

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE held in the School at 8.00am on Wednesday 3rd October 2024

Present: Richard Brown Chair
Stephen Lawlor Headteacher
Margaret Cousins
Niamh Dobson
Stephen Miles

In Attendance: Melissa Mulgrew Business Manager
Wendy Newton Clerk to Trustees

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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 2024-25, 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 2024-25. Steve Miles proposed that Niamh Dobson remain in the role of Vice Chair, and she kindly accepted the nomination. There were no other nominations.

4. **Decision.** Niamh Dobson was unanimously **elected** as Vice Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee for AY 2024-25.

ITEM 4 - MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

5. The minutes of the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 19th June 2024 were **approved** as a true record.

ITEM 5 - MATTERS ARISING

6. Item 7, Para 11 – Budget. It was confirmed that the School Budget for 2024-25 had been re-drafted and re-approved by the Committee by email before being presented to the Board for formal approval on 5th July 2024.

7. Item 9, Para 14 – LED Lighting. The Business Manager confirmed that the LED lighting project was almost complete with only a couple of outstanding areas remaining.

ITEM 6 – CHAIR’S ACTION

8. There had been no Chair’s Action since the last meeting other than routine financial expenditure authorisations within his delegated remit.

ITEM 7 – TERMS OF REFERENCE

9. **Decision.** The terms of reference for the Facilities & Finance Committee were received for review. The Clerk agreed to make one correction - to change a reference to ECC to state Juniper Education. With that amendment, the terms of reference were **approved**.

ACTION

ITEM 8 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

ACTION

10. Item 8.1 – School Financial Management Reports. The Financial Management Reports for Month 11 (July 2024) were received for review. A query was raised concerning the approval level of the disposal of an asset. The Committee were advised that approval had been given by the Management Committee due to the timescales involved. The Business Manager advised that the asset, an old lawn mower, had a net book value of zero and **agreed** to revise the narrative of the Management Report to clarify the situation. It was suggested that the term 'Other' on an income variance graph should be more clearly defined in light of the large figure being reported. The Business Manager **agreed** to raise the suggestion with the Finance Officer who prepared the report. The Month 12 (August) reports would take the form of the year-end accounts.

M Mulgrew

M Mulgrew

11. The Committee reviewed each section of the report and the Business Manager advised that whilst the figures suggested that finances were favourable to the budget, as at Month 11, the end of year balance would possibly break even or produce a small surplus. Bank interest and lettings income had been under-forecast. Grant funding for the Sixth Form had changed after last year's budget had been approved and had been less than expected. The number of grants and variations in grant rates and payment timescales was discussed and noted as making it difficult for the School to forecast its budget. This was stated as being particularly difficult for FY2024-25 and 2025-26. Trustees asked for close monitoring and reporting of any financial changes. The School was asked if the change in Government had made any changes to the receipt financial information from DfE, and it was stated that information was coming through more quickly than before and that communication seemed to be more transparent.

12. Item 8.2 – Updated School Budget 2024-25. The Business Manager advised that post the Board of Trustees' approval of the School budget in July 2024, the ESFA had asked schools to revise and re-submit their budget submissions in August after the announcement of core budget grant funding for 2024-25. The revised 3-year budget report for 2024-2027 was received and discussed. The re-forecasting had resulted in a small incremental deficit of £3000 from the original budget and an end-of-year In Year deficit of £(182,990) was predicted. The Committee noted the variation and the new budget. The Business Manager reported that the 11-16 grant figures had only been received that week and were not reflected in the revised budget, the 11-16 grant figures were expected to reduce the overall budget deficit figure. It was noted that the high number of CCHS UPS3 teachers had an adverse effect on finances. Progress on the LGPS support staff pay award for April 2024 was not likely until after union ballots closed in mid-October. Overall, it was suggested that the early indications from the DfE in relation to future funding were relatively positive.

13. Trustees raised the issue of the higher Sixth Form numbers and funding. The Headteacher confirmed that there were 187 students in Year 12, making a total School population of 1237, the largest number ever (900 in the Lower School, 187 in Year 12 and 150 in Year 13). It was noted that each Sixth Form student brought in just under £5000 additional income and therefore the twenty-two Year 12 students above the forecast figure would bring in an extra £100,000 income. It was confirmed that the additional students could be accommodated within the current teaching commitment and physical school capacity. Details of the DfE's Net Capital Assessment (NCA) programme were received and included how the formal school capacity was calculated. The Business Manager advised that, in light of the increased Sixth Form numbers, re-assessment of the programme had been undertaken; it suggested a primary admission number of 180 students and a Sixth Form admission number of 189. The School had now agreed to become an early adopter of the NCA programme and hoped that a formal DfE acknowledgement of a higher capacity figure for the Sixth Form would allow a change to the School's Funding Agreement. The Committee noted the many changes to the budget figures and thanked the Business Manager for her continuing hard work.

ITEM 9 – AUDIT RESPONSIBILITIES

14. The Juniper Internal Scrutiny Programme 2024-25 was received for information and the Business Manager confirmed that there were no adverse issues with Juniper Education. The meeting was advised that the Management Committee had agreed that the Register of Business Interests (Financial) audit and Statutory Information, Policies & Website (Non-financial) audit should be undertaken during academic year 2024-25. The options were discussed.

ITEM 10 – CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

ACTION

15. The Business Manager advised that the LED roll-out was nearly complete. The project had been undertaken as an operating lease, the cost of which would be offset by energy savings and had required no capital outlay. The project was part of the School's de-carbonisation strategy. Since February 2024 fluorescent lighting was no longer available to buy.

16. It was reported that the current CIF bid project to replace the windows in the Art Block had become very challenging as unexpected areas of asbestos had been found during window removal. Details of the issue were received, and it was stated that the project could not be stopped. This had triggered a significant increase in the project cost, not covered by the contingency, and a delayed end time. The Business Manager advised that the possible increase in project cost was over £70,000 although contractor costs were currently being challenged. A CIF Scope Change Request was to be sent to the DfE alongside an Urgent Capital Support Request for the boilers. An appeal had previously been put in against the rejection of the initial CIF bid for boiler replacement which had been in the region of £0.5 million. The outcome of the CIF appeals was still awaited from the DfE. The Committee were advised that the boilers were in excess of 20 years old, working at about 60% capacity and failing. The School also has only 2 out of its 3 boilers working at the moment. All the documents were to be sent together to the DfE in order to outline the whole School position. The meeting discussed the situation behind the boiler issue, and it was noted that total replacement of the boiler system was likely to cost in excess of £2 million.

ITEM 11 – SUSTAINABILITY

17. In addition to the LED lighting project discussed previously, the School had also scoped a solar energy project which had been put on hold until the outcome of the CIF issue was known as it required capital outlay. The payback for the solar energy project was 3 years, and details were summarised. A no-capital option was also available but had a much longer payback period. The Committee discussed the project concept and raised questions on the operation of the system. The total cost of the project was in the region of £130,000 but would operate at a net neutral cost. The solar project was pending until confirmation was received of the School's overall financial situation. The Business Manager advised that the School was required to have a Climate Action Plan, this was nearly completed and would be received at the next meeting. The work of the School's Eco Committee was outlined for the meeting, and included a water audit and a travel survey. It was reported that the School was making good progress overall in relation to sustainability.

ITEM 12 – POLICIES

18. **Decisions.** The following policies were reviewed and **approved** as presented with the review periods stated below. The Clerk **agreed** to re-check all the documents for obsolete title references.

- a. Item 12.1 – CCHS Financial Regulations & Scheme of Delegation 2024-25 – Approved with two amendments and recommended for presentation for Academy Board approval on 18th October 2024.
- b. Item 12.2 – Health & Safety Policy 2024-25 - Approved with an annual review.
- c. Item 12.3 – Asbestos Management Plan - Approved with an annual review.
- d. Item 12.4 – Cyber Incident Response Plan - Approved with an annual review.
- e. Item 12.5 – Security Policy - Approved with a 2-year review.
- f. Item 12.6 – Lone Working Policy - Approved with a 2-year review.

Clerk

Clerk

ITEM 13 – HEALTH & SAFETY

19. The Health & Safety (H&S) Review for 2023-24 was received and discussed. There had been a significant number of incidents but all of a minor nature and most of which were PE-related, such as grazes and bruises. Trustees queried if there was anything which needed to be adopted to improve the general H&S of the School. The Business Manager advised that during the year there had been a change to School policy in that any student feeling dizzy was now required to be accompanied to the Main Office by an adult rather than another student, and that in line with Sport

England changes, any student suffering from a concussion injury, from either inside or outside the school, was not allowed to undertake PE for two weeks. There had only been one work-related accident which had been to a member of the catering staff who had received a minor burn. Trustees queried whether the Art Lift was now operating and were advised that it was operating in a limited fashion and needed further repair. The repairers were due to return that week, and payment had not yet been made for the repair. Trustees stressed the importance of having a fully working lift in that area of the school.

ITEM 14 – GDPR

20. The Business Manager advised that there was nothing major to report on GDPR issues. There had been no SAR requests or data breaches since the last meeting. There had been the usual Freedom of Information requests relating to the Year 7 Entrance Test, more were expected when test results were published at the end of October and again after offer day in March 2025.

ITEM 15 – IT & CYBER SECURITY UPDATE

21. The meeting discussed the issue of cloud storage, possible future costs, and the balance against the cost of physical servers. The benefits of cloud storage, such as access from anywhere and back-up, were noted. There was further explanation as to how the School was incorporating cloud storage into the School IT system and confirmed that Multi-Factor Authentication was required by all users. The roll-out of Smart TVs in classrooms was queried in relation to the future costing figures. The Business Manager advised that the School had accelerated the roll-out of the Smart TVs from current year's IT budget and therefore required lower funding in future years. There were 11 classrooms using projectors which were entirely functional and did not need immediate replacement. It was anticipated that the Smart TVs would last 20 years.

ITEM 16 – RISK REGISTER

22. **Decision.** The Facilities, Finance and Capital Development sections of the CCHS Risk Register were reviewed and there was debate over the correct risk levels for F54 and F55. The Committee **tasked** the Business Manager with reviewing the two risk entries and amending them as required.

M Mulgrew**ITEM 17 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

23. No other items of business were raised for discussion.

ITEM 18 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

24. **Decision.** It was **agreed** that the next meeting would be held at 8.00am on Wednesday 20th November 2024.

All

The Committee thanked the Business Manager and Finance Team for their continuing hard work.

The meeting closed at 9.15am.

R Brown, Chair

20th November 2024