

SASS NonConfMins 160321 CA

STEPNEY ALL SAINTS CHURCH OF ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Finance and Premises Committee held via Zoom on
Thursday 16th March 2021 at 5.00 p.m.**

In attendance

Governors

Mr Paul Wood (PW)	Headteacher
Mrs Angela Hancock (AH)	
Ms Hendrika Santer Bream (HSB)	
Ms Katie Carr (KC)	
Rev. Trevor Critchlow (TC)	Committee Chair
Mr David Richards (DR)	Committee Vice-Chair
Dermot O'Brien (DO)	

Present

Ms Charmaine Strelitz (CS)	Director, Clerking and Appeals Associates Ltd
Ms Nichola Ahmed (NA)	Observer, School Business Manager
Mr Benjamin Siaw (BS)	Observer, Deputy Headteacher
Nick O'Brien (NO)	Observer, Deputy Headteacher
Tim Duncan (TD)	Observer, prospective Governor

The meeting opened with a prayer.

1. APOLOGIES

None. TD was welcomed to the meeting as an Observer and introductions were made. TD provided a summary of his experience professionally which he hoped would contribute to the Governing Board, subject to appointment.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17th NOVEMBER 2020 AND MATTERS ARISING

Governors received, and approved, the non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on the 17th November 2020, which had been updated to include David Richards in the attendance list.

Item 9 Health and Safety. DR noted that he had suggested there was flexibility regarding VAT, in relation to how capital improvements were reported. NA clarified that the majority of work completed were improvements or upgrades, therefore they were subject to VAT.

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The Committee discussed the style and content of the minutes. CS shared her view on best practice and noted that the minutes were provided in line with Clerking and Appeals Associates Limited's preferred style, which they did not bespoke to individual schools.

TC suggested minutes style was discussed outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on the 17th November 2020 were approved and would be signed as an accurate record.

4. BUDGET MONITORING**Period 11 December 2020**

NA provided a summary of the budget report circulated.

- Income reduction of £77k due to school meal provision, the school had received Covid Catch-Up funding of £27k and £12k had been claimed for exceptional Covid claims.
- E01 to E07 and E26 Staffing. Savings had been made because of staff leavers not being replaced. Overall staffing represented 77.7%.
- E12 and E13 Building Repairs and Maintenance. Works had been agreed mid-year on the Library Hub, and additional cost related to Covid-19 expenditure. NA noted that £25k had been received from the DfE to support the Covid-19 costs.
- E16 Energy costs were broadly on track, an increase in water costs was under review.
- E19 significant underspend due to school closures, but some of the budgets were ring-fenced due to the terms of the grants the funds were allocated under, so they would be accrued into 2021-2022 budget.
- E26 Agency Cost had an overspend which was offset against underspend in E01.
- E27 and E28 Bought in Professional Services. NA said that for Summer and Spring term the Local Authority had charged the school for its contribution to the Fair Access Protocol Services, which all amounted to £65k. NA said that this had been based on a three-year average and the primary school contributions had been shared across the secondary schools. PW provided a summary of the Fair Access Protocols, which was used as a mechanism to support schools with managed moves and funded the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU). PW stated that there was a secondary Headteachers' meeting to discuss the issue, which he would be attending. PW said that he had raised the cost of the service historically although he supported the need for the provision.
- Projected carry forward surplus was £745k which included an in-year surplus carry forward of £411k and a brought forward balance from 2019-2020 of £334k.

The Committee asked if the charge for Fair Access Protocol (FAP) Service was being fairly distributed on a pro-rata basis across schools. NA said that it had been based on a three-year average of exclusions, but there had been no charges for primaries which had been picked up by the secondary schools.

NA referred to the school's proposed developments report circulated, which included the cost impacts. NA provided a summary of works which had been completed such as the Library Hub, which had been redecorated and the Hub which had new furniture.

LDBS Annual Condition Survey 10 Year Plan and School Swimming Pool

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NA provided a summary of works identified in the LDBS Annual Condition Survey 10 Year Plan and the proposal for the School Swimming Pool.

NA said that following heating repairs further work was required for plumbing and additional roofing work. NA advised that she, PW and BS had met with the LDBS and developed a 10 Year Conditions Plan. PW provided a detailed summary of the process to develop the plan, and said that the commitment from the LDBS assumed the school would have an opportunity to prioritise works, such as the School Swimming Pool.

BS said that the plan was for estate investments, as opposed to the strategic plan of what the school might want to do with premises. BS said they had three options with the swimming pool, which include refurbishment, re-purposing the site and filling it in or leaving it, which was not possible as it was a derelict and unsafe site.

BS advised that he had identified a company who could support the school with a refurbishment, which would restore the pool to a high standard. BS summarised the funding of the project as circulated, which assumed a significant contribution from the school using the in-year surplus carry forward.

BS said that the pool had the potential to be used as a community pool and an asset which could promote pupil recruitment. In response to questions BS said that the school could re-organise the changing rooms to create an external entrance to the pool and gym facilities as well as dovetail into the school gymnasium. BS stated that Love to Swim had used the pool for the last five to ten years which had been an asset to the local community.

The Committee asked if there were communal changing areas in the plan. BS confirmed there were. The Committee agreed the benefits to embed the school into the community and recruit pupils to the school although it would be even better if the changing rooms were changed at the same time.

DO noted that he had spoken to a parent recently who had said that the swimming pool had been an attraction to them, particularly considering the reduction of facilities in the Local Authority. The Committee noted that the school was surrounded by canals and the River Thames, with several young people drowning in the area which made swimming an essential life skill.

The Committee asked if NA could send out the full ten-year plan and a summary of ongoing costs and budget implications of the swimming pool on the budget. The Committee said that it had to be assured and satisfied that this was the best strategy for the school.

BS provided a comparison of the potential options and associated cost.

In response to questions BS said that the ten-year survey recommendations totalled £4m. PW noted the school's disrepair as a result of considerable neglect over many years.

PW said the options for the swimming pool were narrow, and what he wanted to emphasise was the link to the Curriculum, which required that every child in Key Stage 3 had access to swimming lessons. PW said that swimming lessons had a very direct impact on pupils which provided value to their health and wellbeing and it was integral to PE curriculum.

PW stated that Ingo Wolf, LDBS had committed £200k and they were optimistic in an application for match funding, which the school might be able to report on in July 2021.

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NA concluded the premises report by noting the school had raised concerns regarding garages on the school boundary. All students had returned on the 8th March 2021 with regular update and ongoing review of the Risk Assessment and increased staff working from home and all staff had individual Risk Assessments.

Year End Projections

See 4.1.

Budget Priorities 2021-2022

NA provided a summary of the assumptions and priorities and noted that the indicative funding was only recently received. NA said that the draft was largely staffing which would amount to 80% of the budget.

NA noted the assumptions which included 10% teaching mobility, incremental increases for staffing, expenditure increase of 1% across all areas.

The Committee referred to Towers Rewards programme which had not materialised and asked if it was expected to be resumed. NA said she had analysed the main impacts which she suspected would be minimal based on her review.

The Committee asked if the school had a plan to reduce its staffing structure from 80% to 75-76% which had been suggested previously. PW said that it was an area under consideration but in terms of teaching staff the structure was very tight, but they could look at the broader staffing structure, considering the curriculum vision for the school and the impact of reducing the curriculum.

PW noted that for EBACC the school achieved 80% and it was the third highest achieving school in London, despite its intake. PW said it was a complex piece of work which he would return to in the future. PW said that if they could deliver outcomes on staffing of 70-80% he would be satisfied.

The Committee asked if leavers would be replaced by staff lower on the Main Pay Scale. NA said they always looked to make savings. NM said that staffing was benchmarked against other local schools and they had a higher FTE budget for staff versus those schools who had higher supply cover costs which would suggest that there was less stability in the provision of the comparable school. NA said that she thought they were therefore spending a similar amount on staff but presented in budgets in different ways.

PW said that also many of his colleagues had significant supply teachers during Covid when closing budgets, they had only had two supply teachers and had been able to deliver consistent SASS teaching.

The Committee asked why the school might want to reduce the staffing budget, if the structure was producing strong results. PW said that it was due to considering long-term increments particularly if looking at long-term budget impacts on a staffing structure which increased in cost annually. PW said that they wanted to keep flexibility in the budget but ensure it also provided financial sustainability.

BS also reminded the Committee about the level of Education Health Care Plan (EHCP), which was currently 96 pupils, with a further 21 potentially joining the school in September 2021, in addition to 200-220 pupils without EHCP but who required additional support.

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BS provided an example of two pupils who required 25 hours one-to-one. When taking the context of the school into account he thought the Committee had to be realistic about the staffing budgets and although some pupils attracted higher needs funding it never matched the commitment required by the school.

NA concluded with a summary of the impact of the changes to the National Funding Formula and the impact over the three-year budget plan circulated.

The Committee referred to the three-year budget and a reduction in CPD and asked if the reduction of CPD could have an impact on professional satisfaction and the quality of teaching. NO said that the school had made significant investment in developing staff and subject leaders and the majority of training was now delivered in house and the school was providing twilight training which allowed it to react rapidly to emerging needs. NO said they used external providers to support and embed practices and used appraisals for staff to identify individual needs which would be reviewed to reflect the needs.

The Committee noted that the three-year budget appeared to be healthy despite incremental decreases in income and surplus carry forward. The Committee referred to benchmarking and percentages of staff versus the budgets and asked if there were other matrices to compare such as staff pupil ratio and were there other important costs to compare and did it consider additional expenditure such as the swimming pool.

NA said that the benchmarking had a significant range of comparator sets and measures.

In response to questions NA said the swimming pool costs were currently part of the carry forward, but the year-on-year premises budget was approximately £80k which was premises maintenance.

The Committee noted that the largest risk to budgets were pupil numbers and that there appeared no risk to the school in the three-year budget and was that realistic. NA said that the pupil numbers were stable and the biggest impact for the school from her analysis was a reduction of central funding streams. PW agreed and said they were oversubscribed. NA said that she had been very conservative in budgeting income over the three years but recognised that they had to look at making savings in other areas.

The Committee asked if the school had any concern regarding highly paid teachers who might be coasting. PW said that was absolutely not the case at SASS. Those who were on higher grades, or leadership scales were expected to contribute to whole school teaching and learning and the performance management model ensured they had to perform.

TD advised what the risks were on the expenditure over short to mid-term. NA said that would largely be building costs which was supported by the LDBS building fund which was underpinned by the 10 Year Condition Survey. PW said that when considering risk, the Committee had to consider the fluidity in London schools where it was much harder to appoint strong subject expertise.

The Committee agreed that it had to continue to keep an open review and dialogue of staffing linked to budget impacts, which would remain the largest budget area. The Committee noted that the presentation of papers and information was also key, to ensure the Committee was able to easily engage in papers.

RESOLVED:

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- 1) that the 10 Year Condition Survey was circulated to the Committee.
- 2) that the leadership team provided a staffing structure and budget business paper which mapped out the staffing structure versus the cost.

5. PREMISES HEALTH AND SAFETY

See item 4.

6. STAFFING STRUCTURE

The Committee agreed that the staffing structure and structure cost would be presented to a future meeting which would include a summary overview of staffing numbers.

7. TERM DATES PROPOSAL

PW stated that the proposal had been approved for recommendation by the Curriculum Committee and invited questions.

RESOLVED: that the Finance and Premises Committee supported the Term Dates proposal as circulated.

8. FINANCE AND PREMISES DOCUMENT CYCLE

The Committee noted that it had received the document which outline the document cycle for review by the Committee.

9. GDPR

None.

10. POLICIES

NA asked Governors to disregard the Freedom of Information Policy, which required further updates which had been emailed to her by HSB who also suggested that the Data Protection Act section 19 should be updated to note that the Data Protection Act had been passed into law.

The Committee requested that all policies were updated to include the new branding.

RESOLVED: that the following policies were approved for recommendation to the Governing Board:

- Charging & Remissions
- Data Protection subject to amendment to section 19.

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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- 11th May 2021

12. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

- Budget Approval
- School Financial Value Standard
- Swimming Pool Update
- Staffing Structure Summary (Summer)
- Staffing Business Paper (Autumn)

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

Meeting closed 6.46 p.m.

CHAIR'S SIGNATURE:.....


12-10-2021

DATE SIGNED:...../...../.....