could find a specific reason for this. There is a meeting with Rob Cottle (the school's Finance Adviser) scheduled for 9.30am on Monday 5th February where this will be raised and the predicted carry-forward confirmed. The Chair of Finance and the Chair of Governors will attend this meeting - other governors are also welcome to attend.

ACTION: Chair to check with Finance Adviser the revised prediction for carry-forward

5. Review of Funding Statement to December 2017

Members of the Committee had received copies of the Funding statement to December prior to the meeting. The Committee confirmed that it appeared the school had received all funding that was expected.

QU: what is covered by the term “other revenue funding”? This is not clear, it will be checked with the Finance Adviser at the meeting next week.

ACTION: Chair to check with Finance Adviser details of the funding statement

6. Policy Review

- Best Value Statement – this was reviewed and agreed by governors (it was noted that the document “RAISE” is no longer available and has been replaced by “ASP” – the statement will be amended to reflect this). The HT noted that, although the statement only requires quotes to be obtained for expenditure in excess of £3000, in practice that school often seeks more than one quote for smaller expenditure. It had been found in the past that significant amounts can be saved (for example with ICT items).
- Financial Responsibilities – reviewed and agreed by governors.
The HT reported to governors an attempted scam that had happened the previous week when she was unavailable. An email, purporting to be from the HT, was sent to the Finance Secretary asking for the immediate transfer of funds to cover a late bill. The Finance Secretary made enquiries and it soon became apparent that it was a fraudulent email. The system of requiring two people to authorise payment means every transaction is subject to 2 separate security checks which mitigates this risk.

7. SFVS

The Chair of Finance reported that he had met with the Finance Secretary to introduce himself. She had shown him the reporting and accounting systems that are used.

He had also discussed with her the completion of the annual SFVS audit. The Committee agreed that the Finance Chair should complete the audit form and circulate to all members before the next Finance Committee meeting.

ACTION: Chair to complete the SFVS audit form and circulate

8. AOB

The HT reported that she and the Finance Secretary had attended training in the use of the new “Orovia” system that has been introduced.

The Finance Committee was then joined by the Personnel Committee to consider a variety of options for staffing models for the next academic year.

Background:

The school has been gradually increasing the number of classes over the last few years so as to move to a 2 form entry school (that is 2 classes in each year group). This is with the agreement of the LA in order to meet local need as further building development increases the number of children seeking places at Little Paxton School.

There are currently 13 classes running (2 for each year group except the current Y6). The ideal would be to open the 14th class in September 2018, however there may not be sufficient funds to do this. Schools receive most of their funding on a per pupil basis; also

funding lags behind changes in pupil numbers – funding is based on pupil numbers on census day in the previous school year.

About half of the current 13 classes are running below the average “break even” point (that is where funding for pupil numbers covers the cost of running the class – 26 or 27 pupils). This has been possible through prudent use of funds in the past to hold back sufficient to be able to cover the costs.

Discussion:

It is not yet clear that there will be sufficient numbers entering the reception classes next year to ensure that there is enough funding to support the 14th class at the moment. There is also some concern that a local multi academy trust may be acting over zealously in an attempt to attract pupils to its schools (which, if true, could impact negatively on our pupil intake numbers).

The HT presented and talked through with governors 4 possible scenarios for the class and staffing structures for September 2018. This included measures to cover a maternity leave. The merits and drawbacks (both educationally and financially) of each of these were discussed. Governors agreed that the Chair of Finance, the Chair of Governors and the HT should discuss all the options with the School’s Finance Adviser, looking particularly at the on-going implications if the reception intake in September 2018 is lower than previously expected. It was agreed that, if it seems to be financially viable, the HT should advertise for one permanent class-teacher post and one temporary class-teacher post on a fixed term contract (to cover a maternity leave) from September 2018. This would be the preferred option as it would enable 14 classes to run next year with the least alternation to existing staffing. Alternatively it might be possible to recruit one permanent class-teacher post and one temporary part-time class-teacher post on a fixed term contract (to cover a maternity leave, the remainder being covered by re-assigning existing staff from other duties) from September 2018. If neither option looks unsustainable the issue will be discussed again at the FGB on 12/3/18.

ACTION: Chairs and HT to discuss class structures with the school’s Finance Adviser and HT to advertise teaching posts if possible

Meeting closed 7.30pm

Agreed actions

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| Head | To update outcome of debt recovery at the next Finance Committee meeting |
| Finance Chair | To check with Finance Adviser the revised prediction for carry-forward at meeting on 5/2/18 |
| Finance Chair | To check with Finance Adviser details of the funding statement |
| Finance Chair | To complete the SFVS audit form and circulate before the next meeting |
| Finance Chair, Chair of Governors and HT | To discuss class and staffing structures for September 2018 with the school’s Finance Adviser and determine if preferred option is financially viable |
| HT | To advertise teaching posts if possible |
| Chair of Governors | To add further discussion of class and staffing structures for September 2018 to next FGB agenda if required |