



GOVERNING BODY OF HARBINGER PRIMARY SCHOOL
FINANCE and GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
11 MAY 2023 AT 5PM

MINUTES

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>Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declaration of Interests</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.</p> <p>An apology for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• absence was received from Kiran Rahman;• lateness was received from Rebecca Abrahams (EHT). <p>The Chair noted that Ben Brickley had been absent at the last committee due to personal reasons and requested the Clerk to get in touch with Ben to see when he would resume attending the committee meetings. The Chair further noted that there would need to be an additional member if Ben could no longer make it so future meetings were quorate.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Action: Clerk</p> <p><u>Declarations of Interest</u> There were none declared.</p>
2.	<p>Minutes Of the Committee Meeting Held on 02 February 2023 and Matters Arising</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></p> <p><u>Minute No. 3 - Budget Monitoring Report</u></p>

The SBM reported that G4S could not agree on the extra hours as they were concerned about security of the premises. The SBM said it would be possible but there would be additional costs involved. The SBM would be speaking with the Regional Facilities Manager regarding the hours and the extension. She would report an update on this in the next meeting.

Action: SBM

Minute No. 5 - Service Level Agreements

The SBM reported that the new system with Arbour had gone live after many issues and a six-week delay. It was a long process of downloading, checking and reuploading. There had been some confusion about which offers the school had accepted, but the SBM had clarified their contract with Arbour.

The Chair enquired if there was a loss of data. The SBM replied that no information was lost, and a staff member had worked hard to get all the outstanding data onto Arbour. Recently, the school had used it to do the census, so it had been working well. Furthermore, staff had been using the system consistently and adjusting to it.

The Chair suggested that the Safeguarding lead conduct a random check to ensure that no data was missing and **asked whether** the old system was still accessible. The SBM responded that the old system had been officially removed, and that the SBM had sent a final reminder and warning to staff about the deadline. Staff had not reported any missing data to the SBM since then.

Minute No. 10 – Any Other Business

The SBM reported that there had been little progress in setting up the Parent Teacher Account. Since their last meeting, the SBM and KR had not met. Suhal, the Senior Accountant at the Local Authority, suggested that the funds generated by the school be transferred to a disbursement account and then used to create a budget for the school fund. The PTA could use the school fund account separately, but this course of action had not yet been taken.

The Chair commented that the disbursement account would create restricted access and usage of those funds. She added that it was money raised locally through activities organised by the school so it would need to be accessible. The Chair suggested not to do this and recalled that she had discussed and agreed with KR to contact Suhal getting the school's request in a form of a letter to open a Parent Teacher account with Metro Bank.

Action: SBM & KR

3. **Budget 2022-2023 Year End Reporting**

	<p>Governors received the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2022-23 Year End report <p>The SBM reported on the variances of income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I01 Funds delegated by the LA – this was £36,819 which was more than what was budgeted but it was the De-Delegation funding so although it was a large income, it was also a large expenditure. • I05 Pupil Premium – there had been falling roll of the Reception class so the income for this had been less. • I06 Other government grants - the £37,198 income was for the EHT's support and the mental health leads scheme. This appeared via the BACS remittance in March which was not expected. • I07 other grants and payment received - there was a variance because of the cash advance and the income was for the two Ukrainian children who joined last year. The school had no prior knowledge of this income until recently. • The total expenditure was just over £70,000 in-year deficit and this was mainly due to the funding for the Ukrainian children and the EHT's support. • The brought forward deficit from last year was just over £225,000 and so in total year-end would be £290,682 deficit which was against the projected £80,000. <p>The Chair asked if the school had received the £125,000 cash advance in March. The Chair stated that it should be noted on the budget as a cashflow adjustment after the SBM confirmed they had received it.</p> <p>The Chair praised and thanked the school for their hard work and efforts in setting the budget as it had involved all levels of sacrifices which had taken a toll on staff and added that it was important to maintain the standard The SBM reported that this had been submitted to the Local Authority for confirmation and then it would be submitted to the Department of Education (DfE).</p>
4.	<p>Budget 2023 – 2024 (draft)</p> <p>Governors received the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget 2023-24 Draft Report <p>The SBM reported on the income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be a 9% increase in income under SB in comparison to last year.

Commented [SB1]: ???

- The school submitted eight EHCPs (educational health and care plans) that were awaiting approval, with the hope of receiving funding in September or December of this year. The budget figures had already taken into account the start date of those applications and represented what the school expected to receive. The SBM stated that she kept these as fixed income figures, but they could change over the course of the three-year plan.
- Pupil Premium would increase by 18% and this figure had come from the Local Authority.
- The total income for catering would be small, despite a 16% increase.
- Overall, for the year 23-24, there would be an increase of 8% in income.

The SBM stated that the cost of the Year 6 trip had increased and would continue to increase in subsequent years. For a long time, it was subsidised for parents, but Harbinger would need to increase the cost to parents. When the SBM asked other schools how much parents paid for residential trips, they were told it was £200 for a three-night stay. Harbinger had asked for £90 from parents last year, which they had now increased to £150.

The Chair commented that subsidising the cost by 40% was good and suggested that parents be informed of the trip at the start of the academic year and given the option to pay in instalments rather than the full amount. Furthermore, if a family was struggling, the school could negotiate the amount with the family on an individual basis to make an exception.

The Chair noted the falling roll in regard to Reception pupils which was a result of a funding shortfall of around £60,000. The Chair then **asked** if Reception would become a one-form entry. The SBM responded that there were currently 13 offers out of 35 so the Executive Headteacher (EHT) had emailed the pupil services team and requested if it was possible to reduce the published admission number to 30 children and they agreed. The Head of School added that if there were 32 admissions, a second class and another teacher would be required, so it was best to cap the number at 30. The SBM went on to say that the concern was more about the consecutive years where there would be a smaller cohort and trying to build that number up.

The Chair suggested that the Head of School join the admission discussions because the EHT would be moving on and it would be beneficial for the discussion to continue because the one form entry could change in the future, particularly after an OFSTED inspection.

The Head of School reported that the Early Years phase lead had contacted every nursery parent to find out which school their child would attend for

Reception. The Chair suggested looking at the offer grid to see if other schools were oversubscribed.

The Chair sought the Chair of Governors' views in regard to the school finances. MY stated that there were other ways to boost income such as repurposing the redundant caretaker's house and **asked whether** the building was going to be used a special needs facility. The SBM responded that a Local Authority officer had visited and Jubeda, the Deputy Head, had shown them around, and they were eager to set up the caretaker's house as a SEN space, but there had been no further updates since then.

The Chair commented that the access to the funds could have changed due to change in the political leadership at the LA so it would be good for Harbinger to explore hiring out the space in other ways.

The Chair asked if G4S were going to refurbish it the caretaker' house. The SBM responded that it was the school's responsibility on the maintenance on caretaker's house. The SBM recalled that there was a feasibility survey carried out before she began her role and maintenance plans were made but there was no money to carry them out.

MY mentioned that because it was built as a house, repurposing it as an educational space would be difficult. He cited George Green and St Luke's as examples of repurposing theirs as something compatible, such as a meeting space. MY suggested letting it to a housing association, which would pay the school around £2,000 per month, or to let a private developer use the site. MY stated that he would think about it further and present a paper on it to the next Finance Committee, but approval from G4S and the Local Authority would be required.

Action: MY

The Chair agreed and stated there would need to be a clear agreement of how it would work from a safeguarding perspective.

The Chair stated that the Local Authority (LA) had some capital funding and suggested that the school apply for it because the LA would be willing to do small projects ranging from £35,000 to £100,000 in which the school would also contribute to.

The SBM reported on the expenditure:

- The expenditure for teachers had reduced as a couple of teachers were resigning and they would be replaced with teachers on lower salaries. The EHT's resignation after the summer had also made a difference.

- For support staff there would be increase of about 4% because there were Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and Teaching Assistants (TAs) on part time contracts as they were returning from maternity leave, but it would revert to full time from September.
- The pay for midday meals supervisors had increased because they covered staff who were sick so instead of using agency staff, the school had taken on a few casual midday meals supervisors.
- Overall, staffing had an increase around 6% due to inflation and cost of living. **In answer to a question** about the provision for pay awards and support staff. The SBM replied that the same rule as last year was applied to support staff which was £2,355 pro rata. For unqualified teachers it would be 5%, for teachers on the main scale it would be 4% and for leadership roles it would be 3%.
- The expenditure for Repairs was small and had increased due to repairs with the playground equipment that was suggested from the Health & Safety audit.
- For Health and Safety, there was stage lighting repairs and, regular maintenance and services that needed to be included this year as it was not in the budget last year.
- Cleaning - G4S did not submit the cleaning invoice for the pandemic period on time and so the payment of £6,400 was from 21/22, and the school had not hired a cleaner since summer 2022.
- A SENCO and a Headteacher mentor were budgeted for under professional services. Jubeda, the Deputy Headteacher, was also the SENCO, so a service level agreement with the Local Authority was made to have a SENCO for the summer term for two days a week, but professional services were still under budget compared to last year.

In response to a question on energy costs. The SBM responded that the fixed term contract had ended, and the new contract had a higher rate. The new contract would only be for six months to cover the school until September and there would be a meeting with Local Authority's forum to understand energy prices.

The Chair asked if Harbinger only needed a SENCO for pupils with EHCPs or if teaching assistants (TAs) could assist. The SBM responded that TAs were supporting all children on a one-to-one basis, and that the SENCO role was introduced to help with EHCP administration and to support Jubeda.

The Chair sought clarification on the Modern Foreign Language (MFL) and PE Physical Education (PE) support roles. The SBM reported that the two members of staff for these roles had come from St Luke's to support Harbinger last year for half a day for the year. This would need to be increased to one day a year from September because they had spent more than half a day to carry out the work. The PE lead had helped Harbinger when facing shortages of staff and she had delivered the club as well as planning the games and sports events. She had also supported Harbinger with PE premium.

The Head of School added that the PE lead and MFL lead had left Harbinger last year, so it had been beneficial having St Luke's subject leaders. The SBM commented that a Teaching and Learning Responsibility (TLR) position could be explored once staffing had settled.

The Chair asked what the year-end projections were. The SBM stated that there would be an in-year deficit of under £11,000 and a carry forward of £29,683 which brings the school to an accumulative deficit of £40,000.

The Chair asked if there was £9000 for capital. The SBM stated yes and reported that there would be a £22,000 deficit if the £9,000 for capital and the cost for the energy and eco spending were deducted.

Clerk's Note: *The EHT joined the meeting.*

The Chair noted that the overall picture of the budget was positive and DfE funding for teacher salary and support staff would only further support reduce the school budget deficit.

The SBM noted that the impact of the five-day strike had not been calculated, nor had the PFI costs, which had been discussed among schools. The EHT stated that schools had banded together to see if this could be reduced, but the budget currently shows that Harbinger would be paying the full amount, but strike actions would increase contingency as this would provide an underspend against forecast budget

The Chair reported that the Deputy Mayor would be coming to the SBM forum, and many schools had brought forward the question of the PFI decreasing. The Chair shared that it would also be beneficial to speak to him about the development of the caretaker's house.

MY shared that he had known the Deputy Mayor since he was at George Greens and suggested to the EHT and NN that he could join them to discuss the PFI.

Governors agreed the budget and it would be referred to the GB for ratification.

Action: Clerk

The Chair reminded the SBM to submit the draft budget before 31st May 2023.

The EHT reported that her lateness was due to a meeting she had with Phoenix School who were a specialist school for children with autism. Harbinger was successful in the application to be a part of the Phoenix specialist classroom pilot. The meeting was about the funding, and it had been confirmed that the children who join the specialist classroom pilot would be given Band P funding which would be approximately £21,000 a year. The pilot would run across three financial years and two academic years starting from September this year. 10 children would be selected to access that specialist classroom on an annual basis.

The EHT noted that the budget would change again from what was presented in this meeting. The Chair suggested that the school present the budget as it is and any changes can be recorded through the quarterly reports where we can show variance in income budgeted vs action. These can be made once the income for 10 children has been received. This would also be made in instalments so the financial reporting would be adjusted as the year progresses.

The Chair enquired if the number of children that could be admitted was confirmed. The EHT responded that it could be no more than 12 but 10 would be ideal. She further stated that Harbinger would have more than 10 children and there would be new pupils in September with needs. Phoenix School would also be giving an extra £10,000 to set up the classroom. The Local Authority had recognised that Phoenix school could no longer cope with the demand and some schools had already piloted these specialist classrooms to accommodate the increasing level of needs. It would be creating an extra class for autistic children who would spend some or most of the time in this classroom with some integration in the mainstream classroom.

The Chair asked if there would be space for the specialist class. The EHT responded that there would be since the Reception numbers were low so one of the classrooms would be unoccupied. The EHT suggested for the specialist class to sit alongside Early Years and Key Stage 1 because majority of SEN children would come from those years groups.

The Chair asked whether Jubeda (Deputy Head) would be a part of this pilot or if it would be with the SENCO. The EHT responded that Jubeda's role as SENCO and designated safeguarding lead was becoming difficult for her

	<p>because she had also been appointed Deputy Head of School. There was a service level agreement with the Local Authority for two days per week to support Jubeda this term, but starting in September, the SENCO would be working full time and the additional three days had been budgeted for. A staff member would also be returning from maternity leave and had requested to work part-time, so the SENCO and staff member could potentially share the work in the specialist class.</p>
5.	<p>Latest Budget Expenditure</p> <p>Noted that there had been</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no potential purchases over the Executive Headteacher's Delegated Limit. • no urgent expenditure previously approved via Chair's action. • no report on any proposed virements.
6.	<p>School Premises Update</p> <p>There were no updates to report.</p>
7.	<p>Health and Safety Update</p> <p>The SBM reported that there was an audit in March 2023, and the majority of the actions were minor and completed. The SBM met with G4S, who had completed their actions but had not yet submitted their report.</p>
8.	<p>Staffing Update</p> <p>The EHT reported that she had a meeting with the NEU (National Education Union) and the strikes dates had not been set. They had been anticipating that the DfE would come back to the table with a decision, and it could be that all four unions were coordinating to grab the attention of the DfE.</p> <p>MY thanked the Head of School and the EHT for keeping him informed the strike days and the support that was arranged for parents who needed their vulnerable children in school.</p> <p>The EHT reported that there were no changes to the staffing structure in the new academic year. There were some changes to the SENCO and the school would be recruiting teachers as there were a couple of resignations. The resignations were due to the struggles of living in London especially with the cost of living.</p>
9.	<p>Policies</p> <p>There were no policies to review.</p>

10.	Date and Time of next FGPC meeting Next academic dates to be agreed at the next GB meeting. Agenda items to be added to next meeting to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review use of Pupil Premium, sports premium & other government grants Action: Clerk
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The meeting closed at 6:18pm.

To be marked as signed electronically via GovernorHub.