

**CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

**Minutes of a meeting of the FACILITIES & FINANCE COMMITTEE**  
**held at the School at 7.45am on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2019**

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

**ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Richard Brown.

**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 2019-20, or 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 2019-20. Steve Miles volunteered to stand for the role and there were no other nominations.
4. **Decision.** Steve Miles was unanimously elected as Vice Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee for AY 2019-20.

**ITEM 4 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

5. The minutes of the Facilities & Finance Committee meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2019 were approved as a true record.

**ITEM 5 - MATTERS ARISING**

6. **Item 4, Para 6 – Deposit Account - Decision.** In light of the ongoing credit concerns about Metro Bank and possibility of interest rate reductions, it was agreed that a decision on moving any School funds into higher rate deposit accounts would wait until after Brexit.
7. **Item 4, Para 10 – Safety Barriers.** It was confirmed that a letter had been sent to ECC in June re-iterating the need for additional pedestrian safety barriers and a box junction outside the School, no formal reply had been received. The issue had been raised again recently through the new ECC consultation on introducing cycle lanes along the Broomfield Road.
8. **Item 8, Para 36 – SSEF – Parental Assistance.** It was confirmed that the parent body had been approached for someone with project management assistance for the SSEF project and that a few offers had been received. The offers were not being utilised for the time being. The Head advised that the School 'Building a Future Appeal' had been raised at recent parents' events with calls for financial assistance towards the £200,000 required for fitting out the new SSEF-funded buildings. The Chair advised that a new Parent Governor election was to be held shortly and that it was hoped someone with fund-raising experience may come forward. It was also confirmed that Steve Miles and Andrew Bonwick were the Governor representatives on the SSEF Project Working Group.

**ACTION**

**Clerk**

9. **Item 4, Para 11 – Swimming Pool.** A structural report on the swimming pool building, reviewed by the Management Committee earlier the same week, was received for discussion. The Chair summarised the situation with the pool building and the options open to the School. Repair was likely to cost in the region of £300,000 and a new pool and building in the region of £750,000. It was suggested that having a pool was beneficial to the School for many reasons but that a lot of investment would be required. Building work for the SSEF project was due to start in the new year and a decision on the future of the pool would therefore be required from the Full GB by December. The Business Manager advised that the swimming pool piling work had been added into the SSEF tender at a cost of £145,000 as it was a necessity, but that it could be removed later if necessary.

**8.05am – Mark Rowell joined the meeting.**

10. The meeting discussed the options available for the swimming pool which included:
- Doing nothing (as the building was being monitored) but with the risk that the building could become dangerous and have to be closed at short notice,
  - Spending £145,000 to stabilise the building with piling only,
  - Spending £300,000 to stabilise and fully refurbish the plant and changing rooms, and
  - Spending £750,000 to totally re-build, subject to obtaining funding.

It was suggested that with the arrival of the new Sports Hall, new curriculum sporting options would become available. The Committee noted that spending a lot of money to keep the pool working for only a relatively short period would not be an effective use of School money. A suggestion was put forward that if the pool had to close it would present the opportunity to re-purpose the building for another use. It was stated that that the Full GB would need to decide before the end of the year if £145,000 should be used from the SSEF building project to pile the swimming pool building. Concern was raised that whilst the SSEF project had a contingency included, there may be unknown extra costs in the future.

11. **Decision.** The Business Manager agreed to prepare information on the various swimming pool scenarios and costings for receipt by the Governors ahead of a final decision in December by the Management Committee.

**M Mulgrew**

**ITEM 6 – CHAIR’S ACTION**

12. The Chair advised that he had given approval for Steve Miles to be added as an online approver on the School’s internet banking system.

**ITEM 8 – POLICIES**

13. A number of policies/regulations/procedures were presented for Committee review and approval, and decisions were as follows:

- Financial Regulations & Scheme of Delegation 2019-20.** Updated in line with current ESFA requirements. There was a discussion over new budget variance limits and it was agreed that the SSEF Working Group would be given authorisation to approve variances over £25,000 in relation to the capital development project. With that addition the regulations were approved for presentation to the Full GB with an annual review.
- Health & Safety Policy 2019-20.** No changes. Approved as presented with an annual review.
- First Aid Policy 2019-20.** A new policy. Approved as presented with an initial annual review.
- Asbestos Management Plan.** The meeting discussed the School’s current procedures and noted that they were robustly managed by the Site Team. In light of proposed building work the School intended to re-review the procedure again in 6 months. Approved as presented with an annual review.
- Swimming Pool Procedures.** The Normal and Emergency Operating Procedures had been closely reviewed after a recent incident and a few new sections had been added. The procedures were approved with an annual review. The swimming pool risk assessment was noted and approved as presented with a 6-month review in light of the current issues.
- Lone Working Policy.** A new policy, non-statutory, required for H&S reasons. The new procedures would be trialled by the School for effectiveness. Approved as presented with an annual review by the Business Manager.

## **ITEM 9 – SCHOOLS BENCHMARKING DATA**

14. The Business Manager presented Schools Financial Benchmarking Data which compared CCHS to 16 other SSGS schools. It was noted that the data related to 2017-18 information and that it was very difficult to compare schools due to differences in building type, pupil numbers etc. It was suggested that there were no surprising findings within the data and that all 'high' figures could be explained. Governors reviewed and questioned particular aspects of the data and additional information was received from the Business Manager and the Head. It was noted that the main usefulness of the data was to decide if any specific areas needed addressing. The Chair reminded the Committee that the School's Key Performance Indicators were shown in the annual accounts and that they related to the benchmarking data. Additional data from the School Resource Management Self-Assessment Dashboard was received and discussed.

## **ITEM 10 – DEFICIT REDUCTION STRATEGY**

15. As tasked by the Management Committee the Business Manager had prepared revised high-level budget forecast figures following the lower than anticipated Year 12 student numbers this academic year. The meeting was informed that there were 107 students in Year 12 as opposed to 130 assumed in previous budget forecasts. It was noted that the reduced student numbers would have a significant effect on the budget as each student currently brought in £4,000 per year. The revised budget figures were discussed and it was noted that the cumulative loss of student numbers led to a £(200,000) deficit by the end of 2022. The Business Manager advised that KS5 funding had been confirmed as rising from £4,000 to £4,188 next year (4.7%) and this would assist slightly.

16. Additional forecast scenarios based on varying KS3 and KS4 funding possibilities were reviewed and it was noted that a 4.2% increase in Lower School funding could produce a surplus budget. The meeting recognised that there were many variables in the funding situation and that firm information would not be received from the Government until December 2019. If the National Funding Formula was followed, a 5.18% increase would be expected. The Chair noted that increased funding often came with increased costs and stressed that the School needed to address the loss of students in the Sixth Form and make the Sixth Form as attractive as possible. It was suggested that times had changed and students were far more likely to leave the School after Year 11 than in the past. A suggestion was made that the Year 11 Leadership Conference may suggest to students that there was nothing else to stay for and the concept was discussed. The Head stated that increased efforts were to be made to encourage external Year 12 students into the School and it was noted that the new SSEF facilities may assist in both attracting and retaining students. The correlation between high examination grades and student retention was stressed as girls were now willing to move schools in order to obtain the best grades they could in order to get into university.

## **ITEM 11 – HEALTH & SAFETY**

17. The Health & Safety (H&S) Review for the year 2018-19 was received for discussion. Twenty-nine minor incidents were reported which included 3 staff members. The Science Department had the highest number of incidents which was considered understandable and no underlying trends had been identified for further action. It was reported that as a result of a re-directed footpath students were now descending the steep slope by the side of the Science Block as a short cut and the Business Manager agreed to discuss the issue with the Site Manager. Governors were advised that no incidents had arisen as a result of the recent building work but that two occurrences of unsafe practice by two of the contractors had been witnessed and addressed, one company was reprimanded by the project management company and the second issued with a formal notice to improve. It was confirmed that the Site Manager had been construction site safety trained.

## **ITEM 12 – SSEF PROJECT & CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT**

18. The Business Manager presented the SSEF Project Status Dashboard as at 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019 and summarised the progress to date. The Bancroft Building had been demolished with only minor snagging remaining. The main build project was out to tender and due back by 18<sup>th</sup> October with the final appointment expected to be made by mid-November. Planning permission had been submitted and the decision was expected on 24<sup>th</sup> October. There had been a few scope changes to

## **ACTION**

M Mulgrew

the project which had resulted in the current financial situation being around £100,000 favourable. The untouched project contingency currently stood at around £330,000. The biggest financial deviation to date had been the cost of Chelmsford City Council planning permission fees which had cost £15,708, £10,000 over expected. The Business Manager advised that 4 contractors had visited the School and all seemed eager to put forward a tender. The only risk to note at present was the swimming pool situation reported in Paragraph 9. It was noted that the School would be in a better position to make a full cost benefit analysis of the swimming pool once the tenders had been received and could then go to the Full GB for a final decision. The Head noted that should it be decided that the swimming pool was to be de-commissioned, there would be an interesting opportunity for re-purposing and that SLT would start considering the options.

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19. The Business Manager advised that Chartwells managers had visited the School to understand the problems arising within the Canteen in light of the increased student numbers and were keen to support the School with capital investment. Chartwells were putting together proposals by November on how to improve the dining facilities, addressing things like pinch-points and having additional food outlets within the School. Governors queried the problems which were occurring and discussed how they could be addressed. The Business Manager advised that the current Chartwells contract ended in May 2020 which may not be the best time to change contractors and suggested that it may be better to extend their contract for a further 12-18 months.

20. **Decision**. It was agreed that the issue of the Chartwells contract would be discussed further at the next Facilities & Finance Committee meeting.

**M Mulgrew**

21. An interim report on Site Team activity was received and the large amount of work undertaken by the Site Team was commended. Governors recognised the significant financial savings achieved as a result of in-house work and the Site Team thanked for their work. The disruptive effect on the work of the Site Team of having external lettings during school holidays was noted. The Business Manager confirmed that additional Site Team staffing had been included in future budget forecasts.

22. **Decision**. The Clerk agreed to draft a letter of thanks to the Site Team from the Chair on behalf of the Governors.

**Clerk**

### **ITEM 13 – IT UPDATE**

23. An IT Update dated October 2019 was received for information and noted. Governors asked for confirmation that the current IT strategy was working and that the School was happy with the present facilities which was confirmed. The Head gave examples of how new IT ideas were being used within the School and curriculum. It was stressed that Governors needed to be aware of any ideas for future IT development in order that the necessary financial planning could be made.

### **ITEM 14 – RISK REGISTER**

24. **Decision**. The Facilities & Finance Committee and SSEF sections of the CCHS Risk Register were presented for termly review and approved as presented.

### **ITEM 15 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

25. **Trips Administration Charge**. The meeting was advised that concern had arisen about the 10% trip administration charge which was possibly excessive for some trips particularly when an external tour company was used. The meeting was reminded that the charge had not been introduced in order to make money. The issue was discussed and it was suggested that the charge should be commensurate with the cost of the trip and the amount of administrative work actually involved by staff.

26. **Decision**. It was agreed that the Business Manager would put forward a proposal for a revised trips administration charge at the next meeting.

**M Mulgrew**

**ITEM 16 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

27. **Decision.** The date of the next meeting was changed and agreed to be 7.45am on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

**All**

The meeting closed at 9.47am.

Agreed as a true record.

R Vass, Chair

20<sup>th</sup> November 2019

DRAFT