CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE held in the School & via Microsoft Teams at 7.45am on Wednesday 4th October 2023

Present:	Richard Brown	Chair (via Teams)
	Stephen Lawlor	Headteacher
	Niamh Dobson	
	Stephen Miles	
	Richard Vass	
	Mary Argent	Associate Member (via Teams)
In Attendance:	Melissa Mulgrew	Business Manager
	Wendy Newton	Clerk to Governors

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE **ACTION**

1. There were no apologies for absence, 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 2023-24, conflicts of interest or receipts of gifts or hospitality.

ITEM 3 – ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

3. Nominations were sought for the role of Vice Chair of the Committee for AY 2023-24. Niamh Dobson volunteered for the role and there were no other nominations.

4. **Decision**. Niamh Dobson was unanimously **elected** as Vice Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee for AY 2023-24.

ITEM 4 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

5. The minutes of the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 22nd June 2023 were **approved** as a true record.

ITEM 5 - MATTERS ARISING

6. Item 7, Para 10 – Budget. The Business Manager confirmed that the School Budget for 2023-24 had been submitted to DfE.

7. Item 11, Para 10 – Tree Survey. It was reported that there were insufficient funds to undertake a full tree survey in the current academic year. However, the Business Manager advised that the trees had been surveyed after strong winds earlier in 2023 and that tree surveys were recommended every 2-3 years. It was stated that a tree survey would be budgeted for 2024-25, funds allowing.

ITEM 6 – CHAIR'S ACTION

8. A summary of all chairs' actions taken since the last Full GB meeting held on 8th July 2023 was received. The Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee had recently **approved** a minor amendment to the School's Lettings Policy, required by the publication of the 2023 Keeping Children Safe in Education document, and the action was noted.

9. The Business Manager advised that it had been necessary for Richard Vass, the previous Chair of the Committee, to approve the final Horizon retention payment for the SSEF project as the current Chair had not yet been set-up on the bank's authorisation system. It was confirmed that the total project cost had been kept within the 1% variation planned for the project and the Business Manager was commended for her persistence over minimising project costs.

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ACTION

ITEM 7 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

10. **Decision**. The unamended terms of reference for the Facilities & Finance Committee were received for review and **approved** as presented. The Committee were reminded that the proposed change of Articles would require a revision of the terms of reference.

ITEM 8 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

11. Consolidated Financial Management Reports for Months 10 & 11 (June & July 2023) were reviewed, there were no major variances to report. The Month 12 (August) reports would take the form of the year-end accounts. The Business Manager advised that it had been an unprecedented year in relation to movements and unpredictable funding. It was stated that at the end of July the School was heading towards a very small surplus for FY 2022-23 which was testament to the hard work of the Finance team. Governors queried the teachers' 2023-24 pay award, its funding and how it would affect the School and were advised that 3% was expected to come from the School's budget and that the remaining 3.5% was to be funded by the Government. The latter figure was calculated on a per-student basis rather than actual staff costs and this would work out less than 3.5% for CCHS as it has a high number of experienced staff who were therefore more costly. The Government funding figure was closer to 2.5%-3% for the School and an amount would end up being unfunded. Governors reviewed the financial reports and the School confirmed that catering income was a year-end accrual. It was noted that the School still had sizeable cash reserves and its interest rate was queried. It was confirmed that the deposit account currently received 2.5% interest and that savings were reviewed annually and moved if more beneficial rates were available.

12. A revised budget forecast for 2023-24 and 2024-25 was presented following the receipt of final Year 12 student numbers, which was lower than had been assumed in the original budget, the additional loss of two Year 11 students, and the correction of one error. The lower student numbers would result in around £18,000 less income for 2023-24 and around £70,000 for 2024-25. It was reported that the 16-19 funding for 2024-25 had not yet been confirmed but was likely to be more than the 1% increase currently assumed in the budget figures - an increase of 2% or 3% would have a positive impact of £15,000 to £30,000 respectively to the budget. It was reported that gas prices were still falling and likely to produce further saving in the future. A Governor query was raised on the staff pay increase assumptions used in the original budget. Post meeting the Business Manager confirmed that for 2024-25 it was 3% for Teachers Main Scale, 2% for Teachers Upper Scale and Leadership Scale and 2% for support staff). The Committee noted that there was no contingency in the budget and recognised that the budget figures would change over the year. The Business Manager confirmed that if required the reserves would need to be the contingency and that a live budget was maintained which could change weekly. The Clerk confirmed that the revised School Budget 2023-24 was on the agenda of the next Full GB meeting.

13. The Headteacher gave additional context about Year 12 student numbers, stating that there had been very great volatility this year with students changing their school decisions up to two weeks into the term. The School recognised that there would always be students who choose to leave CCHs after Year 11 for valid reasons but there was concern over those who left on the assumption of achieving better A level grades at another school. Communication changes were now planned for within the Main School to address this issue. There was discussion about the effects of local and East London educational establishments. Further information was also received on the lower than usual number of Year 13 students achieving Oxbridge places and the new September 2024 Sixth Form curriculum pathway, details of which were to be received at the next Full GB meeting.

ITEM 9 – CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

14. A Site Team Report dated Autumn 2023 was received for information and the excellent work undertaken by the Site Team was commended. There was no major work being undertaken at the School at the current time. The Cadbury (Science) Building boiler had been replaced over the summer holiday as it was over 20 years old and had been end of life. The Site Team continued with essential health and safety issues and general building redecoration. It was suggested that a tour of the School campus was overdue and would be beneficial after the next meeting.

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ACTION
Clerk

15. **Decision**. The Clerk **agreed** to arrange a site visit with the Site Manager after the next meeting.

ITEM 10 – AUDIT RESPONSIBILITIES

16. The Juniper Internal Scrutiny Programme 2023-24 was received for information and the Business Manager confirmed that there were no issues with Juniper, the School had received good service from the company over recent years. The meeting was advised that the Management Committee had selected the Banking (Financial) and HR Policies (Non-financial) audits to be undertaken during academic year 2023-24.

ITEM 11 – POLICIES

17. **Decisions**. The following polices were reviewed and all were **approved** as presented with the review periods stated below.

a. Item 11.1 – CCHS Financial Regulations & Scheme of Delegation 2023-24 – Approved with an annual review and recommended for presentation for Full GB approval on 13th October 2023.

b. Item 11.2 – Health & Safety Policy 2023-24 - Approved with an annual review.

c. Item 11.3 – Asbestos Management Plan - Approved with an annual review.

d. Item 11.4 – Cyber Incident Response Plan - Approved with an annual review.

ITEM 12 – HEALTH & SAFETY

18. In relation to Health & Safety, Governors requested clarification on the RAAC issue. The Business Manager confirmed that no RAAC concrete was known to be on the School site, this had been originally reported to DfE in March 2022. The Business Manager and Site Team Manager had reviewed all school building plans and had physically walked the site during the school holiday to re-confirm the situation. It was noted that the general RAAC situation may result in school funding being diverted to those schools which had been affected by the issue.

19. The Health & Safety (H&S) Review for 2022-23 was received and discussed. The meeting noted that a Juniper site security audit had been undertaken last year and the site deemed secure. The School had been advised to be proportionate in terms of security expenditure versus risk. The School had invested very heavily in CCTV last year and that there was now full site coverage, both internal and external, at a much higher quality. There had been the usual number of expected minor incidents during the year and all PE incidents and any incident requiring first aid were formally recorded. There had been one RIDDOR reportable incident during the year which had been reported to ECC and the HSE. ECC had been happy for the case to be closed as all protocols had been followed and was deemed to have been an unfortunate accident, nothing had come back from the HSE. The Business Manager advised that all essential testing continued to be undertaken by the Site Team. The School now had three defibrillators on site which were located in the Sports Hall, the First Aid Room and the Site Team Office (as Site Team personnel were on site whenever the school was open and were also fully first aid trained).

ITEM 13 – GDPR UPDATE

20. The Committee were advised that there was nothing major to report on GDPR issues. There had been a couple of Freedom of Information requests relating to the Year 7 Entrance Test and further queries were expected after the test results were published. There had been no SAR requests for over one year.

ITEM 14 – IT & CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

21. The Business Manager advised that the roll-out of smart TVs continued and that four more had been installed during the summer. The School was deemed in a good position in relation to cyber security. There had been one phishing breach of the School IT system during the summer but the system had been quickly secured and there had been no adverse effects as the School's multi-factor

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authentication system had prevented any further breaches. The issue of phishing had been stressed to all School staff at the INSET day at the start of term. The concept of 'training' phishing emails and their effectiveness was discussed and would be considered. It was reported that a new form of phishing using QR codes had recently appeared, details of which were to be passed on to staff.

ACTION

ITEM 15 – RISK REGISTER

22. As tasked at the last meeting, the Business Manager had reviewed the Facilities & Finance Committee section of the CCHS Risk Register to assess if the SSEF section was still required. The Committee was advised that the content of the SSEF section actually remained pertinent to any capital development project taking place at the School, such as CIF projects, and it was suggested that the additional section should remain in place.

23. **Decision**. It was **agreed** that the SSEF section of the Risk Register would remain but the section would be renamed as Capital Development Risks. There were no other amendments to the document and it was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 16 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24. No other items of business were raised.

ITEM 17 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

25. **Decision**. It was **agreed** that the next meeting would be held at 7.45am on Wednesday 15th November 2023. **All**

The meeting closed at 8.38am.

R Brown, Chair 13th November 2023

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