

**ELM GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL  
FINANCE & PREMISES COMMITTEE – Virtual meeting**

**7<sup>th</sup> May 2020 6pm**

**Present:** Hugh Mehta; Chair, Louise Willard; Head Teacher, Emma Sutton, Chris Adams,

**Quorate:** 4/5

**In attendance:** Diana Boyd, Anna Johnson, Clerk

1.

**Welcome and apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies

2.

**Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising**

The minutes were **agreed** without amendment.

Actions:

The Head noted that as the School Business Manager had been on sickness absence since February, the actions attributed to her had not all been addressed.

It was **agreed** to defer the Action1 regarding the risk register until the autumn term.

Governors agreed that as a result of the economic impact of coronavirus, there was unlikely to be funds to proceed with works prioritised on the 5 year premises plan. However, it would be updated for the following term to include works that the local authority would be carrying out over the summer.

Governors requested that should funds be available, they be involved in the decision on whether to employ a replacement teaching assistant or an admin/finance assistant via the apprentice scheme. Staff had underlined the very significant work that Ailsa was carrying out in the office but it was now uncertain that the school could afford to recruit another TA and this role was very much needed. It was established that a hybrid role was not likely to work as the skill sets were very different.

**Action:** LW to locate revised Data Protection policy and publish on website.

3.

**March Outturn**

In the absence of Val Gates, Penny Alexander had assisted the Head in finalising the outturn. It initially showed an underspend of £72,000 but Penny had identified an accounting error which when removed produced an underspend of £67,066. Instead of a balanced budget this had led to a £5,434 deficit in the 20-21 budget.

Therefore, the Head would contact Penny to identify amendments and copy in Hugh Mehta and Chris Adams in the next week. **Action**

School trips

There was still money to be refunded to parents for school trips that had not taken place in March due to lockdown. Sonia Ringrose at the local authority had been in communication with Parentpay who had now agreed to release these funds. It was likely that this would be returned to parents' accounts and therefore a suggestion that some parents might 'gift' this to the school might be difficult in practice.

The Head explained that there was a concern that coach companies would not refund transport cost to return to parents. School meals and swimming would not be reimbursed.

*Q. Governors asked if the fall in forecast income between January and February of £7,000 was related to school trip refunds.*

*Q. The Year 6 trip in June had not yet been cancelled and governors asked if refund monies had ring fenced in the budget.*

Head to check both of these items: **Action**

#### Lettings

The Head explained that clubs had been cancelled from early March and it was predicted that this represented a loss of £2,000.

The Pepperpot had not responded to recent communications from the school and the local authority would be contacting them regarding payments during closure. This represented the most significant loss of lettings income if payment was not forthcoming.

#### 4. **Three Year Budget**

The Head introduced the budget explaining that it was extremely tight. It had been difficult to plan the budget without the ongoing conversation with the School Business Manager that took place in previous years. The budget was cautious and reflected a worst case scenario viewpoint, both in relation to the predicted loss of income and future costings.

The lower roll numbers at the time of the autumn census in 2019 had led to less income for the school than expected and although there was an underspend it had been a challenge to achieve a balanced budget. Over the next financial year, the aim was to achieve some level of surplus at end of year.

The Head expressed regret that the curriculum budget had been cut back to a sum based on expenditure in the previous 3 years. This would hamper development of the broad curriculum promoted by the new Ofsted framework. However, the school would be receiving funding for The Every Child a Reader (ECaR) programme which would boost English.

The Head was pleased to report that the budget avoided the need for redundancies.

*Q. Why has the curriculum budget been underspent every year? And what investment in the curriculum will not now go forward?*

A. Subject Leads had been encouraged to spend their budgets but until this year the emphasis on foundation subjects had perhaps dominated. The school had intended to buy instruments for music, SEND and Art resources, as well as arranging visits from outside organisations to enrich the curriculum. However, training related to curriculum development would still go ahead as this was already planned to be delivered in house or via partnerships.

Governors suggested that curriculum resources were a good area to apply for funding from charitable bodies.

*Q. Is there a risk in reducing the budget for supply staff, as if the coronavirus situation continues it is likely that some staff will continue to isolate and they will need covering.*

A. The budget has been reduced from £34,000 to £30,000 and insurance would only

cover absence after 10 days and not that of support staff. The Head explained that there would be some savings in this area due to pupil progress meetings and SATs not proceeding in May. In addition, government emergency funding might also be available for this in order to keep schools open. The summer term in 2019 had seen higher costs than usual for agency staff due to staff instability and the final months of a long term sickness absence.

Governors **agreed** that the committee should continue to pay close attention to staffing costs as the highest area of spending and that variance in percentage increases on salaries should be taken into account. However, staffing costs were unpredictable and could also fall due to unforeseen staff changes.

It was suggested that the Chair of the Staffing committee, Chris McNeil should be invited to a finance committee in the near future. **Action**

*Q. Will the agency charge a finder's fee for Sarah Smith's employment on a contract?*

A. The Head had emailed the agency but not heard back; she noted that they did not usually charge finder's fees.

*Q. Has the school planned in maintenance of a substantial inclusion team to support children with the emotional and behavioural consequences of lockdown?*

A. The whole staff team will work together to support children with recovering from these pressures and also to fill educational gaps. Governors agreed it was difficult to plan, as there was no information about how the return to school would be organised nationally.

*Q. Is it a concern that there is no contingency budget?*

A. The main concern in relation to this would be if a High Needs child joined the school, as funding does not cover the full cost of support. The Head considered that maintenance of the premises should not be an area of risk and the match funding for the work scheduled to take place was already budgeted in.

The annual refund from school meals could not be included in the budget but was likely to provide some reserve.

### Fundraising

Governors suggested that the Covid-19 situation has increased community spirit and that it could be productive to invest in admin support to help with fundraising rather than more TA support, especially in anticipation of a long term economic downturn.

The PTA had been developing new fundraising ideas for example the 'Alumni celebration' which was had been planned for May. This area should be added as a high priority for next year's school development plan. **Action.**

The Head noted that staff within the partnership had attended training in this area but had found it difficult to find the time to apply their knowledge. However, the school had already benefited from parents' skills in bid writing and this could be explored further.

*Q. What is the loan repayment figure?*

A. In 2015 the school received a 10 year loan from the council to refurbish offices on the lower floors.

Governors queried the variance in loan repayment amounts across each year in the budget. Head to contact Penny Alexander regarding this. **Action**

	<p><i>Q. Why has the trips budget increased from around £10,000 to £20,000.</i>  A. This was the figure advised by Penny Alexander.</p> <p>The Head explained that Year 3 was to some extent notional but that there were anticipated staffing savings due to the expected retirement of some support staff and it was possible that not all these posts would be replaced.</p> <p><i>Q. How will the deficit of £5,000 be balanced in this year's budget?</i>  A. It was hoped that the government would provide schools with compensation for losses incurred due to Covid -19. It has now been confirmed that the school will get some return from the After School Club. The premises budget could be reduced, but an amount for match funding the projects going ahead over the summer must be retained.</p> <p>Governors discussed the Head's proposal regarding installation of doors with key fob entry, which would improve safeguarding for the children and provide a printout of staff present in the building in a fire situation. Quotes obtained had costed this at between £500 to £1500 per door, with 3 doors required. Governors concluded that £1,500 was too expensive but that this should be explored further.</p> <p>The Head would send the revised budget ahead of the next FGB by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May. The Head would highlight changes and invite comments in advance, so that Penny Alexander could be consulted and respond before the FGB. This was to ensure there was time for responding to any concerns before the submission deadline, which was the day after the meeting. <b>Action</b></p> <p>Governors thanked the Head for producing a sensible budget in difficult circumstances. The Head noted that Penny Alexander would continue to work with Ailsa in Val Gate's absence.</p> <p>Governors <b>agreed</b> that another Finance meeting should take place in June, which might be informal and not minuted, except as a report at a full board meeting. The Chair and Head to confirm 10 days before the 11<sup>th</sup> June. <b>Action</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Review progress on Finance Plan</b></p> <p>Hugh Mehta had sent a revised plan to the last FGB. The committee reviewed outstanding areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sports budget had been spent but some expenditure was not located in the correct budget field.</li> <li>• The School fund should be audited for the final time following closure of the account. Clerk to check if this is compulsory. Emma Sutton to contact Maria who completed them in the previous year. <b>Action</b></li> <li>• A final Health and Safety walk would depend on any government decision regarding school reopening. It was likely that an addendum for the Health and Safety policy would be issued.</li> </ul>
6.	<p><b>AOB</b>  Hugh Mehta to send email of thanks to Penny Alexander for her support during Val's absence. <b>Action</b></p>
	<p>Next meeting: 11<sup>th</sup> June TBC</p>

Chair's signature: .....

ACTIONS OVERLEAF

<b>ACTION LOG</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
1.	07.05.20	<p><i>Head would contact Penny to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify amendments to Outturn and copy in Hugh Mehta and Chris Adams in the next week</li> <li>• Check queries regarding school trip losses and if Year 6 trip refund was ring fenced in 20-21 budget</li> <li>• Check variance in loan repayment amounts across each year in the budget.</li> </ul>	LW	Asap
2.	07.05.20	Chris McNeil should be invited to a finance committee in the near future	HM	01.06.20
3.	07.05.20	Fundraising to be high priority in next SDIP	LW	01.09.20
4.	07.05.20	Head to send revised budget by 15 <sup>th</sup> May	LW	15.05.20
5.	07.05.20	The Chair and Head to confirm Finance meeting 10 days before the 11 <sup>th</sup> June	HM/AJ	01.06.20
6.	07.05.20	Clerk to check if school fund audit compulsory in the local authority. Emma Sutton to contact Maria who completed them in the previous year	AJ ES	Asap
7.	07.05.20	Paper records security to be added to Data protection policy and policy put on website.	LW	01.06.20
8.	07.05.20	Hugh Mehta to send email of thanks to Penny Alexander	HM	21.05.20

<b>ACTION LOG - Deferred</b>				
<b>No.</b>	<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
9.	14.11.19	Risk Register to be populated as agreed and come to next meeting		Review November 2020
10.	11.02.20	The 5 Year Premises Plan would be updated following submission of the final 3 Year budget in May.		Review November 2020
11.	11.02.20	VG to research overall cost of employing an apprentice		Review November 2020