

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

Resources Governing Body Sub-committee  
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

On Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 4.30pm

**Committee Attendees**

Sara Walshingham (SW)

Laura Theobald (LT)

Giuseppa Colella-Mare (GCM)

Clerk: Manna Ghidey

James Gowland (JG)

Hanna Lownsborough (HL)

Rachel Davie (RD)

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**1. Apologies/Consent for Absence**

No Apologies. All present.

**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 2020/2021**

No changes have been made or noted.

**c. Acknowledgement of TOR**

No changes have been made or noted.

**d. Code of Conduct**

No changes have been made or noted.

**e. Governing Body Annual Calendar**

No changes have been made or noted.

**3. Agreements of the minutes from the last meeting**

All in agreement.

**4. <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> Year Budget Review & Forecast, Current Status**

**a. Current Status of Budgets and Changes**

*A 9 month Viridis Budget Monitoring Report was presented to The Resources Committee prior to the meeting.*

Income – detailed on page 1 of the report

(GCM) Stated that the delegated funding has now been received in full from HE and there has not been much change to the delegated budget.

- The final instalment of the SEN funding has still not been received in full. If the final instalment of the funding still has not been received by the end of March when closing the financial year GCM will have to accrue for this.
- PPG – The last instalment is to be received by the end of March.
- There may be some changes to other funds/grants received due to COVID.
- Government Grants – There have been no changes. By the end of the financial year there may be slightly more than projected due to government payment towards teacher pensions and teacher salaries which is proposed to stop from the next budget.

(SW) Stated that funding will still be given to EY teachers.

(GCM) All remaining income has had changes due to COVID.

- Facilities is on track due to receiving a refund in Electricity of £10K from British Gas for Southwold School which was in credit.
- Catering is projected at 50% less due to the partial school closures and not receiving payments from parents.
- Trips and Visits have not happened in this financial year.
- There has been no donation income due to reduction in community events across the financial year.
- Extended schools has seen a reduction in income due to the partial school closures and a reduced number of pupils attending ASC due to COVID-19 in the Autumn Term.
- Sports grants and UFSM remain as pledged.

(GCM) Explained that overall, there is a reduction in income but it is not substantial. This may be subject to some changes by the end of March. All the money pledged by the government has been received. GCM anticipates £100K less than projected at the beginning of the 20/21 financial year for income.

Expenditure – detailed on page 2 of the report

(GCM) Stated there have been some changes in expenditure. This is largely due to saving being made in salaries and resources due to the partial school closures and COVID.

- Staffing – Saving have been made in teaching assistant and teacher salaries. Admin and finance staff remain the same with no changes. Typically the savings would have been counter balanced by E26 and E27 (agencies staff) but not this year due to reduced number of agency staff needed because of the partial school closures. The Federation opted to pay Long Term agency staff (those who had been within the federation for more than 12 weeks) at 80% in line with the COVID furlough scheme. There has been less need for Short Term – Daily Supply Staff. There has been some small savings in Premises Staff due to unsuccessful recruitment for an assistant site manager. This has been due to lack of experienced candidates and a small number of applicants.
- Indirect employee expenses – Savings have been made in travel expense largely due to reduced number of taxi's being needed for cross site movement in the last financial year.

- Development and Training – Savings have been made due to a reduction in the days of external teaching and learning consultant onsite professional development support.
- Building and Maintenance – is on track as works are still being completed.
- Cleaning – There has been an increase in expenditure due to COVID. Changes in the cleaning contract were made to accommodate increased cleaning hours onsite especially during the day, with an emphasis on cleaning communal areas (including frequently touched areas – bannisters, door handles, etc.), emptying bins at lunchtime and ensuring that classrooms are being cleaned twice a day.
- Energy – There have been continuous savings across the years. This in part is also due to the solar panels at Southwold and Orchard Schools.
- Other occupational costs – There has been an approximate £6K reduction in expenditure due to less CCTV cameras being needed than planned for.
- Learning Resources – There has been substantial savings in Learning Resources. This is largely due to the two partial school closures across the 20/21 financial year. A full school cohort has not been onsite for a large part of this financial year and therefore, less resources have been needed.
- Catering supplies – There have been less expenses. Due to the lockdown there has been a reduction in payments from parents, but at the same time, the catering invoices have been less due to reduction in meals and staff needed.
- Agency Supply – Less spent due to COVID and as explained earlier in the meeting.
- Direct Revenue Financing – Less than what was projected due to the works on the tarmac in playground at Orchard School being moved to next financial year. *This plans for the tarmac works was discussed further in more detail during the meeting.*
- Extended School Costs – Savings have been made due to ASC and other clubs not being run because of the lockdowns so no resources were needed.

(GCM) Noted that the majority of savings made were due to COVID and the two partial school closures. GCM estimated a carry forward of £1.4million for the next financial year. However, the last quarter of this financial year is still to be accounted for, so there may be some fluctuations but it will be minimum.

- Capital – There will be no carry forward due to the income and expenditure being balanced. The money received was £26.5K and the money pledged from the income is £198K which is reflected in E30. This will not change the money brought forward for capital.

(JG) Questioned if there is a risk of the money being clawed back due to the large carry forward.

(GCM) Stated that the threshold for the carry forward without question is 8% of the budget. For anything above this a plan of action is needed for how to spend the carry forward over the following 1-3 years.

(SW) Confirmed that if there has been a surplus of over 12% for 3 years in a row then the LA will consider a claw back, but will take into consideration any plans.

(RD) Noted that the full school cohort has only been in school during the Autumn Term of the 20-21 financial year which has had a large impact, particularly on the staffing element and the carry forward. Some of the works that were planned for the carry forward from last year, were not undertaken because parameters wouldn't allow it.

(GCM) Explained that the budget allows for a member of teaching staff and a member of support staff in every classroom. It was anticipated that those roles would have been recruited for this year but recruitment has been stagnant and advertising has not been successful due to partial closures.

(RD) Added that across the federation there are three vacant Learning Mentor positions. The three recruitment rounds that have taken place have been unsuccessful. There has been only one successful candidate. The quality of candidates has not been to a high standard despite the number of applications. This is the same for TA recruitment that has been unsuccessful. There has also been teaching staff that have resigned whose positions haven't been recruited to as the structure in the leadership teams meant that middle leadership team have been able to step in. This has been intentional to ensure the consistency for children with a known member of staff and not recruiting with an agency given the known gaps the children are currently experiencing. In terms of the budget that has created quite large savings.

(GCM) Noted that there are some teaching staff who had been budgeted for fully who have since gone on maternity leave, resulting in additional savings.

(RD) Has met and discussed with GCM the plans for the carry forward which will be distributed and shared in full during the next resources meeting. RD also noted that this had also been discussed with the Schools Improvement Partner, Hilary Ryan.

(JG) Queried if the level of increase in cleaning costs will continue moving forward.

(GCM) Stated the cleaning contract review for the next budget year allows for the changes in the contract to be kept. The cleaning company has sent the cost implications for this for next year and it will be implemented in the budget for the next financial year. This is to ensure the cleaning standards that are in place are continued at least for the duration of the COVID issue and maybe be kept for the foreseeable future as a good cleaning practice.

(LT) Queried if the catch up activities will be factored in, for example for swimming.

(GCM) Stated there has been no expenses for swimming this financial year due to COVID. GCM also noted that 40% of the catch up fund has already been received and plans have been made to spend that money.

(SW) Queried if the schools had to make reimbursements on the catering contract for staffing costs.

(GCM) Confirmed that the schools do need to make reimbursements in catering but the overall amount of the invoices received has been less than what they would be if the schools were fully open.

(RD) Added that due to the catering company furloughing their staff directly, as per the government scheme, there has been no direct impact on the schools budget/expenses.

(GCM) Stated that a healthy contingency of £500K is good to have in the Federation budget.

(RD) Noted that monthly meetings with GCM will take place to ensure a closer look at the budget movement and take actions if needed.

## **b. Anticipated Budget Forecast for 2021/22, Risks and Planning**

*A report for the anticipated budget was shared with the governors during the meeting*

(GCM) Noted there isn't much of a difference from the 20/21 budget. In terms of funding there has been a slight increase of £380K across the 3 schools for the 21/22 budget. This is based on the indicative budget that has been received recently from HE.

(SW) noted that the SEN funding has increased and asked if the expected amount is known and whether the amount is agreed and correct.

(GCM) Stated that when the budget is reviewed the funding per level is already there. Then GCM goes through the list of children and plots against the spreadsheet the number of children at each level which will give the total figure for each school.

(SW) Asked if the agreed numbers correct and whether the figures are checked.

(GCM) Stated that the figures should be correct as GCM has liaises with the SENCo at each school and updates the LA with any corrections.

(RD) Has raised with HE that the termly finance checking with schools has not happened this financial year. Typically, a spreadsheet would be sent from HE detailing what funding has been given for children with high level SEND and what funding is still expected to be received. RD noted this system is very useful and it is anticipated it will be reinstated as it is important that there is an accuracy between, HE and the schools regarding those pupils, especially for those who have had new EHCP approved. Finance continues to be tracked internally on a regular basis at each school.

(JG) Asked what the latest is on the National Funding Formula and whether it is going to happen anytime soon.

(GCM) Stated if this had been implemented there would have been a reduction in funding.

(SW) Confirmed that it hasn't happened yet but the preferred approach is to bring the pupils in areas of the country who were funded less up to the current level rather than cutting it funds to all other areas. Therefore, some areas have had huge increases in funding compared to other parts of the country.

## **5. Staffing Update (including risks to recruitment and retention)**

### **a. Leadership Update**

(RD) Stated that the leadership team is stable with no planned changes. There were two AHT on maternity, one has returned to work and the other is due to come back in May at ORC. There is one member of SLT at SW on maternity leave but is due to return before the end of this academic year. A successful delivery of CPD programmes for the senior leaders through external coaching has been positively received.

### **b. Staffing Update**

(RD) Noted there is a significantly high number of applicants for teachers. However, only two have been appointed because the calibre of candidates with experience is limited. One of the reasons for this is due to NQTs having not secured jobs during the last academic year because of the pandemic. (RD) Stated that great care is needed as an organisation when taking on additional NQTs with reduced level of experience as this would impact the level of support provided to current ATs and NQTs. The mentoring capacity within the Federation needs to be carefully balanced out. It is important to be careful about how and who is recruited to enable effective management in ensuring the continuation of teaching and learning at the standard that is expected.

(RD) Explained that there were five resignations in the Autumn Term. Four of which were relocations, two abroad and two out of London.

Staff preference forms have just been completed with some staff indicating that they will be relocating out of London. Staff returning from maternity leave and apprentice teachers taking on classroom responsibilities will contribute in filling those gaps. There has been two newly recruited staff to support the potential resignations at the end of this academic year.

Steps are being taken to review the support staff recruitment model. A number of TAs are recruited through an agency due the calibre and abilities being higher. Often enough these TAs are working for agencies to gain experience before they move onto a teaching apprenticeship/teacher training programme. The plan is to adjust advertisements to try to attract higher calibre of candidates which will also be done for learning mentors where recruitment has been a challenge.

### **c. Teaching Apprenticeship Update**

(RD) Stated that all AT from last academic year passed their end point assessments. This was later than the previous academic year due to changes to the end point assessments because of the gap in the practical application due to the partial closures in the last academic year. This will be the same for the current AT for this academic year and this will be extended into the autumn term. Four out of five AT from the last academic year stayed within the federation and went into newly qualified teaching roles. All five out of the five current AT are on track to meet the standards for their award of QTS and will stay within the federation into the next academic year.

The DfE have withdrawn the ITT funding for 21/22 which has resulted in a number of the salary routes having to close their course offers for the next academic year. As a result, there has been an increased number of applications for Viridis for the next academic year. So much so, the course offer has had to be temporarily closed twice to catch up on processing the applicants in the fixed timeframe. The course advertisement has just been reopened for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time in order to recruit a further 3 apprentice teachers. Viridis will be continuing with the AT programme.

#### **d. Finance and Administrative Update**

(RD) Confirmed that a Communications Manager role has been explored and a Job Description has been agreed and graded by HE. The recruitment however has yet to happen due to the school closures. Recruitment will begin when the schools open again fully, in order for the applicants to gather a sense of all three schools running at full capacity, in particular, for some elements of that role.

RD looked at the need to increase capacity within the administrative team across the three schools. RD is currently evaluating the current structure of the admin team.

The recruitment for the Assistant Site Manager role has been unsuccessful due to the recruitment process and the lack of experienced candidates. The one candidate who was offered the role declined the offer. This may be due to the fact that the role is an assistant role rather than a site manager role. However, an evaluation of the responsibilities of the four members of staff currently on roll was conducted and the assistant site manager role, currently employed, will be removed completely and transitioned to an additional fourth site manager. This is to accommodate the need for two Site Managers based at Orchard as the growth in school roll means a site manager is needed on duty all day, so adding a fourth site manager will allow this to happen.

(LT) Queried if the site manager role will be re-advertised.

(RD) Explained that currently there is an assistant site manager who will transition to a site manager role as part of the performance review process. This will allow a better distribution of hours at Orchard and allow for cover at the other schools when needed to complete bigger projects. If additional support is needed, Short Term agency cover will be recruited where necessary.

(HL) Queried if there has been any trend analysis done on the teachers relocating out of London.

(RD) Stated an analysis had not been conducted but being tracked internally.

(SW) Asked what a communications manager role is, in terms of the Federation.

(RD) Explained that the Communications manager roll is for all 3 schools, looking in particular at social media and communications outside the schools.

(JG) Noted that the Admin and Finance hire is important, especially given the current climate. It is important for the foreseeable and ensuring that the teaching staff are spending the absolute

maximum amount of time with the children. JG stated that what the wider Federation structure looks like should be thought about very boldly.

(RD) Agreed that the focus is on creating a sustainable structure and ensuring that there is enough capacity to ensure that work load is manageable for every staff member.

## **6. Financial Standards**

### **a. Financial Value Standards Review**

*SFVS Review was presented to the governors before the meeting*

(SW) Queried if Viridis were submitting the report, as the government didn't require the schools to produce it.

(GCM) Confirmed with Yukon at HE that the SFVS was required this year and it is to be presented in the same format as the previous year.

(GCM) Updated last year's review with this year's figures and prepared it for approval by the governors. There is no substantial difference compared with last year. The two areas in last year's review that were fulfilled in part remains the same for this current year. The review asks if the schools have 6 resources meetings a year which is not relevant to Viridis as termly resources meetings works well for the Federation. There were no problems last year and like last year JG will need to sign and approve.

(JG) Noted that the only red that is visible on the SFVS is SLT as a percentage of the workforce. The report states this is the highest 10% of similar schools, which is a good thing.

(LT) Asked if this was due to the structure of the Federation.

(RD) Stated that this was one of the discussion points that were had last year. It is because of the Federation's model. As a single school there wouldn't be an allowance for as many SLT but the Federation budget has allowed for a wider leadership capacity.

(LT) Asked if the SLT is included in the average teaching costs.

(RD) Confirmed that each of the leaders apart from the HT have a percentage of teaching responsibilities so that they are directly impacting on teaching and learning.

(GCM) Confirmed it does include the SLT.

*All agreed to submit the SFSV and GCM is to send JG the first page of the review to sign and send back. GCM will then submit the SFVS review.*

### **b. Benchmarking**

(SW) Stated that in the report, it is quite interesting to see the differences between Viridis and other schools.

(GCM) Noted that the report states 20/21 data which is inaccurate and presumes 19/20 data is what is actually referred to in the report.

(GCM) Stated that the Benchmarking report is a useful document to review but feels the comparison of schools is not reflective of the Viridis environment. New Wave and Leap Federation are the closest in comparison but the remainder of schools are not reflective due to the number of pupils the report is based on.

(SW) Noted that teaching and supply figures are quite high compared to the other schools in the review and Special Facilities are low.

(GCM) Clarified that special facilities encompasses three budgets; photography, uniforms and school bags. Viridis no longer sells any uniforms or school bags to parents because the company the schools use, have set up a system online whereby the parents can buy direct.

(SW) Noted the review seems to suggest that the other schools do not have a supply budget compared with Viridis.

(GCM) Clarified that this refers to E02, which is a supply budget for supplies that the schools employ directly. This is where the teachers do extra hours for booster classes, which is outside of their daily teaching, where they are supply that revision for children. GCM is not aware of what the other schools do and whether they utilise this budget.

(SW) Asked if the benchmarking report is useful.

(RD) Confirmed the report is useful to see what the benchmarks look like in other schools and in comparing similar contexts with Viridis School expenditure.

(SW) Noted that Viridis and New Wave are the most similar in size.

## **7. Health & Safety**

### **a. Risk Assessment – COVID**

*Version 7 of the COVID risk assessment was presented to the governors.*

(RD) Stated that Version 7 of the risk assessment was submitted on 28/01/2021 and had taken into account the fact that the schools have gone back into a partial closure. Some of the risks and actions that need to be taken have changed, so that it is really important that the risk assessment remains current and any points that are irrelevant to the current situation are removed. There is an emphasis from the government and HE that the risk assessments remain current and live and are reviewed and updated every 2 weeks.

Version 8 is currently being worked on which will be based on the reintegration of all pupils back into school. Taking into account the new government guidance of which there have been a few changes and additions. One of them being, face masks being used in primary schools for adults if they are coming into close with one another, which is different to previous government guidance.

This will then be submitted to HE Health and Safety team to approve and check that all the core elements of the government guidance are included in the schools risk assessment. It is then the responsibility of the school to ensure that the risk assessment is being implemented. The systems that are in place to ensure this include half termly premises meetings and there is a member of staff who does quality assurance checks with site manager's onsite every week to check the implementation of elements of the risk assessment as well as other health and safety measures across the schools.

One of the changes that has been imbedded in the risk assessment from the earlier versions are to look at the existing risks and the levels of the control and the residue risks in a slightly different way by referencing a numerical value to ensure that those gaps are enclosed and the actions allow for the enclosure of the gaps in the risk assessment.

(RD) Stated that the risk assessment is being reviewed every 2 weeks looking at core priorities within the risk assessment and checking it is happening or actions that are coming up that need to happen change. Each of the schools has a health and safety briefing each week and that identifies elements of the risk assessment and re-exposes those through promoting the key messages. For example, social distancing, handwashing and transition safety around the school building. As well as entry and exit point throughout the building.

(RD) Noted there a number of elements to consider and certainly things such as self-isolation and the introduction of the lateral flow tests for all teaching and support staff at schools have been quite transitional through this period of time and risk have been regularly assessed and actions adapted. For all members of staff, it's a consultation process, so once the risk assessment is done, it is sent to all staff and shared remotely in briefing to identify key messages and gives the opportunity for staff to feedback and identify any concerns they have regarding the risk assessment. This then feeds back into the reviews.

All the risk assessments for the individual schools are uploaded onto the schools websites so that parents have access to them. RD is tracking the number of hits the websites received for the risk assessment page.

(RD) Clarified that in terms of parent communications, a letter is also sent out at key transition points to parents highlighting key elements of the risk assessment so that it is really clear. This happened in September at the start of the academic year, when bubbles closures were happening towards the end of the December due to isolated cases.

(LT) Stated that it is really good that the risk assessment is very clear and transparent and available for everyone to access.

(SW) Asked whether the red column means are points that haven't been done.

(RD) Confirmed the red column is the initial risk that might be presented and are the initial controls good enough, which in this case would be no; hence the red column. Therefore additional things are needed to be added/implemented. In this case, what has happened is the control measures have changed over time and some of the initial control measures have become standard practice. Additional things have been needed on top of those, which have then changed again. Those columns change and fluctuate in each of the risk assessment reviews.

## 8. Premises Update

### a. Caretaker house at Hoxton Garden (proposal)

*A short overview of the proposal for the plans to the Caretaker House at HG were presented to the governors*

(RD) Stated the proposal is to renovate the caretaker house and create a multi-use community and teaching space. Comprising of, potentially, a science lab and art studio or drama space. RD is initially seeking the governors' approval that the proposal is reasonable enough to move forward with. There are concerns particularly about the house as it currently stands. The house is not being used as its intended purpose and there is a risk that that building will fall into further disrepair.

The school is responsible for the building and due to its location and the entry points not necessarily needing to be accessed through the school; it is a beautiful opportunity to create a space, not only for the school, but as a space that will benefit the local community.

How feasible that ambition is, is to be determined. Some feasibility studies will need to be undertaken and discussions with an architect.

(HL) Stated that the proposal seemed like a great plan and is worth taking the next steps and investigating.

*All governors showed support in investigating the proposal further.*

(JG) Asked if the federation would qualify for any funding.

(GCM) Has made enquiries with HE. Hackney will not allow the house to be rented as an outlet. Hackney will not spend any money in renovating the house. If the school wants to invest in renewing the house and restructuring it, that is ok by them but it cannot be used for any form of income/profit. A proposal is still needed to be submitted to Hackney stating what the house is intended to be used for and to seek approval due to the building being listed. A communal educational purpose may qualify for approval.

(JG) Noted that is a good reason to use some of the substantial carry forward from this financial year.

*All governors in agreement to move forward with the proposal and further investigations.*

## **b. Orchard Playground (Tarmac tender)**

*A document listing quotes from three potential companies was presented to the governors*

(RD) Noted that the rationale for Orchard's front playground is due to areas of the playground being uneven which can create water build up in wetter weather. There are some small trip hazards that are of a cause for concern. This is being brought forward to the meeting due to the costs falling over the threshold in terms of funding costs meeting governor approval.

(GCM) Conducted a tendering process whereby quotes were sought from three different companies for consideration. GCM investigated with the procurement department at Hackney whether the costs fall under the threshold for a complete tendering process, which it has been confirmed it does not. A report was presented on a table format with the costs proposed by each of the companies for evaluation. Reference can be requested for each company to decide which company to proceed with.

(SW) Asked whether the resources committee needed to make a recommendation to the full governing body and whether RD and GCM recommend a company to propose to the FGB.

(RD) Stated that Alliance Facilities and WH Construction would be the preferred option due to the schools having the best working relationship with them in terms of job completion but there is no preference between the two.

(LT) Asked, considering that WH Construction is the cheaper option, whether there were any reasons that would favour Alliance Facilities over WH Construction.

(RD) Stated there is no preference and would go with WH Construction as it is the cheaper option

*All in agreement to propose WH Construction to full governing body for approval.*

## **c. Façade at Hoxton Garden Update**

(RD) Stated that Hoxton Garden are part of the tranche of three schools that are getting façade works completed. There is a delay to the start due to some issues which are out of the schools control. It seems that the works will start imminently. There is a proposed 17 week completion timetable so it is hoped the works will be completed by the end of the Summer Holidays, in time for the start to the next academic year. There doesn't appear to be any projected impact to the running of the school, which is important but RD and GCM will update the governors of the progress of these works.

(SW) Asked if RD and GCM are confident to manage the process without seeking outside advice.

(RD) Stated she is confident to manage the process. The most important concern is that the works do not impact the running of the school. RD and GCM are attending all meetings to ensure school agreement on the works conducted without impacting the school community.

(LT) Asked if the scaffolding is still up at HG.

(RD) Confirmed that the scaffolding is still up but it is linked to the façade works and the issues that there have been throughout the process.

#### **9. Any Other Business**

No other business discussed.

#### **10. Glossary of Common Terms**

Meeting ended at 5.50pm