

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE **held at the School at 7.45am on Wednesday 28th April 2021**

Present:	Richard Vass Stephen Miles Stephen Lawlor Richard Brown Mark Rowell Mary Argent	Chair Chair of Governors Headteacher Associate Member
In Attendance:	Melissa Mulgrew Wendy Newton	Business Manager Clerk to Governors

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. There were no apologies for absence to receive, all committee members were present.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

2. There were no declarations of business interest further to those already stated on the Register of Business Interests for 2020-21, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

3. The minutes of the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 12th February 2021 were approved as a true record.

ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING

4. Item 4, Para 6 – Artificial Pitch. A condition survey of the artificial pitch had shown that there was still 2-3 years' life remaining in the pitch. The Management Committee had been informed of this fact and had decided that the replacement of the pitch would be deferred for two years, this would give the School finances time to settle after the current SSEF project expenditure.

5. Item 4, Para 8 – Catering. The Business Manager advised that the tender process for the School's catering contract was currently underway. It was reported that Chartwells were expecting to make a £20,000 loss this financial year and had asked the School to assist with the loss. This had not been agreed and the issue would be brought to the next meeting when more exact information would be available.

6. Item 6, Para 12 – Financial Report. The meeting was informed that an additional report had now been included in the School's monthly Financial Management Reports which showed full year to date accrual versus budget as had been requested by Governors to give a clearer financial picture.

7. Item 8, Para 17 – IT - Decision. The Business Manager advised that an updated IT Asset Replacement Plan would be presented at the next meeting once the School budget figures for next year had been assessed.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 5 – CHAIR'S ACTION

8. The Chair reported for general information that the School had received an invoice for £55,000 from AQA for exam fees and there was concern over this figure in light of the lack of exams. Whilst AQA had billed the full amount, only 50% of the bill had been authorised for payment as it was accepted that some services had been received. It was stated that last year a refund of 23% had eventually received from AQA and that this may happen again this year. The Headteacher advised what services and materials had been provided in relation to the 50% payment.

ITEM 6 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

ACTION

9. The School Management Accounts for February 2021 were received for information and included: an Income and Expenditure Report, Cash Flow Forecast Report, Balance Sheet and Full Year Outturn v Budget Report. The Business Manager advised that a previously forecast £50,000 full year surplus had changed to a £(57,764) deficit mainly driven by letting income being £100,000 less than expected due to Covid-19. It was stated that the new deficit figure was very prudent as lettings were now starting again. Staff costs had increased as a result of staff sickness and the unavoidable need for an agency teacher. The Business Manager advised that there had been no payback from Chartwells Caterers this year. It was stated that despite the School closure, utilities were coming in on budget but that there may still be some savings in curriculum costs. It was hoped that the School may break even by the end of the financial year. The Chair noted an irrecoverable VAT sum of over £10,000 mainly relating to the SSEF project which would be capitalised in the future. Governors queried the Covid Catch Up money and it was confirmed as being a grant which did not need to be repaid and that it could be carried over to the next academic year.

10. The importance of lettings to the School was noted and it was confirmed that most lettings had returned, including swimming lettings, Pixie Lott and Barracudas. Lettings for the remainder of the year looked higher than usual. Governors queried areas of the reports which were explained by the Business Manager. The new Full Year Outturn Report showing the variance of full year accruals against assigned budget was reviewed and discussed. The Chair noted that reporting on an accruals basis would show permanent variances as opposed to more temporary variances relating to timing alone. The Committee asked if any guidance had been received from DfE concerning School trips and visits and the Headteacher confirmed that certain types of trips were permissible and that a large Year 7 excursion was being organised to recompense for the students' loss of their Year 6 and usual CCHS Year 7 trips. It was stated that only day trips were currently allowed and that each trip had to be carefully assessed against insurance conditions. It was hoped that School trips would build again in the next academic year.

ITEM 7 – AUDIT RESPONSIBILITIES

11. The Juniper Internal Controls Evaluation Report 1, for a review undertaken in January 2021, was received for information and discussed. There had only been one minor finding which had already been reported and discussed at the March Full GB meeting. The second ICE review was currently underway and the report was expected towards the end of May.

ITEM 8 – SSEF PROJECT & CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

12. The Business Manager advised that the swimming pool had a confirmed, increasing leak. The investigation work had been covered by insurance and the next steps now had to be decided with the insurers. An SSEF project status report dated 20th April 2021 and Progress Report No 14 were received for information and the Business Manager gave a verbal update on progress. Completion dates for the SSEF buildings were now back on track and the School should be in full possession of both buildings by the start of the Autumn Term. The project budget was also on track. Approval was still awaited from the Secretary of State for the new electricity sub-station land and gas easement. It was noted that if approval had not been received by September the buildings could run off electricity generators but that there was no other option for not having gas available. Governors discussed the problems which could arise from the lack of electricity and gas supplies to the new SSEF buildings. The decision on the replacement of a broken soakaway on the field was to be deferred until after tenders had been received for the Library and Art Room conversion. It was suggested that some of the pictures from the SSEF Progress Report could be shared with other Governors.

13. **Decision**. The Business Manager agreed to draft a letter relating to the utility sign off delays for the Headteacher to send to Vicky Ford MP if no progress was received from the School solicitors in the very near future.

M Mulgrew

8.20am – Richard Brown left the meeting.

ITEM 9 – LETTINGS POLICY & LETTINGS RATES 2021-22

ACTION

14. The School Lettings Policy and Lettings Rates for Academic Year 2020-21 were received for review and changes discussed. Governors queried how the School intended to assess 'qualified users' in relation to the fitness suite, it was stated that the finer administrative details had yet to be agreed. The Lettings Rates document contained comparative benchmarking data from other schools and the Business Manager suggested that the School may have priced itself out of the market over recent years. The meeting discussed the proposed lettings rates and noted that the classroom and School Hall rates were particularly high when compared to other schools. The Business Manager gave further information on the usage of the different School facilities. The Committee suggested that a review of facilities usage against capacity and lettings rate could show that having lower lettings rates would be more beneficial for the School. It was stated that there was a lack of demand for particular facilities and that there was also a need to keep the VAT threshold in mind against having more hirers.

15. Decisions.

- a. The Business Manager agreed to revise the Lettings Policy and Lettings Rate sheet in accordance with the discussions of the meeting.
- b. With the amendments of Paragraph 23a, the Lettings Policy and Lettings Rates for Academic Year 2021-22 were approved as presented.
- c. The Business Manager was given flexibility to offer lower lettings rates on a case-by-case basis in order to maximise lettings.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 10 – IT UPDATE

16. As stated in Paragraph 7, an updated IT Asset Replacement Plan was to be presented at the next meeting. The Chair stressed that Governors needed to be sure the correct resources and assets were available to facilitate the students' education, subject to the School being able to afford it. The Headteacher advised that a member of teaching staff was undertaking a project next year on the use of ICT in lessons to assist student learning. The Business Manager reported that there had been a significant increase in email phishing attempts in recent weeks and the IT Manager was currently investigating extra layers of authentication for the School systems. Extra encryption had also been recommended by the Information Governance Service. It was suggested that School staff may need additional education on email phishing.

ITEM 11 – GDPR

17. The Business Manager gave a verbal update on GDPR issues and reported that the School was currently working on a Subject Access Request. One Freedom of Information request had recently been received but, after receiving guidance from the School's Data Protection Officer, the School had claimed exemption on replying due to the size and timescale required to fulfil the request. The annual ECC GDPR audit is due to take place shortly and no issues were expected.

ITEM 12 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

18. **Bank Account Administrator Rights - Decision.** The Business Manager advised that Clydesdale Bank had merged into Virgin Money and that permission was being requested for the School's Senior Finance Officer to be given Corporate Administrator rights to the Virgin Money online banking system. This would only give her access to account information and administration actions but did not allow making any payments or transfers. The Committee approved the request.

19. **Vote of Thanks.** The Headteacher voiced his thanks to the Business Manager and Finance Team for their brilliant work in relation to the period of Covid-19 and the SSEF Project, this was reiterated by the whole Committee. The Business Manager agreed to pass on the comments of the meeting to the Finance Team.

ITEM 13 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

ACTION

20. **Decision**. The date of the next meeting was agreed as 7.45am on Wednesday 23rd June 2021.

All

The meeting closed at 8.45am.

Agreed as a true record.

R Vass
Chair

23rd June 2021

DRAFT