



ST MARY'S COLLEGE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD VIA VIDEOCONFERENCE ON THURSDAY 21st MAY 2020

Attendees:

- Mr C. Beesley
- Mrs S Beecroft (Resources Chair 19/20)
- Mrs E. Best (Interim Principal)
- Mr P. Case
- Mr M Conboy (Chair 19/20)
- Mrs A Francis (Quality Chair 19/20)
- Mr A Kheratkar
- Mrs P. Lightbound
- Mr P. Moore
- Mr M. Wright
- Rev Fr N Wynn SM (BMAC Chair 19/20)
- Mr F. Dowling

Staff invited to be

In Attendance: Katrina Hollern
Tracy Ellett

External parties

invited by the Chair: Stephen Jones (ESFA), Frank Dowling (Society of Mary)

Apologies: Mr M. Vizzard

Absent: Mr M Wright, Mr C. Beesley

Item 1 – Training (standing item)

This has been deferred due to this being an extraordinary meeting.

Item 1: Deferred.

Item 2 – Opening Prayer and Welcome

Chair MC clarified that all members were able to hear and contribute ahead of asking Fthr N. Wynn to open the meeting in prayer, also providing a story to highlight the significance of Ascension Day, demonstrating how knowledge and awareness had faded significantly over his lifetime.

Item 2: resolved

Item 3 – Apologies for Absence

The clerk confirmed the standing apologies for MV however confirmed that there had not been any communication from MW or CB.

Apologies for MV were accepted with a request for contact to be made with absentees to ascertain the reasons in order to accept apologies retrospectively of relevant

Item 3 resolved: apologies were accepted and an action noted for the clerk to contact MW and CB

Item 4 – Declarations of Interest

SB declared an interest in relation to her role at LHu and the HE items on the agenda.

The standing declaration by EB in relation to her husband's employment at the college were noted.

Item 4 - Resolved: The Board noted the declarations of interest.

Item 5 – Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Governors held by Video Conference on 28th April 2020 (MC)

The Board approved the previously circulated minutes without amendments.

Item 5 – Resolved: The Board approved the minutes which would be signed by the Chair once Covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Item 6 – Confirming the Next Full Board Meeting (MC)

The Board were asked to consider their availability to attend a full meeting of the Board of Governors with a full agenda on July 9th. It was agreed that this could still take place as a videoconference although the possibility of a few governors and staff being present in College was not ruled out if it was deemed safe. The Board were also asked to consider any additional items that should be raised with nothing brought forwards and the date was agreed.

Item 6 – Resolved: The Board agreed a full meeting of the Board of Governors on 6th July 2020

Item 7 – FE Applications Report 20/21 (EB)

EB confirmed that the target number of students within the budget was 652.

EB clarified the break down required in terms of progression and recruitment to achieve the target figure which was included in the circulated report. EB informed the Board that progression interviews were on-going and due to be completed in the next week with a good track record of progression with most programmes as two year they expected to retain 316 learners.

EB outlined the expected conversion rates from new applications, with fewer applications that were more realistic, with less from partner schools and more from local feeder schools with an increased likelihood of enrolment with an expected intake overall of 662, ahead of the budgeted 652.

From this, we would need 337 new students from applications. Uses conversion rate from offers, from 725 have converted 573 to offer. Shortfall of 55 based on 652 – not yet, if trend continues – current 573 23.38% increase – 707 – potential to meet 346 added to progression will achieve 662.

The recruitment campaigns, marketing and on-going interview processes, along with plans for virtual taster days were outlined and well received. A governor highlighted the value of local educators adapting to the local economic needs of learners, with more relevance in the skills they acquire rather than generic mass produced education that has limited scope for a broad spectrum of learners.

No further questions or comments were received.

Item 7 – Resolved: The governors noted the details of the recruitment report.

Item 8 – HE Applications Report 20/21 (PL)

PL advised that the comparative data for the previous year was unavailable; advising that position at the end of June would usually represent 50% of total enrolments.

PL advised that the LHU Foundation year had not been marketed as conversations with LHU regarding the curriculum had not progressed due to staff being unable to be in College, advising that there was a need to discuss this further and restart the conversations following the Vice Chancellors meeting.

Q– are you having difficulty contacting the LHU representative?

A (SB – LHU) – He has been off work ill with Covid-19 but is now recovered and back in work. **A (PL)** – everyone in the HE department has been inundated, this has been a challenging time

Q– (EB) – Is LHU aware we haven't developed this? **A (PL)** – he should be giving us access to validation and revalidation resources, this hasn't been followed up. SB agreed to follow this up from LHU and feed this back to PL (**action**)

PL moved on to discuss the position in relation to UCLAN courses for 20/21 entry, advising that no applications had been completed, although 4 were in the pipeline to be completed in next couple of weeks. PL indicated that this was a better position compared to the 19/20 position although raised concerns that students may be put off coming into a learning environment due to the pandemic, although hoped that the decision by UCLAN to deliver online in September will alleviate fears, however noted that LHU had not made a decision yet and would be awaiting vaccine trial results before communicating their strategy for learning in the new year, with a clearer understanding expected at the end of June.

PL confirmed that marketing was ongoing, with contact being made to engage with anyone who has shown an interest through social media and a virtual open event scheduled for June with 15 due to attend, none of which have yet made an application and hope to have a positive influx following on from that.

PL advised the Board that UCLAN had raised concerns regarding the impact of reduced international students, although commenting that altered study habits could lead to students staying local to complete their studies with a positive impact for SMC.

PL confirmed that all students were in a position to progress to the next year of study, therefore the only in year losses would be from any students who decide not to progress for personal reasons, with UCLAN having a 'no detriment' policy relating to the pandemic and progressions, with some MA students needing to re-sit due to being unable to engage during the pandemic.

PL invited questions.

Q (EB to SB) – last year some courses could not run as they failed to meet the minimum required number of applicants, will there be some discussion regarding this at the meeting on the 3rd June?

A (SB) – This will be raised as a discussion point but June is too early to make any decisions, there will be min number which may change. **A (PL)** – it is on the agenda for the Vice Chancellor's meeting.

No further questions or comments were received.

Item 8 – Resolved: The details of the report were noted with an action for SB to follow up on the progress of the foundation courses.

Item 9 – Financial Update (KH)

KH confirmed that the Board had already received a copy of the most recent management accounts within the last Board pack and April's would be available in the coming days and a summary would be sent to the Board.

KH confirmed that work preparing the revised budget for the rest of this year, next year and beyond was continuing with some decisions not yet made and those made this evening by the Board regarding the opening of the nurseries would have an impact and this would be worked into the budget and presented to EB and MC the following week and then be communicated to the Board.

MC updated the Board on the discussions with the ESFA and FEC, advising that they are waiting the for revised budgets to see extent of support required, confirming that the SPA will not resume until September, pushing the backstop from December to March, indicating that this would result in a need for financial support by the end of the calendar year with KH confirming that they are trying to quantify the financial issues and impact of Covid-19 on the financial position, with an announcement having been made by the ESFA for a return to be made by the end of July with C-19 specific information included.

Item 9 – Resolved: The Board noted the verbal update on the financial position with actions to distribute a summary of April’s management accounts and the updated budget.

Item 10.1 – The re-opening of the College

EB conveyed to the board the level of information that had been gathered and processed to compile the reports that had been distributed ahead of the meeting, with significant internal and external input, asking the Board to consider the information in two stages, with the external requirements, communications and advice ahead of the internal stakeholder information inclusive of staff, students and parents.

EB confirmed that the DfE guidance now included specific FE guidance including the checklist which had been included in the Board pack, advising that the SFCA had worked with DfE guidance to support the College in putting together the proposed models for reopening, noting the emphasis on some face to face contact for a ‘small’ number of students and only if progress in reducing infections continues with priority for those who can make it in safely, with the focus on ensuring that this does not displace or disrupt the online learning which has been progressing well.

EB went on to outline the information received as part of the BwD education network, providing detail to the Board from the meeting earlier that day. EB confirmed that the Director of Children’s services had been supportive, of a return to face to face learning but insisted that public health remains their number one priority and the LA is not yet satisfied the 5 tests have been met, therefore they are adopting a cautious approach based on regular reviews of emerging evidence and guidance, with the earliest recommended date for schools and Colleges in BwD advised to open is 8.6.20 but only if they are satisfied with the progress on all 5 government tests.

The demographic of the local population was highlighted as a significant risk with the high BAME population who are disproportionately affected, noting that in BwD with 1/3 of the population falling into this category, at the highest rate in Lancashire this must be taken into consideration along with the R rate remaining at 0.73 in the North West, adding that deprivation above the national average, being in the top ten most deprived areas in the country further amplified the risks to the local population.

The LA had also raised concerns in the limited evidence relating to the transmission rates in older children, with indications that there was a difference between secondary and primary ages with a decision to look to cautiously introduce year 10 learners in a tutorial model, which would be the same for yr 12, stating it would be impossible to follow a curriculum model and this would only be possible once the Principal, Chair and LA sign off the risk assessment, with BwD LA asking that this information is shared with governors, internal union representatives and then staff.

EB went on to advice that the DfE had requested that Colleges work closely with unions, with EB confirming that with most staff being members of NASNUWT, they had been contacted, with a strong working relationship with the internal representative. They had provided a checklist which states that no member of staff should be expected to go into a college that is not safe, and stated that they would need to conduct an inspection with a union representative prior to the college being reopened.

EB highlighted the personal responsibility for herself and the Board, highlighting a weakness in the organisation at the College with the removal of the Estates Manager who had been responsible for Health and Safety. The restructure had seen a member of the finance team assume the H&S responsibilities, however limited experience and time allocation of only one day per week has raised concerns over capacity, with some concerns also raised in relation to capability by reason of their limited experience. The structure has seen the roles and responsibilities and line management now divided, with health and safety within the finance team managed by the finance manager and the other duties and responsibilities of the Estates Manager distributed amongst the estates team consisting of 2 site supervisors, one currently self-isolating and the other having significant language barrier and a now lean cleaning team line managed by HR.

EB advised the board of the additional complication of the person responsible for H&S shielding, leaving no one on site with any H&S knowledge able to work through the risk assessment. EB highlighted that the checklist refers to the responsibilities of a Head of H&S, a post that is not held directly at SMC, advising that this had been communicated with the DfE and ESFA. To mitigate the risks in the absence of onsite support, a consultant was contacted, who could work with SMC at a cost of £15,000. A further solution was considered in utilising the services at BwD council, with their representative offering to review the risks at the college on a full day inspection including assessing the review of the proposed June opening and this would need to include a review the H&S guidance and documents to ensure the College is not in breach, they would then provide a 12 month plan and audits, a review of risk assessments, training for staff including the estates team with a base rate cost of £2,200, increasing with the addition of any bolt on requirements, but still significantly less than the consultants had quoted.

MC thanked EB for the update and invited the Board to raise questions and comments, highlighting that the opening of the college was aspirational and hypothetical at this stage until confirmation was received that the five tests were met and the safety of staff and students would not be compromised.

SJ (ESFA) SJ clarified a point made earlier by MC that the ESFA wanted to identify the impact of Covid-19 but were not underwriting Covid-19, asking for it to be noted within the minutes that there will not be any costs underwritten automatically, noting that if the college has a cash shortfall, there will not be any guarantees, that Covid-19 related costs will be supported, but there is a need to establish the impact. SJ stated that there was nothing to add in relation to the update from EB, adding that when a conversation was held with Deputy FEC, MS, the concern relating to the H&S had been flagged both in general and specifically relating to Covid-19, confirming that there will need to be assurance but that this does not have to come from the post holder and without that the College will be in some difficulty.

EB continued to work through the documents circulated to the Board, highlighting the detail within the overview of online learning, including the information relating to the virtual inset and staff feedback.

EB gave an overview of the weekly monitoring process including the process for raising and managing concerns and student discipline with assurances that online learning continues to work extremely well.

Comment - that is an important point to raise; if we are unable to find a safe way to get students back into college safely, we are still able to see that their education is continuing.

Q – it looks impressive and shows significant progression, do we have a benchmark for comparison, are we ahead or on a par with what other FE colleges are doing? I am curious to see where this is. **A** (EB) – we are part of SFCA NW and I attend those meetings and we are certainly in line with what is going on elsewhere, with few achieving 90% and above engagement through online learning, (to SJ) Is the ESFA able to offer a wider picture? **A**(SJ) Regionally and nationally there are no meaningful statistics on this, colleges are self-reporting distorting the meaning of the information, we don't know what it means as there is a mix and range of provision. Locally talking to local principals, they have done a fantastic job to move to online provision and continue engagement and there will be significant blended delivery for the foreseeable future, so there is a need to reflect, look at what's going well, consider CPD and stock take now before planning for September to normalise this format and ensure it is effective.

Comment – I think this is a really important aspect of our provision, we could be some time coming out of this, we could be teaching through blended platforms for the next 9 months so the engagement of 100% up to Easter is a good selling point.

Comment - If there are things that can be done to keep this at the forefront of our minds, then I think that this should be done, we need to ensure that this is comparable and best practice. **A**(EB) – The groups are supportive and good at sharing best practice.

Q - For the vulnerable learner focus, what is the thinking for those groups? **A**(EB) – This is included in the next section, I'll come back to this.

EB went on to cover the views of internal stakeholders, advising the Board of the student survey outcomes, with 36% stating that they would feel safe returning to College which was 78 students, highlighting that only 3 of those students were not BAME and that 64% would not feel safe which was 138 students and based on this information, it is felt that the only viable timetable to consider would be the tutorial model.

EB worked through the detail form the proposed model which had been distributed; indicating that this would require 4 staff per day conducting 30 minute interviews.

EB confirmed that the 2 learners attending the LA hub for vulnerable learners continued to receive that provision and would do for the next two weeks, with safeguarding staff maintaining contact with all other learners considered to be vulnerable.

EB provided an overview of the Staff who would be at risk from returning to work, including those clinically vulnerable or living with vulnerable relatives and those who would have issues relating to childcare, with rotas drawn up through consultation with HR and guided by the SFCA with a need to individually risk assess staff adding that those with childcare issues should not be pressed to return at this time.

EB added that the information from staff had raised a number of concerns, some relating to health or childcare issues but many staff concerned around the disproportionate impact on BAME or

concerns over students not adhering to social distancing guidelines, questions relating to PPE with one member of staff requesting full PPE to feel safe in their return.

The Chair invited questions, noting that the intention was to gain a consensus on the best way to move forward, acknowledging the difficulties in relation to no one having had experience of anything like this and in the face of limited scientific evidence.

Comment – In relation to the risk assessment, we simply cannot open without one, this is a non-negotiable aspect of this whole process, it is not safe to open without one. This is the standing guidance and the risk assessment is the starting point. I don't believe based on the information provided this evening that we have necessary skills to carry out our own risk assessment, this requires a significant level of experience.

Comment – I recommend that we proceed with BwD offer, they have experience and they have a vested interest in whether we open or not, they have been vocal with their views, we would have to get their okay to open, and using their expert they would be comfortable with the decision.

Q - Online learning is going well, this is safer and at the moment we are not in a position to reopen, do you EB agree? **A** (EB) I think we are vulnerable in the H&S situation we have been left in with being a small college with a small structure.

Comment – I agree that we need expert guidance, however if it is someone's role to undertake health and safety responsibilities there is a wider issue, possibly to be returned to further down the line, we need to do something about that if they cannot carry out a risk assessment. For now we need it and will have to work round it but there is a wider issue that we need to return to.

Comment – this is an important learning point, it is not through their fault, and they have only just undergone the training. **A** (KH) they were asked by the former Principal as we didn't have anyone, she sat and passed the qualification and does the one day per week and the Internal Audit by TIAA raised no concerns, however internal day to day concerns had been raised and we were looking at this, even if they are capable, one day per week is not enough in these circumstances. **A** (EB) – further concerns are due to them shielding, in this role and under these circumstances we need someone with the skills and experience to be on site, we could have worked with her but now no one on site with Health and Safety qualifications leaves us vulnerable.

Comment – this is a necessity to look at this even if we are not opening on 1st June, we need to ensure that we can open even if it is not until September, there has been an announcement that some institutions will not conduct any face to face delivery.

Comment and question – I am in agreement, however, I am concerned when we talk about the person with the specific responsibility we recognise that health and safety is everyone's responsibility, assisting and giving guidance and doing assessments is only one aspect, this feeds into a plan which is everyone's responsibility – we should not end up with scapegoating. Can we put together a reopening working party using the guidance and communicating this outwards, to include site, curriculum, support, and policies? Some can still feasibly work from home but some do need to come in. **A** (EB) – we have created this internally and will look at this further, everything will link in, site, safeguarding and training will be provided, we are 100% clear it is covering the whole college area, the concern I have is that the one person with the qualification is not onsite. In terms of the

working party, KH and I pulled together a full team, onsite with KH, HR and operations manager, director of curriculum, quality and then safeguarding and director of students, PA and EB, the working party has met regularly virtually for weeks and onsite with a full site review.

Q – how likely or unlikely are we to open before the end of this academic year? **A** (MC) a number of LA have made the decision to not open, others are looking to take that decision, our LA has been slow to take that decision but this is an emerging picture. **A** (EB) – like you say, some have decided not to open, ours is taking it slowly, has been extended the earliest date to June 8th and this is only tentatively, there will be more guidance from the government to follow. It is important to me that we will be open in some way, definitely by August and we need to plan now for that, it will take from now to then to be ready for that and need LA support for that, it is crucial we are ready for August and September.

Q – why are we paying the LA anything for what is essential health and safety requirements? **A** (EB) – we need someone to undertake this task. **Q** I agree but why do we have to pay? **A** (EB) – schools have this service because a slice of school funding goes to LA to pay for it, we have to ‘buy in’ if we want to use it. **Comment** - I agree but we need to negotiate, we have not created nor are we responsible for the circumstances that have led to this being a requirement. **A** (EB), to have just the full onsite risk assessment £350. **Comment** - I don’t think we should pay. **A** (EB) – I disagree.

Comment – they could do without charge. **A** (EB) - they get payment from schools to cover these services

Comment and Q– we have to get a risk assessment and regarding the costs, if we were comfortable that we could do it in house then we should, but if we can’t, we must employ someone to do this. I like the idea of the working group, I understand that the College has one but we as governors need to be involved in that working group. When does college close? **A** (EB) – we only have year 12 until end of June. Half term is next week and we need the risk assessment done and then we can progress with plans our plans which is for the 78 students to have 30 minutes face to face contact time.

Comment – it seems there is little benefit that couldn’t be obtained through the online platform. **A** (EB) there would be a 30 minute pastoral appointment each, something we have already done over the phone but could set up small teams to conduct these in College. We cannot do one to ones virtually due to safeguarding restriction, but maybe they could be done across 8 pastoral teams, however the young people may not open up in group of 8.

Q- If we ask someone to do the risk assessment on our behalf, wouldn’t get this done for a couple of weeks, so is opening likely to go ahead before term ends? **A** (EB) – BwD LA can come in next week but any issues will take time to work through.

The Chair asked the approval of the board to go ahead with the risk assessment while continuing to reflect on the on-going guidance as to the value of opening the College.

Comment – I see the priority is focusing on the new term and being safe and ready. I think for now we continue online and do everything you can there. This will become the new normal and it will get better as time goes on. Health and Safety concerns are constantly updated, it is quite an in depth role and responsibility, there will be a lot of this due to Covid-19, even more than normal. I think this is something that we need to come back to but for me, emphasis now should be on getting new

applicants in and the College ready for August, from everything I have learned, there would be a lot of energy for the sake of 3 weeks with very little reward.

Comment and Q– there are so many diff considerations, if we are assuming social distancing continues into September there are huge implications for timetabling, staffing, rooms, I agree that our energy needs to be spent planning and preparing for that and blending learning. The regulatory framework will take this into account and hopefully assessment will be taken into consideration. I definitely think that we need to find out about engagement, which elements of the curriculum are vulnerable; we need to plug the skills gaps as quickly as possible, for both returning learners and for induction, focusing on diagnostics. **(To SJ)** – What is the ESFA’s view? Is it reasonable to focus on new year **A (SJ – ESFA)** It is understandable, in terms of my patch, Lancashire and Liverpool, this would put you as an outlier, that doesn’t mean it is wrong, but most are opening in some capacity, others have looked at learners at risk of dropping out to bridge gap and reengage, socially distanced reengagement activities and also those who need practical assessments which may be less relevant or achievable through online learning which is usually more vocational based courses, all colleges are looking at small numbers but this is what they are considering.

A - (EB) – I have been with NW colleges, they have all fed back on their proposals and Blackpool SFC said they may not open, only seeing the vulnerable, CNMC have stated that online learning is going well and may interview at home, again with maybe only vulnerable students going in. CNMC are using teams to do interviews. Nelson and Colne have stated that they are not rushing to reopen, they again may bring in highly vulnerable learners, there’s nothing to say that we wouldn’t or couldn’t follow a similar model.

Q Vulnerable from our point of view as those who are disengaged? Are we keeping an eye on that, ensuring they stay engaged and go on to their 2nd year? Or do you mean those safeguarding vulnerable learners? What about the more hands on practical skills that students need, are we finding ways to facilitate that?

Q – how are we managing progression enrolment? **A (EB)** – we have conducted 1:1 interviews with the pastoral team, it’s not something that we can do in college as it is high risk. We are working through all year 12 students and doing interviews, discussing all subjects and agreeing subjects with them.

Q – we need to address the ‘vulnerable’ terminology. We have learners who are safer at college than at home, we need an open door policy for those, students, we have to have them in as soon as it is safe to do so, our recruitment would have been a high priority alongside results and both should be treated differently. **A (EB)** – for our vulnerable learners we have a very thorough process, through regular calls, monitored and recorded, those learners have not suggested that they want to come in, the only two very high risk are those attending the hub and receiving that additional face to face support.

The Chair asked for agreement suggesting that the consensus was to focus on opening in the new academic year. This was unanimously agreed.

MC confirmed that this was an evolving situation, with the need to continually watch and to assess, with operational decisions the responsibility of EB, who would feed into the board any information should this change.

Comment – Whilst I agree that energies and efforts need to be on reopening in September if it is safe to do so, I think it is vital that we note that we are not saying that there will be no face to face support for those who may need it before the end of term. I think that we need to agree that we will make this happen if it is possible and required by any learner.

Comment – I agree – if the opportunity arises to support them and they need it we must do this.

This was unanimously agreed, with a summary by MC that the College would arrange for a risk assessment, to ensure that should the need arise, the College could facilitate face to face support, however, unless there was a change in advice, the College would focus on opening for enrolment in August then wider reopening in September.

Item 10.1 – Resolved: The Board agreed:

- **the College should obtain the necessary risk assessment from the LA**
- **continue with online learning and prepare to open in August**
- **be ready, available and willing to open (if safe) for any learner who requests or is thought to need it**

Item 10.2 – The Reopening of the College Nurseries

TE detailed the difficulty in making the decisions in relation to the reopening of the nurseries, with parental expectations for the nurseries to open on 1st June, however, in order to ensure it was safe to do so, specific guidance, not yet available for early years, would need to be followed along with the update on the five tests which would not be available until 29th May. TE conveyed the difficulty relating to social distancing for preschool children, stating that the nurseries were not ready to open but would open if the advice is that they should to stimulate the economy and enable parents to work and to prevent parents taking their children elsewhere. TE provided the highlights from the previously distributed report asking Governors to decide if the measures were appropriate, which depending on the information due on 29th May included a 3 phase proposed reopening.

TE confirmed that the nursery closed when there were only 2 children attending and that they had someone at home who had decided to continue to send them into nursery. TE added that in reopening the nurseries, the staff would be put back onto full pay and there would be the need to ensure that this was a financially viable decision. TE drew governors attention to phase two, highlighting the need to get children ready for school, which she felt would be impacted by the extended time away from the preschool, and confirmed that the bubbles would be reviewed on 29th June along with a review of the risk assessments and health and safety requirements

TE expressed concerns relating to managing a full nursery, at capacity for staff and children, stating that phase 3 may not be implemented until September. Having reviewed the expected attendance, the decision was made not to open the Park until September, with those wanting to return earlier

offered a place at Wensley Fold, with details of projected income for Wensley Fold and SMC provided, adding that the Manager and SENCO were not furloughed.

TE worked through the proposed opening times and days with justification for the decision to open from 8-6 for four days to prevent staff from arriving at the same time and to ensure children remained with the same staff and giving the opportunity to deep clean and allow the environment to recover with an additional measure of a health questionnaire every Monday. TE confirmed that this and other measures had been based on the school guidance in the absence of EYFS information, and they were prepared to amend and update the risk assessments as necessary once the guidance became available which had been due to be released that day.

Comment – the report and risk assessment are excellent, the detail is thought out and thorough, well done to you and your team.

Q – could we reduce opening hours further? **A (TE)** – We are trying to meet as many parents' needs as possible. Most parents are those working shifts, we're trying to be flexible and asking them to be flexible whilst trying to ensure staffing is cost effective, but we must ensure that quality is not compromised. This proposal meets thresholds but we need to ensure that this works, we may need to call in staff on short notice. The ratios meet legal requirements including qualifications, utilising the modern apprentices as there is no extra cost but this will be reviewed regularly. Parents are worried about bringing their children back, so we are unsure when they will bring them back as many will try to continue to work from home, but we need to open for those who can't.

TE went on to further reiterate that they could not stop children mixing, or from putting things in their mouths, they could only minimise the risks and confirmed staff would be vigilant. An additional measure would be to ask the cook to support with the additional cleaning requirements and invited any further questions.

Comment and Q – this is really thorough and well thought through, a credit to you and your team, it demonstrates care and attention. I am just wondering where staff are carefully allocated, if someone became ill and had to quarantine, is there capacity to replace them? **A (TE)** – we are not utilising all of our capacity, we have asked who wanted to return and felt ready to come back and more were ready and wanting to come back than we needed, so we have lots of backup if someone develops symptoms. What remains unclear, is if this happens, whether we will then have to close, we will have to seek advice in this situation.

Q – Paediatric 1st aid, is highlighted in the plan, will this be an issue? **A (TE)** We need to have one on the premises but all our staff are trained, we have one member of staff whose expired whilst on long term sick, now that they are ready to come back, she will the training as soon as it is possible to.

TE highlighted other additional measures undertaken to reduce the risk of spread, including the removal of soft toys and furnishings with additional training for all staff ahead of reopening, therefore the opening would be delayed by a day but this was essential to ensure that staff were all full trained, with regular communication on progress to parents. TE confirmed that children will be encouraged to continually wash, improving the already strict hygiene practices with children aware of the special tissue bins but again reiterating that social distancing was not inappropriate or possible for the children but this would be instilled for parents and staff.

Further discussions were held about the likelihood and implications for the nursery should anyone have any symptoms, with it remaining unclear whether only the bubble or whole nursery needing to isolate until results would be available, and further clarity needed on whether if it was a child with symptoms, if they would be tested being under 5.

Q – do we need BwD LA approval to reopen? **A** (TE) – no nurseries can just open. The Early Years Development Team and Children’s Services email we had stated from 1st they will accept key worker children, from the 8th those progressing to school, they are using the same phases as us so this is reassuring, however , personally I don’t think it is safe but from a business perspective, we need to.

Comment – I mirror those saying that the report is excellent, I would just like to know if someone needs to sign this off? If we have a H&S officer, should they sign this off? Although they can’t go to the nursery due to shielding, surely it is not unrealistic to pass the report to them to ensure that you are covered, as we have a health and safety officer, we should not exclude them from this. **A** (KH) – The DfE schools guidance has been followed but as an additional safeguard we could also to send to the LA.

Comment - no internally, to our own Health and Safety Officer, I don’t disagree, the council should review it but cannot ignore our own officer in this process. **A** (KH) – there is different guidance, the park only has one room, others have multiple rooms, some private nurseries have large spaces, there may be signage needed. The health and safety requirements relating to covid-19 are very specific, an everyday officer would not know, it will need support of the LA to be sure. **A** (EB) – there is so much guidance, it needs a huge amount of different Health & Safety knowledge and risk assessments ahead of opening, I can’t understand why it is not there yet for early years, I would feel more comfortable if this was available.

Q - Would you push back as per LA guidance for schools? **A** (TE) I don’t see the difference for a week, I will be ready.

Q– are you expecting specific guidance? **A** (TE) – yes it is due out today.

(SB and SJ left)

There was a discussion relating to the ability to approve the phased opening and risk assessments with improved hygiene measures in the absence of specific EYFY guidance with TE asking if they were agreed in principal, provided there were no huge unforeseen differences in the measures for EYFS.

Comment - the proposal is logistically practical and workable, this needs superimposing with the guidance, hopefully there will be an added layer, others are carrying your concerns who are working with SEN, these are vital services, but yes I would support that this is agreed in principle.

It was agreed that the Board would approve the phased re-opening, subject to any additional guidance being adhered to and with the measures and report being approved by the Health and Safety Officer and the LA.

Item 10.2 – Resolved: The Board approved the implementation of the phased reopening of the nursery, subject to any additional guidance being adhered to and with the measures and report being approved by the Health and Safety Officer and the LA.

This concluded Part A – Staff Governor PL was thanked for her input and contributions and left the meeting.