

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE held at the School at 7.45am on Wednesday 18th November 2020

Present:	Richard Vass Stephen Miles Richard Brown Mark Rowell Mary Argent	Chair Chair of Governors Associate Member
In Attendance:	Melissa Mulgrew Wendy Newton Fiona Gilmour Tom York	Business Manager Clerk to Governors Senior Finance Officer (8.00am to 8.40am) Auditor, Edmund Carr LLP (8.00am to 8.30am)
Apologies:	Stephen Lawlor	Head

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. Apologies for absence were received from the Headteacher due to an unexpected absence from the School.

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 7th October 2020 were approved as a true record.

ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING

4. Item 4, Para 7 – Cashflow Forecast. The Business Manager confirmed that the new Cashflow Forecast reports now showed the figures for individual bank accounts.

5. Item 9, Para 19 – Premises Team - Decision. Investigation into the options available for financially rewarding the work of the Site during the Covid outbreak was still to be undertaken and would be reported on at a later date.

ITEM 5 – CHAIR’S ACTION

6. There was no Chair’s Action to report.

8.00am –Fiona Gilmour and Tom York joined the meeting.

ITEM 6 – ANNUAL COMPANY ACCOUNTS 2019-2020

7. Item 6.1 – Company Accounts. Tom York, auditor for Edmund Carr, summarised salient areas of the CCHS Consolidated Company Accounts for the year ending 31st August 2020. Annual income was £7.5million, an increase on £1.2million from the previous year, mainly as a result of capital development income from the ongoing SSEF project. There had also been an increase in GAG funding of £400,000 relating to the Teachers’ Pension pay grant. Other income from premises hiring and trip activities had reduced by just over £366,000 as a result of Covid-19. Expenditure of just under £6million was similar to 2019 and this resulted in a net surplus for the year of £1.5million from £316,000 in 2019. It was noted that this in year surplus comprised of a £1.7 million surplus of restricted asset funding, a deficit of £261,000 in relation to restricted education funding and a surplus

ACTION

M Mulgrew

of £101,000 from unrestricted activities which has been used to offset some of the education deficit. After transfers between funds, LGPS pension losses and depreciation, the School had made a net surplus of just over £1.3million. The group balance sheet, including the funds of the School, was explained. It was reported that the School had good reserves and was financially stable, and that the auditors had not made any substantial changes to the accounts which had been prepared by the School's Senior Finance Officer. Having looked at the School's forecasted figures, it was stated that there were no 'going concern' issues for the School.

8.05am – Steve Miles joined the meeting

8. Governors noted the effect of the SSEF project income on the figures and how the additional money may look from an external viewpoint. The meeting was advised that the format of the accounts was fixed and that reserves and their usage timescales just needed to be clearly explained. The Chair thanked Fiona Gilmour and her team for preparing the accounts to the usual high standard. Governors queried the School's working finance outside the SSEF project. It was reported that most of the 'free' money had been set aside into designated funds for specific reasons (£150,000 for the replacement of the artificial pitch, £300,000 for campus development and £413,000 for curriculum restructuring) and was ring-fenced. It was stressed that the School was not allowed to run into deficit and that lagged funding and the growing student population had a knock-on effect on finances, possibly requiring the use of reserves to help balance School finances.

9. Item 6.2 – Auditor's Management Letter & Letters of Representation. The auditor's Management Letter was received and it was noted that only one low priority finding had been reported. There had been an isolated incident during the Covid-19 closure when one bank reconciliation had not been completed within the prescribed timescale, this was considered to be a very minor, one-off incident during difficult times. The auditor's Letters of Representation for audit purposes and regularity were also received by the Committee and would be signed post the formal approval of the accounts by the Management Committee in December.

10. Item 6.3 – Systems Report. The auditors' systems report on accounting and internal controls was received. The strong financial systems and checks within the School were commended by the auditor. Governors noted the content of the Systems Report.

11. Item 6.4 – CCHS Capital Development Ltd. The Annual Report and Financial Statements for CCHS Capital Development for the year ending 31st August 2020 were received. Income of £61,228, expenditure of £187, and a carry forward balance of £235,723 was noted. It was confirmed that the School had applied the statutory guarantee provision which will be filed in due course. The statutory guarantee meant that the CCHS Capital Development accounts did not need to be formally audited and that the School guaranteed to cover any liabilities resulting from the subsidiary company. The Chair thanked Tom York and his team for their assistance with the accounts.

8.30am –Tom York left the meeting.

12. Item 6.5 – Reserves Policy. The Committee reviewed the Reserves Policy and discussed the current figures and timescales. The Business Manager advised that replacement of the artificial pitch was now required more urgently and should be considered to be undertaken whilst the SSEF building work was underway.

13. Decisions.

- a. The Business Manager agreed to obtain quotes for the replacement of the artificial pitch.
- b. It was agreed the wording within Note 15 of the accounts pertaining to the timescale of replacing the artificial pitch would change to read 'within the next 2 years'.
- c. It was agreed the last sentence of the Reserves Policy in the Governors' Report, would change to read 'anticipated changes to future funding'. With that change, the Reserves Policy was approved.
- d. With the changes of Para 13b and 13c above, the Company Accounts were recommended for approval by the Management Committee on 4th December 2020.

M Mulgrew**F Gilmour****F Gilmour****Clerk**

14. The Chair of Governors thanked the Business Manager and all the Finance Team for their work over the last eight months of Covid-19 and Fiona Gilmour for her excellent work in preparing the accounts.

ACTION

8.40am –Fiona Gilmour left the meeting.

ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING (Continued)

15. Item 8, Para 5 – Staff Pay Increases. The Business Manager presented a summary of the impact of the 2020 staff pay increases. An increase of 2% had previously been assumed for budget purposes. The support staff pay increase for April 2020 had been 2.75% for all points, and the teachers pay increase for September 2020 had been 2.75% for most CCHS teachers, increasing to 5.5% at the lowest point. The variance from the 2020-21 budget was an additional £39,432 (1%). A significant amount of the increase had been covered by the teachers' pay and pension grant. It was hoped that the Indicative National Funding Formula due to start in September 2021 would buffer the pay increases next year. It was stressed that a close eye must be kept on likely increases and that future budget assumptions were kept realistic.

16. Item 14, Para 27 – Classroom TVs. Provisional approval had been given previously for additional classroom smartboard TVs but the IT Manager was having trouble obtaining a third quote in the current Covid situation. The Business Manager reported that the best quote to date was five smartboards for £19,200 (£3,840), seven for £26,425 (£3,775) or nine for £33,030 (£3,670). It was reported that six projectors needed replacing urgently and approval was requested for seven or nine if at all possible. The Committee discussed the request in relation to: the previous financial approval, how much had been spent to date and current reserves. It was stressed how much better the new smartboard TVs were against the current projectors, especially when teaching remotely.

17. Decision. The sum of approximately £33,000 was approved for smartboard TV expenditure subject to the receipt of a third quote, and the Business Manager agreed to update the projector replacement programme for Committee consideration.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 7 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

18. The Management Accounts for Month 12 (August 2020), full year outturn, were received. The Business Manager reported an operating surplus of £10,106 and summarised the difficulties experienced during the year in respect to Covid-19. The Committee were advised that the School had not accrued any profit-sharing payback from Chartwells Catering and that it was not known if any was likely. The School was technically out of contract with Chartwells as discussions had been set aside due to Covid and the current difficulties within Chartwells were explained. Governors put forward questions relating to the current service and whether the company could walk away leaving the School with a potential problem. The situation was discussed and it was reported that income into the kitchen had risen from £400 a day at the start of the term to over £1000 the previous week as more students used to the new system of catering.

19. Decision. The Business Manager agreed to check the School Risk Register to ascertain if there was a risk covering current the situation, and draft a new risk if required.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 8 – SSEF PROJECT & CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

20. The Business Manager gave a verbal update on the SSEF Project and campus development. There had been issues with the current roof replacement work for the Main Building with a couple of significant leaks and a broken stone windowsill, both of which were to be corrected at the contractor's expense. The roof work had generally gone well and was due finish shortly. The SSEF project was progressing well and both buildings were due to be water-tight by the end of November. Electrical work had started on the teaching block and the Science Department had been assisting with the design of the new science rooms. The SSEF project was still on schedule and running to cost. The Business Manager advised that she had registered for a charity called 'Business for Schools' which gave schools the opportunity to obtain items which were no longer wanted from business offices without any cost. The School was due to receive free of charge cabinets, desks, chairs, white goods,

stationery and plants estimated as being worth over £10,000. The School was also allowed to sell on these goods for fundraising purposes. The preliminary designs for the re-purposing of the Gym into a new Library had been prepared and were being worked through with the project managers. The Committee was assured that the design for the new Library would be sympathetic to the history of the School.

ACTION

ITEM 9 – POLICIES

21. Item 9.1 – Lockdown Policy - Decision. The School Lockdown Policy was approved with an annual review period.

22. Item 9.2 – Security Procedure - Decision. The School Security procedure was reviewed and approved with a 2-year review period.

23. Item 9.3 – CCTV Policy - Decision. The School CCTV Policy was reviewed. It was noted that some CCTV cameras were now out of action as a result of the SSEF building project but that all cameras would be re-instated along with some expansion of the system at the end of the SSEF project. It was confirmed that the CCTV system could not be accessed remotely and that it would require a full refit of the system. The CCTV Policy was approved with a 2-year review period. The Business Manager agreed to look into the concept of a remotely viewable CCTV system, and to update and re-present the CCTV camera location appendix at the end of the SSEF project.

M Mulgrew

ITEM 10 – HEALTH & SAFETY

24. The Business Manager reported that there had been no Health & Safety meetings yet this year and that there had been no notifiable incidents to report. A group of fifteen Year 12 students had been required to self-isolate when a teacher tested positive for Covid-19 and were now at home and learning remotely. There had been no other significant Covid-related issues.

ITEM 11 – GDPR

25. The Business Manager advised the Committee that the School was currently dealing with one Subject Access request and one Freedom of Information request both of which were extremely time-consuming. The meeting queried if there was anything else that could be done to assist with the administration of such requests, it was suggested not. There had been no other GDPR issues.

ITEM 12 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

26. Covid Expenditure. Governors queried if there was any other additional spending required by the School to assist with the current problems caused by Covid-19. It was suggested that the biggest concern for teachers was the reliability of ICT in classrooms. The meeting discussed the issue and noted the problem. It was reported that server upgrades had recently been undertaken and that the rolling process of laptop replacement continued. It was suggested that additional IT staff may be required in the future as a result of the School expansion.

ITEM 13 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27. Decision. The date of the next meeting was agreed as 7.45am on Wednesday 10th February 2021. (Changed post meeting)

All

The meeting closed at 9.20am.

Agreed as a true record at the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held remotely on 12th February 2021 and signed electronically due to Coronavirus situation.

R Vass

R Vass
Chair

12th February 2021