

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

Resources Governing Body Sub-committee
Virtual Meeting via Microsoft Teams

On Thursday 20th May 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)

1. Welcome

a. Apologies / Consent for absence

No apologies. All present.

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

All agreed.

2. Governing Body Organisation

a. Membership

To be agreed at the FGB meeting. – *No changes to the resources committee.*

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. Acknowledgement of Code of Conduct

No changes have been made or noted.

e. Governing Body Annual Calendar

All in agreement for the next resources committee meeting to take place on 4th November 2021.

(RD) Noted that a draft schedule for 21/22 meeting dates have been drawn up and has been included as a point of reference but is to be consulted in the FBG meeting.

3. Agreements of the Minutes From the Last Meeting

All agreed. No comments or questions.

4. Budget Monitoring

a. The Viridis Schools Year End 2020-21

A Year End Viridis Report was presented to The Resources Committee prior to the meeting.

(GCM) Stated that the carry forward is as predicted £1.543m.

- Income has not varied - all income has been received as predicted and presented during the February Resources meeting. More COVID catch up funding is still to be received as this is delivered in three waves (approx.£60k).
- Expenditure – there have been areas of underspending across the budget. Mainly, in teaching and class based support staff costs. Under a fully opened academic year the agency staff costs would counterbalance the reduced expenditure in salaries. Capacity recruitment and the apprentice teacher model has meant December staff leaver recruitment was paused as a result of the partial school closures.
- Savings have been made in curriculum resources (E19). Particularly in enrichment and educational visits as no trips have taken place because of the risk the pandemic presented. Not as many classrooms resources have been needed due to reduction in school attendance for a large portion of the financial year.
- Some capital projects that were planned to take place within the financial year, did not happen due to restrictions of site visits from external parties, particularly between April and August 2020.
- Investments in IT equipment have been made. All PCs and iPads for teaching staff have been bought as planned. The equipment was bought outright rather taking out a lease. £120K was spent on hardware.
- Other building works were also completed as planned.

(GCM) Noted that a full budget was received as if the schools would have been fully opened.

(JG) Asked what the original forecast was for the carry forward amount.

(GCM) Stated that the carry forward was originally predicted at approximately £600k.

(JG) Assumed other schools were in similar positions with considerably large carry forwards.

(GCM) Enquired, during the SBM meetings, with Business Managers in other schools about their schools carry forwards and was informed that some of those schools were in similar positions with similar carry forwards. GCM clarified that the schools that may be struggling are most likely smaller

schools with one form entry or schools that are struggling to recruit pupils. Viridis Federation is not the only Federation with an increased carry forward.

(RD) The carry forward from 2019 – 2020 was in the region of 900k. This money was committed largely to the capital projects which have had to be paused for the reasons above. This has in turn increased the carry forward this year. A plan for how the carry forward will be spent, including postponed projects has been included later in the meeting for discussion.

(RD) The meeting format for budget review has moved to monthly across this financial year to accurately track expenditure and progress towards committed carry forward money.

(GCM) Noted that the Year End documents needed to be signed by the chair of governors, then submitted to Hackney.

RD to sign the Year End Report and New Budget, GCM to send the documents to JG to sign before submitting the documents to LA.

b. The Viridis Schools New Year Budget 2021-22 (including forward projection)

(GCM) Stated that the amount of money pledged by the LA is similar to last year, approximately £8.6million. There is a little bit more than last year due to the increased number of children that are in the schools. The transition to 3 forms of entry at Orchard has been completed and Hoxton Garden has had a small increase to pupil roll.

SEN funding is a prediction as this could increase due to number of pupils in school with need changes, for example, new entries in Reception. The budget is set at the October census minus the number of pupils in nursery. There are three points in year where numbers can change so there may be adjustments to the funding, this is the same for PPG and FSM funding.

(GCM) Stated that this year, across the Federation, there has been an increase in the number of nursery pupils. This year no money will be received for pension contributions and this has been accommodated within allocation.

(SW) Clarified that the pension grant for Early Years teachers will still be received.

(GCM) Stated that for income, catering was approx. £110k and other facilities income approx... £22k which includes small gains in bank interest and the income for diaries, book bags etc. Educational trips and visits have been budgeted for this year as trips, visits and workshops can take place, with increased risk assessment or adaptations. Kench Hill will not take place until 2022.

(JG) Expressed that it was a shame that the residential trips weren't happening again.

(GCM) Stated that by the time the government had set out its plans for reopening and given dates and guidance's to schools, it was too late notice to organise Kench Hill safely. This included adequate time for payments and kit purchase, particularly for disadvantaged family budgeting and

clear risk assessment reviews. The government did not give permission for residential trips until April 2021 for primary pupils.

(LT) Asked if the trip for the current Year 5's could be moved to the following year when they are in Year 6 and potentially have 2 year groups attending residential trips.

(RD) Explained that it was a very difficult decision to make this year in terms of national context and whether plans for trips could move forwards. The Federation had to consider parental confidence with the risks involved in undertaking a residential trip given the current climate and the impact of numbers attending as a result of this and finance. There was amended plans this year for the current Year 6 residential trip as a result of their missed provision in Year 5 but this has also not been possible. Spaces and bookings will be a challenge for additional slots at Kench Hill (the schools book 3 years in advance) however, other options are being tabled for discussion and advance booking to close the experience gap for the next cohort of Year 6 pupils. A secure plan is in place for the current Year 6's towards the end of this academic year to recreate some of those experiences but in a more localised context to support the soft skill development residential trips allow for.

(GCM) Noted that wrap around provision income is approx. £180k assuming normal school opening next academic year. The 3rd portion of the COVID catch-up funding is still to be received which is approx. £40k. Other grants made up of FSM and PE and sports grants is approx. £205k. A total budget figure of £10.5million is predicted to be received this financial year.

80% of the budget expenditure relates to salary. This year GCM and RD have evaluated the staffing structure; having planned for a member of teaching staff and TA in every classroom. RD and GCM have evaluated how many agency staff could potentially be needed across the year and have added that to the budget. This is to reduce the level of variance in the 2021/22 Year End Report and historical variation as a result of agency staff filling contract gaps and how this is recorded within the budget (committed twice vs spend). There has been no movement in premises and admin staff.

(GCM) Other areas of expenditure are similar to last year. Indirect employee expenditure covers CPD, staff welfare and advertisement for recruitment. Building maintenance is also similar and includes smaller projects not defined as capital projects. The increased cleaning costs of approx. £30-40k across the Federation for the increased cleaning hours during the day will remain in place. Other occupation costs, including statutory testing, hygiene services and waste collection are as normal. The energy contracts and costs are procured by Hackney.

E19 - Learning resources are comparable commitment to last year. E20 – IT learning resources includes annual subscription fees and the leases mentioned previously. Catering supplies has been budgeted on the school remaining open. E27 – supply support staff, therapy contracts and swimming (which did not happen last year). E30 – Revenue contributions to capital works includes the projects for refurbishment of the tarmac at Orchard and the caretaker house at Hoxton Garden. E31 – the costs for staff running ASC and clubs and E32 – cost of the resources for those clubs.

(GCM) Stated the budget reflects what is achievable and realistic to spend and accomplish in 2021/22. The budget takes into account the carry forward with a prediction of £750k carry forward for next year.

(GCM) Stated that if the budget was without a contingency carry forward, projects wouldn't be able to be completed. If the Viridis budget was a zero based budget every year, areas of the budget would need to be looked at where savings could be made to make the budget balance. (JG) Noted that looking at the projections, in 2023/24 the Federation would be at acceptable carry forward.

(SW) Stated that while the 3 year projection is important, it would be better suited for a school that needed to plan ahead and needed to increase the number of pupils on roll, to see the impact. The Federation is in a position where it is secure in funding and the number pupils on roll. Not a huge amount of validity with 3 year spending plan but important to ensure carry forward reduction is evidenced in outcome.

(JG) Urged that there needed to be a focus on spend of the surplus this financial year in order reduction is seen.

(RD) Acknowledged JG and SW raised an important point. There are plans in place to ensure that the Federation is in a better position by the end of the 2021/22 financial year in terms of the carry forward. The money has been committed so that the projects that were not accomplished last year can take place this year, resulting in a more reasonable carry forward next year.

(RD) Reiterated GCM's point about refining the budget to be more accurate. With GCM, RD has supported mapping out and planning, for example, the number of hours committed for services for SALT and psychologists in addition to staffing to create a clearer, more accurate picture of what projected costs will be. RD and GCM are to meet monthly to have a more accurate idea of the progression of the budget.

(LT) Agreed with points raised by JG, but stated she was comfortable with proposed plans presented by RD and GCM.

c. Risks & planning (including carry forward and COVID19)

Proposed expenditure plan for the carry forward was presented to the Resources Committee before the meeting

(GCM) Stated that as the carry forward is greater than 8% of the budget, a spending plan needs to be sent to the LA. The proposed plan for the carry forward is spread across 3 years. Additional staffing costs for high needs children has been factored in. The current lease for the iPads and Chromebooks will be completed in this financial year and that will be the last of leases the Federation has.

(GCM) Stated that in the first year it is planned to buy a set of iPads for EYFS, as the current iPads are outdated. It is also proposed that the refurbishment of the libraries will continue and additional

reading books will be bought. There is building and decoration improvement plans across all 3 years. There are also proposed upgrades to the telephone systems across the Federation. This is in addition to postponed project spending including the caretaker house at Hoxton Garden.

(JG) Noted that recently there have been a number of discussion with Maggie at Hackney Education about the effectiveness of the Governing Body and how the governors have confidence in the spending plans proposed by the schools they govern and whether the plans align with school improvement priorities.

(JG) Added that the plans sound sensible but wants to make sure the committee is clear and confident the proposed plans are appropriately spread across priorities the schools have.

(RD) Stated that the proposed plans feeds into the school development plan which is in the process of being written for the new academic year and will be evidenced in review through the current academic year. RD noted that this will be highlighted in the schools development plan where the carry forward fits into the wider context and rationale for the school development. These documents will be shared in the Autumn FGB meeting.

(HL) Asked if there were strategies for recouping costs from the disposal of old technology and if there was any 2nd hand value.

(RD) Explained that normally the companies that provided the tech equipment would take away the old equipment and reimburse a small amount of money.

(GCM) Added that the equipment has to be disposed of correctly and ensure that the old equipment won't end up in landfill. GCM ensures that the schools receive a certificate of disposal. If the equipment is a little bit newer sometimes it would be donated to charities or might be distributed to those who may not be able to afford it.

(SW) Noted that on the planned surplus expenditure report, the year is 18/19 not 20/21. GCM to amend.

(SW) Stated that in the first year the planned expenditure is only £886k and asked if this was due to keeping the rate of contingency at the amount in previous years.

(GCM) Explained that it was good to have a contingency for 3 schools but also referred to JG's point about achievability rather than having a list of jobs/projects that might not all be completed or started during the year. Instead, by spreading the works across 3 years, it means that at the end of the year the targets are more likely to be met.

(LT) Referred to JG point about priorities and stated that following LT's curriculum visit she was pleased to see there are priorities for curriculum included in the plans, especially updating and refurbishing the libraries, which was a key point of discussion during the curriculum visit. LT noted that it would be good to map back when the plans are received. LT is comfortable it aligns to what LT saw during the visits.

5. Staffing Update

An overview of the staffing structure was presented to the Committee in the pack

(RD) Stated that at SW, one of the DHT had secured a headship, which is exciting and huge testament to the leadership development that the DHT had, working in the Federation. RD has successfully recruited a DHT to start in September and who will start induction next ½ term.

One AHT and one SENCO have returned from maternity, increasing the leadership team back to capacity. Current reviews of leadership development are in place to support greater security and succession planning.

Recruitment packs have been evaluated and adjustments made to ensure that the Federation approach fully reflects the Hackney Education 'Inclusive Recruitment' guidance. This term, since reopening fully on the 8th of March, a higher number of applications have been from experienced candidates,

RD noted that the Federation are mindful of external NQT recruitment who are not under the Federations apprenticeship programme. This is due to the changes being made to induction and the introduction of a two year Early Career Framework framework. However, within the Federation, continued development and support for teachers outside of their 1st year is offered. There needs to be mindful knowledge of effective mentor experience and the capacity of middle leadership teams.

(RD) Stated there are 9 expected leavers at the end of this academic year, 7 of which are due to relocations. Exit surveys will be completed for all leaving staff. Initial knowledge gained is that the majority of leavers are a result of relocation.

(JG) Asked how the number of leavers compares other years.

(RD) Stated that it is currently lower than previous years. In the next resources meeting RD will share the overview once the numbers of leavers are confirmed and share the 3 year trajectory of retention over a period of time to show how that has changed over the course of 3 years.

(RD) Noted that the MFL lead is retiring and RD has discussed a transition model with her to support MFL teaching. In the Federation, MFL teaching is very robust because her leadership ensures embedded Spanish teaching. RD has discussed the transition model over a period of a term and ½ with possible extension across the academic year, so that she can continue to support the Erasmus projects and the wider aspect of the international schools awards. She will also support the induction of the new languages teacher once recruited.

(RD) Stated that the recruitment model for support staff has been reviewed, including restructuring advertisements in order to target a higher calibre of applicants which is due to go live in Summer 2. Once teacher recruitment is complete, so that projected gaps in teaching assistants are recruited for, with a view for recruiting applicants who would best suit that model for apprentice teaching so that they have already done their experienced teaching years with the Federation through TA work.

Two Apprentice Teachers, have been recruited for the next academic year. Another has been recruited through the initial teacher training route, specifically for early years. The cycle of opening and closing the apprentice teaching portal regularly due to the large number of applicants has supported processing strategies within the time frame.

(RD) Updated the committee on the recruitment for a Communication Manager. There are a good number of strong candidates. RD is confident this recruitment round will be successful.

(JG) Noted that it will be good to recruit a communication manager to alleviate the workload.

(RD) Stated that the Communications Manager role is very much exploratory, in the sense that it is a unique role for a Federation of primary schools to have rather than a PA. The successful candidate needs to be someone who has the calibre to shape that role into what it needs to be. RD stated that she is confident with the potential applicants that that will be achievable.

Admin/Finance Staff – RD and GCM have evaluated performance management and made changes to place greater emphasis on training opportunities and succession planning in the longer term for finance roles and business manager roles to ensure safeguard of succession planning.

(HL) Asked if after re-evaluating the recruitment process to be more inclusive and diverse, whether there has been an impact?

(RD) Stated that there has been a broad range of applicants that reflect the advertisements are reaching a diverse audience. The process of evaluation has focussed on adjusting packs through looking closely at language and wording.

(LT) Suggested that going live with two different variations of adverts can sometimes attract more diversity.

(RD) Noted that that was something to consider with the communications manager, once recruited, and thinking about targeted recruitment and making sure that the breadth of avenues is being used to ensure that recruitment is happening from the right place.

6. Health and Safety (update on COVID19 and risk assessment)

A copy of the Viridis schools risk assessment was included in the pack (relating to the opening on 8th March)

(RD) Stated that last week, the government issued updated guidance in light of the step 3 changes. RD has identified key reminders and changes that need to happen to the risk assessment so that they are moving in line with the guidance. Core regular discussions and reminders with all staff continue to take place. For example, the active promotion of rapid testing and the importance of testing continuing.

In terms of changes and adaptations of the new information from this week, the 17th of May face coverings are no longer recommended in classrooms for pupils in secondary schools. Staff within schools in publicly used spaces are still advised to wear face coverings if in direct contact with each other, such

as in meetings. The focus around restrictions lifting and holidays is a key point/thread for the wider community and that children are required to be in school. Holiday absences are not authorised and the schools communicate regularly with parents through the newsletter. Attendance panels are up and running and have been continuous throughout the year and those will reflect some of the individual conversations that need to happen with families during this period.

(RD) Noted that educational day visits are allowed to restart and planning is beginning to map in some opportunities for this. There needs to be careful assessment and balance the needs of risk assessments with that of the centres or places visited. In the meantime, there have been a lot of virtual/remote opportunities, so creative workshops through zoom have happened for different year groups so that level of enrichment is still being achieved.

The schools are planning transitional days for early year's parents and those opportunities to see settings, see the presentations and have 1-1 meetings for induction. Performances towards the end of the year will be arranged in line with what is feasible and reasonable to do to invite parents back into the school and that will be focusing on outside performances and assemblies to support that.

Wrap around care continues and it is expected that schools are putting those things in place. Due to the guidance against children mixing across year groups and the access and use of the school building to enable certain aspects of provision to happen, careful balancing has had to take place. On all three sites ASC and Breakfast Club wrap around care provisions is open and the schools are able to start thinking about increasing numbers in line with national guidance.

No further questions.

7. Premises Update

a. Painting Tender

(RD) Explained that there is a proposed 3 year rolling programme to support the continuous development of school buildings over a period of time. Priority areas have been identified as a 1, 2, 3 (representing the years 1, 2, 3) to ensure that all areas are targeted and nothing will fall into disrepair. The reason this is being presented to governors as a tender proposal is because of budgeting for that whole process. Three quotes have been provided for Phase 1 of the process which will take up to 18 months to complete. Following will be phase 2 of that process.

(SW) Asked if the schools had used any other companies that are quoted before.

(RD) Ian Williams is the benchmarking quote, in the sense that the schools don't have a relationship with them. Alliance Facilities and WH Construction, the Federation does have previous working relations.

(JG) Noted that Alliance Facilities is known and the cheaper option.

(LT) Added that Alliance were considerably cheaper.

(RD) Suggested that because Alliance have done most decorating works historically over the last 5 years or so, they are most knowledgeable of the schools environments, the layouts and the classrooms and therefore their quote is probably the most robust and accurate.

Committee all in agreement to move forward with Alliance.

b. Update on Caretaker House at Hoxton Garden

(RD & GCM) Met with two architects. One local who is currently working on the building works directly across from HG and another who has been researched and has good knowledge of the local area and has done similar school projects.

(RD & GCM) met and discussed the caretaker house with the ambition to repurpose 3 floors into 3 different open plan spaces which would be an Art Studio, Science Lab and Dance Studio. Explored through the meeting if the planned works are achievable and feasible based on the construction of the house. An indication of the cost impact was given and although it is still in the early stages, it is looking to cost approximately £300k; possibly more depending on any additional features that may need to be added like wheelchair access. The architects will now go away and draw up proposal plans to give an idea of what the spaces could look like. Then a quantity surveyor would need to be consulted to review the ideas and plans with the view to start pushing the project forward.

(SW) Asked if the LA have to be informed due to the change of use.

(RD) Confirmed that the LA do need to be consulted but concrete plans need to be brought forward first. RD can't see any potential problems due to the proposed community space aspect of the house.

(SW) Noted there were problems previously with works done to the wall at HG.

(RD) Clarified that as the works to the house are internal and not external, it should be ok to move forward with the proposed works.

(HL) Asked if there was room for opportunity to create a source of income with the Dance studio by advertising the space on weekends or after school.

(RD) Confirmed there is good potential to create a source of income, which would be a good idea for future proofing for the schools in terms of budgeting. Due to the external access to the house, it presents an ideal opportunity to let out the space outside of the school opening hours.

(RD) Updated the committee on the façade works at Hoxton. The works will start in June. The façade works is predicted to be completed by the end of the summer. Will be in a good positions in September to move forward with the Hoxton House project.

8. Policies

a. Debt Policy

A copy of the Debt Policy was presented to the Governors in the Resources Committee pack

(SW) Asked if the debt policy was to be agreed in this meeting.

(RD) Confirmed that the policy did need to be agreed by the committee. RD noted the debt policy has been updated for this academic year. The policy has been updated to reflect the reduction in cash payments and the move to Scopay online payments. RD made the committee aware of the debt management which is evaluated and discussed between GCM and the office managers and is looked at continuously so that debt is not being accrued to unmanageable levels.

(LT) Stated that it was great to see the move to online payment system, making life easier.

(GCM) Noted that the move to online payments has been a success with parents. They can pay anytime, anywhere. It is linked to the child's account so payments are applied straight away and there is no room for human error.

(RD) Added that parents can download the Scopay app enabling them to see their children's account and the list of payable items.

Resources committee all in agreement and approved updates to policy.

9. Any Other Business

(JG) Asked when the next audit was due.

(GCM) Noted that Hackney have been impacted by COVID and have been running at reduced capacity so audits have been taking place virtually. The Federation was last audited in 2018/19. Normally, the audit takes place every 3 years so the next audit may be due next year.

(SW) Asked if the 21/22 budget is to be presented to the FGB for agreement.

(RD) Confirmed that they needed to confirm it had been discussed and the committee has approved it.

(GCM) Stated that she will make the corrections to the Surplus Plan report title and send it to JG for signing.

10. Glossary of Common Terms

11. Viridis Governing Body Calendar 2021- 22 DRAFT

A draft version of the Viridis Governing Body Calendar 2021-22 was included in the committee meeting pack sent to governors as a point of reference for the next Resources Committee Meeting. The Draft Calendar is to be discussed and confirmed in the FGB meeting.

Meeting ended at 5.50pm