

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE ELIOT BANK AND GORDONBROCK PRIMARY SCHOOLS FEDERATION

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held on Thursday, 7 February 2019 at 6.30 p.m.
at Eliot Bank Primary School

PRESENT

Mr T. Bremner	Chair
Mr P. Fidel	
Ms M. Gilmore	Executive Headteacher
Mr N. Hayles	
Ms K. Knowles	
Ms H. Lyttle	

Also present

Ms A. Carter	Senior Admin Officer, Gordonbrock
Mr G. Goode	Premises Manger – for item 11
Ms S. McAllister	Federation Business Manager
Mr M. Ridler	Head of School, Eliot Bank
Ms J. Wright	Head of School, Gordonbrock
Mrs J. Woods	Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received with from Ms Branch.

2. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS AND DISPENSATIONS

Governors were reminded that they must declare conflicts and pecuniary interests before items were discussed, and must withdraw from the meeting while the item was under discussion.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 April 2018 be approved as a correct record.

There were no matters arising which were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting be agreed as a correct record. There were no matters arising from the minutes which were not included elsewhere on the agenda.

5. TO AGREE THE BUSINESS FOR THE MEETING

The order in which items were to be discussed and those items which would be considered as urgent business was agreed upon.

6. 2018/19 BUDGETS AND THREE YEAR BUDGET PLANS

Copies of the budget vs actual report, summary report, and narrative had been circulated for both schools.

(a) Eliot Bank

Ms McAllister drew governors' attention to the summary report and the significant savings that had been made to reduce the projected in year deficit from £195,550 to £22,452. Savings of over £100,000 had been achieved, mainly through restructuring of the support staff, and the school had also received additional funding in a number of areas.

Governors asked whether it was likely that the position would fluctuate further before the end of the financial year. Ms McAllister explained that the figures were based on predicted expenditure, and any money which was not spent would reduce the £22,452 further; should it be necessary to make any unexpected expenditure, then the deficit could increase again.

Ms McAllister highlighted the additional income received as follows.

- £2,500 additional EYFS deprivation funding.
- £8,352 Growth Fund and distribution of local authority's underspent Growth Fund.
- £10,302 for teachers' pay grant. The school had already budgeted for a 3% increase for all teachers.
- Adjustment to Nursery funding. It had been possible to replace all children who had left as a result of Jan Pritchard's tireless efforts to recruit children.
- £2,631 EYFS Pupil Premium funding.
- £3,228 additional funding for a child whose EHCP level had increased; however, this was offset by expenditure (I03).
- An additional £13,120 over the original estimate had been received for Pupil Premium funding (I05).

Ms McAllister said that she had reviewed the three year budget plan at the beginning of the year, and now predicted that the school would be facing a much smaller deficit in Year 3 than predicted. With the budget reductions that had been made this year, it was predicted that there would be a surplus of £428,074 to be carried forward to the 2019/20 budget

The Committee then scrutinised the budget vs actual report, together with the budget summary.

Ms McAllister informed the Committee that Eliot Bank would not receive the grant of £6,000 (I06) as Eliot Bank was no longer a national support school following Mrs Palmer's resignation.

There had been an increase in the Facilities and services budget (I08) of £15,446 which related to funding received from the School Improvement Team for Mrs Palmer's outreach work and reimbursement from Gordonbrock for joint services.

Income donations (I13) included £17,861 for clubs, trips, and events, and £8,517 to date from EBSA for contributions towards the cost of a range of items including books, dictionaries, PE curriculum week, and percussion instruments for the playground. Ms McAllister said that EBSA would be invoiced for further contributions for the end of the year.

Reimbursement of £469 had been received to cover the cost of the intruder alarm service and maintenance for the Children Centre (I17).

There was also a slight shortfall of £35 in the PE grant (I18), which was spread over two financial years, because of an error in calculation.

The premises staff budget (E04) was overspent by 4% because of overtime claims from March to July 2018.

The recruitment advertising budget (E08) was overspent by £11,918 as a result of the amount of recruitment that had taken place, and the difficulties in recruiting. Ms McAllister said that it might be necessary to recruit one additional person but the additional cost of this would not be significant.

The grounds maintenance and improvement budget was overspent because cleaning and maintenance of the pond had not been included in the budget. Ms McAllister said that this would be a recurring cost, and would be included in future years.

The cleaning budget (E14) would be overspent by approximately £1,776 due to the additional cost of the summer deep clean.

The agency supply budget (E26) would be overspent by £1,591. This was due to delays in getting EHCPs agreed.

An additional training session for specific learning difficulties had been commissioned, and the bought in professional services (curriculum) budget (E27) was overspent by £495.

The health and safety element of the bought in professional services (other) budget (E28) was overspent by £740. Ms McAllister explained that this was because a two year contract had been agreed and therefore no expenditure would be needed in 2019/20. There was also an overspend of £4,056 for Federation consultancy, and reimbursement was awaited from the School Improvement Team.

The Chair asked for a summary of the projected outturn position. Ms McAllister said that at present, there was predicted to be an in year deficit of £22,500, with a surplus of £428,074. There was also a capital surplus of £23,839. The funding figures for next year had not yet been received from Lewisham, but based on assumptions on the level of funding that would be allocated, Ms McAllister said that she predicted that there would be an end of year surplus of £390,000, following which the situation would worsen the following year.

Governors recognised that the school was now in a much better position than could have been the case, and that the school had been prudent in making cuts at the right time.

Mr Bremner thanked Ms McAllister for her attention to detail and careful budget management. He asked about the impact on the school in making such a significant level of savings and whether there were any issues that governors should be aware of. Mr Ridler said that the new model of teaching assistant support was a little more difficult for teachers to manage than when one teaching assistant had been allocated for each class. Under the new model, every class except Year 6 had teaching assistant support every morning. The bulge classes were not full, and because members of the Senior Leadership Team were able to take groups of children, this had enabled teachers to take a flexible approach for the afternoons. He said that teaching assistants had been extremely flexible and were working in different classes in the afternoons. Mr Ridler said that now the model was becoming embedded, some tentative recruitment would take place.

Ms Lyttle asked whether the school still had a learning mentor. Mr Ridler said that Eliot Bank had a learning mentor and a family services officer. Ms Lyttle asked whether the school had non class based teaching assistants for SEND. Mr Ridler said that there were currently three in post, and Ms McAllister said that the budget forecast included provision for two SEN TAs. With regard to the impact of the changes, Mr Ridler said that the outcomes for the were some of the strongest the school had had, and it was clear that the changes to the support staff model had not had a major detrimental effect.

Ms Gilmore added that the school was waiting for an EHCP to be agreed for one child, and was providing teaching assistant cover. Ms McAllister said that this support was coming from existing additional resources, but it was recognised that it was essential to provide the support necessary to keep the child safe.

Mr Fidel expressed concern about the potential impact on the budget if more children with significant additional needs came to Eliot Bank. Mr Gilmore pointed out that the schools had no idea of the needs of the new Reception cohort until June and could therefore not plan far in advance. She said that it had been interesting to see the difference in the level of support staff between Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock, and she had had specific conversations with Gordonbrock staff about the level of support staff at Eliot Bank and in many other schools; in particular, she had reminded Gordonbrock staff that Eliot Bank no longer had teaching assistants in Year 6.

Mr Fidel asked whether there had been any progress in relation to previous discussions about the possibility of transferring part of the budget between schools. Ms Carter said that she had discussed this with Hayden Judd, who had said that it would not be possible to vire any of the budget surplus between the schools. Ms McAllister added that this would be an audit issue, and because the DfE funding was allocated per pupil, the money received for a Gordonbrock pupil could not be transferred to Eliot Bank. However, it would be possible to demonstrate that it was appropriate to adjust the proportions of the salaries for Federation-wide staff between the schools. At present, 50% of Ms Gilmore's time was charged to each school, but changing the proportion could be justified on the basis that Ms Gilmore would need to spend three days per week at one school rather than another. 80% of Ms McAllister's salary was charged to Eliot Bank and 20% to Gordonbrock, and there was also the possibility that this could change in the future.

(b) Gordonbrock

Ms Carter informed the Committee that Gordonbrock had also received additional funding as follows.

- £6,001 for the Growth Fund (I01) distribution to all schools.
- £14,148 additional Nursery funding. It had been possible to fill 49 out of the 50 places this year, and the remaining afternoon place would be filled after half term. Ms Carter said that the Nursery was oversubscribed for next year.
- The amount of SEN funding (I03) would be slightly lower than the budget by £10,041. This was partly due to a child transferring to a special school. Several EHCP applications were under consideration but were unlikely to be agreed until the new financial year. A number of children with EHCPs had transferred to secondary school in September, and staffing had been reduced through natural wastage.
- Additional Pupil Premium funding of £45,683 had been received, as well as an extra £27,600 for looked after children and £983 for a child who needed one to one support because of their very challenging behaviour towards staff and other pupils.
- £6,776 had been received from Bromley Collegiate for school partnership work as reimbursement for staff (I06).
- An additional £9,500 had been received for School Improvement Board work (I07), £700 for consultancy work with Stillness, and £1,200 from the Virtual School for a looked after child. It was noted that some of the SIB income would be shared with Eliot Bank.
- The expected outturn for I08 was expected to be £82,415; this included the Breakfast club, a child who was paying for additional nursery time, After School Club rental, and reimbursement of the cost of a member of staff who had been seconded to the GMB. Ms Carter informed the Committee that Mr Fidel, Mrs Palmer, and Ms Gilmore had all written to Sara Williams to ask when the reimbursement of the staff costs would be received, and an assurance had been given that this would be paid in December. This had not happened, and Ms Carter said that the January report was due the following day, and it was **RESOLVED** that if the money was not received, Mr Fidel would write to Sara Williams again before half term.

The Premises Staff budget (E04) was slightly overspent because of overtime incurred for cleaning work that had not been anticipated.

The budget for cost of other staff (E07) was underspent as a result of vacancies for midday meals supervisors. Three staff had now been employed and there was one further vacancy to be filled.

There were variations in the indirect employee expenses budget (E08). There was an overspend on agency fees for teaching staff, and the DBS charges were showing as an underspend; however, the checks would be carried out before the end of the year.

There had been a miscalculation in the grounds maintenance budget (E13) and the budget was expected to be overspent by £100 at the end of the year.

The water and sewage budget (E15) would be overspent. Ms Carter said that a bill had been received after many months without charges, which goes back to the previous year for waste charges.

The gas budget (E16) would be over budget as a result of the biomass boiler. There had been further issues with the boiler, and the amount of gas used would be higher than anticipated.

The refuse charges (E18) appeared to be underspent, but charges were expected by the end of the financial year.

The school trips element of the learning resources budget (E19) was over budget. However, this would be adjusted as money was reimbursed from the school funds. The departmental maintenance budgets were currently underspent, but Ms Carter reminded governors that the main expenditure took place during January and February.

The ICT learning resources budget (E20) appeared to be underspent, but charges would be made against this budget before the end of the year.

The agency supply staff budget (E26) was overspent partly because of the need to use agency supply staff as a result of a class teacher leaving mid year.

The bought in professional services budgets (E27/E28) would be spent by the end of the financial year. Ms Carter reminded governors that the SLAs and charges were received at different points in the year.

Ms Carter informed the Committee that £3,100 had been spent from the capital budget to replace the hall projector. She said that it was proposed to move £70,000 from the revenue budget surplus to the capital budget to continue with the rolling programme of ICT equipment replacement, and explained that although all of the equipment had been replaced as part of the new build, this had been six years ago, and some of the equipment was beginning to fail. Ms Carter said that if the school began to invest in new equipment now, it would ease the pressure in the coming years. She said that the £70,000 would be used to replace some of the staff laptops, the children's laptop trolleys, refurbishment of part of the staff kitchen, and some of the staff toilets. The school would be receiving additional 'little extras' funding from the DfE of £22,684, but it was not clear when this would arrive, and it had therefore not been included in the forecast. Ms McAllister said that the amount from the 'little extras' funding for Eliot Bank would be approximately £18,000.

Mr Bremner asked for a summary of the projected end of year position. Ms Carter said that an in year surplus of £95,000 was forecast, with an overall surplus of £698,725 in the revenue budget to be carried forward to the next budget, which would put the school in a very strong position for next year. The surplus on the capital budget was expected to be £28,246.

Mr Bremner asked for clarification of the amount of capital available to spend next year. Ms Carter said that she expected to receive a further £10,000 in capital for 2019/20, which would make a total of £38,000. She confirmed that the proposed £70,000 expenditure on ICT renewal was planned for the current financial year. Mr Bremner asked whether more money should be set aside for building works at this time, but Ms Carter felt that keeping around £30,000 for repairs should be adequate.

A governor asked how the financial position of the two schools compared with other Lewisham schools. Ms Gilmore said that Gordonbrock was in one of the strongest positions in Lewisham, and many schools were already facing deficit situations.

8. 2019/20 BUDGETS AND THREE YEAR BUDGET PLANS

Ms McAllister said that she had run the budget plan for the next two years, but no figures were available for Year 3 at this stage. Eliot Bank would lose the bulge classes the year after next, and she was concerned that if all of the current budget surplus was spent by this time, the schools could be in deficit of up to £400,000 by Year 3. However, the surplus provided in 2019/20 together with the staffing cuts had made the current support staff structure more viable. It had been necessary to make some minor refinements to the teaching staff structure, but this was common practise during a financial year, because of staff fluctuation. Ms McAllister said that there would be a significant in year deficit when the school lost the bulge classes but the loss of funding would be partially offset by the reduction in teachers required, which would be achieved through natural wastage.

Mr Bremner asked Ms McAllister how concerned she was about the financial position. She said that it was not possible to forecast the position for next year accurately until the figures had been received from Lewisham, and asked Ms Gilmore to request the School Improvement Board to put pressure on Finance to provide the funding figures as a matter of urgency. Once the figures were available, arrangements would be made for the link governors to meet Ms McAllister and Ms Carter.

Governors agreed that the situation looked more positive overall. Ms Gilmore wished to record her appreciation to Ms Carter and Ms McAllister for their very hard work and prudent management of the budgets. Mr Bremner agreed that the level of detail provided for governors was fantastic and made a huge difference to governors' understanding of the financial situation.

9. STAFFING ISSUES

(a) Eliot Bank

Mr Ridler informed the Committee that one of the SEN teaching assistants and two Nursery midday supervisors had resigned. One of the midday supervisor vacancies had been filled, but it had been necessary to readvertise the second position, as these posts were difficult to fill because of the working pattern. Mr Ridler had looked at the cost of recruiting two more part time teaching assistants to release pressure on the support staff and teachers, particularly for the afternoons to give more consistency, and those two part time TAs had been appointed. The vacancy for a SEN classroom assistant was being advertised again as no applications had been received.

The Schools Direct student had made a very good start to teaching, and had previously been a teaching assistant at Eliot Bank for many years.

Governors were informed that Emma Tighe had returned from maternity leave on a 2.5 days per week job share in Reception. Lucy Parker and Allesha McDonald had both started maternity leave.

Mr Ridler said that the latest round of Schools Direct recruitment had been really poor and only three applications had been received, one of whom had already been offered a job elsewhere. The remaining two applicants would be interviewed the following week. He said that it was likely the current Schools Direct trainee would be offered a permanent post if her training was completed successfully.

(b) Gordonbrock

Ms Wright informed the Committee that a Year 3 teacher had left at the end of the autumn term. Rosie Barritt had returned early from maternity leave that week and cover had been provided for five weeks by the PPA teacher. The previous Year 3 teacher had been the music lead, and Ms Wright explained the alternative arrangements that had been made for the choir and singing across the school, which were going well.

One of the Year 6 teaching assistants had left at the end of the autumn term due to family illness, and two supply teaching assistants were working in Year 6 on a temporary basis, who were really strong. One had been appointed to cover the TA who had left, and the other was covering absence for a learning support assistant in another class. Recruitment for teaching assistants and a senior midday meals supervisor was under way.

Anne-Marie Kucukkaramuklu was due back from maternity leave on 5 April, but had just begun working for 10 hours per week on the websites. Ms Carter and Ms McAllister would be interviewing for a receptionist to provide cover for Allesha McDonald.

10. BENCHMARKING DATA

Ms McAllister informed the Committee that she had attended training recently with Ms Carter and Mr Fidel on the changes to the new online assessment system that would replace the Schools Financial Value Standard (SFVS) next year, and part of the training session had covered benchmarking. There had been a demonstration of a new benchmarking tool and how this could be used to provide comparisons with other schools.

Ms McAllister said that for this to be a meaningful exercise, schools should benchmark against 10-20 other schools; however, if the proposed parameters were set to include only Lewisham schools, only six schools were matched for Gordonbrock and five for Eliot Bank. Ms McAllister circulated a document setting out a number of suggested characteristics which could be used for the benchmarking exercise, which included pupils eligible for free school meal, pupils with SEND who also have statements or EHCPs, pupils with English as an additional language, and schools within Lewisham. Ms McAllister said that schools could set their own parameters for the benchmarking criteria, and sought governors' views on the categories she had suggested.

The Committee discussed the new system, and the range of characteristics that could be selected. Ms McAllister said that she had looked at a number of possible options relating to finance, some of which could be misleading; however, in making comparisons against Lewisham schools, it would be possible to ring colleagues in other schools to discuss any apparent anomalies in their costs.

The Chair felt that it was important for the Committee to look at benchmarking data based on genuine information, and said that he would welcome advice from Ms Carter and Ms McAllister on what would be the most useful data. It was **RESOLVED** that Ms Carter and Ms McAllister would discuss which characteristics they thought would be most appropriate and would then circulate this data to governors by email.

11. PREMISES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

Mr Goode was welcomed to the meeting. He began by reminding governors that the annual health and safety self monitoring checklist must be completed and returned to the local authority electronically by 1 March 2019. It was **RESOLVED** that Mr Goode would contact Mr Fidel and Mr Hale, as health and safety link governors, to arrange dates for this to be completed for both schools.

Eliot Bank

Mr Goode informed the Committee that there had been problems with the new boilers at Eliot Bank over the last few months. The handover for the boilers had been completed on 23 November, with a 12 month defects liability period. He said that the boilers were working reasonably well, but there were areas in some of the classrooms at the end of the building where the heat output was not good enough. Mr Fidel asked whether there had been problems with the controls; Mr Goode said that there had been an issue with the master control, and the contractor had now supplied a wifi control

Quotes were being obtained for replacement of the roof to the Year 3 block. A representative from Lewisham had inspected the roof, and Ms McAllister said that it had been agreed that the local authority would fund this work, although it was likely that the school would be asked to make a

contribution towards the cost. Mr Goode said that it had not been possible to find the ingress point on the roof, so the entire area was covered with tarpaulins.

The Committee were informed that a new cleaning contract would begin on 1 March 2019. Following a range of concerns with the cleaning of the schools, Ms Gilmore said that she, Mr Fidel, Mr Goode, and Ms McAllister had met the current cleaning contractor to review the problems with the contract. Unfortunately, the position had not improved; the leadership of the company had been unresponsive, and the point had been reached where the position had become untenable. In order to begin the required notice period, the Strategic Group had been asked to consider a proposal to terminate the contract for Life Cleaning and appoint Tower Cleaning instead.

Governors asked for more details about the new contract. Ms McAllister said that Tower Cleaning would carry out a free deep clean at Easter, and had given a firm price for the summer deep clean. She had worked with Tower Cleaning at her previous school, and the company worked with approximately ten other Lewisham schools, whereas Life Cleaning had not had prior experience of cleaning schools. Although the existing staff would be transferred to Tower Cleaning under the TUPE arrangements, Ms Gilmore said that she hoped that the service they provided would be improved under the new contractor. She informed governors that the problems with Life Cleaning had impacted on the premises staff significantly, and they had worked a huge number of additional hours which they had not claimed for.

Gordonbrock

Mr Goode informed the Committee that there had been further problems with the biomass boiler and it had been necessary to make further expenditure on general maintenance. He said that he thought there had been a recurrence of the previous problem, and it would be necessary to empty the pellets in order to carry out the repair, which would be costly. In addition, the gas boilers had now started to show problems, and one of them was not working. Mr Goode said that he was leaving the heating on over the weekend to keep it going, and said that consideration now needed to be given on the future of the biomass boiler. Ms Gilmore said that she had agreed that it should be repaired again to support the gas boilers, but they must also be repaired because of the unreliability of the biomass system. Although the biomass boiler was environmentally friendly, it was proving very costly in terms of premises staff hours and repairs.

Mr Fidel asked whether the gas boilers had been refurbished during the new build project; Ms Gilmore said that they had both been new. It was **RESOLVED** that quotations would be sought for the necessary repair work to the boilers.

Mr Goode informed governors that there had been a problem with the booster pumps to the main water tank, and he thought that the bearings may be failing. He said that there were two large booster pumps, one of which was not enough to boost water around the school, and if the pumps failed, this could potentially lead to closure of the school. Mr Goode said that he would be seeking quotes for the cost of replacing the pumps.

12. SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD (SFVS)

Although SFVS would be replaced with a new system from 2020, Ms McAllister advised governors that it was still necessary to complete the SFVS return this year. Ms McAllister said that she and Ms Carter would arrange to meet Mr Bremner and Mr Hayles respectively to ensure that the documentation was completed and returned to the local authority by the deadline.

Ms McAllister informed governors that the School Fund Account would need to be audited, and Pat Rouse would be asked to do this.

13. URGENT BUSINESS

The Committee discussed the Eliot Bank Nursery intake. Mr Ridler explained that the uptake of nursery places had continued to fall, and the Nursery was currently running at 1.5 fe. Although the current number of children on roll was creating a modest surplus, it would be of greater financial advantage to the school if the intake was reduced to 1fe, with one class teacher and one nursery

nurse. This would also address the uncertainty of being able to fill all of the places, whereas Mr Ridler was confident that there would always be sufficient demand to fill the Nursery if the intake reduced to 1fe. This had been raised at the last meeting of the Strategic Group, and it had been agreed that the Nursery should reduce in size.

Mr Ridler informed the Committee that there were currently two longstanding nursery nurses in post, both of whom were valued, and the school would want to retain both of them if possible. Governors asked for more information on the options. Ms Gilmore explained that the Strategic Group had wanted to avoid redundancy and to look at the possibility of redeployment if at all possible, and this was currently being explored. She said that it would be necessary for the surplus nursery nurse to remain within the EYFS if redeployed, and if one of them was moved to Reception, consideration would have to be given to the extra duties she may be doing and how these would be different from a teaching assistant. She emphasised the need for transparency and to make it clear that this would not be a temporary measure.

Ms McAllister had discussed the position with Lewisham HR, and said that, in considering the possibility of redeployment, it would be necessary to match an alternative job to qualifications and current pay scale. Ms Lyttle asked whether nursery nurses were on a higher pay scale than teaching assistants. Ms Gilmore said that this was the case, and if one of the nursery nurses was redeployed, the issue of status would also need to be managed.

A governor asked for the future number of places in the Nursery if a 1fe model was adopted. It was noted that the model would provide 16 full time and 18 part time places, which equated to 50 part time places. Ms McAllister said that although the Nursery was likely to be oversubscribed at 1fe, it was unlikely that it would be possible to fill all of the places if it remained at 1.5fe. Mr Ridler reminded the Committee that last year it had looked as though all of the places would be filled, but once the offers had been made, this had not been the case. Ms Lyttle asked whether all of the children in the Nursery took up places in Reception. Mr Ridler said that a significant proportion did not live close enough to the school to qualify for a place on the distance criterion. He said that reducing the size of the Nursery would also free up the classroom, which could be partitioned off fairly cheaply.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Governors were reminded that the next meeting had been scheduled for Monday, 29 April 2019 at 6.00 p.m. at Eliot Bank.

Chair 

Date 29th APRIL 2019