



CALDECOTE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Personnel, Premises & Finance Committee

Thursday 25th February 2021 at 6:00pm

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the meeting was held virtually using Zoom.

- Present:** Pippa Smith (Chair)
Karen Stanton (Co-Head)
Rebecca Snelling (Co-Head)
Cristina Turner
Renu Martingale
- In Attendance:** Lesley Whitehead (School Business Manager, Associate Member)
- Clerk:** Vicky Miles
- Apologies:** None

Reference

Action

1. Welcome to all and apologies for absence

PS as Chair formally opened the virtual meeting, extending a welcome to all present.

2. Declaration of interests relating to items on the agenda

None declared.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the committee held on the 4th November 2020

The minutes were approved by Governors as a true and accurate record of the meeting, the Chair will sign and handover at the next available point.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the committee held on the 4th November 2020

Page 5 - Item 7: Pay increase agreed for VM and now in place.

Page 6 - Item 9: RM contacted Parish Council for update, not heard back yet, will continue to chase.

Page 6 - Item 9: LW reported that the white wooden fence has successfully been removed.

KS explained that the information about Care Clubs staff being unable to be furloughed - as they have two contracts, was incorrect information, school along with other heads are currently challenging EPM with the aim to receive compensation.

KS added that two staff members of Care Clubs have been in a bubble supporting EHCP children to cover hours and two others have been running Care Clubs with reduced numbers.

5. BMR and Finance Update

LW circulated the BMR for January ahead of the meeting, and took Governors through the headlines noted, highlighting and explaining the variances.

LW reported that finances continue to look healthier than we may have expected.

LW explained that the anticipated carry forward would be £33,500. The figures are doing incredibly well considering the losses from Care Clubs and school meals. There have been higher expenses around cleaning but lower on curriculum.

Lesley reported the highlights,

- Gaynor Pope and Rob Cottle from County are very happy with how the finances look.
- Insurance claim for the residential paid, and the money borrowed from the PTA returned.
- The move from Barclays bank to NatWest has been a smooth transition and the balance now transferred. KS, RS and LW all have access.
- The claim window for Covid expenses was only for the summer term, since found out there is another claim window for the autumn term. A claim will be put forward for the path laid by Cambridge Landscapes.
- Nichola Church has claimed money from loss of earnings for Care Clubs a total of £6,000 is due.

LW added that the finances are on track and doing well despite everything.

To a question on building maintenance, LW explained that the advice from Property Management was that significant work was needed on the boilers, this has now been completed and did not cost as much as expected.

The plan is to have additional Astro turf laid in the bridge areas and something will need to be installed where the maze use to be. Sports Premium funding will be used towards this. The Astro Turf already installed has been a huge success.

To a question on cash flow and Care Clubs, LW explained that cash flow was just a summer time issue, having to handout refunds, with money going out all at once. This was primarily around Lunchtime – as a maintained school we were required to support our lunch provider to cover Universal Infant Free School Meals. The money is now in.

To a question on the gas bill, LW explained that this is always behind, although the money is set aside for it based on monthly readings.

PS thanked LW and congratulated all.

6. Budget Review 2020/21

Covered in BMR and finance update.

To a question on numbers of children on roll, RS explained that the numbers for next year are currently 11 children; this is a huge blow. Rob Cottell had said that every school in the local area is having a dip in numbers. Place Planning had said we would get 26. When Year 6 leave in the summer, we lose 29 children – 192 then drops to 174. Financially we can manage for another year, but will need to look at planning further forward. RS added that in order to provide equality across the school different scenarios are currently being explored.

One scenario would be no redundancies, although if staff do leave there will not be new appointments.

RS added that the school was going to support a TA with an apprenticeship, which cannot happen now.

A further scenario, maintain 7 classes in the morning and in the afternoon combine Reception and Year 1, use the additional staff to do Covid Catch-Up across the school.

To a further question on numbers, RS explained that there is still a steady flow of children when admissions start again on the 8th March; all tend to be older children. The hope is that a few more children will materialise, but will start putting things in place ready.

To a further question, KS explained that if somebody leaves staff could be moved around. CT added that Linden homes would soon be ready.

KS added that the Cala development seems to have many older families; hopefully Linden will have more affordable homes and attract younger families to the village.

RS reported that the DfE benchmarking showed no major discrepancies with the schools that are similar to us. Teaching staff is slightly above. Admin staff always above as Care Clubs staff fall into this category. Supply staff always low as use in house cover. Energy costs are low. Overall, all figures similar to other schools.

To a question on whether governors can do anything, RS thanked governors and declined, as there is nothing needed at present.

7. Personnel

KS reported that, staff are working in bubble teams on a rota basis, time at home and time in school – to reduce personnel on site and reduce risk. KS added that every member of staff whoever they are has felt huge pressure around Remote Learning, more children in school (57) and quite a few very challenging children.

KS informed the committee that following a consultation with Kevin Vanterpool, Kate Duncombe, PS and RS, they agreed that KS would continue full time during lockdown. KS explained that together with RS they have been working flat out. Along with Nichola Church and LW, they act as a shield, intercepting emails from parents to prevent staff from becoming overwhelmed. Staff have been very positive, and have dealt with the many changes that have been imposed really well but are finding it exhausting; there is an awful lot of added stress.

KS added that the NQT is making fantastic progress and is such an asset to the school; she has had minimal support but is doing brilliantly and would like to retain her.

KS informed the committee that the school is in a position to be able to accommodate the teacher who is currently on maternity leave to return part time, as requested.

KS reported that to support staff wellbeing, meetings and emails have been reduced and Care Club staff are covering lunch and break time duties. Staff are having their breaks and eat their lunch in the classrooms with the children. Some key points around full reopening:

- Guidance is all staff will wear masks in all communal areas
- Our two Mental Health First Aiders have hosted virtual tea and chats at which high comments of praise about the school were received

- Everybody working extremely hard to do the best they can

KS added that it would be a big bombshell to them to look at redundancies and recommended that we hold our resolve for the coming year and do not make redundancies in the hope that by September, there will be a clearer picture of the numbers going forward and we can make plans for the following year.

To a question on what governors can do to support, KS explained that Ofsted have revised what needs to be published on the website, governors could check to make sure the school is compliant. KS to email PS. PS to look at and share with RM and CT. KS thanked all.

KS
PS

To a question on Covid, KS explained, that there could be a spike in cases. After the last lockdown, what we saw was that parents became very complacent with social distancing, play dates etc. but in September, we were pleasantly surprised at how people changed and modified their behaviours. There is three weeks until Easter, the weather is getting better, we have done it before and we are hopeful all our measures will continue to keep the school Covid free.

To a question on Maternity cover, KS explained that ideally we would like to retain the NQT; both the teacher on maternity leave and NQT are valued members of staff. When the maternity teacher returns a possibility is that she could support Y6, as it is a very large and challenging year group.

To a further question

To a further question, KS explained that this model would mean the school has a slightly higher ratio of teachers: pupils than recommended but some cost would be offset, as there would be less HLTA cover.

8. Premises

RS reported that:

- Path has been laid
- A large expense we thought would need paying (boiler) not happened
- Leak in the roof has been fixed

RS explained that there have not been many expense, a good start to the year so far.

LW added the boiler was serviced and inspected for another year.

To a question on whether Astro Turf would help with flooding, LW explained that the flooding was due to more of a site problem, it has happened for years. Numerous people have tried but nothing seems to

eradicate it, the school site as a whole slopes down to where the willow use to be.

9. Health & Safety

RS reported that the school has remained Covid free, due to everyone being on board with the robust risk assessments. Not many schools in the area that have managed it. So going forward for the 8th March we are going to stick with what we know works.

10. Impact of Covid

KS reported that the three weeks up until Easter would be used to reassess the children. In September, we provided lots of pastoral support and found that children settled well with routine. There will also be an emphasis on pastoral, wellbeing and mental health during this time.

KS explained that the recovery plan is on hold, staff are shattered and everyone is doing their best. The positive mind-set and team morale is fabulous, everybody supports everybody else. The hope is that when staff get back to teaching and building relationships with all the children in the classroom this will help everyone feel a bit more 'normal'. The duo role of maintaining relationships with children online as well as in the classroom has been added pressure. Having the children in school reminds us of our role, our purpose – they bring joy to us and the school.

RS added that from all of this we have got to know the parents a lot better, spending a lot more time talking with them on the phone and email. Although it has been remotely, it does feel as if we have got closer to them. We have not just been supporting children; we have been supporting parents too. The hope going forward is that we can continue to build on these relationships.

PS added that this shows that the school is such a central role to the village, a support to many people.

To a question on catch-up funding, KS explained that the original plan would go ahead; there is one teacher ready to get started with tutoring. The school has purchased many new reading books and put aside other amounts for catch up in the future. There is also an additional funding announcement, which indicates about £6,000 for an average primary school; we will probably get £4,000.

11. Policies to be Ratified and Reviewed:

Policies to be ratified

- PPF Terms of Reference - PS - changes agreed, Kevin Vanterpool to sign later.
- Pay Policy - PS
- Governor Expenses - CT

Policies to be reviewed:

- Flexible Working - RM
- Handling Redundancy - RM
- Induction - CT
- Sickness Absence - PS
- Social Networking - PS
- Charging & Remissions – KS to update and circulate to all

12. Date of Future Virtual Meeting of this Committee

The next PPF Meeting will be Budget Setting on Thursday 6th May 2021 @ 6pm via Zoom.

KS explained that if changes to class structure were needed, governors would need to understand and be on board. KS will send round a proposal as and when the numbers and staffing becomes clearer. If a meeting is required at this point, a date will be set. As a proposal to mix classes is very unusual for Caldecote, it would be wise to share with both committees as it impacts both personnel, finance and curriculum.

To a question on whether this has been discussed wider, KS explained that so far it is confidential. Any talk of staff reduction could really affect morale, especially at this time of great uncertainty due to the pandemic. It is important that we plan ahead rather than thinking we are okay this year and then having to make major changes next year.

KS explained that we would wait until after Easter to see if there are any changes with numbers. Governors to be kept informed.

KS to send round model ideas after Easter, VM to add as an item on the agenda.

KS, VM

PS asked that thanks was passed to all staff

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.23pm.

Signed as a true record..... Date.....
Chair