

SHIRLEY COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND PRE-SCHOOL

Minutes of a Meeting of the Resources Committee

Held at 6pm on Tuesday, 12 March 2019

At Shirley Community Primary School

Governors Present: Mark Lewis (ML) Chair
Mark Broadbent (JB)
John Cattermole (JC)

Also in Attendance: Jo Bouttell (JB) School Business Manager
Suzanne Wernham (SW) Deputy Headteacher
Andrew Pulham (CK) Clerk

The meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from Iain Smith and his absence was recorded as authorised.
Apologies had not been received from Mark Abbas and his absence was recorded as not authorised.

2. Declarations of interests

None received.

3. Urgent business not on current agenda

None advised.

4. Minutes of Resources Committee on 23 January 2019.

These were agreed unamended and signed by the Chair.

5. Matters arising (actions)

In respect of the agreed actions summarised at the end of the minutes from the 23 January 2019 committee:

- Agenda Item 3 (four separate actions): JB gave an update on progress towards the procurement of a new boiler, advising that the school is about to go out to tender. A plan of action is being developed to follow up on a number of strands, including continuing to lobby CCC for additional funding towards this significant item of expenditure that the school is incurring through no fault of its own and seeking the support of Ray Byford from CCC in this respect.
- Agenda Item 7: This item was on the agenda for discussion at the current meeting.
- Agenda Item 8: JB confirmed the procurement exercise had gone well and contracts had been signed. She and a colleague are about to go on training for the new system and training

will then be rolled out to key colleagues. Other activities such as data cleansing and migration are underway and together these activities are placing considerable additional demands on JB and the team.

- Agenda Item 9: This item was on the agenda for discussion at the current meeting.

6. Benchmarking

The importance of benchmarking as part of the SFVS process was discussed with Governors. JB and JC suggested and Governors agreed that benchmarking with other schools in areas such as operating costs, even with those identified by the DfE as ostensibly comparable, can be hugely problematic unless the true context in which each school operates is understood.

Governors agreed that local knowledge is particularly important and with that in mind it was proposed that Orchard Park, Milton Road and Kings Hedges schools might be considered as appropriate schools with which to benchmark, on the basis of factors such as their age of buildings, size, number of pupils and overall area demographic.

Agreed:

- **CK to schedule this benchmarking exercise as a standing item for the Resources 'B' committee each year, with the preparatory work being undertaken prior to the meeting.**
- **JB to send the benchmarking link to all Governors.**
- **CK to place this matter on the Agenda for 7 May Resources.**
- **JC to raise at his next cluster headteachers' meeting, to obtain commitment to partake from the above schools.**

7. SFVS

JB explained the role and purpose of the SFVS process and in particular the return the school must make to the local authority by 31 March each year. Governors agreed the importance of this being a Governor-led process which is key to Governors and CCC gaining assurance as to the effective governance and operation of the school as well as helping to drive improvement. JB further advised that FGB would need to agree this year's assessment on 21 March for it to be submitted to CCC before the 31 March deadline.

Governors noted the SFVS exercise undertaken in March 2018 had demonstrated assurance against all twenty-five subject areas listed.

Agreed:

- **ML, JB and JC to meet at 1430 on Tuesday, 19 March to prepare the SFVS assessment form in advance of the FGB on 21 March.**
- **The assessment form completed in March 2018 to form the basis for the above meeting, with particular attention to be paid to whether the evidence and assurances detailed in that return remain the same.**
- **The completed assessment to be submitted to FGB for agreement, on 21 March.**

8. Finance monitoring

JB took Governors through her report and supporting documents which had been issued in advance of the meeting. Key areas of over and underspend summarised in the tables JB had issued were discussed with Governors.

JB predicted the capital carryforward at year end would be approximately £28,000, although she advised most of this has already been committed to essential works in 2019/20 such as improved ventilation systems in the school kitchens. It was unlikely, therefore, that any significant element of the £28,000 would be available to help fund the new boiler.

JB advised the *current* revenue surplus was approximately £164,000, which had arisen for reasons listed on her summary. This figure included a reserves figure of £61,000. JB advised the actual carryforward at financial year end would be lower than the £164,000 as spending occurs during the final few weeks of the financial year and some elements are ring-fenced to specific areas; however the carryforward is still likely to be significant.

Governors asked JB and JC a number of questions against this report as follows:

Q. How can we encourage staff to actively monitor and manage their budgets?

A. Although this is already encouraged, there is scope to have staff review their allocated budgets at regular intervals during the year – at least termly, if not half-termly.

Q. How can we better plan for and manage fluctuations of income and expenditure?

A. It was agreed that some items of income and expenditure are extremely volatile and therefore difficult to plan for with certainty. (Strategies for addressing this would be discussed by JC in his Headteacher's report). It was also agreed that this had been a particularly busy year for the school, with significant changes in staffing, which might not be expected in a typical year. Experience gained during the year would be of great help to the school in its financial planning for 2019/20 onwards.

Governors agreed that the school's overall budget position appeared healthy and reflected well on the school's sound approach to financial management.

9. Business Manager's report

This had been largely covered under agenda item 8.

In respect of the budget for 2019/20, JB advised the school's base budget had already been set. JB and colleagues are now in the process of expanding the budget to include the other items that will help form the full 2019/20 budget. She, JC and colleagues will also be looking at areas of expenditure and discussing where savings and efficiencies might be made, in view of anticipated funding reductions.

JC reminded governors that on the key census days in October 2018 and January 2019, there were approximately twenty-eight fewer pupils on the roll than had been recorded the previous year. This will result in a reduction in core funding of around £85,000 for 2019/20. Although pupil numbers are already increasing and are already well above four hundred, this will make no difference to the school's settlement for the coming year as these pupils were not accounted for at the census.

JC, SW, JB and all Governors agreed that an ability to forecast with some certainty in areas such as school numbers over a period of up to five years was essential to help with medium term planning. Information held by CCC as well as information from other sources should be better used to aid in this forecasting process.

Agreed:

- **CCC to be asked to furnish relevant demographic information to aid the school in its forecasting work.**
- **JC to ask a representative from CCC to attend a meeting of the cluster headteachers to talk through the information available and how it could be used as a planning tool.**

10. Headteacher's report

JC took Governors through his report which had been issued in advance of the meeting.

The effect on the school of the previously mentioned revenue reduction in 2019/20 linked to a lower number of pupils on roll on the census days in October and January was again discussed, along with the fact that in general terms core funding is failing to keep pace with increasing costs/inflation.

JC talked Governors through the savings proposals set out on page two of his report. These savings have been identified as relatively 'pain free'.

Agreed:

- **The school will more assiduously monitor and control its budgets from 2019/20.**
- **The school will use its carryforward to help manage the financial shortfall predicted for 2019/20, arising from the fact that although the census indicated around 391 pupils on the roll, that number has already increased and may well be back close to the previous year's 419 pupils by the end of 2019/20.**
- **The core purpose of using the carryforward for this purpose is to enable the school to continue to deliver against its Improvement Plan.**
- **The school will develop its demographic planning/forecasting capability as discussed earlier in the meeting.**
- **The school will continue to market itself and all that it has to offer in the expectation that the roll will again grow in future years.**

Governors noted the proposals set out in this report and welcomed the fact that the school has in place a clear and cogent plan to manage through the current situation and tackle the issues that have presented themselves.

On the issue of staffing, JC presented his proposal for the recruitment of a 'Family Inclusion Worker'. JC advised that this role, with its strong safeguarding element, would play a pivotal role in the life of the school. It would also free up existing school leaders to concentrate on their core functions of teaching and leading the teaching staff at the school. He had introduced this post at a previous school where it had paid dividends and was aware of at least one other local school which has already gone down this route.

Both JC and SW identified areas in which sources of support, primarily from CCC, had been 'hollowed out' over recent years, meaning that schools such as Shirley are forced to shoulder more and more of the burden of supporting vulnerable families. This person would assume some of these responsibilities, including liaising with the Children's Centre in respect of vulnerable children who are or may soon be, pupils at the school, engaging with hard to reach groups in particular and following up on problems such as chronic non-attendance. The officer would be based in Room 1, adjacent to the reception and would therefore have easy access to colleagues in reception as well as to parents/carers. A further benefit would be that this person would be able to interface with the 'Red

Hen Project' a local project that works with and supports children and their families to overcome barriers to learning, and provides a link between home and school.

Governors asked whether taking on these functions created any liability issues for the school; however JC advised this is not perceived to be the case. Such colleagues are *not* social workers or advocates and do not aim to replace or replicate arrangements that are already in place. They have a defined role which is to support or identify a need for support for children and families, and to then find the best way to organise the delivery of that support.

Governors supported the proposal, whilst placing on record their regret that the hollowing out of services previously delivered by other agencies had made this particular appointment necessary.

Agreed:

- **School to recruit to the post of 'Family Inclusion Worker' on the outline terms set out in JC's report.**

In respect of JC's upcoming plans for teacher staffing, again as set out in his Headteacher's Report, Governors expressed their broad support for his proposals, including for the increased use of TAs as required within the school which it was agreed can often produce better outcomes than reliance on supply staff.

11. Health and safety

Governors were reminded that there is currently a vacancy for a Governor to assume responsibility for health and safety monitoring at the school. JB gave an overview of what is required from the role which would include a minimum twice a year walk around of the school with a member of the facilities team, plus oversight of the school's incident/accident reporting log. The Governor would report on his/her findings to the FGB to an agreed frequency.

Agreed:

- **This item to be placed on the agenda for discussion at the FGB on 21 March.**
- **JC to write to all Governors to confirm that in general terms, Governors are not *required* to undertake Governor visits in pairs, should this be difficult to organise/sustain.**
- **The current imbalance between the number of Governors on the Standards Committee (nine) and on the Resources Committee (five) to also be placed on the agenda for discussion at the FGB on 21 March.**

12. Policies for review

There were no policies for review, although this position will change once the imminent review and re-working of the policy review cycle has been completed.

13. Any other business

Governors noted that this meeting had been scheduled for a Tuesday rather than the usual Wednesday and suggested this was in fact a better day for the meeting in the context of their other commitments.

Agreed:

- **JC, JB and CK to liaise with members of the Committee and colleagues to establish whether a new day and time of meeting might be preferred, effective from 2019/20.**

14. Date and time of next meeting

Tuesday, 7 May at 1800hrs.

The meeting closed at 1945hrs

I confirm that at a meeting of the Resources Committee held on _____ these minutes were approved and agreed as being a true and fair record.

Signed _____

Position _____

Date _____

Summary of Actions (not part of minute)

Agenda Item	Action Agreed	Lead
5	Continue with representations to CCC in respect of boiler funding.	JC, JB, Governors
6	Schedule annual benchmarking exercise for late spring Resources (inc. 07/05/19)	CK
6	Send link to benchmarking proforma and information to all Governors	JB
6	Seek commitment of named cluster schools to participate in benchmarking	JC
7	Prepare 2019 SFVS assurance statement on 19/03/19	JB, JC, ML
7	Place 2019 SFVS assurance statement on FGB agenda for 21/03/19	CK
9	Seek CCC's assistance in furnishing demographic data as a tool to aid in forecasting	JC
10	Use carryforward to assist with anticipated revenue shortfall in 2019/20 due to reduction in pupil on roll.	JB, JC

10	Explore and exploit opportunities to market the school in the local community	Governors and relevant staff
10	Recruit to the post of 'Family Inclusion Worker' for the school.	JC, JB
11	Place requirement for Governor with health and safety responsibilities on agenda for 21/03/19 FGB.	CK
11	Confirm that under normal circumstances Governor visits need not be undertaken in pairs.	JC (+IS?)
11	Address numbers imbalance between Standards and Resources committees at FGB on 21/03/29	CK, JC, IS
13	Review day and time of future Resources Committee meetings to ensure best fit for Governors and staff.	ML, JC, JB, CK