



AYLESBURY
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Founded 1598

FULL GOVERNING BODY MEETING MINUTES

Monday 14 November 2022 at 8am held via Googlemeet

PRESENT:	Mr R Williams (Chair)	Mrs C Hart
	Mr P Bown	Mr P Jennings
	Mr M Brock	Ms J Moore
	Mr L Cobley	Mr M Sturgeon (Headmaster)
	Mr J Collins	Mrs A Ward
	Mr A Fails	Mr E Walter
	Mr N Gibbs	Mr S Winman
	Mr K Hardern	

IN ATTENDANCE Iain Digby (Resources Director)

APOLOGIES: Mr T Hall
 Mr Y Odukoya

ACTION

1 Notification of any other business

No items were tabled under any other business.

2 Declarations of interest

There were no interests declared.

3 Purpose of the meeting

The Chair reported that the purpose of the meeting was to update all Governors about the developing difficult financial position of the School. The position had changed significantly for the worse since the September FGB meeting had taken place. It was important that all Governors understood the current position because of collective responsibility.

He said that all Governors had received papers in advance prepared by the Headmaster, the Resources Director and Mr Fails and thanked them for their hard work in assembling these.

In view of the absence of the Clerk because of a competing commitment, the Chair said that he had arranged with her that he would minute the meeting.

4 Report from the Headmaster/the Resources Director

The Headmaster reported that the deterioration in the budget was down to a large increase in utility bills and an unfunded increase in staff salaries.

On staff salaries he said that like most schools the budget had provided for a 3% increase. Very shortly before the budget was produced the Government had indicated that a 5% rise would be proposed, and there was no mention of additional funding.

This proposal has now been ratified very recently and a further headline announcement is due this week to confirm the details (without any further funding). The Headmaster said that industrial action was possible, and the position might be further made difficult by the Chancellor in the Autumn statement, but that was the current position. It resulted in a cost of c.£93,000 to the School.

Mr Digby continued that in addition to this £93,000 cost, support staff increases could be at a similar level. This would result in a further £18K cost. The headline cost was £25K between March and August 2023 but £7K was offset by one of the receptionists leaving and not being replaced: the time would be covered by the other receptionist and the office staff.

Regarding increased utility bills the School had been on a 4 year fixed cost deal with Bucks Council, which started when rates were a lot lower. This deal came to an end in September. We had committed to a new deal in March 2022, but Bucks Council had left it to the last minute to fix costs with suppliers, presumably in the hope that rates would come down from the Summer. The fix only occurred a few days in advance and was very disadvantageous.

The budget submitted in July had, based on information then available, already included a 66% increase from £151K to £251K. However the Bucks Council outcome has resulted in a further forecasted increase of £188K for 2022/3. The School has signed up for 2 years but the tariff fix will be reviewed after 1 year, by when it is hoped prices may have come down. Bucks Council intend to go out to tender in March/April 2023.

When the budget deterioration became apparent the Headmaster and he had started to look at cost savings and had identified savings with a net effect of £34K

which will be adjusted in this year's budget. They have also introduced a strict regime whereby all purchase orders have to be approved by one of them.

They have had negotiations with Seriously Fun Swimming (SFS). The swimming pool is a large user of utilities and one option was to close the pool completely which they had discounted. SFS have agreed to increase their rental from £42K p.a. to £60K. This increases the overall amount for all lettings to £115k p.a.. In addition SFS will donate a new pool cover at £15K. This should be delivered over the Christmas holidays and there should be a resultant saving on fuel thereafter.

Discussions have also been ongoing with the Aylesbury Grammar Foundation. A paper and proposal will be put to the Trustees in January to fund £106K worth of costs from this year's budget. An initial discussion has already occurred, and the Foundation has indicated that it is at least very likely to fund £56K mainly relating to education and conferences. They have also said they will look at the balance.

This leaves the School looking this year at a deficit of £196K. This includes a £30K contingency. Reserves are currently £360K so if the contingency is used there would be £164K left in reserves.

Monitoring of utility use is occurring. In September usage was 20% down on last year. However this had not resulted in any financial saving from last year due to the low rates then in effect.

The Chair asked what the projections were for 2023/4 given the current plan to ensure we had sufficient reserves to cover at least the next two years as discussed previously. The Headmaster said that he thought that there was a strong likelihood that energy support for Schools would continue. He also thought that that there would be additional support for staffing costs and this would have a big impact.

They were carrying out analysis regarding projected natural wastage as to which roles were essential to replace and which were desirable only. Renewal or /replacement of one year contracts in place was also being looked at carefully. On the occurrence of any resignations they would look seriously at the impacts regarding any replacement. A decision on (non) replacement of a receptionist had already been taken as previously mentioned.

The Chair asked if based on current information it was reasonable to think that the School would still be balance sheet solvent at the end of 2023/4. The Headmaster confirmed that was his view.

The Resources Director said that in line with the IT strategy there had been a lot of IT investment in recent times. As a result he anticipated that little more was needed in the next 4-5 years. This should mean a reduction of at least £50K in next year's budget.

ACTION

The Headmaster said for the sake of completeness he should point out some other options had been looked at but considered not palatable. These were mentioned in the red section in his paper.

Mr Hardern asked about the risk impact of the Harpur v Brazul ruling. The Headmaster said that an email from the Council was expected later this month. Any effect might be ameliorated by the fact that staff already got additional holidays under the school calendar.

Mr Cobley asked if any reduction in staff would affect funding. The Headmaster said no, just the quality of the provision of education.

It was decided that there was not at this stage a need to set up regular meetings to discuss developments. The Chair reminded Governors that there was a RiF meeting scheduled for a few weeks' time for further discussion and all Governors were welcome to attend that.

The meeting concluded at 8.30 a.m.

Signed.....Date.....