

**Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body of Stormont House School held at 4pm on Monday
23 May 2022 by videoconference**

Membership:

Mr Bernard Hawes Co-opted Governor – Chair
Ms Beatrice Andrews LA Governor – Vice Chair
Mr Kevin McDonnell Head Teacher
Ms Lynn Dalton Co-opted Governor
Ms Rhiannon Eglin Co-opted Governor
Ms Judith Enemoh Co-opted Governor
Ms Dot Hodgson Co-opted Governor
Ms Claire Napier Staff Governor
Mr Dayo Okewale Co-opted Governor
Mr Nicola Pizzolato Co-opted Governor
Ms Gillian Wickham Parent Governor
Mr Alan Roddie Parent Governor

Present:

Ms Beatrice Andrews, LA Governor – Chair (VC)
Mr Kevin McDonnell Head Teacher
Ms Lynn Dalton Co-opted Governor
Ms Rhiannon Eglin Co-opted Governor
Ms Dot Hodgson Co-opted Governor
Mr Dayo Okewale Co-opted Governor
Mr Nicola Pizzolato Co-opted Governor
Mr Alan Roddie Parent Governor
Ms Gillian Wickham Parent Governor

In attendance:

Ms Grainne Carpenter School Business Manager

Apologies

Mr Bernard Hawes Co-opted Governor – Chair
Ms Judith Enemoh Co-opted Governor
Ms Claire Napier Staff Governor

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed governors and noted apologies had been received from Mr Bernard Hawes. Apologies were later received from Ms Judith Enemoh and Ms Claire Napier.

2. Register of pecuniary interests

Governors reviewed the register and noted some minor gaps and inconsistencies in recording. There was a separate staff register which should be used for non-governors who were members of staff.

Action GC/KH to review the register, remove non-governors and check for consistency.

3. Main Business

3.1 Receive SIP report

KM advised that the SIP report was presented to governors, but that the committees would be responsible for scrutinising the detail. For example, Teaching and Learning Committee would focus on the curriculum aspects; Resources Committee on wellbeing.

LD asked about £200k loan. GC confirmed this had been taken out as a buffer in case of running into overdraft. It had not been required and had been returned.

3.2 Receive and approve draft budget for 22/23

The Budget had been circulated to governors following scrutiny from Resources Committee who had provided comments and questions. Grainne Carpenter (GC) had provided responses to those questions and a summary paper had been provided to governors.

Governors reviewed each of the Budget themes in turn, reflecting on the responses to questions posed by the Resources Committee, and posing further questions and comment.

Income:

Resources Committee had raised a question about the apparent mismatch between catering income and expenditure. This was because catering income was the amount collected from students and staff who paid for their meals. Around 45% of students pay for their meals (£2 per meal); the remainder are entitled to Free School Meals. That FSM allowance is effectively included within the place value and top-up per student and not therefore included in the income calculation for Catering.

DH asked about Pay360 and debt levels. GC confirmed that these had reduced considerably as more parents switched to using the app rather than paying in cash. It would remain under review.

KM noted the addition to the risk register from Resources Committee, relating to the potential impact on families of the rising cost of living. The school was offering advice and support to families, including the Information Station on Thursday 26/05/22.

DH provided link to guidance from the Greater London Authority which she suggested might also be shared with families potentially struggling.

ACTIONS:

- GC to ask Schools Finance if there was a notional amount that was included in the place value that could be used to produce a more accurate reflection of actual income.
- Further to discussion at Resources Committee (06 May 22), GC had already undertaken to work with chefs to look at costs and potential for savings in the menu cycle, recognising the potential impact of rising costs.

Staffing

Governors noted the questions that had been raised by Resources Committee and the responses provided by GC.

GC confirmed that National Insurance 1.5% increase and teacher pay uplift of 2% had been factored into the budget. It was noted that budget had been based on snapshot of actual staff FTE in April 2022; adjustments may be required in September.

GC confirmed that Education Support costs were budgeted to be lower. This was because last year had seen significant levels of long-term sickness absence which the school did not expect to see repeated.

Non-classroom support costs had included £3000 budget for overtime that was already accounted for; this would be rectified.

Resources Committee had noted that the cost of Staff Absence Insurance was higher than the expected amount to be recovered. KM commented that this was normal as insurance was effectively used to smooth costs over years. GC commented that the insurance package included staff counselling which had been quite heavily used last year – the value of that was harder to quantify but there was a significant benefit to staff wellbeing.

ACTIONS

- GC to remove double-counting of premises staff overtime costs.

Premises

BA noted that budgeted premises maintenance costs were lower. GC confirmed this was because there had been considerable maintenance last year catching up on things that had not been done, so costs were expected to be lower this year.

BA noted that predicting energy costs would be challenging and that this risk had been discussed at Resources Committee. GC explained that Hackney had advised to budget for 50% extra in gas and electricity costs. As meter readings were once every six months, it would be some time before the impact of price rises could be determined. [Resources Committee had previously discussed continued vigilance in relation to saving energy].

ACTION

- GC to add review of energy costs to agenda for September Governor's meeting

Governor training

GW asked whether training would now be delivered in person or online. KM assumed it would continue to be online at present, but undertook to check and also send out details of upcoming Governors conference.

ACTION

- KM/GC to circulate details of any training and forthcoming Governor's conference when available.

Budget deficit

Governors discussed the projected deficit of £97,000. It was noted that whilst this could be met from contingency/ reserves, but that it was not a sustainable position to be carrying a deficit two years running.

KM had already been in touch with Nick Wilson, Head of High Needs, and Ophelia Carter, Head of Schools Finance at Hackney Education, regarding top-up funding. This had been at a flat rate since the introduction of the policy 6 or 7 years ago (£10k place funding + £15k top up). The only means of increasing income was therefore by increasing student numbers.

BA asked about the ability to predict numbers and specifically 137/140 on roll. KM explained that there were a small number of in-year changes, but the main uncertainties were (i) transition from year 11 to year 12 and (ii) entry into year 7. For example, the school had expected an intake of 24 this academic year, but the actual number had ultimately been lower.

RE noted the SEND and AP Green Paper (2022) and suggested it be kept under review as there may well be implications for the revision of funding mechanisms. KM noted this was a strategic risk and agreed it should be kept under review.

RE asked whether the school received information about how many people put Stormont down as first choice. KM advised that it had not been provided this year, although it was relatively easy to infer.

DH asked whether the budgetary position might influence the school's long-term business plan, for example considering opportunities to expand. This was something Governors had discussed last year but there had been no update.

KM explained that the school had not received any further communication from Hackney Education regarding their review of demand and any potential expansion of SEND places. KM was expecting a workshop to be scheduled for late June/ early July with update from Hackney Education on this, but it was not yet in the diary.

Governors noted that it was difficult to do business planning without clarity on the overall strategy for SEND in Hackney.

LD asked about CFR budget codes. KM explained that this was DfE coding intended to make comparison simpler, but that it that did not easily fit with the way schools budgeted.

GW asked about wider fundraising and whether the school was registered as a charity. KM advised this was not currently the case but was something that she may wish to explore with other parents, recognising the commitment this would require.

ACTIONS

- Monitor expenditure
- Discuss with LA about increasing income; if they agree responsible budgeting but with 2x years
- Liaison with SEND team to ensure planning numbers/ assumptions are correct, identifying replacements

The governors formally approved the Budget for 2022-2023.

AOB

LD asked whether all governors had completed pen portraits as these were not yet up-to-date on the website. Several governors confirmed they had provided.

ACTION:

- GC to follow up with Toni Altinok and check all pen portraits had been received. If any required re-sending, they would email to confirm.

(Signed) 
(Chair of Governing Body)

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Signed: Chair of Governors

27/06/22.....
Date