

Soaring Skies Federation
Colvestone Primary and Thomas Fairchild Primary School
MINUTES

Meeting Title:	Extraordinary Full Governing Board Meeting			
Date/time/venue:	Friday 29 May 2020, 12:00 – 13:30 Held virtually due to exceptional circumstances			
Members:	Membership:	Role	End of Term	Present/ Apologies
	Caroline King	Executive Headteacher (EHT)	On-going	Present
	Amy Coyne	Staff Governor	October 2021	Present
	Claire Barton <i>(Chair of Teaching and Learning Committee)</i>	Co-Opted Governor	October 2021	Present
	Dona Henriques <i>(Chair of Governors)</i>	Local Authority Governor	October 2021	Present
	Kelly Durcan <i>(Vice Chair of Governors)</i>	Co-Opted Governor	October 2021	Present
	Kofi-Mills Bampoe <i>(Co-Chair of Finance Committee)</i>	Co-Opted Governor	October 2021	Present
	Laila Torsun	Associate Governor	October 2021	Apologies
	Rebecca Jensen	Parent Governor	November 2021	Apologies
Additional attendees:				
Clerk:	Chenelle Blake			

	Item	Discussion / Action
1.	Welcome and introductions	The Chair of Governors (CoG) welcomed the Governors to the Extraordinary Full Governing Board meeting. It was noted that the purpose of the meeting is to review the 2019-20 budget, review and discuss the deficit recovery plan, formally approve the 2020-2021 budget proposal and discuss plans for the reopening of schools on Monday 1 June 2020.
2.	Acknowledgment and Agreement of Virtual Meeting	The Full Governing Board acknowledged and agreed that the meeting will exceptionally proceed virtually due to the Coronavirus pandemic, in line with the current official guidance.
3.	Governors not in attendance	It was noted that Laila Torsun sent apologies in advance of the meeting. Rebecca Jensen sent apologies, as she experienced issues with joining the meeting.
4.	Declarations of interest	It was noted that there were no declarations of interest, in relation to any items on the agenda.
5.	2019-20 budget review	The 2019-20 budgets for Thomas Fair Child and Colvestone were circulated in advance of the meeting for governors to review. It was noted that both budgets were initially discussed and reviewed at the FGB meeting held 7 May 2020.

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		<p>Concerns were raised around the Thomas Fairchild budget and governors carried out a deep review of E03 – Education Support Staff, E07 – Costs of other staff and E31 – Community focused school staff costs.</p> <p>Governors requested true figures for E03 and assurance that the Deficit Recovery Plan is achievable, in line with the year-end figures presented.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance Committee highlighted a lack of understanding of variances and overspends documented under specific budget headings; it was noted that there was nothing for governors to benchmark against.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance Committee highlighted that there were no concerns relating to the Colvestone year-end figures, however noted that Colvestone has the larger deficit.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Deficit Recovery Plan</p>	<p>The Deficit Recovery Plan was circulated for the Full Governing Board to review in advance of the meeting. The EHT informed governors of advice from HLT Finance to clear the deficit within 3-5 years.</p> <p>Governors were advised that discussions have taken place on how to reduce the deficits, with a review of specific line items within each schools budget.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance Committee highlighted the following key issues of concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A lack of clarity behind some expenditure line items - The need for a deeper understanding of how the budgets fit in with the Deficit Recovery Plan, to ensure a reasonable basis for the deficits projected. - The cumulative deficit remains significant, however has reduced in comparison to last year. - The Thomas Fairchild draft budget is projected with a cumulative deficit budget of over £200, 000. It is important to establish that this is reliable and that the projection is a sustainable decrease. <p>Clare expressed that she was very supportive of the Deficit Recovery Plan, which is strong and appears to have a very solid structure to move forward. However, she also noted concerns about whether there is capacity to focus on the financial management of the federation.</p> <p>The Executive Headteacher (EHT) advised of plans for the admin team to focus on the financial management, along with plans to recruit a School Business Manager, who will be responsible for tracking the budgets and Deficit Recovery Plan.</p> <p>Question: How will we account for redundancy costs? Answer: In relation to longer members of staff, particularly at Colvestone, some are closer to retirement age; this will have different cost implications. Some of the other redundancy costs have been reviewed, however this is dependent on when the restructure formally begins.</p> <p>The CoG advised that despite advice from HLT regarding the avoidance of a restructure during the pandemic, it is important to at least consult with staff before September 2020. It is important that there is a clear message about the plans, to avoid staff returning in September and being welcomed back with an unexpected consultation.</p> <p>Question: Are the restructure consultation documents ready for 1 June 2020, as stated in the Deficit Recovery plan?</p>

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		<p>Answer: The EHT advised that the admin documents are completed, however more work is being carried out on other documents to ensure accuracy.</p> <p>It was proposed by the CoG to push the consultation period to this summer term. The EHT advised against this and noted that it is not only a Hackney position, but also a union stipulation against carrying out a restructure during a pandemic. The EHT emphasized the importance to consider the risk factors, particularly with staff going to the employment tribunal, based on the timing of the restructure.</p> <p>Governors emphasised that there is data to evidence that the school has been in a deficit position for a long time and plans were in place to make savings through a restructure. The EHT agreed with the points made, however emphasised that this will not stop staff going to the employment tribunal, which can lead to increased costs for the federation.</p> <p>The CoG emphasised that there is no alternative to the decision made relating to the restructure of staff, as there has been a cumulative deficit for a long time, which pre-dates the pandemic.</p>
7.	<p>2020-2021 budget proposal (including 2021-2022)</p>	<p>The Chair of the Finance Committee expressed concerns with signing off the budget at this stage, as there is more work to be completed.</p> <p>The following concerns were raised by governors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Thomas Fairchild budget has significantly large staffing costs; this accumulates to £1.1 million, with a reduction to £760,000 as a result of the staffing restructure. Governors need more clarity to establish how the costs will decrease and require assurance that this is an ascertainable goal. - More clarity needed for 'other' staffing costs. - There have been significant revisions following calculation errors and miscoding's, therefore the correct position of last year's budget needs to be clarified for governors to have confidence in this year's projections being accurate, attainable and sustainable. - Additional clarity required on the proposed staffing restructure across the federations support staff and administration and clerical teams. - Lack of confidence in the reliability of the budget. <p>It was noted that recharges between both schools is due to end, which accounts for around £149,000.</p> <p>It was noted that there will be significant reductions through the reduction of staff through the planned restructure, however it is important to establish that this will not be to the detriment of the school and the teaching and learning of children across the federation.</p> <p><u>Executive Headteacher's response to concerns raised:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The accuracy of the figures contained in the Deficit Recover Plan, were worked on with the Consultant School Business Manager (SBM). The ground work was completed first, which informed the figures contained in the proposed budgets for Thomas Fairchild and Colvestone.

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- The figures are not wishful thinking and are attainable for the federation.
- Staff salaries and payrolls were not correctly allocated; however, through significant work carried out with the Consultant SBM, a correction has been made to teachers accounted to each schools budget. This work has resulted in the significant reduction for the 2020-21 budget.

The EHT advised governors that the Federation has retained a structure which is no longer suitable for the needs of the school; therefore, cannot sustain a structure where the appropriate SEN funding to support the needs of children will no longer be received. It was noted that applications will be made this year for more ECHP funding.

Chair of Governors summary:

- The CoG reminded governors of the need to ensure the FGB has monitored and explored income and expenditure from last year and seen improvements.
- Accounts need to be finalised and governors require confidence in the effectiveness of the financial figures.
- The Chair of the Finance Committee does not recommend formally signing off the 2020-21 budget, due to a number of concerns raised and noted.
- The EHT will undertake work next week to provide more clarity, to enable the budget to be signed off. However, there is also a priority in focusing on the re-opening of the school.

EHT's comments:

- The budget is not late for submission as it is due on 31 May, however it is late for FGB discussion.
- The proposed 2020-21 budget is draft and in principle.
- The Deficit Recovery Plan informs the figures in the proposed budget.
- A delayed or late submission of the 2020-21 budget places the Federation under more scrutiny, considering the work and explanations requested from the FGB have been completed.

The CoG advised governors that both the EHT and FGB must be confident with the budget set; it is the entire FGB's responsibility to ensure that the budget set is accurate, achievable and sustainable in its current position.

It was noted that there are a number of significant questions and concerns regarding the monitoring and completion of financial work whilst there is no SBM in place.

Question: What are the main implications of a late budget?

Answer: The deadline was set earlier and was extended to 31 May 2020 due to the pandemic, to allow schools and governors a little more time to discuss and sign off.

Governors agreed that they would rather have the budget accurate and late, rather than submitted on time and inaccurate. It is important that the FGB are appropriately fulfilling their duty, taking into consideration the financial position of the federation.

The CoG advised that Ophelia Carter will be informed of the delay in submitting the budget, to allow the concerns to be addressed and FGB confidence in signing it off.

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		<p>Action 1: CoG to write to Ophelia Carter, Head of Schools Finance, HLT, to inform and explain why governors have been unable to sign off the proposed 2020-21 budget. The CoG will also request an extension on the submission deadline.</p> <p>It was acknowledged that the work which has been carried out has provided more clarity to governors, however there are a few more concerns to be finally addressed to increase governors confidence.</p> <p>Governors acknowledged the hard work required to prepare the proposed budgets and the challenges experienced by the Executive Headteacher.</p> <p>The CoG emphasised the joint responsibility of the FGB to approve the improved proposed budget and ensure the school is spending money in an efficient and sustainable way.</p> <p>It was agreed that a further extraordinary FGB meeting to be scheduled, to formally sign off the proposed 2020-21 budgets.</p> <p>Action 2: Clerk and CoG to liaise, to schedule an extraordinary FGB meeting for the purpose of formally signing off the improved proposed 2020-21 budgets.</p>
8.	AOB	<p><u>Plans for the reopening of both school sites, following closure due to the Covid 19 pandemic</u></p> <p>The EHT advised that there are now 4 members of staff (in addition to who were previously highlighted as vulnerable) who are unable to work; this has had implications on the federations ability to reopen.</p> <p>Kelly advised that parents expressed good comments on the School Reopening Plan and the way in which the wellbeing of children was taken into consideration.</p> <p>The CoG advised of the need to ensure that there are adequate resources to ensure the safety of the school community upon reopening.</p> <p>The CoG emphasised the need for governors to provide support to the EHT and school with the reopening. It was suggested to have a form of checking-in to provide open communication with both schools.</p> <p>Further to Union advice, it was agreed that Kelly Durcan, Amy Coyne and a member of SLT have open communication on how the school is managing with the reopening and be available to offer support. The CoG noted the importance for governors to ensure that this is not an overwhelming additional piece of work for the school, but rather a way of simply checking in and being aware of what the school is doing.</p>