

The Swanage School
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE FINANCE & PREMISES COMMITTEE
Held on Wednesday 14 October 2020, 5.30pm

Present (via remote access): William Knight (Chair), Jenny Maraspin (Headteacher), Tim Marcus, Jessica Starmer
In attendance (via remote access): Anna Carvisiglia (Business Manager), Sue Fletcher (Clerk), Tanya Hamilton-Fletcher (Governor observer), Kay Lawton (Deputy Headteacher, from item 1.6)

Item		Action	Lead	By
	The meeting was held by remote access in accordance with guidelines relating to the Covid-19 pandemic.			
FP 1.1	Welcome The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.			
FP 1.2	Apologies for Absence Apologies were received from Isobel Tooley.			
FP 1.3	Declarations of Interest There were no new declarations of interest or conflict with any agenda item.			
FP 1.4	Minutes of the Last Meeting The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record. The minutes will be signed at a later date.			
FP 1.5	Matters Arising & Actions Where not elsewhere on the agenda. <u>FP 6.5.2 Premises Report: Flammable Materials</u> Following the last meeting AC had confirmed that the school's Health & Safety Advisors had not raised any points relating to the storage of flammable liquids during the H&S audit and had confirmed that there were no new regulations. The Chair noted that the school must conform with the DSEAR (Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations) in addition to COSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations) and, if not already covered, that internal procedures should be updated to reflect this.	Check procedures	Facilities Mgr / H&S Link	Nov '19

<p><u>FP 6.5.3 IT Report: Phone system</u> AC reported that transfer of the telephone system had been completed. The question over whether this had entailed changing the Private Branch Exchange (PBX) for incoming calls was unresolved and it was agreed the Clerk would raise the question with the IT Manager.</p>	Query PBX	Clerk	Nov '19
<p><u>FP 6.5.4 Data Protection Report</u> JM reported that the school has subscribed to training courses via the National College and that an online course relating to GDPR will be scheduled into the continuing professional development programme for staff.</p>			
<p><u>FP 6.6 3-Year Budget</u> The 3-year budget had been approved by the full board of governors on 15th July 2020.</p>			
<p><u>FP 6.7 Insurance Annual Review.</u> AC confirmed that re-tendering for insurance cover currently provided by Marsh will start after half-term.</p>	FP agenda	Clerk	Nov '19
<p><u>FP 6.8 Designated Funds and Free Reserves: Maintenance Fund</u> There had been a number of actions in relation to this item and progress was reported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Updating the maintenance plan is an objective for the Facilities Manager, both in terms of reactive maintenance and long-term strategic maintenance. - AC had approached two consultants for quotes in relation to CIF bids, however both had said they were unable to quote without knowing the scale of a project. It was clarified that the question from the Committee had been in relation to having a consultant advise on the CIF evaluation criteria and to ensure that the school's understanding of the evaluation criteria is correct, rather than to assist with a specific bid. - The auditors had been advised that wherever there is discretion, the governors' wish would be to use restricted rather than unrestricted reserves; this would be discussed again during the audit. - The Chair had advised the full governing body of the Committee's recommendation for continued prudence in spending. - Attributing costs of sick pay and acting up allowances in relation to the former Headteacher's illness to the Staff Absence Designated Fund, and increasing the fund again in line with the fund parameters, would be dealt with during the upcoming audit when year-end adjustments are made. 	Quotes for advice on CIF evaluation criteria	AC	Nov '19

	<p>2. <u>Premises</u> The premises report had been circulated. In response to questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AC confirmed that the online maintenance helpdesk is based on the same system as the IT helpdesk, which has been working well, and has required a new license at minimal cost. - JM reported that quotes received for floodlighting on the astro-turf pitch look unfeasibly expensive and therefore this was unlikely to be viable. It was noted however, that if significant extra lettings income would be predicated if the pitch is floodlit and would cover the installation and running costs over a reasonable number of years, it may still be worth considering. <p>AC reported that the Facilities Manager is re-locating and therefore has resigned his position.</p> <p>3. <u>Data Protection</u> A report of a breach had been circulated, on which there were no questions.</p> <p>4. <u>Health & Safety Governor</u> JS reported that inspection checks had been good. She had met with senior leaders to go through the Covid-19 guidance and the school's response on a line by line basis and reported that the school had been very thorough.</p> <p>The Chair asked whether the school had investigated the air-conditioning system to ensure it met the needs in relation to Covid mitigation. JM confirmed an engineer had attended site and had confirmed the system was air-handling rather than air-recirculation as needed, and that no changes were required. She noted that the system works less well in classrooms, but a check had shown it was not faulty.</p>			
FP 1.9	<p>School Development Plan Objectives The draft School Development Plan (SDP) had been circulated and the Committee focused on the objectives relating to leadership and management.</p> <p>JM outlined the proposed actions, reporting that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - she and AC were working on a long-term financial strategy, noting that any input from governors would be welcome 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the income generation strategy would include applying for grants; a volunteer is flagging relevant grants to the leadership team - every effort will be made to produce a balanced budget, with the 3-year plan stringently implemented - financial reporting will be as useful and thorough as possible - Covid-19 related spending is being carefully managed and monitored - an annual spending plan will be required from the Curriculum Area Leaders for teaching and learning - internal monitoring and impact evaluation of performance management and upper pay scale objectives would be improved, to ensure value for money. Meetings with postholders are currently underway to set objectives in line with the SDP. <p>In relation to the income generation strategy, it was noted that it may be possible to seek a grant to cover the cost of floodlighting the astro-turf. JM confirmed this will be explored, along with grants to fund other ideas to improve sporting facilities for students and community use.</p> <p>A governor asked if environmental sustainability should be included in the SDP. JM agreed that it should and that this would be added.</p>	Add environmental sustainability to SDP	JM	Oct '20
FP I.10	<p>Budget</p> <p>AC presented a revised 3-year budget. Reasons for the changes were given in the commentary and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a decrease in catering income due to the delay in starting hot-food provision due to Covid mitigations - a further decrease in lettings income due to the ongoing impact of Covid mitigations - an increase in funding by £25k (Covid related) <p>The result was a reduction of £17k to the 2020-21 budget (taking it from a projected in-year result of £16.3k surplus to a £1.1k deficit). Small positive changes were forecast for the following two years.</p> <p>NOTED the revisions to the budget.</p> <p>[Clerk's note: as there is a School Development Plan objective to produce a revised balanced budget, these revisions were presented to the full governing body for note rather than approval].</p> <p>In response to a question, JM reported that the budget for alternative provision was based on previous years as is difficult to predict. Whilst rarely used, alternative provision typically results in a dual registration for a student</p>			

	between the school and a learning centre, with the GAG funding for that student, plus extra, being paid to the learning centre.			
FP I.11	<p>Salary Uplift & Pay-scales</p> <p>The Chair reported that the pay-scale recommendations for teaching staff reflect the announcement that the government will fund an increase of 2.75% for all teaching staff with the exception of newly qualified teachers who will attract a 5.5% increase in funding.</p> <p>AGREED the proposed pay-scales for recommendation to the full governing body.</p>	FGB agenda	Clerk	Oct '20
FP I.12	<p>Pupil Premium Funding</p> <p>JM reported that pupil premium funding and Covid-recovery funding had been used to invest in teaching and learning support, namely a Higher-Level Teaching Assistant for maths support, two apprentice Teaching Assistants, 0.2 FTE English and literacy support and other interventions. In response to a question, JM confirmed this was in keeping with the guidelines for use of pupil premium funding.</p>			
FP I.13	<p>AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE</p> <p>1. “Dear Accounting Officer” letters</p> <p>Neither the Headteacher nor the Chair of Governors wished to highlight anything from the letters which had been circulated, these being primarily for information.</p> <p>2. Risk Register</p> <p>The Chair recorded thanks to governor Isobel Tooley for her work on streamlining the risk register back to a manageable list of key risks. JM confirmed that it was a helpful document in its current format, especially given the proposed changes. With reference to specific risks, the Chair:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - noted that plans are in place to address the risk of a deficit budget. - asked JM to be conscious of the need to continually monitor the effectiveness of the wider leadership team, following the significant changes in senior leadership last year, especially with regard to whether fine-tuning of roles and structures may be needed. JM agreed that changes in leadership can have a significant impact on a school but she was confident in the strength of the current middle leadership team. 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - asked JM about attendance, given the risk of students not attending, it being noted that the current level of 92% was below the usual expected rate of 95%. JM reported that at present (due to the impact of Covid-19) the Department for Education was monitoring schools against the national average, rather than against 95%, and that schools are submitting figures daily. The national average at present was 85% and so the school was experiencing very good levels of attendance in the circumstances. She reported that additional hours have been given to the Attendance Officer to monitor attendance and communicate with parents. - asked JM about students' mental health and wellbeing. JM reported that a significant amount of work is being put into supporting students by staff and youth workers from the Swanage Churches who are in school frequently for support including mental health "walk & talk" sessions with individual students. She also reported that the PSHE curriculum has been adjusted to front-load the mental health and wellbeing sessions and that the return to school (post lockdown) has been approached with a focus on regaining an enjoyment of learning and building resilience, rather than being assessment-driven to formally identify gaps in learning. - suggested that he and the Clerk work to flesh out the risk register in relation to the infectious disease risks. <p>3. Internal scrutiny of financial and non-financial controls</p> <p>The Committee discussed questions raised by the Regional Schools' Commissioner (RSC) regarding the governance structure and in particular whether Academy Trust members hold governors to account, noting that the RSC has asked the school to commission an external review of governance. It was acknowledged that the co-operative membership structure, with a higher number of members than most other academies, is unusual and that the approach has led to concerns in the past also. The Chair expressed that he is confident that members can and do hold the governing body to account and that the structure is compliant with requirements.</p> <p>The Committee considered whether to ask the internal auditor to address this specific question through a compliance check, or whether to take the opportunity of commissioning a consultant to work with the board for a full review of governance practices and effectiveness. This would be as a proactive learning exercise with a view to ensuring that the governing body continually improves and is as strong as it can be. The Clerk had sought information from the National Governors' Association (NGA), whose charge for such a review was c£1,800, and was waiting to hear from a National Leader of Governance (NLG) to obtain an alternative quote.</p>	Risk Register updates	Chair / Clerk	Nov '20
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	<p>AGREED that as the internal auditor will be conducting an audit in any event, that they be tasked with looking at governance compliance, in particular the question of whether members can effectively hold governors to account. Further AGREED to recommend that the full board of governors give consideration to the commissioning of a full external review of governance by a consultant after additional information is received from the NGA and the NLG.</p> <p>AGREED that additional information regarding the role be given at the time of recruiting new members. The Chair offered to act as a mentor to new members if required.</p>	Scope internal audit	AC	Oct '20
		FGB agenda	Clerk	Oct '20
FP I.14	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p><u>Cycle to Work Scheme</u> AC outlined the options for the scheme, with reference to the circulated paper, noting that the scheme could be run either as a loan scheme or as a pool scheme. As a salary-sacrifice scheme, where loan repayments are taken from gross salary, there would be advantages both for the member of staff (lower tax and National Insurance) and for the school (lower National Insurance contributions).</p> <p>Governors were in full support of the idea of running a scheme and indeed the Chair noted that this had been approved by the governing body back in 2013 on the basis of a pooled scheme with the value of the bikes to be no greater than £1,000 (as bikes under this value are entitled to exemption under the Financial Services and Markets Act).</p> <p>AGREED that the scheme should be reaffirmed and publicised to staff, once appropriate third-party suppliers had been considered.</p>			
FP I.15	<p>Confidentiality No item would require confidential minutes.</p>			
	<p>Next Meeting The next meeting will be held on 2 December 2020</p>			
	<p>The meeting closed at 7.20pm</p>			