

**Minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee of Wheatcroft C P School
Wednesday 29th March 2023 at 4pm**

Present:

Mr G Dyer
Mr C Baxter
Mr R Hirst

Mr M Parkins
Miss V Lewis (Clerk)

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| FC15/22 | Welcome from the Chair The Chair welcomed members |
| FC16/22 | Apologies Mrs Webster was not present and Clerk had not received apologies. <i>Addendum: Mrs Webster had not realised the meeting date had changed.</i> Mrs Kirby (Associate Member) was undertaking a training course and gave apologies. |
| | Action: Contact Mrs Webster for post dated apologies / reason for absence By Clerk |
| FC17/22 | To invite governors to declare confidentiality or any interest in items of business on the agenda None declared |
| FC18/22 | Minutes of the previous Finance Committee meeting – 23.11.22 Actions from Minutes 23.11.22 have all been completed and governors agreed the Minutes as a full and proper record of the meeting. Mr Parkins proposed, and Mr Baxter seconded. All agreed. |
| | Actions: File and publish agreed Minutes as per procedure By Clerk |
| FC19/22 | Matters Arising No matters arising not covered by this Agenda. |
| FC20/22 | Correspondence Letter received from staff member. Discussions recorded in Confidential Minutes. |
| FC21/22 | <p>Safeguarding Update All staff and governors should recognise that there is a corporate responsibility for safeguarding. This remains a standing item on all Full Governing Body and Committee meetings.</p> <p>The 2022/23 Safeguarding Audit needs to be completed and submitted by 31st March. The document, which is completed two yearly, has been drawn up by Miss Glass, My Dyer and Miss Lewis as the different sections have different elements. The various questions are answered and evidenced and then RAG rated according to the school's level of compliance and completeness with 5 being fully compliant and appropriately evidenced. For those areas with a lower score, an action plan with responsibilities/ownership and timescale are also in place.</p> <p>CPOMS has been very useful for this year's audit as it is a very versatile tool which enables tracking, reporting and audit trails for safeguarding data and incidents.</p> <p>The elements and audit outturn are: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safer Recruitment – no further actions for this section. 2a. Management of Safeguarding - no further actions for this section. 2b. Actions taken where there are concerns about a child – no further actions for this section. 3. Inclusion – 3 action points all annotated and action planned. 4. Management of Risk – 2 action points all annotated and action planned. 5. Early Years - 3 action points all annotated and action planned. 6. Learning Beyond the Classroom – no further actions for this section. 7. Premises Security – no further actions for this section. 8. Premises Health & Safety - no further actions for this section. <p><i>Please see the Audit for specific action points and planning.</i></p> <p>Q. How will we know everyone has read it and understood / taken on board the content?</p> |

A. SBM will ensure staff sign off to say it's covered and will be covered/presented on the upcoming training day.

The actions from the Action Plan feed into SDP. After submission to the LA we may be asked to discuss or present it at a Panel as a fact checking countywide quality assurance scheme.

Q: It is important governors understand the content as they are endorsing an important document.
A: agreed, propose to submit on Friday 31st March with governor in principle agreement to meet deadline but also ask governors to further consider and agree at the next FGB meeting.

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| Action: Ensure staff and governors receive a copy of the document and acknowledge content. | By: Clerk |
| Action: Submit Audit in advance of 31.3.23 deadline. | By: Head |
| Action: Present Audit at Training Day 17.4.23 | By: GD/MG/VL |

FC22/22

School Business Manager Report:
 Miss Lewis referred governors to key points in her report.

FINANCE:
Budget Monitoring / Forecast Outturn 22/23
 Having completed the Period 11 budget monitoring the likely outturn figures are as follows:

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|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Forecast Income Outturn: | £1,274,962 |
| Forecast Expenditure Outturn: | £1,324,388 |
| In year position: | - £ 49,426 |
| Balance B/F 21/22 | £ 110,090 |
| Balance C/F to 23/24 | £ 66,588 |

There may be some small variances that arise between now and the closing of the year but the figures below show a likely indication of our situation moving into 23/24. There is a difference of £45k to the outturn carry forward since the Autumn. This is largely down to unprecedented utilities bills and supply staff costs. I am hopeful that on the actual outturn this will be an improved figure due to likely adjustments to pupil premium and UIFSM but we won't know these until Period 13 paperwork is received.

It is important to remember we are not the only school in this position and we are actually in what can be considered a 'healthier' position than many – due to the previous carry forward. The unfunded pay uplift costs for both support and teaching staff have been debilitating and are not sustainable longer term – for us or any schools.

Draft Start Budget 23/24 & Three Year Forecast
 The Start Budget and future forecasts will continue to be affected by a further year of unfunded pay awards for both teaching and support staff. Whilst support staff unions have not yet agreed any proposals, we are working on the premise of a £1925 award on all pay bands plus the already agreed 4% for teaching staff at a cost of approx £55k. Additionally there have been changes to NJC (support staff) banding boundaries which has meant automatic uplifts to some of the lowest earning staff. These changes have all been included in the draft start budget. The carry forward has also been impacted heavily by the cost of utilities despite the government's support schemes and we must wait again to see whether further help next year will be forthcoming.

2023/24 is supported by the carry forward position of £66,588 but from 24/25 onwards we will be in a deficit position which will need to be recovered from. We will need to start considering significant cost saving, and staffing changes during next year to ensure we have a managed deficit recovery plan in place. We can hope that additional support is offered to schools regarding their staffing costs because, obviously, all schools are in a very similar position but we cannot plan or bank on this occurring.

The SBM will finalise the Start Budget and it will be available for formal approval at the next FGB Meeting in May.

Contracts Review Schedule

This review has been undertaken for the coming year and prices have been updated to reflect current. The only additions are for CPOMS and the hand drier contract from PHS.

Fixed Meal Price / Cost

We were informed in January that the fixed meal price from April is due to rise to £2.94. Unfortunately this additional cost of 24p per meal per day will need to be folded into the budget until the new school year, as it seems unfair to change the price to families mid-year. The impact of this is an additional cost of £144 per week until the end of the school year (total approx. £1800). Uptake of meals is stable but governors were asked to consider what we charge pupils / families from September. The options are:

1. Continue to charge £2.70 and incur the additional cost of 24p per meal ourselves (approx £3800 per year)
2. Increase the price of meals in line with the FMP to £2.94. This may affect take up and income but will be offset by reduced expenditure.
3. Go somewhere in between the two options...

Q: Why is every school's FMP slightly different?

A: the FMP is calculated based on the cost of staffing, average number of meals, size and condition of kitchen facilities/equipment and cost of resources/food. We don't get any say in what the LA charge us per meal for the catering service but we are allowed to decide how much we charge per meal so long as it is equal or below the FMP.

Governors agreed that school should not be making a loss on meals and therefore agreed to Option 2 – increase the price charged for meals in line with the FMP. Therefore from 1st September 2023 children not in receipt of free school meals will be charged £2.94 per meal.

Wheaties Costs – September 2023

Wheaties is very well attended, with many days completely full and having a waiting list. However, due to increasing staff costs the club is running at a loss. There was a previously price rise in September 22 but when considered in line with other similar provision Wheaties is still cheap in comparison. In order to bring the costs more in line with income, and remain competitive pricewise, we propose increasing each session by £1 from September as follows:

| Session | Regular | Ad Hoc |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Pre School | £3.00 -> £4.00 | £4.00 -> £5.00 |
| After School until 4pm | £4.00 -> £5.00 | £5.00 -> £6.00 |
| After School until 5pm | £6.00 -> £7.00 | £7.00 -> £8.00 |

Q: Completely agree with price increase however, a flat rate increase doesn't make much sense as it's not standardised across each time frame. Shouldn't the increase be the same across each? To even this out would suggest we look using RPI 13.8 plus 5% (average staff pay award). This gives the increase to be 18.8%. Eg. morning £3 to £3.60, afternoon £4 to £4.80 and later time collection £6 to £7.10.

A: this works but the staffing isn't in response to the length of time a pupil stays, the club is staffed for the whole session regardless of how many are 4pm or 5pm finishes.

Q: So would it make more sense to have a flat rate for before school and a flat rate for after school regardless of finish time with no regular / ad hoc differentiation?

A: yes this would be a better way of managing the system – if governors are open to this.

It was therefore agreed that from 1st September all pre-school sessions will all be £4.00 and all after school sessions will be £7.00 (regardless of collection time). The 50% sibling discount will remain.

Utilities

The costs of these has been higher than anyone predicted and has come in at £15-20k above expected. The government's support scheme has now ended and whilst it saved school around £12k it does now mean we will need to manage without any reductions. Thankfully the worst of the winter weather is now over and bills should be less. New boilers, if approved, will also have a beneficial impact all being well.

STAFFING:

- We have needed to cover a couple of short term teacher absences during the Autumn Term, and this has incurred costs for both internal supply and agency cover. However, none of these absences have hit the trigger points for absence insurance relief so will not be offset by any refunds.
- Performance Management reviews for support staff are currently in progress and there are nine staff who would be eligible for an incremental increase subject to satisfactory performance management. These increments are already built into staffing projections.
- Unfortunately, we have had several longer term support staff absences since Christmas which have been very disruptive to the running of the school. Two of these remain ongoing. We have had to use agency support staff to cover for these absences just to enable classes to operate safely and this has had a significant impact on our supply budget (see below). Internal staff have also had to be very flexible and this has been greatly appreciated.
- Following Mrs Woodall's departure to take up her new post, we have staffed her 0.44 contract with an agency supply. However, we have been able to appoint Mr Bowes to a fixed term 0.44 contract for the remainder of the year to provide some additional stability for Year 5 pupils. Mrs Hillion is returning from maternity leave after Easter and will be able to take over Mr Bowes' existing Thursday and Friday roles and responsibilities.
- Due to unexpected absences detailed above, we have unfortunately used the supply budget and overspent by £3700 to date. There will be approximately £2500 further to add for the rest of this term meaning our expected overspend will be around £6200. This is obviously not ideal, but was unavoidable to ensure classes were able to operate.

Staff Absence Insurance 23/24

School purchased Day 11 Low cover for 22/23 at a cost of £10,875. Supply cover has cost £9160. Scheme reimbursements of £4905 mean that absences have cost £4255 over and above the cost of staff absence insurance. Without insurance in place the cost would have been £9160. Therefore, even though reimbursements did not cover the costs incurred it has halved the potential impact.

Having undertaken some modelling the recommendation is to again opt for Day 11 Low at a cost of £10,591. Whilst it doesn't catch short term absences, the additional cost of Day 1, 4 and 6 cover does not equate to the reimbursements due. Additionally, we will receive reimbursements for Mrs Kirby's maternity leave this year.

| 2023/24 Proposals | Cost of Cover | Number of days lost 22/23 | Number of claimable days | Supply cost @£180 per day | Equivalent Refunds | Outturn | Difference between Insurance cost and outturn |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------|---|
| Day 11 Low | 10591 | 100.66 | 33 | 5940 | 5280 | 11251 | -660 |
| Day 6 Low | 12083 | 100.66 | 54.66 | 18118.8 | 8745.6 | 21456.2 | -9373.2 |
| Day 4 Low | 12878 | 100.66 | 70.66 | 18118.8 | 11305.6 | 19691.2 | -6813.2 |
| Day 1 Low | 23595 | 100.66 | 100.66 | 18118.8 | 16105.6 | 25608.2 | -2013.2 |

Modelling of support staff absence insurance indicates this is not cost effective due to most support staff absence being covered from within existing staffing. Even with the unusual challenges of several periods of support staff absence lasting in excess of 4 weeks during this year we still would have only saved around £900 which, whilst not an inconsiderable sum, is not high enough to warrant the expenditure risk in case of reduced staff absence. It is not recommended we purchase support staff insurance at this time.

Governors discussed and agreed with the recommendations made for 2023/24: Day 11 Low Teaching Staff Insurance and no Support Staff Insurance.

Single Central Record / HR / Personnel Audit

As part of the package of support for the school we have benefitted from an audit of our Single Central Record and HR files which was undertaken on 31st January (report attached). Our school NYCC HR Adviser visited to check the content of our SCR against the national and Ofsted accepted statutory requirements and also checked the content of each staff member's HR file for the appropriate evidences, certification,

safeguarding checks, statutory returns and other content to ensure completeness. The adviser also checked volunteer, third party, agency and governor files to ensure they are appropriately complete.

Overall the audit was very positive and the action points were all very easily rectified and would not have caused a major issue on inspection. I expect all actions to be completed by the end of March at the very latest. The adviser was very complimentary about the format of our HR files and said that inspectors would appreciate the ease of finding everything neatly bundled and checklisted.

The next stage is to ensure a robust quality assurance schedule is in place to evidence adequate checks being completed. At the recent SPAM meeting it was agreed that this would be undertaken by the Headteacher and Mrs Parkins before each SPAM and FGB meeting as Mrs Parkins will already be in school and a separate visit need not be arranged.

PREMISES / HEALTH & SAFETY:

- Lockdown practices have now been undertaken, with a further one to follow during the Summer.
- Works are continuing with the Y2 refurbishment project – the next phase will be taking place over Easter. This project has been funded by the additional capital allocation received in the Autumn.
- We have had a survey undertaken by the LA’s Building Services on the current boilers. Unfortunately they are now so old that the parts needed (flue system) are obsolete and there are no parts currently on the market which could be adequately adapted to fit. Currently awaiting the outcome of the survey but the hope is that the LA will agree to install new boilers at cost to themselves, less a contribution from school of our capital funding allocation for 23/24. Whilst this does mean other conditions planning / scheme of decoration would be impacted for 12 months we would have efficient boilers, under an extended warranty, which would save us money longer term.
- The Fire Panel in the office has successfully been repaired which means it is now usable and useful. However, this also means it was now possible to identify the faults in the call points, heat detectors and sounders. We have had urgent repair works completed to rectify the issues with highest need, and the remaining works will be undertaken at Easter. The system will then be 100% compliant and active. The faults identified are ones which have been on the last 3-4 fire alarm safety inspections but had not been actioned – possibly due to Protec advising the whole system needed to be replaced at a cost of £20k, rather than targeted repairs. Unfortunately these works have cost around £7k (waiting on final invoices) but they were absolutely and quite urgently required for the safety of the school premises.
- Following Mr Dyer’s visit to Hertford Vale School we are asking governors to approve a small budget for improvement works to the staff room which we feel would benefit staff resilience, health and wellbeing. The works would be redecoration, freshening up / upcycling the current units and tiles, a few bits of furniture to replace broken chairs etc and a reorganisation of noticeboards. The cost is anticipated to be under £2,000 which would be offset by £1,200 in refund for overpaid resources last financial year which we are expecting back shortly. As a key SDP objective we feel this would be very well received by staff and would hopefully mean a real boost to wellbeing school and staff wide.

Q: this seems like money which could be spent better elsewhere – bearing in mind our longer term budget position. We’re saying there are going to be difficult cost saving decisions to make but would like to spend money on the staffroom?

A: the problem is, the staffroom is very underused as it is not a pleasant place to spend time. Staff would rather eat at their desks than in the staff facilities which is not a healthy staff position. Also bearing in mind the difficult days to come, we want staff to feel they are valued and can spend their downtime comfortably. Additionally, we would be able to use the room for smaller meetings etc during times when it isn’t needed for staff breaks. The actual costs would be around £800 as offset by refunds and we feel this is a small price to pay for improving staff wellbeing.

Governors further discussed but understand the reasoning and agreed to net expenditure of £800 for staffroom refurbishment.

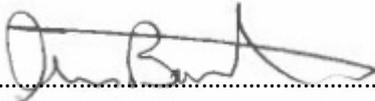
Action: Inform parents of increase to meal price from 1st September **By: Clerk**

Action: Inform parents of Wheaties pricing changes wef 1.9.23 **By: Clerk**

FC23/22 **Next Meetings Dates**
Next Finance Meeting – 28.6.23 at 4pm

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| | Next FGB Meeting – 25.5.23 at 6pm |
| FC24/22 | <p>A.O.B.</p> <p>Reading Teepee/Yurt The School Librarian, Mrs Hyde, has brought a proposal to Mrs Kirby and the SBM to reinvigorate the reading provision and use of the library resources. She would like to request school purchase a large-ish dome tent in a yurt design which will be on the school field Spring to Summer annually. It would be used as an additional reading space and could accommodate small groups, plus extracurricular clubs. The SBM has costed the tent and various soft furnishings such as bean bags and floor cushions and this has come in at around £350-500. The PTA would also be willing to support this project. Governors agreed this was a lovely idea and confirmed that the resources could be ordered.</p> <p>Tesco Grant application The SBM has applied to the TESCO Grant Scheme for a contribution towards the proposed conversion of the EYFS external store into a specialized reading nook area. Application has been submitted and SBM will update in due course.</p> |

Meeting closed at: 5.15pm

Signed (Chair):  Date: ...28.6.23.....

Actions:

| Agenda Item | Action | Responsible | Completed |
|-------------|--|----------------------------------|-------------|
| FC16/22 | Contact Mrs Webster for post dated apologies / reason for absence | Clerk | ✓ |
| FC18/22 | File and publish agreed Minutes as per procedure | Clerk | ✓ |
| FC21/22 | 1. Ensure staff and governors receive a copy of the document and acknowledge content. 2. Submit Audit in advance of 31.3.23 deadline. 3. Present Audit at Training Day 17.4.23 | Clerk Headteacher GD/MG/VL | ✓ ✓ ✓ |
| FC22/22 | 1. Inform parents of increase to school meal price wef 1.9.23 2. Inform parents of Wheaties pricing changes wef 1.9.23 | VL VL | |