

GOVERNING BODY OF HARBINGER PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

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| Date of Meeting | 9 th January 2020 |
| Venue | Harbinger Primary School, 8 Cahir Street, Isle Of Dogs, London, E14 3QR |
| Chair | Martin Young |
| Clerk & Minutes | Suzette Nicol |
| Time | 5:00 p.m. |

MEMBERSHIP

| Governor | Category |
|--|-----------------|
| John Bradshaw * | Local Authority |
| Martin Young (Chair)* | Co-opted |
| Ranjani Shrutisagar* (virtually – From Item 4) | Co-opted |
| Kiran Rahman | Parent |
| Andy Smith (Headteacher)* | Staff (Head) |
| | |

| Also In Attendance | Role/Title |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Mai-Anh Dien | School Business Manager (SBM) |

*Denotes attendance

PART 1 – OPEN SECTION

ITEM

1. Welcome, Apologies For Absence and Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Kiran Rahman.

There were no pecuniary interests declared on items on the agenda.

2. Election of Committee Chair

It was agreed that Martin Young would act as Chair for this meeting and that Ranjani Shrutisagar would be approached to see whether she would take on this role.

RESOLVED: To appoint Martin Young as Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee for this meeting and for Ranjani Shrutisagar to be asked whether she could take on the role of Committee Chair.

3. **Review and Approval of Committee Terms of Reference**

Committee members reviewed the Terms of Reference of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The Terms of Reference incorporated the Terms of Reference of both the dissolved Finance and Resources and the Personnel & Salaries Committees.

RESOLVED: To approve the Terms of Reference of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

4. **Minutes For Review & Approval**

- Minutes of the Finance and Resource Committee meeting of 19th September 2019

Governors received the draft minutes of the Finance and Resource Committee meeting that took place on Thursday, 19th September 2019, as circulated prior to the meeting.

It was **AGREED** that the draft minutes of that meeting be approved as a true and accurate record, and they were signed by the Acting Committee Chair.

Matters Arising

Page 2, agenda item 3 – The date of 7th May 2020 has been set for the full governing body to approve the agenda. The committee has also been populated with new members.

Page 2, agenda item 4 – The Asset Management Plan could not be approved at the last meeting as it was contingent on the changes in ICT.

Page 4, agenda item 5 – Russ Mitchell, the school's Financial Consultant, was invited to the governing body meeting on 7 November but he could not attend the meeting. The Head said that he would be invited to the next governing body meeting on 16th January.

Ranjani Shrutisagar joined the meeting by conference call at this point.

- Minutes of the Personnel & Salaries Committee meeting of 28th October 2019

The minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Salaries Committee held on 28th October 2019 had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Personnel & Salaries Committee held on 28th October 2019 be signed by the Acting Committee Chair as a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

Page 3, agenda item 6 – The Safer Recruitment policy had been updated and would be presented for approval at this meeting.

Page 4, agenda item 9 – The Headteacher provided the appendices to the Appraisal Policy. The policy will be reviewed at this meeting.

Page 5, agenda item 9 – The Pay, Sickness Management, Capability and Flexible Working policies were reviewed and agreed at the full governing body meeting on 7 November 2019. The Grievance Policy is to be reviewed during this meeting.

- Confidential Minutes of the Personnel & Salaries Committee meeting of 28th October 2019

Governors reviewed and **RESOLVED** to approve the confidential minutes of the Personnel & Salaries Committee meeting of 28th October 2019.

Matters Arising:

None

- Minutes of the Pay Committee meeting of 31st October 2019

The minutes of the committee meeting of 31st October 2019 which had been circulated prior to the meeting were reviewed and agreed.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Pay Committee meeting of 31st October 2019 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and signed on behalf of the committee.

Matters Arising

Page 2, agenda item 6 – The application for pay progression for the staff member on P001 will be discussed under Part II of the minutes.

5. **Finance**

- Budget Monitoring Report

Mai-Anh presented the November 2019 Budget Monitoring Report. Highlights of the report included the following:

- I07 – School Business Services Ltd (SBS) had included an approximate £20,000 reimbursement from the Local Authority in the budget for the PFI contract. The entry had been put under an incorrect code.

Q&A: What comes under PFI in this building?

We do not own the building, G4S does. We have 7 years left on the PFI contract.

The Headteacher reported that he had received an update recently and the school would not be receiving this money.

At this point, the Acting Chair asked the Headteacher to produce a briefing note on PFI for the governing body as the PFI contract had an impact on many of the things done by the governing body. It was also agreed that the briefing note would form part of the induction for new Governors.

Action: Headteacher

- E12 – There appeared to be an overspend of £1,865.76 under this budget heading. However, the SBM said that it was a duplicate Purchase Order which

was now rectified. As a result the budget was not over spent.

- E19 – Governors were informed that the main bulk of the overspend (£2,594) was due to the Y6 trip to the Unicorn theatre. The Headteacher said that the overspend had to be flagged up and looked into in more detail.

Action: Headteacher

- E27 – The SBM reported that this budget heading was overspent by £73,817.87 due to a lot of staff absence which required agency cover. In addition, the school had under budgeted for this year (£18,000). It was noted that staff absence was currently being managed.

Part of this item was taken under Part II.

- E28a – Governors were informed that the school had not allocated funds to this budget in error. SBS then over allocated funds for this due to incorrect invoicing from Local Authority. The LA had calculated costs for the wrong school but the school got the money back. The budget has now been correct for next month.
- The overall in-year balance was a deficit of £104,111.77 however, due to the carry forward from the previous year, the school currently had a surplus of £123,188.97. This total will change if the capital is used for the proposed I.T. upgrade.

A Governor asked the Headteacher whether all the LBTH audit actions had been dealt with. The Head said that most of the financial actions had been done but that there was a need to look at the Parking Policy.

Q&A: Does the school have a car park?

We do not. We are paying some parking permit costs.

Q&A: Why are we paying for some staff and not for others?

The system has not been that robust. It is not normal practice to pay for parking. We need a clear approach on what we are doing for staff.

- Agree Virements (If any)

Quote for EVERY System

The Headteacher explained that the Every software was a system used at George Green's school to manage policies and risk assessment. The new system will be a big change for staff as they can receive policies and then note on the system that they had seen them. The system would also send alerts. Committee members were also informed that the system can send automatic alerts to staff to read statutory documents, alert the school to who has and who has not read the documents and the policies can be automatically updated on the school's website.

Q&A: Will the system be able to write policies?

No. It does not model policies.

Q&A: What will be the total cost?

The minimal contract term is 3 years. The total cost will be £3,597 which is roughly around £1,100 a year including VAT.

Q&A: Have you seen this system in operation at George Green's?
Mai-Anh has.

Q&A: Can we afford it?

We will have to do a virement. We have the money which came from reducing the cost for one school journey which will now be undertaken later in the year.

Governors **RESOLVED** to approve the purchase of the EVERY software subject to a proper review of the system in two years.

Following the above discussion, a request was made to transfer the sum of £3,147.50 from: Budget heading E19 Y6SJEXP to budget heading E20 ICT SOFT to pay for EVERY Software which will manage policies and risk assessments.

Governors **RESOLVED** to approve the above virement.

It was agreed that the SBM would re-write the virement request to reflect the correct reason for the virement request and the request would then be signed by the Chair.

Action: SBM/Chair

- Asset Management Plan

Committee members were informed that as the Asset Management Plan was contingent upon the changes in ICT, it would be signed by the Committee Chair when it was ready. The School Business Manager (SBM) would let the Chair know when it was ready.

Action: SBM

The Headteacher explained that the school was waiting for an ICT upgrade (Windows 10 upgrade). The school had old software in place and the replacement could not be delayed. The ICT supplier had put together two quotes one for £12,689.90 and the other for £16,299.90. The difference between both quotes was £4k. The Head said that the quotes had been challenged by the previous Committee Chair which had caused delay and the earliest that the new software could be installed was by Easter. There were also memory storage capacity issues. The Head added that once the new software was in place, it would not need to be replaced over 3 years. Although the quote for £16,299.90 was on the high side, the school would not need to budget for ICT upgrade for a while. The SBM informed the committee that the school had enough money in the capital budget to undertake this expenditure.

Governors **RESOLVED** to approve the quote for £16,299.90.

Committee members were informed that the upgrade would be carried out during the Easter break.

- Subscription to the Key

The Committee discussed the proposal for the school to sign up to the Key which is a provider of knowledge and know-how to education leaders. Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that given the pressures on the budget, the school could not afford this. It was agreed that the governing body and the Head should focus on the training provided by the Borough for now. It was also agreed that this decision would be reviewed by the governing body in six months' time.

6. **Review and Approval Of Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS)**

The School Business Manager presented the draft Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) to the committee. The SFVS could not be approved at this meeting as it was incomplete. It was agreed that there was still some work to be done on the document and that the document would be circulated once it was completed.

Action: Headteacher

7. **Benchmarking Report**

The SBM presented the benchmarking report. Four schools with similar pupil numbers were compared.

Q&A: We are one of the lowest in terms of school workforce but the highest in terms of salaries. Why is this?

We have a lot of staff who have been here for a long time and some of them are on the upper pay scale. In addition, these figures are from 2018/19.

The Headteacher added that there were more staff members on the upper pay scale last year compared to this year. This year, there are 2 NQTs and the school is changing its staff make up.

Governors received the benchmarking report.

8. **Review of Service Level Agreements (SLA)**

The School Business Manager highlighted the following SLAs that were being reviewed:

- The Home School Support contract will be terminated at the end of the Spring Term and brought in-house. The money would be used to employ a staff member to perform the same services.
- The SBM is looking into sourcing a new Payroll Provider and moving away from the LA as a provider. She would like to try a payroll provider who can provide HR services as well and has liaised with other SBMs for feedback on different providers.
- The quote obtained from EPM is slightly cheaper than the current provider and there will be better communication between payroll and HR as they currently provide HR service. There will also be a better finance processing structure – paperwork. The SBM will obtain 3 quotes for this service which will be

presented to the committee at the next meeting.

Action: SBM

- There are plans to source a new GDPR provider. The SBM said that Connetix had a more personal service and was slightly cheaper than Judicium (current provider).

Q&A: Why do we need someone to monitor GDPR compliance once we became compliant?

We need someone to monitor this for Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and subject access requests. We also need someone to do the redacting. We had an audit recently.

Q&A: How many FOIs and subject access requests have you received?

We have received one or two since I started as SBM. A child's medical supply got lost on a bus and we had to contact GDPR.

Q&A: How much will it cost and can the service be used on a case by case basis?

Kinetics will cost £1,700 per year. They train and update staff and do our policies. The school needs to have a named company.

9. **Report On The Impact Of Pupil Premium Funding**

The Headteacher reported that the Pupil Premium strategy had not changed and the focus was on providing additional support. The school was getting better at analysing impact. He mentioned that the school would be embarking on poverty proofing and would need to look at how they could offer support to families.

Governors **RESOLVED** to approve the Pupil Premium report which will be placed on the school's website.

10. **PE Grant**

The Headteacher reported that the school had received £8k in PE grant. The report on the PE grant was being prepared by the Deputy Headteacher and would be presented at the next full governing body meeting.

Action: Headteacher

11. **Staffing Update**

See Part II minutes

12. **School Premises Update**

i. Building Update

The Headteacher presented the following building update:

- Security fobs for ground floor

The school would like to change to a one way entry system as the current system was a safeguarding risk. They had been negotiating with G4S on this and had received one quote for security fobs – £7,845.40, p/a £409.66, which included installation, maintenance and life cycle.

The quote was discussed with G4S. G4S had also been asked to provide the school with at least two more quotes in order to compare the costs but there were concerns that the quote from G4S would be high. The LA will be invited to the next G4S meeting. The Head said that he wanted to alert Governors to the challenges that they were facing.

Q&A: Can we not use another firm other than the one recommended by G4S?
We can try and see how G4S will react. The premises belong to them.

It was agreed that the PFI agreement should be checked to see whether the school had to use their recommended company for the job.

Action: Headteacher

ii. Health and Safety Update

The following health and safety update was presented:

a. Accidents/Incidences

There had been 2 pupil accidents involving 2 different pupils. AIR forms were completed and submitted to the LA for both incidences.

b. H & S audit

The school had a safety audit in December which highlighted several 'high' priority actions that needed to be reviewed. The Headteacher and the SBM have met to discuss the actions.

Q&A: How close are we to replacing the lead pipes in the school?

We need 3 levels of approval at G4S. The issue is now with the LA for 3 levels of approval. All taps are labelled and we are meeting all of the standards.

Committee members discussed conducting a health and safety inspection. The Clerk was asked to remind the Chair about identifying a Parent Governor to carry out a health and safety inspection.

Action: Clerk

c. Fire Evacuations

There were two fire evacuations last term (consecutive weeks). The Fire Brigade was now on automatic call should the fire alarm go off.

d. Playground maintenance

Governors were informed that there had been 2 termly inspections as well as the annual inspection. The first termly inspection was carried out in November, the second in January. The inspection in January brought up some low level maintenance requirements which the school has received a quote for.

Termly inspections for the play frame had booked in for the rest of this academic year. The repair of the playground wood work would be carried out in the Summer term when the wood was drier. G4S had been asked to carry out daily/weekly and monthly checks on the playground and to forward the checklist on a weekly basis so that safety issues could be highlighted and rectified if necessary.

e. Pond

G4S undertook the cleaning of the pond over the Christmas period. Installation of safety guard on the top of the pond has been carried out over Christmas period.

f. Purchase of EduCare for Education Unlimited e-Learning Licence

Committee members were informed that the school had purchased the e-Learning Licence EduCare software, an online training for all staff at a cost of £1164.00. Thirty-seven training courses will take between 30 – 60 minutes each to complete and the courses range from Health and Safety in Education, Administering Medication, Food Hygiene, On-Line Safety and Child Protection refresher. Certificates would be issued once the courses were completed. Staff were allocated a couple of hours in the afternoon of 6th January (INSET day) to undertake a couple of the courses. This was presented to Governors for information only as the purchase had been authorised by the Head.

13. **School Policies And Procedures** (For Review And Approval)

i. Appraisal Policy – The appendices were provided by the Headteacher. The Head was asked about what concerns he had regarding this policy. He mentioned the coaching strategy which he said was embedded in the school. Governors **RESOLVED** to approve the policy as is with the knowledge that the policy would be reviewed with staff. Governors asked that the appendices be kept separately from the policy and not listed as appendices to avoid the appendices being taken as policy.

ii. Grievance Policy – Approved. It was noted that this was the policy from the THEP website that had been approved by the unions.

iii. Safer Recruitment Policy – Approved

RESOLVED: To approve the above policies and to recommend them to the governing body for ratification.

It was agreed that the following policies would be deferred until the next meeting:

iv. Whistleblowing Policy

v. Charging & Remission Policy

vi. Best Value Statement

vii. Health & Safety Policy – The SBM was asked to forward the model Tower Hamlets policy of May 2019 to Governors for approval as this was the policy recommended by the recent health and safety audit.

RESOLVED: To defer the above policies until the next meeting.

14. **Agenda Items For The Next Meeting**

- i. Policies For Approval - Whistleblowing Policy, Charging & Remission Policy and Best Value Statement
- ii. Deficit Reduction and Budgetary Control
- iii. Approval of Draft Budget for 2020/21

15. **Any Urgent Business**

a. Deficit Reduction and Budgetary Control

A Governor suggested that there was a need to look at the budget line by line to see where savings could be made. This could be treated as a 2 year task rather than drastically cutting the budget in year **Action: School**

The Head was advised to start working on different deficit reduction measures. He was advised to work the new budget with 5% cuts in all lines to see if the targeted cuts could be achieved. The SBM undertook to do this after February when there would be no more spending. Ranjani Shrutisagar undertook to work with the SBM on this. Ranjani agreed to come into the school between February and early April to look at the budget with Mai-Anh.

Action: SBM/Ranjani Shrutisagar

b. Finance audit

Committee members were informed that the Local Authority had informed the school that they would be carrying out an internal audit at the end of March. The school will be starting preparations for their visit.

c. Committee Chair Role

Ranjani was asked to consider taking on this role from early April. She mentioned that this would depend on her situation at the time.

Action: Ranjani Shrutisagar

There was no urgent business.

16. **Confidential Items (If Any)**

See confidential minutes.

17. **Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Thursday 30th April 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

Chair's signature: _____ **Date:** _____