

GOVERNING BODY OF HARBINGER PRIMARY SCHOOL

MINUTES OF FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING

Date of Meeting	29th April 2021
Venue	Virtually Via Zoom
Chair	Kiran Rahman
Clerk & Minutes	Suzette Nicol
Time	5:00 p.m.

MEMBERSHIP:

Governor	Category
Martin Young*	Co-opted
Rebecca Abrahams (Executive Head)*	Staff (Head)
Nimesha Nagahawatte (Head of School)*	Staff (Head)
Kiran Rahman (Chair)*	Co-opted
Ranjani Shrutisagar	Co-opted
Srividya Srivathsan*	Co-opted

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

***Denotes attendance**

PART 1 – OPEN SECTION

	ITEM
1.	Welcome, Apologies For Absence and Declaration of Pecuniary Interests
	<p>The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Ranjani Shrutisagar. Nimesha Nagahawatte sent apologies for lateness.</p> <p>Vidya Srivathsan reported that she was no longer a trustee of a multi-academy trust as had been declared at the previous meeting. She however worked as a School Business Manager at Oaklands School in Tower Hamlets. No other interests were declared.</p>
2.	Minutes Of The Committee Meeting Held On 11th February 2021 And Matters Arising
	Governors reviewed and RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of 11 th February 2021.

	<p><u>Matters Arising:</u> Page 6, agenda item 6 – Feasibility Study – A Governor asked whether the issue with the feasibility study had been resolved. The School Business Manager (SBM) confirmed that it had. She said that she had spoken Calvin at the Local Authority (LA) and the matter had been resolved.</p> <p>Page 8, agenda item 10 – PFI Contract – It was agreed that this item would be deferred until the next meeting of the committee and that Jimmy Williams would be invited to attend.</p>
3.	<p>Budget Monitoring Report (2020/21 Closeout)</p>
	<p>The School Business Manager presented her 2020/21 year-end report. There was a year-end surplus of £76,820.10. This constituted the carry forward. The revenue income was under by £49,027.93. This was due to an error in the Spring Census for Nursery attendance figures which led to a claw back of £38,664.50.</p> <p>Q&A: The accruals figure is £66k whereas this is £49k, was there anything else that was being clawed back? This includes funds that we received for Rebecca Abrahams and Nimesha Nagahawatte representing the additional cost to the school. The LA gave additional funds to cover the salaries. That is the total amount including the accruals for nursery.</p> <p>Rebecca explained that the LA gave the school the amount for the academic year and the school had to deduct the amount for the summer term.</p> <p>In terms of revenue expenditure, the SBM reported that most of the staff expenditure came under budget. This was due to the fact that the school did not cover staff who went on maternity leave or those who left the school. The roles not covered included TAs, Nursery Nurse, Midday Meals and Admin staff.</p> <p>The SBM highlighted the following budget headings accompanied by comments.</p> <p>E01 – Although there was an overall overspend in this budget, the Executive Head managed to obtain additional income (under I01) from the LA to cover these costs.</p> <p>E20 – ICT Software. The school had had to invest a lot of money this year in upgrading its software as a result of the pandemic, in order to ensure that the children continued to receive the best possible learning during lockdown.</p> <p>E22 – This budget had been overspent because all of the Covid related expenditure had been placed in this budget. The school had been able to recover the funds. The school had already received funds of £2,376 (I18B). There may also be some coding errors which would be investigated.</p> <p>The school had underspent on some budgets because of the school closures.</p>

CFR codes from 24 onwards were all underspent as a result of school closures such as budget headings E25 – School meals, E27 SLAs Consultancy SDP, Counselling (Play Therapists) and Speech and Language Therapist.

The Executive Head informed the committee that when Governors approved the budget last year, they had envisaged the school closing last year in deficit. Against this background, a carry forward figure of £76k was a good outcome given that a deficit had been expected. She however mentioned that within the £76k carry forward, a sum of money was ring-fenced (Erasmus funding-£10k) for a particular purpose. This CPD had not happened due to the pandemic as it involved foreign travel. In addition, when setting the budget for next year, there were some invoices from this year which had not been paid. They did not meet the threshold for the LA to communicate them as accruals, however when the separate amounts were added up, they came to around £12k. As a result, although the LA would report the carry forward as £76k, in the school's view, the actual carry forward was £54k.

Martin Young joined the meeting at this point.

A Governor mentioned that although the Erasmus funding of £10k had been ring-fenced, it was not included in the assignment of the carry forward revenue balance. She wanted to know whether it was embedded in one of the codes. She advised the school to keep an eye on the £10k. The SBM said that she had been advised by the Financial Consultant to put the figures in because they needed to identify how they were going to spend the full carry forward. The Executive Head clarified that the school had not committed the whole £76k as the carry forward. She said that when the draft budget for 2021/22 was presented, Governors would see that the school was aiming to protect the £54k surplus and would be asking Governors for permission to spend £10k of the carry forward on IT and then set a balanced budget protecting a £44k carry forward which recognised that the £10k Erasmus funding could go. She added that if Governors did not approve the £10k spend on IT, the budget would then be readjusted to £54k. She highlighted two other things were having an impact of the school's finances. These were the PFI contract and the national funding formula which was creeping in. The school's budget had been reduced this year and they had lost around £70k in deprivation funding. This was making it difficult for schools in the borough to set a balance budget.

The Executive Head said that when the £10k for IT, the £10k for Erasmus and the £12k accrual mentioned above were taken into account, that was the difference between the £76k that was reported as a surplus and what the school was hoping to protect in next year's budget. The school was erring on the side of caution.

A Governor commented that it would appear that the school had actually balanced its year-end. Had there not been any clawback the school would have had a bigger surplus. The Executive Head said that they were hoping that next year would be a normal year without a huge difference in terms of projected expenditure.

	<p>Committee members agreed to accept the year-end balance and RESOLVED to recommend it to the governing body to be signed off.</p>
4.	<p>Approval Of Draft Budget For 2021/22</p> <p>The School Business Manager presented the draft budget for 2021/22. As already discussed under agenda item 3 above, although there was a carry forward balance of £76,820.10, the following accruals needed to be taken into account and deducted from the overall figure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - £9790.03 – Erasmus funds received in 2019-20 - £12,042.26 – outstanding payments for 2020-21 as highlighted in individual budget lines <p>Taking away the above accruals, the school was left with a carry forward balance of £54,987.81. The committee was being asked to approve £10k for IT under agenda item 3. This left a surplus budget of £45,265.26.</p> <p>Q&A: Is the £10k that has been requested for IT to sustain what we have or is it for something else? We still have a lot to do in terms of our IT system because it is old. Our children still need IT support and we need additional equipment and resources for IT.</p> <p>The Executive Head explained that all of the funds that had been allocated to IT from last year to this year had been geared towards moving away from the server on to the cloud, ensuring that the wi-fi in the building was working properly, putting a Microsoft platform in place, ensuring that PCs were in the right place and ensuring that the boards were working. The purpose was to ensure that the IT in its general sense was fit for purpose.</p> <p>The committee was of the view that the draft budget did not carry any potential risk and RESOLVED to approve the sum of £10k from the school's carry forward to be spent on IT. They also approved the draft budget for 2021/22 and RESOLVED to recommend it to the governing body for ratification.</p>
5.	<p>School Premises Update Including Health & Safety Update</p> <p>The SBM said that at the time of writing the report, there had been 3 Fire evacuations in the last couple of months. The fire alarms had been set off by the children in the ground floor toilets. The school had last week, authorised for fire point guards, with 'screamers' to be installed on all the fire points. It was hoped that this would deter the children from setting off the fire alarms.</p> <p>She informed Governors that the school was considering inviting the Fire Brigade in to talk to the children to highlight the importance of why they should not set off the fire alarms. A Governor suggesting holding an assembly to explain the consequences of not adhering to the fire regulations.</p> <p>Stage 2 of the Fire Risk Assessment had been circulated with the papers. Governors were informed that all the actions highlighted in the report were</p>

	<p>either 'medium' or 'low'. The following actions were still outstanding:</p> <p>4.2 (G4S/ School)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Installation of smoke detectors in classrooms and the Early Years area. The school submitted an ACR for a survey to be carried out. Dela Security returned the report identifying 27 additional points that needed to have new smoke detectors. G4S advised that the school could plan these works in stages over several years as not all areas were high risk points. The school was waiting on the floor plans from G4S to identify the emergency exits/areas that would benefit from these new smoke alarms. <p>Q&A: Is there a timeframe within which the final report needed to come to us? The Auditor said that with medium actions points, these had to be done within 3 months. It is a big job that will take more than 3 months.</p> <p>5.1 & 5.2 (G4S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - These involved works to be carried out in May half-term. <p>6.5 (G4S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Currently being reviewed by G4S Compliance team. Once approved they will be printed and distributed to the school. <p>Gates in front of Year 1 classes - The SBM said that the school was still waiting on an update for the request to change/raise the height of the gates outside the Year 1 classes.</p> <p>Q&A: Is there any update on the playframe inspection? We book termly and annual playframe inspections. The termly playframe inspection was booked for the February half-term but was overlooked by the company. This has been rebooked for the May half term and everything is in place for the inspection during the May half-term.</p> <p>Annual Inspections – Governors were informed that all annual services such as PAT testing and servicing of gym equipment and air conditioning were up to date. The last annual inspection was carried out in April 2020.</p> <p>Governors thanked the SBM for the premises update.</p>
6.	PFI Contract at Harbinger (Jimmy Williams to be invited)
	This item was deferred until the next meeting of the committee.
7.	Staffing Update
	<p>The following staffing update was presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. There were 4 members of staff on maternity leave and 1 teacher would be going on maternity leave in May.

	<p>ii. The following appointments had been made:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="395 264 1377 405"> <tr> <td>Nursery teacher</td> <td>Fixed term contract covering maternity leave - March 2021</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 x Midday Meals</td> <td>Casual contract – as and when required</td> </tr> <tr> <td>First Aid Lead</td> <td>Internal appointment – April 2021</td> </tr> </table> <p>iii. The Receptionist left in April 2021. iv. A Midday Meals Supervisor was on long term sick and due back in May 2021.</p> <p>Q&A: Do you follow up on long term sickness as you have someone on long term sickness. Have they gone through a formal review, a contractual review based on the triggers? We have and the person will be returning to work in the next two weeks.</p> <p>The Executive Head mentioned that as the governing body had given the school permission to carry out a restructure, the business case for the restructure had been put to the LA's Re-organisation Panel which had given the school approval to proceed with a consultation. She said that she shared the proposal with the wider leadership team earlier in the evening and their response had been positive on the whole. A meeting was planned next Wednesday evening, to present to the proposal to the Unions and then the staff. The consultation will close at the end of the first week after the May half-term. Feedback from the consultation would be considered and any necessary changes will be made to the proposal before re-submitting it to the governing body for approval.</p>	Nursery teacher	Fixed term contract covering maternity leave - March 2021	2 x Midday Meals	Casual contract – as and when required	First Aid Lead	Internal appointment – April 2021
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8.	<p>Pupil Premium Report</p>						
	<p>The Headteacher said that this would be presented at the next governing body meeting. Action: Headteacher</p>						
9.	<p>PE Grant Report</p>						
	<p>This report was deferred.</p>						
10.	<p>Policies For Approval</p>						
	<p>The following policies were presented for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safer Recruitment Policy • Fire Management Plan • Fire Risk Assessment – Management Action Plan • Scheme of Delegation • Data Protection Policy • Best Value Statement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charging Policy <p>Q&A: In this policy you are charging for attestations for passports. Why is that?</p>						

	<p>It was something the previous Head wanted put in as a number of parents were asking for it and it was time consuming. We have not had any requests in a while. This has been kept in the policy in case there is a request.</p> <p>It was noted that the person signing the form had to have known the applicant for at least two years and as the Head of School and the Executive Head only joined the school in September, they would not be able to sign the forms. Although the school would be willing to support parents in cases where parents were clearly in need of support, the two year benchmark would need to be in place as it was a legal document.</p> <p>It was agreed that this offer should be kept under review until the next time the policy was reviewed.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the above policies and to recommend them to the governing body for ratification.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash Handling Procedure <p>Q&A: Why is there a limit of £2k in the school cash safe? Is this not on the high side? Most of our transactions are online now and since September we have said that we were going to go cashless. We use parent pay now but we needed that policy in place in case there were collections for fares, school journeys and trips.</p> <p>Q&A: Is it the case that this policy is for your main account and the budget that you prepare? For the school fund and the school journeys account do you include that as part of your final accounts return? That is a separate account.</p> <p>Vidya said that if the school had gone cashless and the school journeys and school fund accounts were separate, it was advisable for the cash limit be set at £500 instead of £2k. Governors RESOLVED to approve for the policy to be amended and for the limit to be set at £500 instead of £2k as a deterrent.</p> <p>In addition, Vidya mentioned that she did not see how segregation of duties was laid out in the policy. She said that the policy needed to spell out how segregation of duties would be practiced and up to what threshold. The SBM undertook to review the policy in the light of the suggestions made. Action: SBM</p> <p>It was agreed that the School Business Manager would liaise with Vidya to discuss the amendments to the policy. Action: SBM & Srividya Srivathsan</p>
11.	Agenda Items For The Next Meeting
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PFI Contract at Harbinger (Jimmy Williams to be invited)
12.	Any Urgent Business

	Vidya suggested that the school adopt the HR policies on the THEP website. The Clerk confirmed after the meeting (to the Head and SBM) that the THEP HR policies in question had been approved at the last full governing body meeting.
	The open section of the meeting came to an end at this point.

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