

GLADSTONE ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL
"Learning, caring, growing together"

MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE OF THE GOVERNING BODY

DATE: Tuesday 13th November 2018

TIME: 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

Mr Ray Williamson
Ms Jane Malpas
Miss V Lewis (Clerk)

Mr Peter Southward
Mr Keith Wright
Mrs Andrea Cowley

Additionally Present:

Mrs Caroline Sarney (School Business Manager)

MINUTES

1. Election of Chairperson for Resources Committee (5 minutes)

The Clerk welcomed governors to the meeting and asked who may be interested in chairing the committee. AC said she would be willing to, with support. There were no further expressions of interest therefore AC will act as Chair for this Committee for 2018/19.

Action: Update records as appropriate.

By: Clerk

2. Apologies for absence; consider acceptance of apologies (5 minutes)

All expected members present, including non governor Mrs Sarney (SBM).

Action: None Required.

3. Confidentiality (5 minutes)

No items on the agenda were identified as confidential.

Action: None Required.

4. Declaration of Interest in any Agenda Item (5 minutes)

There were no declarations of interest in any agenda items.

Action: None Required

5. Resources Committee Terms of Reference (5 minutes)

Governors considered the duties outlined in the Terms of Reference. They requested the following updates:

- Premises 3. To ensure the school premises are inspected annually and consider report(s) of the conditions and a proposed order of priorities for maintenance, improvement and development.
- Premises 11. To liaise with and consult with the LA Property Services Team as appropriate.

Action: Make alterations and re-file.

By: Clerk

6. Minutes of the previous meeting (01.05.18) / Matters Arising (10 minutes)

The Minutes from the meeting on 01.05.18 were presented. Proposed by RW and seconded by PS. Minutes were signed by AC (counter signed by KW who Chaired that particular meeting) and returned to the Clerk for filing as per procedure.

9) Health & Safety Adviser Report: more recent visit took place last week, CS will forward the report when it is received.

11) AOB: RW advised that following the successful opportunities area funding applications some facilities have been put in place such as the gardening clubs. It is now planned to hopefully look at expanding the plans and move the strategic direction forward. AC advised that her son is attending lunchtime gardening club and loves it. He cannot attend after school due to childcare arrangements so the fact there are lunchtime sessions is really good.

Action: Minutes from meeting 01.05.18 to be filed as per procedure

By: Clerk

Action: Forward most recent H&S Adviser report to governors

By: CS

7. Business Manager Report: Finance, Health & Safety, Benchmarking (30 minutes)

CS has been liaising with county re pupil numbers and likely funding. However it is difficult to predict where we will be due to continued uncertainty around pupil numbers and staffing requirements. The 3 year forecasts provided have been created using the optimistic 11% allocation of the pupil population (though factoring in the drop in the birth-rate). Governors were also given delegated funding figures for 8% admissions. Both variations have unpleasant ongoing impacts. With that in mind a lot of work has gone into promoting the school to prospective parents, with the Open Evening events scheduled for 20th November. There has been a flyer mail drop, display banners, online and media advertising. Staff will be available throughout the school on this afternoon to showcase year groups, visits, opportunities etc.

Funding will be further affected by likely decreasing Pupil Premium numbers (reducing pupil population and/or eligibility criteria changes) and changes to SEND funding (issues at county level).

There is currently consultation at LA level regarding the way in which the national funding formula is to be applied. The best outcome for GRPS would be a funding reduction of £15k but could be a loss of £45k.

With regard to expenditure, looking at all areas, there is little that we can trim on spending. When looking at NYCC and national comparative statistics our spending is either in line or below on most areas (give or take). The major, evident issue is that we spend well over the average on support staff wages. Therefore CS has prepared two forecasts:

- one retaining all current staff - which is completely unsustainable
- one based on ending fixed term contracts - impact being the loss of 1 x teacher and 220 TA hours per week (equivalent to 7.25 TAs)

Even with this, in year deficits increase year on year. The start budget as it stands would not be accepted by county in March 2019, at least not without a clear recovery plan outlining how the deficit situation will be rectified. On average school needs to be looking to reduce costs by £300k per year. The situation looks rather bleak considering these figures are the best case at present.

CS has been in touch with HR as a full staffing review is going to be needed to ensure that staffing provision, roles and responsibilities are fit for purpose and to consider the implications for the staffing structure. Redesigning of support staff job descriptions to be of a more flexible nature rather than particular class based will likely be one of the creative ways pupils will be supported by a reduced number of staff. AC: do the TAs have an appropriate skill set? CS: some do, this will need to be considered also.

HR will be meeting with CS in early December to begin the process, as the scope of the review is going to be too large to manage in house without support.

If all fixed term contracts end in the Summer term there would need to be the equivalent of a further 13 TAs cut to make the necessary savings. There are likely to be redundancy situations, and County do not pick up the costs associated with this. HR will look at what we need to run, whilst also cutting the required amount of spending.

RW: what turnover of staff is there? CS: we lose some TAs here and there but not to the extent necessary to make savings. Two TAs are leaving imminently who will not be replaced.

£300k is a very extreme amount to save, so CS suggested initially a structured saving of £200k from staff expenditure is aimed for. This will have a knock on effect on teaching staff who are used to more support than they will get under new plans.

AC: is £200k achievable? CS: yes, but there are going to be ongoing issues. KW, RW, HH, CS are scheduled to attend a course on 20.11.18 looking at ways to manage / plan for a deficit budget. Additionally CS and HH are attending a resourcing and delegation course.

RW: whatever recovery plan we come up with must feed back into the SIDP.

CS: absolutely. It is important to have input from HH and other SLT members about what is needed to support the curriculum whilst being mindful of the need to improve outcomes as well as HR involvement. CS proposed that a working party with Resources Committee members as well as teaching and support staff representatives could look to meet in early January (set date at December full meeting). The scope of the review will likely involve a longer consultation period than the last staffing review so it is important to start working with staff sooner rather than later.

JM: some staff will be happy to be flexible and accept modified roles, some may not.

KW: aware of several schools who have already taken quite extreme measures re staffing; perhaps visit to look at how this has been managed, how it works etc. We are also not alone, some schools are already in deficit and facing issues re management of budgets and even closure. Stuart Carlton has told KW that by the end of 2021 80% schools will be in deficit.

AC: are we in this position solely due to reducing numbers?

CS: it certainly isn't helping. But there have also been decreases to PP funding, changes to SEND funding, teacher salary and knock on cost increases which aren't covered by the LA.

JM: Cuts and job changes may lead to the loss of some strong staff.

CS: perhaps there will need to be questions about the ways in which children are supported – ie. Venn did mention at training on Monday that teachers should be taking more responsibility for dealing with low level behaviour issues in the classroom rather than automatically requesting inclusion / behaviour team support. This would mean children are remaining in their classrooms for teaching input, but also require less support staff time and less reliance on the inclusion team. It is important to empower staff to manage things themselves. Obviously the especially high need children are separate to this and resources should be targeted here, which less reliance on the inclusion team for low level issues would allow for.

CS: this situation and need for drastic changes has been coming for some time; unfortunately now the decisions to be made are far more immediate. The promised changes to funding at local and national government level have not come to fruition and therefore now we must find a way to manage the situation as it stands.

KW: there is inequality, Stuart Carlton can do very little to provide us with relief but was keen that school continues to make their challenges and displeasure known to MPs, the government, the public.

AC: it is important that governors know the real situation, rather than 'burying heads in the sand'. The school needs to look to move forward constructively. CS: the real fear is that if we continue with dropping numbers there will be even more significant issues.

RW: is there any way to incentivise parents to choose GRPS? Free uniform etc?

JM: not sure that would be enough of an incentive at this point. With the amount of homes being built out of town many more prospective pupils are leaving the local area, even if their parents would choose us.

CS: it is possibly too late this year to offer an incentive as all the flyers etc have already been printed. Perhaps, if numbers do not increase this year we could look at incentive plans for next year, to give time to promote and plan for this?

RW: yes.

CS was asked whether a decrease in pupil numbers means reducing the number of teaching staff? There may be the need to look at the possibility of reducing the number of classteachers and/or classes if numbers continue to fall past 2019/20.

AC: lottery funding or other grants?

RW: these sorts of grants are designed to support a particular scheme or purchase for amounts of around £5-10k, not to supplement a school's revenue budget or support staffing costs. There are also frequently conditions and tracking criteria applied to ensure the grant is used as expected.

AC: deprivation – are a large number of pupils coming to school hungry?

JM: no more than in previous years. Breakfast club is targeted at the most deprived and / or those with attendance or punctuality issues.

CS: Reducing visits would make some savings but really feel that this isn't the answer as visits and opportunities are such a huge part of the ethos of GRPS. Training more support staff to be HLTAs would have a knock on effect to reduce supply costs, though there would be an initial outlay. HLTAs are also more consistent and beneficial supply option for pupils.

RW: it is important to make the required savings via managed reduction, but we must also look to increase income wherever possible.

Catering

Historically the county caterers agreed that the MSAs who scrape the food trays fell under their remit. However they have now changed their minds. If school wishes them to continue to employ these staff then the price of the service will increase. However, if we employed these staff directly the cost would be similar to the increase but we would have the added complication of recruitment, attendance, retention, training etc. The recommendation is to accept the price increase. **Governors agreed.**

Premises:

The phone system contract with BT ends in July 19. They have not been particularly easy to deal with and there have been issues, though fewer in the latter part of the contract. CS investigated the option of the NYCC service, but this would require an initial hardware expense of £18k which is not justifiable considering the current financial situation. Therefore CS plans to meet with BT to renegotiate the contract. **Governors agreed this would be the best way forward.**

Door Entry System:

The SLT raised concerns that in the event of a fire there was no way of checking on the staff / visitors in school (children are checked via online registers). CS has investigated door entry systems which would sign in and record visitors and staff to ensure live data and also provide swipe cards for more efficient staff entry. The favoured option is coming in at a cost of £8,500 for the initial hardware and install then then annual support costs of £1200.

AC: does the system not work now?

CS: must be pragmatic, the chances of a fire are very low and it would be hoped that other staff are aware of whether their colleagues are in school (and if the worst happened, whether they were missing).

AC: are there other options with less outlay, such as a signing in board?

CS: we tried these when we first amalgamated but because staff don't always use the same entrance and exit it didn't work. There is a visitors signing in book, most of whom are either with another member of staff or with children. Perhaps staff need to be more aware of letting someone know they are going off site.

JM: when you compare that cost against a teaching assistant then I think it isn't a justifiable cost.

KW: I understand the rationale of the idea but have never been required to check the visitor books when inspecting other schools, to check their systems. It seems like an unnecessary expense at this time.

CS: A 30 hr TA is £15k per annum so this is essentially a morning TA. The main fire risk is the kitchen, which has its own built in fire containment system.

Governors agreed not to proceed at this time.

IT:

There are a number of iPads in school, which require updates to their operating systems, software and apps on a reasonably regular basis. Lee, the IT tech has asked for a piece of software called Mobile Guardian which would essentially push out all updates to each iPad simultaneously without the need to gather in equipment and run programmes. This would save lots of his time to deal with other issues and would mean pupils were not without their equipment. The initial cost is £585, with an annual fee of £150 for licensing. The cost for doing this manually would be approx. £600 and then £1200 for future years, in addition to technician time. **Governors agreed this purchase.**

Playcentre:

The Playcentre will be using the empty former Rec Red classroom to provide additional after school club places. It is hoped this will be an incentive to parents with childcare needs, as well as a source of additional income to school. **Governors discussed and felt that £80 per week would be a fair rental charge.**

Staff Absence:

Staff absence figures are still significantly above average. The breakdown shows that teachers have more absences than support staff. Under the previous Attendance Management Policy the trigger points were 3 absences in 6 months or 4 absences in 12 months. Once triggers were hit staff were set a target of no absences for 3 months then a monitoring period of a further 6 months.

The new policy sets out more clearly the process for managing absences. HR has said that through this new policy the aim is to manage to improve attendance levels by using a rolling tracking system supported by occupational health, health assured, medical advice, support etc. Governors need to consider how firm the 3 month period needs to be. CS would like to trial continuing with 3 month target of no absences so long as appropriate support is put in place. This can be reviewed in 12 months' time and adjusted if necessary. **Governors discussed and agreed that staff should be given a target of 3 months with no absences after they have hit a trigger point.**

With long term sicknesses, the policy is more consistent and clear. After 4 weeks absence there will be a review meeting, after 8 weeks another and then if after 12 weeks there is no plan to return to work school will look at whether this absence can be sustained and whether a governor attendance management panel needs to be convened to discuss dismissal on the grounds of ill health. The aim is to support staff back into work. Illnesses and chronic conditions such as cancer are covered under a the Equalities Act and appropriate support put in place. It's about managing long term absences to ensure they don't go on unchecked for unmanageable and unrealistic periods of time.

H&S:

Health and Safety Adviser has visited on 9.11.18, with the report due any time. CS will circulate the report when received.

KW: would like to recognise the time and effort that CS and other staff have put into the extensive finance, forecasting, staffing and HR work. This is not a pleasant situation, so thank you.

CS: Thank you. If any governors would like further clarification etc after digesting the figures, please get in touch.

Action: Set date for working party to meet Jan 19 at 4.12.18 meeting

By: SBM

8. Correspondence (5 minutes)

No correspondence received.

Action: None required.

9. Approve & Adopt Policies (15 minutes)

FMS003 Budget Management Policy

HS001 Fire Safety Policy

HS003 Health & Safety Policy

HS010 First Aid and Medicines Procedure

SW001 School Medical Policy v1.1

SW014 Infection Control Policy

HR021 Pay Policy 2018/19

HR005 Attendance Management Policy

HR Policies as detailed on summary sheet: -

HR004 Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy

HR005 Attendance Management policy

HR006 Capability Policy

HR007 Codes of Conduct- Staff: NYCC and GRPS

HR011 Developing Performance (Perf Management) Policy

HR012 Disciplinary Policy & Procedure

HR012A Hearing & Appeals Procedure

HR016 Resolving Issues at Work Policy & Procedure

HR018 Leave Policy inc Schools & Colleges updated February 2012

HR019 Extended unpaid leave policy

HR023 Maternity Leave

HR021 Model School Pay Policy

HR024 Schools Appraisal Policy

HR026 Recruitment & Selection Policy (Corporate and inc Schools)

HR027 Schools Reorganisation, Redundancy & Redeployment Policy & Procedure

HR028 Early & Flexible Retirement Policy

HR030 Stress Management

HR032 Workplace Drugs & Substance Misuse

HR037 Flexible Working Policy & Procedure

HR048 Smoke Free Workplace Policy

HR049 Travel and Expenses Policy

HR050 Infection Prevention Policy

HR051 School Meal Policy for Staff
HR052 Induction Policy
HR053 Personal Safety
HR054 DBS Policy

All policies are the most up to date model NYCC approved versions. Copies of all documents were made available to governors for reference.

All policies were approved and adopted.

CS also confirmed that JM is happy to act as the Health & Safety Governor for this school year.

Action: File policies as per procedure (intranet, website, paper file) By: Clerk/SBM

10. A.O.B (10 minutes)

Staff Appraisal

By 31st October school has a legal obligation to conduct performance reviews for all teaching staff. These have now all been completed. The recommendation is that all teachers have met their performance objectives and that those who are eligible to receive a salary increment do so. Four teachers have also met the threshold to move to the Upper Pay Spine (UPS) by meeting all of the teaching standards. KW recommends that these staff members move to the UPS.

AC: the increases re AH salary scales were discussed at length and it was decided to approve them based on retention of high quality staff. Therefore if the relevant objectives have all been met it would be appropriate to award staff.

CS: a school must have very good grounds for not awarding increments and / or movement to the UPS.

RW: have the increases to salaries been taken into account regarding budget forecasts?

CS: Yes, but you can't refuse increments based on budget constraints.

Stuart Carlton

Stuart Carlton visited last week and was very pleased by the appearance and politeness of pupils. He spoke with both the children and the staff and tweeted afterwards how much he had enjoyed his visit.

Action:

The Meeting was closed by the Chair at 8.15pm

Signed _____ Dated _____