



**GOVERNING BODY OF HARBINGER PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
FINANCE and GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE  
2 FEBRUARY 2023 AT 5PM

MINUTES - PART 1

Members: Rebecca Abrahams (EHT (Executive Headteacher)), *Ben Brickley* (BB), Kiran Rahman (KR), Srividya Srivathsan (SS)(Chair) and *Martin Young* (MY)

In attendance: Mai-Anh Dien (SBM (School Business Manager)), Nimesha Nagahawatte (Head of School) and Sabrina Begum (Clerk).

*\*Italics denotes absence*

1.	<p><b>Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declaration of Interests</b></p> <p>An apology of lateness was received from Rebecca Abrahams (EHT)</p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Martin Young</p> <p>Noted the absence of Ben Brickley. The Chair requested for the Clerk to check if Ben Brickley had received the email notifications from GovernorHub as there had been no response from him.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action: Clerk</b></p> <p><b>Clerk's Note:</b> <i>Subsequent to the meeting, Ben Brickley sent his apologies and stated that he had been dealing with a personal issue and was unable to attend meetings, but that he would be able to resume his role in the near future.</i></p>
2.	<p><b>Minutes Of the Committee Meeting Held on 20 October 2022 and Matters Arising</b></p> <p>The Minutes were agreed as a correct record and would be marked as signed by the Chair via GovernorHub.</p> <p><u>Matters Arising</u> None</p>

3.

### **Budget Monitoring Report**

The SBM reported on the income as following:

- Received additional SEN (Special Education Needs) funding that was approved due to the EHCP (Education and Health Care Plan) applications. There is backdated funding to be received from the last financial year where plans were requested and still have not been delivered.
- There was Pupil Premium increase from the latest report by the Local Authority
- The school received an additional grant was for a training course which two named members of staff attended (Jack and Jubaida).
- There had been an income of £4,000 from GS4. There had been ongoing debate with GS4 as they stated that it was not under Harbinger's contract to take the money, but other schools were given the money when the SBM investigated into the issue. There is a cost that they are charging for the key holder arrangement even though they only lock up in the evening. They also charge during school holidays even if there are no bookings.

**Resolved** that the SBM suggests to GS4 using the additional hours that they provide for Harbinger over the course of the year.

**Action: SBM**

- There was another increase to income due to an additional unplanned school journey and this had also increased the expenditure.
- The Covid Catch up Premium and Covid expenses reclaim was more than what was planned. It fluctuated considerably in the last two years.
- Overall, Harbinger had received more income than predicted.

The SBM reported on the expenditure as following:

- The main bulk of the overspend in expenditure is the staff inflation and increase. There was a planned 3% increase for teachers and 3% increase for support staff but this was not the case. The biggest overspend came to staffing apart from administration which is due to the SBM's role being split between two schools.
- The other overspend was under agency and that is to do with an additional SEN child that was not budgeted for but required support.
- The current projected total deficit carry forward for 22/23 is estimated at £120,000.
- The school is in receipt of capital income of over £15,000 which needs to be allocated as part of the devolved capital earmarked for energy

savings project. This has therefore reduced the in-year deficit carry forward to an estimate of £92,000 for the year end.

The EHT reminded the committee that there would most likely be unforeseen changes again. The EHT highlighted another overspend which was providing staff to work with SEN children. The EHT stated that the school was looking to get a higher income than what was originally anticipated for that expenditure, but the increase deficit was difficult to avoid. However, the school's strong efforts to keep the deficit to a minimum are clear especially on the expenditure side where great efforts have been made to keep it a basic minimum. The EHT praised the efforts of Jubaida and Nimesha who had managed many staff absences because of the high level of community illness. Furthermore, the EHT and the SMB were already in discussion regarding next year's budget with significant changes that would bring further savings of the staffing expenditure.

The EHT further reported that the planned expenditure on ICT Learning Resources had not changed. The EHT had been discussing with the SBM that she is interested to use some of increasing capital in computing as there are no immediate urgent plans for building. However, the EHT is waiting to see the school's position at the end of year because there is potential for further savings due strikes, VAT, and other efforts being taken.

The Chair noted that Harbinger is not at the stage to sign up for a licence deficit agreement rather the school needs cash flow support. The EHT stated that she would speak to the Local Authority if the school was facing a lot of difficulty in keeping the revenue deficit below £100,000. The Chair reported that Suhail Kadir, a member of the school's finance team, had suggested to go for a cash advance to support the deficit and adjust the cash advance for the following year in February 2024. However, if the school remained in the same position as next year and had not shown enough effort to manage, then the Local Authority may consider putting the school in a licence deficit agreement.

**The Chair inquired** if Harbinger would be expecting children out of the borough who have applied for the EHCP. The EHT replied that there are children who are out of the borough but have not applied for the EHCP.

There was no urgent expenditure approval to action.

**Resolved** that the committee have acknowledged the school's effort in maintaining the budget as well as the school's direction in trying to reduce the deficit.

**Benchmarking**

	<p><u>Update</u></p> <p>The SBM compiled a spreadsheet comparing Harbinger to four other schools with a close focus on Cubitt Town Infants as the roll numbers and OFSTED ratings were like Harbinger's. The information was taken from the DfE site and from the 21-22 figures so there are a lot of changes to consider.</p> <p>The EHT pointed out that Cubitt Town had a spend of £192,000 under curriculum resources which could be hidden staffing or consultancy. The Chair noted that their deficit is higher than Harbinger's even though their spend is less. The SBM added that Harbinger had a lot of SEN needs to meet in comparison to Cubitt Town.</p> <p>The Chair noted that Harbinger is a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) school and so benchmarking against other schools that are not PFI is unreasonable. The Chair thanked the SBM for putting this document together as it does show a general picture of where Harbinger sits with other schools.</p>
4.	<p><b>Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) 2022 – 2023</b></p> <p>Governors received the SFVS and reviewed it. Following a review of the document, the following points were noted:</p> <p><b>School Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 6 - The school would consider putting in a License Deficit Agreement to the Local Authority – The Chair suggested to remove this point as it would be revisited next year upon further review with Local Authority.</li> </ul> <p><b>The Chair inquired</b> the EHT on whether her plans to use the capital for ICT procurement would impact student provision. The EHT replied that the school can continue to spend on what it had planned but if there is an increasing surplus of capital then it would be sensible to direct some of that towards ICT. The EHT added that she had been investigating into lease agreements but would bring more concrete information to discuss at the next meeting. The Chair agreed that having a lease allows a continuous flow of updated technology.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b> on transferring some of the revenue expenditures under the ICT line to capital. The SBM and the EHT to review the entry and agree.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action: SBM</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 8 - there are no changes other than moving away from Parago with the asset audits and giving that responsibility to Clever ICT.</li> </ul>

	<p>The Chair commented that there are banks which repurpose their items by donating it as a part of the corporate strategy. The Chair suggested that the school could reach out to local banks in the area to explore corporate donations of equipment, where available.</p> <p><b>Setting the Annual Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 11 – The EHT responded to a query from the Chair confirming the form entry had been approved. If there is a good outcome at the next OFSTEND inspection, then there would be a recommendation that Harbinger had two forms of entry. There is growing potential for student numbers at the Isle of Dogs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Staffing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 15 – The Chair inquired if there was a final report circulated from the SRMA (School Resource Management Advisor). The EHT would forward the report to the Chair.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action: EHT</b></p> <p><b>Value for Money</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question 20 – SBM reported that the Isle of Dogs SBM forum had been set up in addition to attending the LBTH SBM Forum with the Chair.</li> </ul> <p><b>KR inquired</b> if schools could sell unused or unwanted items that are in good condition as another source of income. The Chair replied that there might be a financial limit depending on what the policy states but there would need to a write off in this committee if it were to happen. Hardware can normally be sold to a recycling company for a small amount and there are e-buyers too, but it could be enough to cover for some stationary. However, as it is taxpayer’s money the school must fully utilise it.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b> the changes to the Schools Financial Value Standard and the document is agreed by the Governing Body virtually before being signed by the Chair and submitted to the LA.</p> <p>The Chair noted that Martin Young must read the standard and sign it off before Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> February.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action: SBM</b></p>
5.	<p><b>Service Level Agreements</b> <u>Update</u></p> <p>SBM reported that the school had registered with Arbor, a management information system (MIS), due to the difficulties with Bromcom. The migration would take place over the February half term. With Arbor, all communication, information, and processes would be under one system, but the current payroll remains because of Harbinger’s financial situation.</p>

	<p><b>The Chair inquired</b> if there had been any communication sent to parents on these changes.</p> <p>The SBM replied that a communication had not been sent to parents. The parent pay is available up until June 2023 as Bromcom is available until March and Arbor would be going live in February. There is an overlap so the old system can still be referred to. There is contingency if the ParentPay contract ends.</p> <p>The Chair highlighted that due two MIS running simultaneously, there could be missed information or a confusion on the parent pay especially if the systems are not syncing. The Chair suggested to write to parents after the Easter break in April. <b>The Chair agreed</b> with the payroll remaining with the Local Authority until the cashflow is resolved.</p> <p><b>Resolved</b> both changes for the Service Level Agreements and that the approval of the SLAs is referred to the next Governing Body.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Action: Clerk</b></p>
6.	<p><b>School Premises Update</b></p> <p>Reported that G4S had agreed to pay for the Portacabin work after years and the work would be completed over the February half-term.</p> <p>The Health and Safety Audit would be undertaken at the end of the month and preparations had begun. G4S and the PFI company produced much of the paperwork and they have a good of upkeeping the records.</p>
7.	<p><b>Staffing Update in relation to Budget</b></p> <p>None.</p>
8.	<p><b>Policies</b></p> <p>None.</p>
9.	<p><b>Date and Time of next FGPC meeting</b></p> <p>Resolved that the meeting would take place on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 5:00PM.</p>
10.	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>KR reported that funders from a past youth event that she was involved in contacted her to say they have grant applications open. These are open from now until March but the bank account that would hold the grant cannot hold more than 100k. They have suggested to open a Parent Teacher Account</p>

(PTA) to receive this grant. KR investigated into a suitable bank for this type of account and Metro was favourable. The bank would require minutes from any PTA meetings and a letter written and signed by Harbinger school stating that the PTA is recognised, the date of when it was established and the names of the committee members. One parent had kindly volunteered to be the treasurer but there may be a conflict of interest because she is employed by the school as a volunteer staff and a lunch time supervisor.

**The Chair advised** to speak to Suhal Kadir, Local Authority Finance Officer who is currently supporting the school to understand more before opening the bank account. KR would put the information into writing and submit this to the SBM and Suhal.

**Action: KR**

The meeting closed at 6:18pm.

To be marked as signed electronically via GovernorHub