

The Viridis Schools Federation of Orchard, Southwold and Hoxton Garden Schools

**Resources Governing Body Sub-committee
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams**

On Wednesday 20th May 2020 at 4.00pm

Committee Attendees

Sara Fox (SF)

Giuseppa Colella-Mare (GCM)

James Gowland (JG)

Clerk: Manna Ghidey

Laura Theobald (LT)

Rachel Davie (RD)

Sara Walsingham (SW)

1. Welcome

a. Apologies/Consent for Absence

No apologies. All present.

b. Acknowledgement and agreement that the meeting will exceptionally proceed virtually due to Coronavirus pandemic, in line with the current official guidance; acknowledgement that GDPR rules will apply and code of conduct followed.

All acknowledged the meeting will exceptionally proceed virtually.

2. Governing Body Organisation

a. Membership

No changes have been made or noted.

b. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda & Register of pecuniary interests for 2019/2020

No changes have been made or noted.

c. Acknowledgement of TOR & Code of Conduct

No changes have been made or noted.

d. Governing Body Annual Calendar

No changes have been made or noted.

3. Agreements of the minutes from the last meeting

All in agreement.

(LT) queried if the follow up on the caretaker house was to be deferred for the time being due to current circumstances as it was not a point on the agenda for this meeting.

(RD) Confirmed it has been deferred for now. Longer conversations need to happen. Given the current Covid-19 situation it is not relevant right now but will be on the agenda for future resources meeting at a more appropriate time.

(SF) noted that it was agreed, in the last resources meeting that a revised capital works schedule was necessary for governors to look at to help frame discussion surrounding the procurement policy.

(RD) confirmed it is to be discussed on agenda point 9.

4. Budget Monitoring

a. The Viridis Schools Year End 2019-20

(GCM) The carry forward amount for the Viridis Schools Year End 2019-2020 is £946,382.23. It was forecasted at £550,000 but after some analysis, £399,000 has been received in addition to the budget.

- £145,000 – more received by HLT. Consisting of £168,000 from the teacher pension's grant, £31,000 from the old Hoxton Garden bank account that was transferred into the Viridis account, £59,000 less from the EYFS grant (blowback on EYFS nursery places across all 3 schools) plus a small amount of £6,000 in nursery PPG.
- £166,000 more in SEN funding. Consisting of £116,000 from HLT due to grants being paid for children who have been statemented throughout the year. Plus, £50,000 from Waltham Forest for a child who moved to Orchard who was under their care. The money was backdated from 2013.
- Additional small grants including the Apprentice Teacher grants.

Last years carried forward was £906,000, if this carry forward was not there the remaining balance would be £30,000.

During the last week of March some of the budget was not spent due to Covid-19. There are some outstanding invoices which are currently being chased. Some savings have been made in catering as well.

(SW) queried if catering had to be paid in full to honour the contract agreement.

(GCM) confirmed that the catering company are following the furlough scheme and they will invoice for labouring costs accordingly. However, the budget does allow for full salaries.

(JG) queried what the clawback criteria is on surplus balances.

(SW) confirmed that amounts greater than 8% need a Surplus Spend Plan and the clawback is for balances great than 12% across 3 years.

(GCM) confirmed that the carried forward amount is 11.28%, so Viridis does not fall into the clawback criteria.

(SW) LA also considers if a school/federation has an action plan for the surplus.

(GCM) noted there is a proposed action plan for the surplus budget across 3 years in the pack.

(SF) noted there is a signature slot at the end of the report and queried if the intention is for all to agree and sign off in conclusion to this meeting.

(GCM) The deadline for submitting the 2019-20 Year End statement and the new budget to the LA is on 31st of May 2020. The LA Finance Manager has asked that once the meeting has been concluded, if all agree with the Budget report that it is signed off. Therefore, JG can sign as chair of governors and either print, sign and scan it back to GCM or JG can print, sign and send it to HLT finance manager with an email to say all agree.

(JG) confirmed he would print it off the statement, sign it and send it back to GCM as long as everyone in the body is in agreement.

(SW) queried whether the number of SEN pupils had increased or was if the SEN costs were already covered by existing staffing cohort as you would expect the costs to increase if the number of pupils had increased.

(RD) clarified that the increased funding does not relate to new entry SEN pupils but due to Education Healthcare Plans being achieved for pupils already in school who are already receiving support from staff and there has also been an increase in funding for existing pupils who previously had lower level funding or for those who have achieved funding.

All in agreement for JG to sign off the budget report.

b. The Viridis Schools New Year Budget 2020-21 (including forward projection)

(GCM) Additional class staff costs - Due to the level of funding increase in SEN, a need for more staff is anticipated. Discussions have been had with (RD), regarding where it is appropriate for extra staff. This will continue into the 2nd and 3rd year of the plan.

ICT Hardware New Leases - In September, the final payment of £22,000 for the LCD screens in classrooms will be paid. Once this payment has been made, confirmation will be sent that the equipment can be kept and disposed of whenever it is deemed necessary. £45,000 to be paid for the lease of the Chromebooks and iPads to be paid across the next 3 years.

ICT Hardware/New Equipment - £75,000 for IT hardware and equipment to update computers in the classrooms for teachers.

Libraries - RD plan to refurbish, restock and update libraries across all 3 schools.

Building improvements and capital works plans – currently seeking quotes. To be discussed under premises.

(SW) Any comments, all ok with plan.

(JG) noted that all the works would be dependent on the current Covid-19 situation.

(SW) queried if the IT work be done whilst the school numbers are reduced?

(GCM) stated it wouldn't be disruptive but quotes are still being sought and a timeframe is needed from the IT Company to complete the works. Plus, it all depends on Covid-19. Proposed for works to be carried out in Summer 2020.

All in agreement for JG to sign off plan.

c. Risks & planning (incl. carry forward and COVID-19)

(GCM) Similar to 2019-20 budget due to amount received from HLT and the amount carried forward being very similar to 2019-20 budget. Income (including all income related from catering, ASC etc.) will be £10,180,000.00 and the Expenditure is £10,500,000.00 including £946,382.23 carried forward. The projected carried forward for next year will be approx. £600,000. In terms of expenditure budget, it has not deviated from last year. Teaching staff remains the same and it has been budgeted for every class to have a teacher and teaching assistant, plus a few classes with an extra teaching assistant for SEN support. Premises and admin staff remains the same. Cleaning and catering costs are slightly higher due to factoring in the London living wage into labour costs. Energy costs slightly increased due to Orchard being a larger school. Savings have been made on photocopying contract. Reduced to £20,000 across 3 schools where previously it was £180,000.

(SF) queried if there is an under investment across the 3 forecasted years. The 1st year is £205,000, the 2nd drops to £65,000 in the 2nd and 3rd years.

(GCM) Capital investment is dependent on the revenue carried forward. Money given by the government for capital works is very low, see CE01 - £25,000 is allocated for all 3 schools. It is justified due to the carried forward revenue. However, the same cannot be said for the following 2 years as the surplus is expected to reduce from 600,000 to 380,000 and 260,000 in the subsequent years. The budget is progressive budget to allow for expenditure.

(SW) noted that a conservative budget was planned this year but resulted in a larger surplus. It is good to be risk averse.

(GCM) This year the pension fund has been factored in to the 20-21 budget so there should be no surprises there.

Budget based on full school opening but the Covid-19 situation has not been factored in. The budget is quite static and there has been little spending, salaries are steady and building works were stagnant over April due to companies not working. Recommend pushing to get premises work done if it is permitted. At the end of August, the plan is to review what has happened and proposed in October to present the Actual Spend and to review budget considering Covid-19.

(SF) queried if the budget will be presented to the FGB to be recommended for approval.

(GCM) confirmed that all documents need to be brought to the FGB meeting and documented in the minutes.

(SF) noted that the budget has not been included in FGB's pack, but it is on the agenda.

(SW) queried if the schools are considering claiming extra funding under the government allowances due to Covid-19.

(RD) stated that it is not relevant for the federation as of right now. There has been no change to the allocated budget so in the interim schools are expected to cover costs using current budget.

(SW) noted that due to partial school closures there will be reduced income.

(GCM) has allowed for this in the budget see I09, April – May has not been calculated in terms of revenue from dinners and will review again in September following analysis of proposed June re-opening of schools.

(SW) confirmed the budget will be proposed to the FGB for agreement.

5. Staffing

a. Update on situation (numbers working in school, at home)

(RD) stated it was recommended by HLT to discuss Covid-19 during the meeting. All 3 schools have remained open during the school closures. The plan is to re-open all 3 schools in line with government guidance on June 1st. Hoxton Garden did close for a period due to reduced number of pupils attending. It has since re-opened in the last 4 weeks due to increase demand.

b. Wellbeing

All staff have a designated key point of contact amongst the SLT team. RD has been sending out weekly communication emails to all staff. Head teachers are making weekly communications and logistical organisations for supporting pupils onsite. Overall staff are happy in terms of what is expected of them. This puts the schools in a reasonably good position for understanding the wider re-opening of school on the 1st of June. In particular, the teaching groups who have already been in school during the partial closures and have been adhering to the current context and expectations around social distancing measures and managing smaller groups and transitioning. The Employment helpline has also been reiterated to staff. School offices have remained opened for parent queries and the websites are being continuously updated to support this.

c. Implications on finances to date and predicted

A decision was made to continue to pay LT agency staff following the governments furlough rates during term time with the expectation for them to return following the school closure.

d. Risks and Retention

Staffing for the next academic year is stable with a small number of gaps but recruitment of staff across year will allow to fill the gaps. Less inclination from some staff who were intending to move

or leave. 3 members of staff who were planning to move abroad have now put those plans on hold for later in the year which poses potential risks for staffing gaps later in the next academic year. Recruitment process has needed to be changed considering the current situation. A successfully trial was conducted for an online interview process. However, great caution is being taken around this model. Potential candidates will be asked to come in at a later stage in the next half term to do a teaching session to assess effectively if they are suitable and can evidence high teaching standards. A live teaching model will return when it is safe to do so but there cannot be gaps in our staffing profile for the next academic year so closing the gaps now is vital.

The application portal for apprentice teachers was closed 4 weeks ago to deal with the back log of applications and will re-open at a later date. Currently 4 have been recruited and a further 2 candidates instead of 4 are to be recruited to allow for continued support for the current apprentice teachers and NQT's as they have missed a large amount of practical teaching time. Plans are in place to see how this will be achieved and what they will be able to access in terms of mentoring during this period.

(LT) asked if it has been considered to ask for portfolios of schemed work.

(RD) confirmed that candidates have been asked to submit examples of work, 2 references and 2 previous lesson observations under their current setting.

(LT) queried if observations of teaching staff conducting online learning has been carried out.

(RD) confirmed that monitoring and quality assuring is being done but observations have not been carried out. Teachers are not being asked to do live teaching sessions. All work is being set through google classrooms and through the website. Catch up and discussions are logged on a home learning log to ensure that contact points have been made regularly between families. SLT are quality assuring the work and pupil feedback and picking up on gaps where children are not accessing and the reasons for them not accessing.

6. Schools Financial Value Standards Review

(RD) noted the action point from the last meeting was to allow for further discussions or queries.

(JG) stated the SFVS Review was signed off and queries were satisfied.

(LT) queried if the SFVS is to be reviewed annually.

(GCM) confirmed that it is to be reviewed annually as it is updated. This year the SFVS has been updated to included more lengthy questions and introduced a RAG system.

No further questions.

7. Health & Safety

(RD) Covid-19 – The Action Plan included in the pack is currently in place and remains in place up to the end of the current week. Continuing risk assessments have happened since the school closure, during the school closure and as a continued measure whilst more pupils are on site. The next phase of the risk assessment is currently being worked on, accounting for more pupils in light of schools opening on the 1st of June. Cleaning is being reviewed as a core priority in terms of delegated areas, number of hours on site and any additional hours that can be utilised. All 7 government guidance's have been reviewed and all information has been extrapolated to produce a more concise document. There are lots of guidance on particular elements of provision. One of which is site management and ensuring that all systems and statutory testing are happening and taking place. Key priorities around communication with parents and logistical elements of onsite provisions with the intention to open of the schools to more children. In particular, access to the site, social distancing and how social distancing is maintained in school.

Children will be in learning pods which needs logistically mapping and risk assessing. Children in one leaning pod will not be able to interact with children in another learning pod. Assessments of lunch times and breaks, which staff will be allocated to which group etc. Need to be carried out. In the interim, to accommodate this in the 1st phase of re-opening, schools will be opening for 4.5 days, with a half day on Friday allocated to planning and preparation for the following week. This reduces the need to allocate another member of staff to the pods and maintain the same teaching staff for each pod and reducing the risk of mixing. The measures that currently exist, works effectively and there is great confidence with the risk assessment that the schools can safely re-open to the parents who have elected to send their children to school on June 1st.

There is a potential 2nd wave of maybes who might elect to send their children to school over the next couple of weeks.

None of the government guidance allows for a 2nd phase of school re-opening. Until further guidance is received on what the 2nd phase will look like there is very little that can be done. There will however be a national problem in keeping in line with the maximum class size of 15 children due to the lack of space and resources available. Longer conversations will be needed to evaluate and manage how to transition into the 2nd phase of school re-opening.

(RD) noted that the risk assessment takes account of the government guidance with an overview of how government guidance translates into actions taken by the schools. In the short turn around since the guidance was published, visual elements are essential in building back trust and ensuring that the children will be safe on their return to school. Hygiene boxes will be placed in every classroom that will include: hand sanitiser and hand sanitising wipes, surface and cleaning wipes, soaps, gloves, aprons and first aid kits to allow the teaching staff to manage the daily provision of the pods. Systems will also be in place for the hosing down of playgrounds daily which is essential in supporting EYFS.

(RD) will share the Phase 1 Risk Assessment with the Governors after the meeting for their consideration and feedback.

(SW) asked how big the pods are.

(RD) confirmed that the government guidance stated that no more than 15 pupils should be allocated to each class. Within our schools it is unlikely to reach that capacity at the moment, but there is allowance to expand should more parents elect to send their children back to school. It has also been risk assessed for the likely possibility that demand will increase significantly especially at Orchard where currently there are only 2 pods per year group, but it is likely a 3rd and 4th pod will be introduced imminently.

(SW) asked where the highest level of anxiety is.

(RD) noted that it is more of a sense of trust issues rather than anxiety. The staff who have been working within schools during the partial closure are very clear on the systems that are in place. However, Teaching Assistants have predominantly not been back in school since the 20th of March, so they have less knowledge visually of how those systems work which is something that needs to be risk managed over the next phase of time.

(RD) will send an email out to staff with an overview of what the provisions will look like in the event that the school will re-open and there is logistical planning for each site to manage that.

(RD) noted that Unions and the GMB have issued particular guidance on questions that staff should be asking before their return to work. RD has worked with senior teams across all 3 schools to articulate what the risk assessment means. RD has also matched all the Unions questions to the risk assessment so that it is clear how those concerns have been answered. It is important for staff to feel like their questions and concerns have been answered promptly and that there is a good articulation around what the answers are so that staff can feel safe upon their return to work.

Nationally the trust has been broken amongst the parent body but over time that will be regained once the parents see that it is safe for their children to return to school and anticipate that the uptake of children returning will increase. However, a number of parents have indicated that they do not want to send their children to school and a process has been set up whereby the parents will have to notify us beforehand if they have changed their minds. This will allow for better management of the numbers of pupils in each pod and ensure that risks are minimal, and it is as safe as possible for all.

(RD) noted that parent communications will go out on Friday 22nd May 2020, so they are updated prior to the half term. A separate letter will be sent out to parents who have elected to send their children back to school informing them of pod allocations, entry points, drop off and pick up times for each pod and managing that process.

(JG) stated that it was his understanding that it was essentially down to the schools to decide to re-open or not.

(RD) clarified that is not the case. Nationally, all schools are expected to re-open from 1st June as per the government's directive. As of this morning, 11 Local Authorities have decided to stand against the government's guidance to re-open; predominantly in the north of England where the R rate is significantly higher than London where it is thought to be considerably lower. The Hackney Learning Trust are supporting schools in the borough to re-open as per the government's guidance. The government's final decision will be made on Friday 28th of May but preparations have been made for the Phase 1 re-opening of school. A phased return of year groups will be implemented and by Week 2 of re-opening Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 6 will be back at school. This is to allow for safe management of the school re-opening from the 1st of June.

8. Premises Update

(SF) has reviewed all the documents on the Playground equipment inspections and is confident all the problems the inspector has highlighted for all 3 schools have been actioned and are being adequately addressed. The one concerning problem that was raised by the inspector was rectified on the day and at the time of the inspection.

(GCM) plans to extract some of the actions from the inspection to be added to the site manager's daily tasks across all 3 schools and to add other actions to the site manager's schedule of tasks. Also, the plan is to enlist a company to rectify all the problems the inspector has raised.

(SF) queried how the recruitment of an Assistant Site Manager was progressing.

(RD) noted the uptake has been unsuccessful but recruitment will restart as soon as soon as it is possible to do. More time needs to be invested into re-advertising the role.

(GCM) stated the aim is to have 1 full time assistant at Orchard and another full time assistant to be split between Southwold and Hoxton Garden.

9. Policies

a. Procurement Policy

(RD) stated that the half termly Premises meetings have been helpful in enabling her to better understand the processes and difficulties around getting and securing quotes, making plans and decisions about the right supplier who would carry out proposed works.

The conversation in the previous resources meeting was regarding some of the suppliers that are being used and how quality assurance is conducted and reliance on "go-to" suppliers isn't happening. This is the part of the process that is missing from the procurement policy. It doesn't state in the current procurement policy the process in which suppliers are selected and how the decision is made to select a certain supplier.

(SF) stated that after reviewing the documents the point was highlighted in the previous meeting that the accumulated amount from a single supplier could easily exceed the £10,000 limit despite the individual figures being below that limit. This may mean the supplier may not get the same scrutiny that a £50,000 investment would require in terms of due diligence. Once an analysis has been done to see where the largest expenditure is, a framework agreement may need to be established, where every year or 2 years at the most, a review of the suppliers used for these costs is done. For example, for stationery and admin supplies, 3 companies would be researched, and quotes requested for a selection of goods and service terms agreed. Based on this, it can be ensured that a framework is in place to uphold quality assurance. There also needs to be room for flexibility in the procurement policy, for example if there are repairs to be done that only the company who supplied them can do. Otherwise, it would be counterproductive to acquire 3 quotes when the result would be that the original supplier is the only viable option. However, 1 quote for expenditures up to £10,000 is unacceptable.

(RD) agreed that there is a need for a system to be implemented for expenditures under £10,000. This is being explored in the premises meetings through additional quotes being sought for the limit under £10,000.

(RD) that the policy could to be adapted to include a process that is Federation wide and a separate one that is for individual schools. The HLT guidance is based on individual schools and states that 1 written quote is needed for expenditures between £1000-£5000 and 2 or more written quotes are needed for expenditures between £5000 and £25,000.

(SW) stated that the policy needs to be reasonable and enable procurement to be effective without being too harsh.

(GCM) noted that the DfE has a national framework and Hackney also has a framework where they have vetted a list of companies to use.

(RD) stated that as an outcome of the meeting she needed to establish if the policy needed to be redrafted to included parameters for individual schools considering the current policy is based on the federation.

(SF) stated that orders of magnitude are what is important regardless if it is for the individual school or for the federation. The policy should apply to all purchases regardless if it is on behalf of the individual school or on behalf of Viridis.

All in agreement with SF's statement.

(JG) noted that it is also important to have an accumulative spend check in the policy.

(RD) noted that she would re- draft of the procurement policy to account for all the points discussed and highlighted in the meeting.

(LT) noted that in the previous resources meeting it was discussed that it would be more beneficial to have a document with the accumulative total spent per supplier rather than the individual amounts for separate jobs.

(RD) confirmed that is being worked on through the premises meetings.

(SF) clarified the discussion generated from Document 8 in the pack from the last resources meeting where JG suggested that the totals be categorised into similar expenditure enable us to see if the framework idea makes sense for certain types of expenditure.

b. Code of Practice and Scheme of Delegation

Agreed by all that it is to be reviewed by RD and GCM, considering adaptations need to be made to the Procurement Policy

c. Finance Procedures

Agreed by all that it is to be reviewed by RD and GCM, considering adaptations need to be made to the Procurement Policy

(LT) noted that Stephen Hall was still mentioned in the document

d. Income Collection Policy

(GCM) confirmed the policy remained the same with no significant changes.

e. GCP Card Holder Guidance

(SF) noted an anomaly amongst the Head teacher signatures. SF will review the document and highlight these anomalies and send it back to GCM

f. Disposal of Assets

(GCM) confirmed the policy remained the same with no significant changes.

g. Health and Safety Policy

(GCM) confirmed the policy remained the same with no significant changes.

(SF) noted that it isn't clear if there have been any amendments made since the previous policy reviews. There are no tracked changes in the documents which would be helpful.

10. Any Other Business

No other business

11. Glossary of Common Terms

Meeting ended at 5.50pm