

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

Minutes of a meeting of the Resources Committee held on Thursday, 19 November 2020 at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT

Mr T. Bremner	Chair
Mr P. Fidel	
Ms M. Gilmore	Executive Headteacher

Also present

Ms A. Carter	Senior Admin Assistant, Gordonbrock
Mr G. Goode	Federation Premises Manger – for item 7
Mr P. Jenkins	Observer
Ms K. Knowles	Observer
Ms S. McAllister	Federation Business Manager
Mrs K. Walsh	Head of School, Eliot Bank
Ms J. Wright	Head of School, Gordonbrock
Mrs J. Woods	Clerk

Because of the ongoing pandemic, the meeting took place remotely via Zoom.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

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. ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR 2020/21

The Clerk took the chair for this item and invited nominations and self-nominations for a governor to serve as Chair of the Committee for 2020/21. Tom Bremner was nominated and confirmed that he was willing to continue as Chair for the current academic year. It was **RESOLVED** unanimously that Mr Bremner be elected as Chair of the Resources Committee for 2020/21.

4. ANNUAL REVIEW OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee carried out the annual review of their terms of reference. It was agreed that they were an accurate reflection of the Committee's responsibilities and that no changes were needed for 2020/21. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the terms of reference be approved and commended to the Governing Body for ratification.

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.

Mr Bremner said that he had found it difficult to follow some of the documents which had been circulated for this meeting, and it was agreed that the future naming and distribution of documents would be considered.

6. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 February 2020 be approved as a correct record.

In view of the ongoing pandemic, the Committee asked the Clerk to sign the minutes on behalf of the Chair.

There were no matters arising from the minutes which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

7. 2020/21 BUDGET AND THREE YEAR PROJECTION

Ms McAllister reminded governors that schools were now required to submit their budget plans to Lewisham Finance twice each year, on 15 June and 15 November. She explained that the budget reports had been prepared using the usual template, but they now included the narrative next to the funding and expenditure predictions to give greater clarity. In addition to the reports, the entire Lewisham budget template had been provided for each school because it was necessary for the budgets to be signed off by the Committee and Governing Body.

(a) Eliot Bank

Ms McAllister highlighted variations in income and expenditure since the budget plan had been agreed in June.

The balance carried forward from 2019/20 had been £475,737, which was an increase of £25,000 from 2018/19. The Committee were pleased to note that the original prediction had been for an in year deficit of £144,000, so significant savings had been made during the year 2019/20.

Since the budget had been set, there had been no major changes in the funds delegated by the local authority (I01), with just a £5,000 increase due to one off exceptional funding from the National Funding Formula.

Nursery funding had increased because more children had joined the Nursery than had been anticipated, and there were currently 15 full time and 19 part time children on roll. This had resulted in additional income of £13,650.

The initial budget had included £20,186 for the Teachers' Pay Grant, and an extra £4,036 had been received in the October update. Ms McAllister reminded governors that all teachers had received an annual pay award from 1 September, with teachers on the lowest point on the main pay scale receiving an increase of up to 5%, with 2.75% for higher paid teachers and those on the upper and leadership scales.

A total of £105,408 had been received for the Teachers' Pension Grant to help with the additional costs. This had included £13,620 supplementary grant from last year.

The amount of SEND funding (I03) included in the budget had not changed, at £38,159. However, Ms McAllister warned that the situation could change at the end of the year as children with special needs left and joined the school.

There had been a reduction of £14,795 in Pupil Premium funding (I05) but Ms McAllister said that there had been a large number of new children who were entitled to free school meals this year because their parents had lost their jobs or were furloughed. However, the additional income from these children would not be reflected in the current year's Pupil Premium Grant but would be received next year.

Other grants and payments (I07): The school had bought Google Classroom during the lockdown, and had been reimbursed £1,500 from the DfE. In addition, £2,500 had been received from Ms Gilmore's school improvement work.

Income lettings (I08a) was usually around £19,000 but the amount estimated had been reduced to £12,900 in the June budget because Top Mark had not been able to run the after school club during the first lockdown. This could potentially reduce further in the event of another whole school closure.

Facilities and services (108b) - There had been a reduction of £3,000 in nursery supervision contributions from parents and carers as a result of the first lockdown. Bank interest of £5,234 had been received, resulting in a net increase of £2,234 in this budget.

Income from catering (109) was an in/out figure, and Ms McAllister said that she had calculated a £4,000 reduction in income during the lockdown.

£14,000 had been removed from the School Journey contributions budget (112) because the school journey would not be taking place this year due to the pandemic.

The community focused income budget (117) had been increased by £1,669 for increased premises costs for cleaning. It would be possible to charge some of this back to the Children's Centre.

The income for the PE and Sports Grant (118) was unchanged from the June budget. The school had received more than had been expected, but had spent the extra.

Eliot Bank had been allocated a total of £32,400 for the Catch-Up Grant (118). £18,901 had been received for the first two terms of the current academic year and the balance of £13,499 would be received in the 2021/22 financial year. The school had also received £13,517 for the additional COVID-related costs up to the end of July. This covered extra cleaning and premises costs etc, and schools had now been informed that it would be possible to claim again for additional costs in the autumn term. Ms McAllister said that she would send in the next claim before Christmas, and the reimbursement should be received by the end of the financial year.

In total, the school had received additional income of £74,813 for this year.

The Committee then scrutinised the revenue expenditure. The projected outturn expenditure was now £2,780,977, which was a small increase of £6,654 on the original projection. **Governors recognised that Ms McAllister had clearly budgeted very accurately.**

A budget of £8,597 had been set expenditure on additional COVID-19 expenses, excluding cleaning costs, and a new budget of £21,809 had been set for extra cleaning costs, of which £4,920 had already been received as part of the July claim. Ms McAllister said that she hoped it would be possible to claim further additional expenses in the spring term.

Ms McAllister drew governors' attention to the capital expenditure, which included the purchase of 30 new laptops and two new trolleys. The laptops had been bought from the money received from the insurance claim, but the school had met the cost of the trolleys. This meant that the school now had two trolleys of laptops for Years 3 and 4. EBSA had also been invoiced for £10,461 for new equipment.

The Committee were pleased to see that the predicted in year deficit had now reduced by £37,753 from £206,939 at the start of the budget year to £169,186. Ms McAllister pointed out that this figure was based on the assumption that 100% of the budget would be spent, but this was unlikely to be the case. Governors noted the three year forecast shown on the signature sheet.

The Chair asked for confirmation that the school was now in a better position than the beginning of the financial year. Ms McAllister said that this was the case, and reminded the Committee that an in year deficit meant that the school was living beyond its means.

Ms Gilmore informed the Committee that Eliot Bank and Gordonbrock were two of only a very small number of schools in Lewisham which had received the full amount that they had

claimed for additional COVID-19 expenses, because the claims submitted had been so detailed and robust.

Governors noted that if all of the budget for this year was spent, Eliot Bank would have a surplus of £306,551, with a capital surplus of £17,393. If all the funding was spent in 2021/22, there would be a surplus at the end of the year of £1,436, and an overall deficit of £419,264 by the end of the third year. However, this was based on the worst case scenario, and the Chair pointed out that the position always looked concerning during mid-year reviews of the budget, but the school never spent the full allocation, and the outturn position was always significantly improved. Ms McAllister pointed out that the school had received a funding cut of £190,000 this year, and was managing to weather the storm. It had been agreed previously that Ms McAllister and Ms Carter would submit budget updates to the finance link governors (Mr Bremner and Ms Keyte) every two months, and Ms McAllister stressed the importance of governors keeping a close overview of the budget and to keep the staffing structure under review.

Ms Gilmore, Ms McAllister, and Ms Carter had been attending termly meetings with Lewisham Finance, and although the budgets were being very well managed, both schools were still rated as red by the local authority because they showed deficits in Year 3. The budget plans and suggestions for the coming two years had been agreed with the previous finance link officer, but the school had now been allocated a new link, and Ms Gilmore had suggested that the local authority should come back with suggestions and support for years 2 and 3.

Ms Gilmore had discussed the budget situation with Mr Fidel and it was felt that it was important to set up a smaller working party to look at proposals for year 3 of the budget, for example possible restructuring of the support staff and leadership team, and to look at costings. ***Mr Fidel reminded the Committee that it had been agreed in the last financial year that it would be helpful for a group to meet in the summer term, but this had been overtaken by the pandemic. Mr Bremner and Mr Jenkins both said that they would be happy to be involved in the group. Mr Bremner recognised that the schools were in their current position because of very prudent and efficient financial planning, but agreed that it was necessary to look at the medium and long term picture in more detail. Mr Bremner said that the benchmarking data showed that some budget areas, such as teaching costs, were running much higher than other schools, and felt it was important to identify the reasons for this.*** Ms McAllister explained that this was because the Federation was benchmarked against single schools which had different costs. It was agreed that the Clerk would email other governors to ask if anyone else would like to be involved in the working party.

(b) Gordonbrock

The Committee then considered the Gordonbrock budget reports.

Ms Carter said that the school had been in a very good position last year, with a surplus of £988,639 which had been carried forward to 2020/21. This would see the school through the next three years, with a predicted surplus of £164,985 at the end of the third year. However, there was a significant in year deficit each year, and because the school was living beyond its means, the local authority had rated Gordonbrock as a red school. Ms Carter then highlighted the variations from the budget that had been agreed in June.

An additional £5,000 had been received through the National Funding Formula (I01).

The school had received slightly more than had been included in the budget for the Teachers' Pay Grant and Pension Grant. An additional £5,463 had been received for the Pay Grant, and an extra £20,375 for the Pensions Grant.

The SEND income budget (I03) was unchanged but Ms Carter pointed out that three of the six children with EHCPs would be leaving at the end of the year, but the position may well change with the new children who would be joining Gordonbrock.

There had been an increase in the number of parents who had signed up for the Pupil Premium Grant (I05) but the benefit of this increase would not be reflected until next year's budget allocation.

The school had received an additional £1,500 (I07) from the DfE towards the cost of Google Classroom.

Estimated lettings income (I108a) had been reduced to £9,700 as a result of the lockdown from March to June.

There had been a reduction of £12,600 for nursery supervision and breakfast club contributions (I108b) from parents and carers during the first lockdown. However, this was partially offset by bank interest received of £10,735. Ms Carter said that the breakfast club was operating again this term, but take-up had fallen; this was largely because many parents were still working from home and did not need to use the club. She hoped that the situation would pick up over the coming months.

Additional income of £4,399 had been received than anticipated for Universal Free School Meals (I18)

The total allocation for Gordonbrock for the Catch-Up Grant (I18) was £49,200, of which £28,702 had been received so far; the remainder would be received in the next financial year. Reimbursement of £14,890 had been received for the July claim for COVID cleaning costs and a further claim would be submitted before the end of the year. Ms Carter informed the Committee that she had been advised that a claim could be made for the extra cover costs incurred for teachers who were due to go on maternity leave and who had been told that they should leave early, and this would be included in the next claim.

No capital expenditure had been made at the time the report had been written, but Ms Carter said that the school had just bought 20 new laptops, including 5 for staff who were working from home. In addition, an extra water trough had been installed in the playground for handwashing.

Overall, the Gordonbrock budget was still healthy, with a substantial surplus to be carried forward to future years, leaving a surplus of £169,000 at the end of the third year, assuming the entire budget allocation was spent each year. Ms Carter said that discussions had taken place with the local authority to plan where some of the budget surplus could be used if necessary to avoid a possible future clawback, and the possibility had been discussed of extending one of the buildings to create another room for children who needed additional catch up lessons.

Mr Fidel asked what the schools did with old laptops which were no longer used. Ms Carter said that in the past, the hard drives had been erased and some had been sold for a nominal amount of £30-50. However, most of the laptops were not in a stage where they could be recycled, and would need to be upgraded to Windows 10 at a cost of £40-50 per machine. Ms McAllister informed governors that the old laptops at Eliot Bank were still stored in the staff room, and Deku would be looking at the devices in the near future to see whether any could be salvaged.

It was **RESOLVED** that the updated budget plans be approved and submitted to the Governing Body for ratification.

8. STAFFING ISSUES

(a) Eliot Bank

Mrs Walsh said that there had been very little change in staffing this year. Mary Quinn, one of the Assistant Headteachers, had returned from maternity leave, and the teacher who had covered for her had now taken up a post as an Upper Pay Scale teacher. One teacher had left the school, but with Ms Quinn's return, it had not been necessary to replace her.

One of the teaching assistants had left at the end of the academic year. There was a vacancy for a teaching assistant in Year 4, and a replacement had not been recruited.

One teacher was on maternity leave, and would be returning for three days per week in January. It was noted that there was a vacancy for a Literacy TLR. Ms Gilmore reminded governors that there had been discussion about not recruiting to the teaching assistant post because of the pressure on the budget, and natural wastage was being considered. She informed governors that at Eliot Bank, there were still three non-class based inclusion teaching assistants, and consideration had been given as to whether the SEND provision should be compromised to make savings in the budget, and whether the middle leader Literacy Team Leader post should be filled, or whether this role should be delegated. Ms Gilmore said that she would make more concrete proposals to governors in due course.

(b) Gordonbrock

Ms Wright informed the Committee that a teacher had returned from maternity leave and had fitted back into the Early Years team well. Another teachers was currently on maternity leave and would be returning in August. Two further teachers were due to begin maternity leave in January, one of whom had been advised by her clinician that she should leave work early under the current regulations, and arrangements were being made for her to work from home.

There had been no resignations this term.

Interviews had taken place for three vacancies for teaching assistants and learning support assistants. One teaching assistant and one learning support assistant had been appointed, subject to references and DBS checks. Two teaching assistant posts were being covered by agency supply staff, and Ms Wright had been working with Ms Gilmore to look at maternity cover. There was a vacancy for a phase leader in Upper Key Stage 2, and Ms Wright said that she had identified someone who may be suitable for this post, who was currently working on a supply basis.

A report had been made to the Strategic Group on the middle leader team, and there had been an injection of several successful candidates into the team who had been given TLRs for the curriculum, PE, PSHE, and maths. Mark Ridler was working closely with them to provide support as needed.

9. PREMISES AND HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

Governors welcomed Glenn Goode to the meeting to discuss his detailed report on premises and health and safety issues, which had been circulated prior to the meeting. As well as covering the statutory requirements, the report also gave details of fire drills which had taken place at both schools.

The report covered the period from March to November, through first lockdown, the wider reopening in June, and the full reopening in September. ***The Chair thanked Mr Goode for his comprehensive report, and the incredible amount of activity by him and his team since the last meeting.***

Mr Goode highlighted the items for discussion included on page 3 of his report.

Two Lewisham contracts had been running at Eliot Bank since July. The heating contract was now 95% complete, with work to the group room still outstanding. This had been included in the plans for the work but had been omitted during the contractor, and it would be necessary to get the contractor back to connect the two radiators in this area. The room was currently being heated with electric fires, and Mr Goode said that he wanted the work to be carried out during the Christmas holidays rather than over a weekend. The heating in the rest of the school was now working sufficiently but the main hall still needed to be tested fully. The hall would be heated by seven fan units, each of which had a separate remote control, and Mr Goode said that he hoped to be able to turn them on the next day to check that they would provide sufficient heat. Some of the heaters still needed to have a protective cover fitted to them, and the contractor had been asked to increase the heat in the Reception girls' toilet if this was feasible. Replacement of the unit had not been included in the original contract, and Mr Goode outlined the alternative if the unit could not be replaced. The last period of making good had been carried out over the October half term and the contractor was due to return the following weekend to carry out further work. This included painting of the MDF boards which held the radiators in the classroom, hole-filling etc., and a cleaner would be coming in to ensure that the school was ready for Monday morning. The contract period was 23 weeks, and should be completed by Christmas, and Mr Goode said that he should have a clearer picture of what more needed to be done by early the following week.

The second contract was the roofing works, and there had been a further change of subcontractor to finish off the remaining work. This was also a 23 week contract, which was going well, and the majority of the work had now been completed. Work had begun in July, and Mr Goode was hopeful that it might be possible to finish the work for January.

There had been issues with the hot water at both schools, but the problem at Gordonbrock had been resolved. The boilers at Eliot Bank had been replaced two years ago, and the connecting pipes into the system from the boiler room. However, the hot water pipes had not been renewed, and the boilers were still using the 60 year old system. A 400l chlorifier had been installed in the boiler room, and there had been regular issues with this; however, the situation had become much worse with the additional demand for handwashing inside the school and the boilers were struggling to keep up with demand. This was not an issue with outside handwashing where only cold water was used. Mr Goode said that the water tank also served the kitchen, and he was concerned that there could be issues with Legionella. There were also problems with the hot water supply reaching the Reception classes and the Year 4 classes at the far end of the school, and he had decided to remove the taps in these rooms. Mr Goode outlined the options, which included replacing the pump, replacing the chlorifier or improving the elements inside it, or obtaining quotes to install boilers in the classrooms affected, which would be very expensive and could result in deadlegs in parts of the school which may need treating. He was also considering replacing the mixer valves and hot water pipes, and it may be necessary to go back to Lewisham to say that the pipes must be renewed.

Mr Goode said that the hot water must run freely at a minimum of 50 degrees before it reached the school. **Mr Fidel asked whether any sanction would be enforced if this temperature was not reached.** Mr Goode explained the external tests that had been carried out, and said that the readings had been satisfactory, but it was for the user to resolve any risks. He went through the options again, and Ms Gilmore emphasised that immediate action had been taken to disable the taps in the areas concerned to avoid any risk to the children.

Mr Fidel referred to the work that had been carried out to the trees around the school sites, which amounted to almost £10,000 for the year, and asked if this would be an annual amount. Mr Goode explained that a rolling programme was in place, and he tried to focus on areas adjacent to the playground. It was cheaper to reduce the trees by 20-30% on a regular basis rather than waiting longer until they had overgrown and cutting them back more harshly.

Mr Bremner thanked Mr Goode again for all of the work that he and his team had carried out over the year, not only just the challenges of coping with COVID-19 but also managing the roofing and heating contracts. He complimented him on the level of professionalism of the

team, and the phenomenal achievements which made a huge difference to all children, parents, and staff. Mr Fidel asked Mr Goode to pass on governors' appreciation to the rest of the Premises Team.

10. SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARD (SFVS)

Governors were reminded that the SFVS document must be completed and returned to the local authority by the deadline of 14 February 2021, and that it was now a requirement for a report to be made to the Governing Body on the process. However, consideration of the report could still be delegated to the Committee and the report could still be submitted to Lewisham pending final approval by the Governing Body.

Ms McAllister reminded the Committee that Mr Fidel had worked with both schools on the documentation, but recommended that it would be more appropriate for the link governors to do this for 2020/21. It was **RESOLVED** that Ms McAllister would contact the link governor for Eliot Bank and Ms Carter would contact the link governor for Gordonbrock to work through the SFVS report in time for consideration by the Resources Committee at their meeting in February 2021, prior to approval by the Governing Body in March.

The Committee then considered the Financial Management Policy and Ms McAllister drew governors' attention to the changes which had been highlighted in yellow. She reminded governors that the new Scheme of Delegation had been agreed by the Governing Body in the summer term. The finance link officer had confirmed to Ms McAllister that day that the thresholds for quotes and tenders would remain at the same levels.

Governors then considered the Segregation of Duties documents for both schools. No changes had been proposed for Eliot Bank, but the Gordonbrock details had been amended to reflect Mark Ridler's appointment.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Segregation of Duties and Financial Management Plan be approved and submitted to the Governing Body for ratification.

11. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair wished to record his thanks to all staff for their hard work and commitment during the pandemic. He acknowledged the huge amount of work carried out by staff and the Senior Leadership Team in keeping the schools open, and to prepare for the children to return in September, and recognised the incredible teams at both schools.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Governors were reminded that the next meeting has been scheduled for Monday, 22 February 2021 at 6.00 p.m.

These minutes were agreed at the meeting of the Committee held on 22 February 2021. In view of the ongoing pandemic the Committee asked the Clerk to sign the minutes on behalf of the Chair.

 Jackie Woods, Clerk to the Governing Body

Signed on behalf of Tom Bremner, Chair. 22 February 2021