

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE **held via Zoom at 7.45am on Friday 11th February 2022**

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

1. The Chair welcomed Chris Lamberti, new Staff Governor, to the Facilities & Finance Committee.

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies for absence were received and accepted for Stephen Lawlor, Headteacher.

ITEM 2 - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

3. There were no declarations of business interest further to those already stated on the Register of Business Interests for 2021-22, or conflicts of interest or receipts of gifts or hospitality.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. The minutes of the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 17th November 2021 were approved as a true record.

ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING

5. There were no matters arising from the minutes which needed further discussion.

ITEM 5 – CHAIR’S ACTION

6. There was no Chair’s Action to report, only routine School and SSEF financial approvals had been undertaken in line with the Financial Regulations since the last meeting.

ITEM 6 – FINANCIAL UPDATE

7. The School’s Financial Management Report for Month 4 (December 2021) was received, and its content noted. The Business Manager reported that School finances were currently changing quite rapidly and gave a verbal update on the most significant issues. Overall finances were relatively healthy in relation to the planned budget, mainly as a result of having set a very prudent budget at the start of the year. Additional unbudgeted income had been received from the Teachers’ Pay Grant, the Recovery Premium Grant, the School-led Tutoring Grant and the 16-19 Tutoring Grant. All the grants had specific restrictions and had to be spent within the financial year. There had been a carry-over from last year of £18,000 from the Covid Catch-Up Grant, there were plans in place to spend most of the Catch-Up Grant this year but it could be carried over to 2022-23 if necessary. The meeting received data on budget income and expenditure variances and the Business Manager summarised the information. There were no concerns for the income variances shown, related expenditure would happen later in the financial year. The reasons for the expenditure variances were explained, several items related to SSEF project requirements. Expenditure was slightly over budget (-0.6%) at this stage, adverse costs were due to phasing issues and were expected to come back into line by the end of the year. The Committee noted the financial situation and timing issues and had no concerns with the report.

ACTION

ITEM 7 – SSEF PROJECT & CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

8. The Business Manager gave a verbal report on the status of the SSEF project. The ESFA had requested a project close-out which had been filed and rejected as the final accounts had not yet been agreed by the School. It had been estimated that the SSEF contractor (Horizon) had made a loss of around £0.25million due to significant increases in materials costs during Covid. There had been some School-agreed variations totalling over £100,000 during the building project, but Horizon had now submitted their final accounts with additional variations of a further £100,000 over the original agreed cost. The School's project manager (PCH) had discussed the issue with Horizon and was proposing that around £50,000 was a more realistic figure, the Horizon variation figure was to be challenged by the School. The Business Manager advised that the School had recently received unexpected ESFA in-year funding of £75,000, relating to high Year 12 student numbers this year, which could be utilised to offset the additional expenditure without the need to use School reserves. The Committee discussed the issue and what SSEF variation figure would be acceptable to the School. It was noted that a £50,000 variation figure would only be less than 1% of the total SSEF project cost. It was also suggested that it was in the School's interest to settle the final SSEF accounts quickly in relation to staff time and effort.

9. **Decision.** It was agreed that, further to final debate with PCH and Horizon, the Business Manager could accept a final SSEF variation figure of up to £65,000.

ITEM 8 – SITE TEAM REPORT

10. A Site Team Report on recent Autumn/Winter activity written by the Site Manager was received and the excellent work of the whole Site Team was commended. The extra burden on the Site Team of additional cleaning work required by a shortage of cleaners was noted by the Committee and discussed. The Business Manager reported that the cleaning team was now nearly back up to full strength and that this would reduce the amount of cleaning work undertaken by the Site Team. The shortage of cleaning staff was reported to be an issue for many schools. The very large amount of work undertaken by the Site Team since the start of the Summer holiday to finish off the SSEF buildings in time for the Autumn Term was also noted. The Committee asked the Business Manager to pass on the thanks of the Committee to the Site Team.

11. A request for additional items within the report was noted and discussed. An external storage facility for PE equipment had now been put onto the Parents' Association Wish List for their initial consideration, if not agreed the Business Manager suggested that funds may be available for this item at the end of the financial year. A second request for bow-topped fencing was not deemed an immediate need and could also be delayed until the end of the year. The Committee queried if the fencing was a health and safety issue and it was confirmed that it was not.

12. Governors asked for an update on the swimming pool issue. The Business Manager advised that the pool continued to be a problem, water leakage continued and some of the plant room machinery was now becoming obsolete. The School's insurers were still involved but not accepting any of the building problems. The Committee were advised that Sports England were very interested in keeping the pool available for local use and may be able to assist financially but that full remedial action was likely to cost over £0.25million. The School was investigating various other grants and funding streams including Active Essex.

ITEM 9 – IT UPDATE

13. A Wireless Access Extension Project report was received from the IT Manager. Following complaints about School Wi-Fi reception, an internal survey had been undertaken which had highlighted issues with internet reception around the School site. The Business Manger advised that the large amount of steel in the new SSEF buildings had also produced new Wi-Fi blind spots. To address the issue, a proposal was being put forward to the Committee for expenditure on additional Wi-Fi access points. The report outlined the options available and a cost comparison exercise, and the Business Manager reminded that Committee that the recent additional ESFA income would cover the essential elements of the request. Governors discussed the request and noted the importance of reliable internet access in relation to teaching needs. It was stated that 50

ACTION

M Mulgrew

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new access points were required in total but that 30 units would cover immediate needs. Installation work would be undertaken as soon as possible, possible during the School Summer holiday. **ACTION**

14. **Decision.** Governors approved expenditure of £13,200 for 30 Wi-Fi access points from existing School funds. The remaining Wi-Fi expenditure request was to be held over to FY2022-23. **M Mulgrew**

ITEM 10 – RISK REGISTER

15. The Facilities & Finance Committee and SSEF sections of the CCHS Risk Register were received for termly review. Governors raised the current issue of increasing energy prices and suggested that a new specific risk was required in the Risk Register. The Business Manager reminded the Committee that the School had fortunately fixed prices for electricity until September 2023 and for gas until September 2024 but the effect of increasing energy prices would be noticeable in future budgets.

16. **Decision.** The Clerk agreed to add an additional energy price specific risk as F59b into the Risk Register in line with the discussions of the meeting. **Clerk**

ITEM 11 – GDPR

17. The Business Manager advised that there were no major GDPR issues to report but that Freedom of Information access requests could be expected after the Year 7 Offer Day.

ITEM 12 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

18. **Raffle Prize - Decision.** The Business Manager advised the Committee that a member of staff had won £700 of free Virgin Airline flights following a School-purchased flight to a conference in Boston, USA, in March 2022. The free 'prize' flight(s) would have to be bought by the staff member but will then be refunded onto the same credit card as the original winning flight had been purchased on, ie the School credit card. The School would then need to reimburse the staff member once the credit amount had been received by the School. The Committee agreed with the proposed course of action and noted that it could be considered as a wellbeing action for the staff member involved. It was not deemed to be against any of the School's Financial Regulations. **M Mulgrew**

ITEM 13 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19. **Decision.** It was agreed that the next meeting would be held remotely by Zoom at 7.45am on Wednesday 27th April 2022. **All**

The meeting closed at 8.35am.

R Vass, Chair

27th April 2022