

**Finance & Resources Committee Meeting**  
**Queen Emma School**  
**Monday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2025, 5.30 p.m.**  
**Minutes**

Governors present:

Richard Baldwin  
 Sarah Jarman (EHT)  
 Marsha Merchant  
 Harriet Phillips (Chair)  
 Nicole Wilson  
 Richard Wilson  
 Stanley Wilson

Others present:

Julia Neal  
 Nicky Pedder  
 Cath Stubbs  
 Zoe Vassiliou (Clerk)

	Item	Supporting Paperwork		Action
1	Apologies for absence		No apologies for absence and all present.	
2	Declaration of Interest		No declarations of interest were received.	
3	Agree Minutes of the last meeting	Minutes 25.11.2024	Amendments: 4 (3) – “SBS” not local authority 5 (7) – “planning from schemes of work” 6 (1) – make clear that the LA cancelled the meeting not the Federation 8 (2) – Janet and Jisc 8 (3) – “the new Local Authority provider is Janet and Jisc” “they offer a service for some universities” 16 (3) – “might cover some of the costs”	Amendments made by Clerk
4	Matters Arising		None raised.	
5	Personnel Update (SJ)		1. QEM Cover supervisor to replace a PPA teacher, who had resigned. Due to start after February half term providing a cost saving of £7k. 2. Continue to have a vacancy for a part-time TA at QEM and are on our 3 <sup>rd</sup> recruitment round. The role is currently being covered by an agency TA with permission granted by the LA as it is to cover child with statutory SEND needs.	

			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. At Queen Emma a class teacher is retiring at end of this school year. We will not be recruiting for a replacement as we will be reducing by one class next school year. This will provide a reduction of £70k including on costs.</li> <li>4. At Queen Emma 2 class teachers are returning from maternity leave and CS and RH will no longer need to teach in Y5.</li> <li>5. <b>Governor challenge: As DHTs have had to teach for financial reasons does this now add an extra cost to our budget?</b> Yes, but as the class teachers were on maternity leave they have to have their jobs back. Although they have reduced their hours considerably.</li> </ol>	
6	FBM Report (NP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FBM Report – January 2025</li> <li>• Budget overview – December 2024</li> </ul>	<p><u>Budget monitoring</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A monitoring report to end of December 2024 has been shared with governors.</li> <li>2. FBM has identified a large discrepancy in I08 and believes that the nursery income is being duplicated on the budget system. This threw the top line out significantly above what was being predicted.</li> <li>3. <b>Governor challenge: Whose responsibility was it to notice that error?</b> We would have hoped that LA financial advisors would have noticed this discrepancy as we were without a FBM at the time however, it was inputted incorrectly in by the Federation.</li> <li>4. We have received further extra high needs income.</li> <li>5. As staff pay awards are currently going through and are being back-paid the FBM will not make substantive adjustments until the end of January.</li> <li>6. E19 (curriculum resources) will close at February half term and no further spend will be allowed via this CFR area. Subject leaders have been advised to only order what they need for the Summer term.</li> <li>7. <b>Governor challenge: E19 looks overspent already.</b> FBM hasn't completed a reconciliation of trips income yet and believes some money is still sitting in the wrong code.</li> <li>8. <b>Governor challenge: Do grants go into curriculum budgets; would they have come out of curriculum costs or professional services?</b> FBM is looking into this.</li> <li>9. <b>How do the grants initially get allocated?</b> I01 is defined by DfE. They need to go into right area so when reports go back to DfE it is consistently reported. I18 has to be government specific, ring-fenced funding. Other grants would go into I07.</li> <li>10. <b>Governor challenge: Is it up to school to put it in the correct place?</b> Yes.</li> <li>11. Summary provided shows the forecast bottom line which predicts a year end revenue carry forward of £484,183.54, which is a reduction of £108k on the approved budget return. The projected in-year deficit has reduced to - £31k. At the start of the year the projected in-year deficit was -£118k so there is an improvement and we can see that changes we are making are having an impact.</li> <li>12. <b>Governor challenge: Last year we set a balanced budget so is the deficit TA related?</b> Yes, in part, however incorrect postings have been made for IT and curriculum which is giving an unrealistic view. Energy is also a significant cost and is overspent.</li> </ol>	

		<p>13. There are some budgetary challenges in relation to the catering contract with Aspens and this is under discussion. There has been a decline in meal up-take, but more concerning is that both kitchens are overstaffed by 25%. We are seeking HR advice from EPM.</p> <p>14. <b>Governor challenge: Who employs the catering staff?</b> Staff are employed by Aspens and were all TUPE'd over. There is a clause in their contract that the Federation would be liable for costs so we are taking advice. We are currently unable to sign their contract until this is resolved. Catering is in our recovery plan as a consideration of significant concern and we will provide the committee with a further up-date at the next meeting.</p> <p>15. Energy costs are high and may be overspent at year end.</p> <p>16. <b>Governor challenge: Energy costs are not really in your control. Is it a fixed rate or variable rate?</b> It is all through the framework provided by the local authority.</p> <p>17. <b>Governor challenge: Are the solar panels working?</b> No. We have submitted meter readings to the company but are waiting to hear back. Unfortunately solar panels need to be maintained and we have not been able to cover these costs due to budgetary challenges.</p> <p>18. Our LA Finance Advisor has now retired. We remain in a bit of a mess with SBS with a certain amount of functionality being retained by school and some by the LA; there are too many fingers in the pie and we would like to take control of it to reduce the risk of problems. We have been allocated an interim financial advisor.</p> <p>19. <b>Governor challenge: Have you received any advice on teacher pay rises?</b> We have been advised to allocate 3%.</p> <p>20. <b>Governor challenge: Is this being supported with extra funding?</b> We are not sure yet.</p> <p>21. There are several areas which continue to need some unpicking – the deficit, agency staffing, Aspens Catering, energy and curriculum supplies. As a Federation we have not been able to monitor our budget effectively which has had a negative impact.</p> <p>22. <b>Governor challenge: Are more schools now running a deficit?</b> At the most recent COG / HT meeting with Chris Sutton he stated that more schools have gone in to deficit and more gone into a FIG.</p> <p>23. The financial problems will not go away. We need teaching assistants for pupils who have EHCPs and what we receive in funding from government does not cover the cost of that provision. With a steady increase in the numbers of children with complex needs this financial situation will only deteriorate. On top of this the funding arrives late and is not back-dated.</p> <p><u>FBM report</u></p> <p>1. We have significantly reviewed the financial aspects of the school trips process and DHTs have helped significantly with this.</p> <p>2. Both school safes have been emptied and all cash has been banked. We are working towards being</p>	<p><u>FBM to provide update with regard to catering</u></p>
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		<p>“cashless” and are putting new procedures in place for any cash income. No petty cash is being held.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Additional approval measures are in place for all orders with an additional level of authorisation by the EHT and all orders being undertaken centrally via the Finance Manager.</li> <li>4. The final version of the audit report is still pending, however actions to improve control measures are being addressed and is incorporated within the recovery plan.</li> <li>5. We are working on the recovery strategy and will come to governors to consider and discuss this further. Alison Cramer who has recently been appointed as Assistant Director of Education at the Local Authority and has expertise supporting schools in managing a deficit budget and is due to come in for a meeting in February. We will run through the recovery plan with her before it comes to governors, hoping that she will endorse that we’re on the right track.</li> <li>6. Moved capital spend –Capital projects that have been completed have been “re-posted” to Capital Expenditure and include the hall floor refurbishment at Queen Emma, the sails at Queen Emma (funded by the PSFA) and the pool refurbishment at Queen Edith. Planned projects include the CCTV at Queen Emma and we are currently awaiting quotes and the trim trail at Queen Edith and we are currently awaiting quotes.</li> <li>7. Purchase orders have been raised for Irvine Knight in respect of the new Broadband Provider contract and Sharp Copiers which were approved prior to the Christmas holidays. Both contracts will commence on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025.</li> <li>8. Our contracts with Premier Sport for extra-curricular provision and with Irvine Knight for ICT support are due in April so we need to review these.</li> <li>9. We have a meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> February to look at SFVS and Harriet Phillips will attend this.</li> <li>10. <b>Governor challenge: If the trim trail is being funded by the PSFA why is it included in the capital budget?</b> The costs have come out of the capital budget but the funding will be received from the PSFA and paid into capital funding.</li> <li>11. The local authority has provided notification of funding rates for nursery provision in 2025/26. Our current nursery rates are therefore under review with a proposal to increase fees by 5% from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025. We have bench-marked our rates against LA rates and some other local providers and concluded that we are very cheap. This is shared with the committee in the FBM report.</li> <li>12. <b>Governor Decision: Governors agreed that nursery fees should increase by 5% from 1<sup>st</sup> September and that this should be further reviewed next year. The £2.50 cost of the meal should be further charged for the After School Club session 2.</b></li> <li>13. Following the last committee meeting Lettings rates have been simplified and benchmarked against other local school and community facilities. Long term lets have been advised of the rate increases.</li> <li>14. <b>Governor challenge: Ad-hoc bookings for the community room are cheaper than rate A and rate B.</b> FBM to check with Lettings Manager, but this is a typo and should be £50.</li> </ol>	
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7	Finance and Resources Committee – Terms of Reference (SJ)	Up-dated Terms of Reference	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following our finance audit we were advised that the terms of reference needed to be amended to match up with the financial regulations document. Governors can see tracked changes at item 6, 7, 8 and under (d) general item 1.</li> <li><b>Amended terms of reference were agreed by the committee.</b></li> </ul>	
8	Policies for review and ratification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EPM advice on Redundancy Handling Policy</li> <li>Redundancy Handling Policy and Procedures</li> </ul>	<p>12.1 – An employee who is age 55 or over and a member of the Local Government Pension Scheme will be entitled to immediate payment of unreduced pension benefits if made redundant.  <b>Governor decision: that they not be entitled to immediate payment of unreduced pension benefits if made redundant.</b></p> <p>12.2 – The governing body will grant/will not grant premature retirement benefits for an employee who is aged 55 or over and a member of the Teachers' Pension Scheme if made redundant.  <b>Governor decision: that they will not grant premature retirement benefits in this instance.</b></p> <p>13.1 – The salary safeguarding provisions of the STPCD shall apply for teaching staff.  <b>Governor decision: it was agreed to remain in line with STPCD for teaching staff, but that there would be no salary safeguarding provision for support staff.</b></p>	
9	Health and Safety Report (NP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Queen Edith H&amp;S Minutes – 18.11.2024</li> <li>Queen Emma H&amp;S Minutes – 07.10.2024</li> </ul>	Covered under the FBM report.	
10	Safeguarding		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lettings are having some strengthened expectations and letters have been sent out. Each group leader will be provided with a fob and it is their responsibility to let people in and out of the building.</li> <li>At QED arrangements for KS1 coming in and out of school building have been amended and a letter has</li> </ul>	

			been sent out to parents advising them of these trial arrangements which will be put in place after half-term and reviewed at Easter.	
11	What is the impact of decisions made during this meeting upon the standards and improvement of the Federation?		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decisions about lettings and nursery fees to support financial income.</li> <li>2. Redundancy policy decisions based on Federation's current financial position.</li> </ol>	
12	Correspondence Circulated			
13	Items to be reported to parents		Nursery fee increase.	
14	Any other business		<p><b>Governor challenge: how are parents made aware of the opportunities to volunteer in school?</b> This is usually talked about at the class meeting which takes place at the start of the school year. To volunteer to read in school you can contact your child's class teacher directly.</p> <p>We request parent volunteers in each trip letter and for events in school e.g. Science Week.</p>	
15	<b>Date of next meeting:</b>		<b>17<sup>th</sup> March 2025, 5.30pm</b>	

Signed:  Dated: 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025  
 (Harriet Phillips, Chair, Finance and Resources Committee)