

## **CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

### **Minutes of a meeting of the FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE held at the School at 7.45am on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

Present:	Richard Brown Stephen Miles Stephen Lawlor Niamh Dobson Richard Vass Mary Argent	Chair (via Teams) Chair of Governors Headteacher (via Teams)  Associate Member (via Teams)
In Attendance:	Melissa Mulgrew Wendy Newton Fiona Gilmour Jonathan Gorridge James Smith	Business Manager Clerk to Governors Senior Finance Officer (8.15am to 8.48am) Auditor, MWS (8.15am to 8.48am) Auditor, MWS (8.15am to 8.48am)

#### **ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

#### **ITEM 2 - DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

2. The Headteacher advised that his daughter, a CCHS Alumna, was now employed as a student tutor on a casual basis and that a new declaration of interests form had been received by the School. The Headteacher was not involved in the interview and selection process. There were no other declarations of business interest further to those already stated on the Register of Business Interests for 2023-24, or conflicts of interest or receipts of gifts or hospitality reported.

#### **ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

3. The minutes of the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2023 were approved as a true record.

#### **ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING**

4. Item 9, Para 15 – Site Visit. The meeting was advised that due to the absence of the Site Manager there would not be a site visit after the meeting. It was suggested that the Chair could undertake a separate meeting with the Site Manager in the near future.

#### **ITEM 5 – CHAIR’S ACTION**

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

#### **ITEM 7 – FINANCIAL UPDATE**

6. Item 7.1 – Exceptional Expenditure. The Business Manager presented a list of exceptional expenditure items which had arisen since the start of term. These included: repairs to the Music gates (£3400), emergency air conditioning work for the backup server room (£2000), a fall restraint system for the Bancroft Building (£1000) and additional external lighting near the tennis court after a H&S event (£1000). The details behind each item were summarised and it was confirmed that all four items were within the agreed School expenditure limit of £5000. It was also reported that the Art lift had failed and been condemned by the School’s insurance company. A serviceable lift was required as soon as possible as it was the only means of disabled access to the SENDCo Office & Sixth Form study area (1<sup>st</sup> floor) and Art rooms (2<sup>nd</sup> floor). The Business Manager put forward a request for expenditure of £21,000 from reserves for the repair of the lift. It was stated that the cost of a new lift was estimated to be around £50,000. Governors discussed the issue in relation to the relatively small difference in costs and the life expectancy of a lift.

#### **ACTION**

## 7. Decisions.

a. It was **agreed** that the Business Manager would obtain three quotes for both the repair and the replacement of the Art lift and report her findings to the Management Committee by email or at their meeting in December.

b. Subject to the findings of Para 7a, it was **agreed in principle** that the sum of £21,000 could be used from School reserves for the repair of the Art lift.

## ACTION

M Mulgrew

M Mulgrew

8. Item 7.2 – Teachers’ Pensions. It was reported that the recent actuarial re-evaluation of the Teachers’ Pension Fund had resulted in an employer increase for the School of £180,000 for 2023-24. Whilst a Government grant was to be received for the first year, it was suggested that it was unlikely to cover the full amount and a shortfall of around £30,000 was expected. Governors noted the increase and discussed the huge financial impact on 2024-25 and beyond if no further Government funding in years 2 and onwards.

9. Item 7.3 – Management Reports. The Financial Management Reports for Month 1 (September 2023) were not yet available as a result of a new staff member in the Finance Office and would be sent to Governors in the near future.

10. Savings Account - Decision. The School’s Virgin Money savings account was coming to the end of a fixed term and investigations had been made into an alternative savings account. The Business Manager recommended that the School’s savings of nearly £527,000 should be moved to a Lloyds one-year fixed term deposit account at a rate of 5.08%. Other banks offering slightly higher interest rates had been rejected as they had poorer credit ratings. Governors suggested that a better interest rate may be available if a slightly longer term was chosen. It was **agreed** that, subject to a final re-check of available interest rates, the Business Manager should transfer the School savings to the Lloyds one-year fixed term deposit account.

M Mulgrew

## ITEM 8 – CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT

11. Campus development was quiet with most of the Site Team’s work being focussed on maintenance and H&S issues. Governors queried the status of the swimming pool complex and were advised that it continued to be very problematic. A new leak had arisen which could be from the Calorex system or the roof itself, investigations were currently ongoing. The use of the swimming pool was assessed daily due to the numerous problems within the pool complex. The Business Manager advised that the next CIF bid was likely to be the replacement of the windows in the Art and Sixth Form Study block. These windows are situated in an area of asbestos which would need to be professionally removed as part of the CIF project. PCH were currently scoping the work for the CIF bid and had suggested that the age of the windows would make their replacement a priority for CIF.

## ITEM 9 – AUDIT RESPONSIBILITIES

12. There were no actions to report relating to audit responsibilities.

## ITEM 10 – POLICIES

13. Item 10.1 – School Lockdown Policy - Decision. The School Lockdown Policy was presented for review unamended and was **approved** as presented with an annual review period.

## ITEM 11 – HEALTH & SAFETY

14. The Business Manager reported that Health & Safety issues were minimal. There had been one trip by a staff member in an area close to the tennis courts and additional external lighting had now been installed to rectify the problem. The meeting was also informed that the School’s Concussion Policy had been amended to reflect recent changes made by Sport England in relation to concussion-related injuries, and details of School protocol were received.

**ITEM 12 – GDPR**

15. A few Freedom of Information queries had been received relating to various aspects of the Year 7 entrance test, none were deemed to be contentious. There had been fewer queries than expected following the introduction of the new entrance test, however more queries were expected after National Offer Day in March. The large amount of time taken by School staff to address and reply to the Fol queries was noted.

**ITEM 13 – IT & CYBER SECURITY**

16. There was nothing significant to report concerning IT. It was reported that a very close eye was kept on cyber activities and that School staff were regularly reminded about spam and phishing emails. Governors queried the security of the School mobile phones and were advised that the phones were not directly connected to the School's IT system and used multi-factor authentication if necessary.

**8.15am – Fiona Gilmour, Jonathan Gorridge & James Smith joined the meeting.**

**ITEM 6 – ANNUAL COMPANY ACCOUNTS 2022-2023** (Taken out of agenda order)

17. Item 6.1 – Company Accounts. Jonathan Gorridge, MWS auditor, reported on their audit of the CCHS Consolidated Company Accounts for the year ending 31st August 2023. The audit had gone extremely well, and the Finance Team were commended for their professional and accurate work. The auditors stated that the control of School finances was excellent and confirmed that no matters came to light during their audit and assurance tests. There had been nothing to record in the formal MWS Audit & Regularity Findings Report as everything was very sound with no control weaknesses. This report and the full accounts would be sent to the ESFA after they had been formally approved by the Management Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The auditor's Report to Management contained no significant findings and only three areas for consideration. One area related to the ESFA-preference for company members to have a degree of separation from trustees, this issue had already been addressed by the Governing Body but still awaited DfE approval. All three items were deemed very minor by the auditors and had been recorded purely for the School's information. Overall, the auditors considered that the School was in a strong position but noted that Government funding for future years was unknown. The level of School reserves was deemed sound and the designation of the reserves to specific purposes commended. The auditors brought to the attention of the Committee the change in the LGPS valuation which had made a huge reduction to the LGPS deficit figure. It was stressed that pension valuation figures were variable and could change again in the future.

18. Item 6.2 – Auditor's Management Letter & Letters of Representation. The MWS Report to Management Letter was noted and had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The auditor's Letters of Representation for audit and regularity assurance were received by the Committee and signed off after the meeting.

19. Item 6.3 – Audit & Regularity Findings Report. The auditors' Audit & Regularity Findings Report had been discussed earlier in the meeting. No findings were to be reported to the ESFA.

20. Item 6.4 – CCHS Capital Development Ltd. The Annual Report and Financial Statements for CCHS Capital Development for the year ending 31st August 2023 were received for information and noted. The accounts would be formally presented for approval at the CCHS Capital Development Ltd AGM in December.

21. Item 6.5 – Reserves Policy - Decision. The School's Reserve Policy, which was contained within the Company Accounts, was discussed and it was **agreed** would remain unchanged.

22. Governors questioned the auditors over whether any significant financial worries had arisen from their audit and were advised none. It was stated that there was general unease within all schools concerning the lack of funding certainty and the unknown levels of future funding. The Chair thanked the auditors for their work and for attending the meeting.

**ACTION**

23. **Decisions.**

a. James Gorridge advised that one small amendment was required to the Auditor's Report within the Company Accounts document which would be undertaken by MWS and then sent to the School.

b. With the revision stated in Para 23a, the Committee **recommended** approval of the CCHS Consolidated Company Accounts 2022-23 by the Management Committee in December 2023.

**MWS**

**Clerk**

**ITEM 14 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

**ITEM 15 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

25. **Decision.** It was agreed that the next meeting would be held at 7.45am on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

**All**

The meeting closed at 8.48am.

R Brown, Chair

7<sup>th</sup> February 2024