

**ELM GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL
FINANCE & PREMISES COMMITTEE**

11th February 2020 6pm

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

Quorate: 3/5

In attendance: Val Gates (VG), School Business Manager; Anna Johnson, Clerk

1. Welcome and apologies

Apologies were received from Chris Adams and Leigh Ward

2. Minutes from last meeting

Minutes from the 14th November were **approved** without amendment.

3. Matters arising

- Governors **agreed** that the Health and Safety audit action be closed.
- VG had checked the Emergency Evacuation plan and confirmed it was up to date.
- It was **agreed** that the 5 Year Premises Plan would be updated following submission of the final 3 Year budget in May. **Action**

4. Outturn

Governors noted that many areas of the curriculum budget were underspent. VG stated that subject/area leads have been encouraged to spend their allocations, adding that this expenditure was an important part of school development and an underspend was not looked for in this area.

VG explained the budget bid process for curriculum leads who were encouraged to think ahead and plan spending for their subject areas. The Head noted that the new Ofsted framework would require a larger budget for curriculum due to the greater emphasis on foundation subjects.

Q. Has the school received funding for children who have entered the school with high needs?

A. The school completes EHCP (Educational Health Care Plan) applications for these children following assessment – there is one in process currently and 3 in place. However, funding is not received retrospectively with support costs borne by the school up until confirmation of the EHCP and this is an area of budget which is difficult to predict.

VG explained that schools had incorrectly been charged the National Insurance element for the Term Time Only payments in relation to teaching assistants and this would be refunded by the local authority. There was still uncertainty about how or if schools would be asked to bear costs for back payments.

High costs for agency staff were balanced by an underspend in teaching costs – the current overspend was £41,604 with Teaching staff underspend at £30,449.

Q. How can this be avoided in next year's budget?

A. VG explained that there had been an unusual level of sickness and absence for serious illness in the summer term of 2019 which increased the use of agency staff. However, supply cover is underspent by £6,750 with less sickness in the autumn term. The Head noted that historically the school had had 7 grade D teaching assistants who were used for cover (now reduced to 2) and this staffing structure did not work for the school as it now

operated. The school needed incidental cover for small meetings and teacher training/professional development. A teacher employed in a cover role would increase FTE costs and an inherent risk of redundancy, in addition if this teacher was absent the school would incur double costs having to employ agency staff and pay the teacher.

Calculations for agency in the budget were based on known schedules for PPA (planning, preparation and assessment), pupil progress meetings and an estimate for absence for CPD/training.

Governors **questioned** the forecast remaining budget for utilities as electricity, gas and water cost centres were significantly underspent, with only two months remaining in the financial year. VG explained that the local authority had advised this cautious forecast and there was a historic pattern of large bills for utilities being issued in the final month of the year.

Q. What is the cause of the deficit within the miscellaneous income budget?

A. An ambitious budget was set based on an expected income of £20,000 from the PTA and a Crowdfunding initiative (which did not go ahead), as well as a further £4,000 from the LEA Reading project. The LEA money has been put into YLEA, which is now showing a surplus of £13,686. The Head reported that the £4,000 for the Reading project would also be received in the next financial year.

VG reported that the school has been asked to resubmit the Lottery Bid by the National Lottery Community Fund delaying this possible source of income.

The school would be receiving a refund in relation to the Free School Meals service of around £2,000.

The Head reported that provisional numbers for intake in 2020 were promising with a high number choosing Elm Grove as their first choice. This suggested the new format for prospective parent tours had been positive. There was still a concern about children leaving the school at Year 2 to move out of the city but these places were filled later on.

The recent LA consultation with GPs had forecast a continuing reduction in school entry children in the city with a forecast surplus of 719 school places in 2023. Governors discussed this and concluded that this was less likely to impact on Elm Grove than schools in other areas.

5. First draft of 3-year budget for 2019-22

VG explained that budget training was taking place on the 13th February and LA funding was not yet finalised, therefore the 3 Year budget was not available. However, both the year end underspend and next year's funding was expected to be the same as predicted. Per child funding for Pupil Premium would increase in 2020-21 but formula funding was £21,629 less than predicted. Continuation of sports funding beyond 2021 had not yet been confirmed by the government.

It was **agreed** that VG would email the committee with the first draft budget before submission to the local authority to allow questions from governors. **Action**

Budget 2020 ideas

Governors considered staff proposals for expenditure to support school development in the next academic year, this would enable the budget to be linked to the 2020 School Development Plan.

	<p>The Head introduced the proposal to employ an apprentice to work as Admin Support: typing up minutes, organising diaries, updating the website, creating and updating policies, reviewing risk assessments and carrying out basic HR duties. They would require a staff member to provide mentoring. The school would use the compulsory apprenticeship levy in the school budget.</p> <p>Governors queried the overall cost of employing an apprentice and VG agreed to research this. Action</p> <p><i>Q. Is there greater freedom to adapt teacher appraisals compared to in previous years?</i> A. Schools must be careful to evidence performance linked pay but there has been considerable change in how Heads in the city approach appraisal. Lesson observations are now rarely used and broader evidence for example research reports are replacing these.</p> <p>The Head explained that consideration regarding best use of Grade D TAs and the desire for training in a wide number of areas were a particular focus of teacher's budget discussions.</p> <p>The Virtual School (set up to improve outcomes for children in care) had agreed to pay for Attachment training for staff at Elm Grove which was extremely welcome and this item could be removed from the CPD budget.</p> <p>SENCo accreditation was not in the 'budget idea' document but should be added to next year's training budget.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Services for Schools analysis</p> <p>VG highlighted the increase in the insurance premium for maternity and long term sickness which was based on the previous year's claims. Otherwise there was little variation in charges between this year and 2020-21 and governors were advised that there were few services that could be discontinued.</p> <p>The Literacy Support Service was optional but considered essential as there was a rising number of children with dyslexia attending the school.</p> <p>The school would investigate whether they could buy into the EMAS service, which gives support for children with English as an additional language, on an ad hoc basis. The school currently had few children who needed this service and it did not offer every language represented in the city.</p> <p>Governors discussed the negative impact of delays in processing EHCPs due to low numbers of Educational Psychologists in the city.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Premises VG confirmed that work on the roof of the caretaker's house was proceeding.</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>GPDR policy – to approve</p> <p>Governors asked that security of paper records be made more explicitly set out in the policy and approved it pending this amendment. Action</p> <p>Scheme of Delegation – to approve <i>Q. Has the delegation requirement re virements been applied recently?</i> A. This was applicable to the purchase of the minibus.</p> <p>Governors approved the Scheme of Delegation without amendment.</p>

9.	<p>Health & Safety</p> <p>Governors considered the Health and Safety report submitted to the committee.</p> <p><i>Q. Has the school identified the cause of the rise of playground incidents?</i></p> <p>A. The change to recording incidents on CPOMs and recent training of staff in relation to this may be the reason. Accidents in the playground have not been associated with OPAL but were either in relation to the climbing frame or slips and trips. VG noted that the wet weather may have contributed to these incidents.</p> <p>The Head described the serious incident that had happened at the Winter Fair, noting that the PTFA had a rigorous risk assessment in place. Following RIDDOR investigation it had been categorised as an accident. However, the school had communicated with the PTFA emphasising the need to ensure that carers knew that they were responsible for children's safety during PTFA events at the school.</p>
10.	<p>Fundraising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lottery bid had been resubmitted as requested. • A gathering of Elm Grove alumni was planned for May. • The PTFA had questioned the replacement of chairs and tables questioning the decision on the basis of sustainability. Governors agreed that this was an important improvement of the class environment for staff and children and if not done it could be offputting to prospective parents and so a risk to future intake. • Other grants applied for were: an Eco grant, a gardening project and RE project. The school had received percussion instruments following application.
11.	<p>AOB</p> <p><u>Polling station</u></p> <p>The local authority had not agreed to find an alternative venue in response to the school's health and safety concerns about being used as a polling station while the school was open. Governors agreed this was unsatisfactory and posed a significant risk.</p> <p><i>I was not clear that next steps were identified.</i></p>

Chair's signature:

ACTION LOG				
No.	Date of meeting	Action	Owner	Due Date
1.	14.11.19	Risk Register to be populated as agreed and come to next meeting	VG	11.02.19
2.	11.02.20	The 5 Year Premises Plan would be updated following submission of the final 3 Year budget in May. Meeting 7th May	VG	27.04.20
3.	11.02.20	VG would email the committee with the first draft budget before submission to the local authority to allow questions from governors		26.02.20
4.	11.02.20	VG to research overall cost of employing an apprentice	VG	27.04.20
5.	11.02.20	Paper records security to be added to Data protection policy and policy put on website.	VG	Asap