



**ST MARY'S COLLEGE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 29th APRIL 2021 AT 8.30AM VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

Present:	Mrs S. Beecroft (voted in as 20/21 Committee Chair) Mrs E. Best (Interim Principal) Mr M. Conboy (Board Chair 20/21) (until item 20)
In attendance:	Mrs L. Farnhill (Clerk to the Board)
Staff:	Mrs K. Hollern (Business Manager) Ms P. Lightbown (Staff Governor attending in capacity of HE co-ordinator)
Apologies:	Mr M. Wright
Absent:	Mr A. Kheratkar

OPEN AND WELCOME

The Committee Chair, SB opened the meeting by expressing her gratitude to staff for their time and effort into preparing papers for the meeting, noting the exceptional quality, ensuring that governors were able to attend the meetings well prepared for the discussions

ITEM 1 - APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The clerk provided details of the apologies of MW and confirmed that there had not been any apologies received as yet for AK. The clerk asked for retrospective acceptance for AK for the previous meeting, with him having been inadvertently held up with local media coverage of the pandemic. Acceptance for the retrospective apologies was given.

Item 1 – Noted: The Committee noted and accepted the apologies detailed.

Action: The Clerk would ascertain the reason for absence of AK to be detailed at the next meeting of the Resources Committee for retrospective acceptance.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATION OF INTEREST

LF, SB, KH and EB declared their standing interests.

Item 2 – Resolved: The interests declared were noted.

ITEM 3 - APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 27th JAN 21

SB asked members to give their approval for the minutes circulated, confirming that all matters arising and actions were incorporated into the agenda or detailed in item 4. The minutes were approved unanimously without correction, with confirmation that all matters arising were addressed.

Item 3 - Approved: The Committee approved the minutes as an accurate reflection of the meeting of the Committee held on 27th January 2021.

ITEM 4 - MATTERS ARISING AND DEFERRED ITEMS

SB thanked the Clerk for the summary provided as a report under item 4. Following clarification that members did not require any further information regarding the actions undertaken, the actions were noted.

Item 4 -Noted: The Committee noted the details of the actions addressed.

ITEM 5 – HE REPORT - STUDENT APPLICATIONS 20/21 AND RETENTION

The HE Coordinator confirmed that all applications and recruitment had ceased in line with the closure implementation plan.

The retention was reviewed, with concern noted for the significant reduction in a year 1 UCLAN group, which would result in low numbers for year 2 going in the 2021/22 academic year.

The Committee were advised of the dissatisfaction of LHU students finding online delivery difficult to balance with family commitments, noting staff had been unable to assess students at risk due to the deferment of assignments.

The Committee were notified of the details of the retention strategy in place, with retention anticipated to remain strong but noting that this was subject to change once assignment results were available. It was noted that some level H students may repeat the year, which whilst having a negative impact on retention, would bring in additional income.

A member asked what the universities were doing or could do to further support students at risk. PL advised that concerns from LHU students were in relation to the need for onsite delivery which was not possible due to current government guidelines. It was noted that the universities were doing all they could and staff at SMC were offering opportunities to come in for socially distanced one to one support, but it was the opportunity for face to face lessons that students felt they needed.

The Committee were advised that SMC was working with staff at Holy Cross to try and reduce the dissatisfaction, with the Committee advised that a formal complaint had been received from the cohort of Business students, which had been addressed the previous evening with students feeling better following this.

A member asked what the options would be for students who decide to defer their studies for a year, with the Committee informed that a detailed plan had been put in place, with all scenarios

reviewed with the university staff, which included the option for LHU students to transfer to Holy Cross or Liverpool Hope if their studies were interrupted.

The Principal added that discussions with LHU and Holy Cross had gone well, with detailed action plans reviewed covering up to September 2021 with a further meeting scheduled to look at the action plan to 31st July 2022.

The Principal advised that these meetings had been minuted, offering to share those with the Committee Chair, and this was noted as an agreed action.

Item 5 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report

Action: The Interim Principal will share the minutes of the planning meetings with the Committee Chair.

ITEM 6 - TERMLY NURSERY REPORT

KH advised that TE was unavailable as she was now included in the ratio's for the nursery staffing and offered to deliver the report as written by TE.

KH highlighted the following points from the report:

- The Park Nursery had closed in December and SMC at the end of March
- The Closures had gone well with both buildings now vacant
- All redundant staff would receive final payments this month
- Performance against budget is on track
- Registration with Ofsted has been cancelled for the closed facilities, with Wensley Fold remaining open under a judgement of outstanding, unlikely to be re-inspected unless concerns are raised
- 62 children are registered at the nursery although not all full time
- There are currently 10 level 2 safeguarding cases
- Staffing and children can be in one bubble but this has been split to two to prevent a full closure in the event of any positive cases
- Since the beginning of the pandemic 2 staff and 1 child have tested positive

A member asked if the nursery had struggled with staffing, with KH advising that all staff were given notice and a number of positions were opened for staff to express an interest in. Agency staff had been used because most staff were able to immediately find alternative roles, with the exception of those that chose to retire, some of which can return in a few weeks. KH advised that a risk assessment had resulted in a member of staff needing to maintain a social distance from the children, but was still able to work in a supportive capacity

A member asked to record a note of support for the staff, expressing relief at them being able to find alternative work, noting that the staff, children and students had been a great concern to the members of the Board as the College undertook this difficult process.

Item 6 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

Staff Governor and attendee PL left after this item.

ITEM 7 - HR

Item 7.1 – Termly HR Report

EB informed the Committee that with the support of the HR assistant, she had drafted and would deliver the HR report as LC was now on maternity leave.

EB summarised the detail from the report notifying the Committee of underlying reasons for any resignations, including the headhunting of staff and staff needing to secure additional hours as their roles at SMC reduced in line with the closure implementation plan.

EB informed the Committee of careful consideration of time-tabling to ensure that classes were covered while securing savings where possible following resignations, with priority being to minimise disruption for students

EB indicated how staff had been supported to find roles that met with their career aspirations and noted how pleased the senior team were to see redundant staff able to find suitable alternatives.

EB outlined plans to cover maternity roles, detailing anticipated return dates and cover for the absences.

The Committee were advised that the COVID-19 testing supply staff costs had been covered by ESFA funding.

Sickness was noted as significantly reduced with long term absence details provided, noting the good news at the return from hospital for a member of staff following a serious road traffic accident with occupational health working with him at home from next week.

A member asked how satisfied the College was with the quality of the agency cover and how easy it had been to source. EB advised the Committee that the good relationship with one agency ensured that the quality was high and cover needs were responded to efficiently. EB notified the Committee of the stability of staffing levels, with it anticipated only one member of agency staff would be needed.

A member noted the exceptional planning and robust risk assessment had supported the low level of need for cover and agency staff, keeping supply cover costs at a minimum, **with another member** suggesting that the loyalty of staff could also be seen in the low absence and number of staff remaining committed to the College.

Item 7.1 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

Item 7.2 - Update on the Consultation Period

EB provided a headline summary of the report, **with a member noting** the positivity around communication and staff support, embedding a sense of loyalty.

Board Chair, MC advised the Committee that he had received additional detail and reviewed progress in detail, reassuring the Committee that the handling had been excellent, with a difficult process undertaken with sensitivity and care.

A member asked if the local job market would be supportive for staff finding new roles, with EB advising that it was competitive and staff with excellent CV's and a strong supportive references had failed to succeed with applications due to the level of competition for some roles.

Formal thanks was noted to the HR manager for her support and commitment in ensuring that everything was in place ahead of commencing her maternity leave, showing dedication and compassion for all staff throughout, despite only stepping away from her duties and commencing her maternity leave days ahead of giving birth.

Item 7.2 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the update.

ITEM 8 TERMLY HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT TO INCLUDE ESTATES (JAN-APRIL)

KH summarised the report highlighting the following points:

- The contract with BwD local authority Health and Safety services had been extended for another year and will include a full review of health and safety policies
- The risk assessment had been updated to reflect the updated national guidance including updated guidelines on visits and shielding
- rapid asymptomatic testing centre had tested staff ahead of the home testing kit process being implemented with twice weekly tests and reporting
- Students were tested on site twice the week of 8th March, returning to the blended model of learning the week of March 15th, receiving a 3rd onsite test before also commencing home testing
- Only 1 first aid incident had required the support of a first aider
- Lower numbers of trained staff resulted in increased frequency on the rota for those trained
- Defibrillator, although never used, has had the batteries replaced
- The fire drill will be tested in the coming weeks and marshals will receive refresher training once available
- Estates maintenance continues including legionella testing, asbestos reviews and scheduled emergency lighting tests
- Roof repairs are completed with decontamination, mould removal and redecoration to be completed ahead of reoccupation
- 5 yearly fixed wire test is scheduled to be undertaken incurring a significant cost
- The car park exit barrier has been damaged by contractors, remedial repairs are not satisfactory, with further repairs requested

A member asked how the barrier damage was caused. KH advised it had been damaged during the removal of the scaffolding, with it being reported immediately to the College with the contractor offering to undertake repairs of the damage caused.

KH concluded the report by summarising the return of the Park Nursery to the local authority, with no request for further maintenance or repairs received as yet, with money allocated in the budget to account for this, with the Wensley Fold site now being prepared for return to the local authority, with some equipment sold and the remaining disposed of.

A member asked if the College had plans to increase the number of trained first aid trained staff or if increases to the rota were sufficient. KH advised that there was sufficient cover, however, would look to train additional staff once courses were running again, which had been suspended during the

pandemic, adding that teaching staff could not be on the rota due to teaching responsibilities. **A member noted concern** that during an inspection the College would need to be able to demonstrate compliance and cover, including if there were further staff absences. KH advised that the H&S lead attended most incidents and was full time on site, however would be offering training to more staff as soon as this was available.

A member asked if areas closed by the water ingress were now in use, with KH advising that they had been out of use all year, and although were repaired and dried, needed the mould to be removed and redecoration, along with the replacement of the ceiling tiles and housing grid. KH confirmed funding was allocated with the rooms to be put back in use later in the year.

EB advised that being able to use those rooms would allow for the Finley Stokes classes to be brought back into the main building, which was in line with the closure implementation plan to bring all classes into the main building.

A member asked if the College was reliant on staff and students providing results from home tests or asking for evidence. EB advised that this was a voluntary process, without the need for evidence. EB advised that she monitored the staff returns with the Director of Students monitoring the results for students, which came into a spreadsheet via an online survey twice weekly.

A member noted that the ESFA, although not concerned, had noted students were taking the home testing kits but not uploading their results, with it indicated that the college results may be more accurate. EB advised that staff return rates were higher than the students, with it expected to be due to the NHS system occasionally not allowing for results to be input, with students less likely to persist. EB confirmed that communication with students encourages them to follow the process and provide the results to the NHS, however, due to being voluntary, they cannot insist.

In response to a question EB advised that the guidance from the DfE indicates that the College cannot ask to see results, however, they can ask a student or staff member with a positive lateral flow result to take a PCR, and the College asks for the result to conduct the appropriate track and trace procedure and associated paperwork.

Item 8 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 9 - RISK REGISTER

KH advised the Committee that the risk register was analysed in full by the Audit Committee, and presented to the Resources Committee for review and consideration on the elements relevant to the Committee's Terms of Reference. **In response to a question** KH confirmed that nothing had changed since it was last reviewed by the Full Governing Board.

A member noted that it was helpful that the areas relevant to the Committee had been extracted, asking that any changes are also highlighted for future reviews.

Item 9 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 10 – FINANCE

Item 10.1 – Management Accounts

KH summarised the details of the March Management Accounts highlighting the following:

- The deficit YTD is £497,306 against a budgeted deficit of £490,548,
- Planned redundancies cumulative total is £76,143
- The revision of the budget is required quarterly with the next revision available next month
- The teachers' pension grant was received in April but not included in the budget, is a known item and will reduce the overall deficit, with the allocation extended to 2022 with the amount not yet known for 2022
- Staff costs are less than budgeted due to lower than anticipated absences, and funding received for the COVID-19 testing
- Lower teaching costs are attributed to the amended teaching methods used during the pandemic
- Legal and consultancy costs allocated for the closure have not been fully utilised, using £25,000 less than budgeted, with the budget to be adjusted next month
- General education included a credit allocated by the transport company for staff furloughed while the college was closed
- Lower premises costs were detailed as lower water costs, less waste costs and reduced need for cleaning during the closure
- Nursery budgets were on track overall, with potential for further improvements if funds allocated to maintenance following closure are not required
- The closed nurseries would not receive any further income but would incur ongoing contractual expenditure
- HE surplus was attributed to the lower expenditure during the closure
- The £150,000 emergency funding is profiled in the cash flow.

A member commented on the hard work that had gone into maintaining the budgets with nothing evident that would cause any concern for the committee.

Item 10.2 – Capital Monitoring Report

KH confirmed that this was included in the management accounts, with no additions.

Item 10 – Noted: The Committee noted the financial updates.

ITEM 11 - EMERGENCY FUNDING UPDATE

KH informed the Committee that this new report had been included at the request of the Committee Chair to summarise the progress against the emergency funding claims.

A member noted it provided a useful summary, evidencing the reduced need relating to legal costs and COVID-19 cover. **Another member** noted it was reassuring to demonstrate the College had funds still available with claims behind the initial expected amounts.

A member asked that this is included on the agenda for the Full Governing Board, with an action noted by the Clerk to include this on the May Board agenda.

KH informed the Committee that a report would be submitted to the ESFA detailing month by month cash flow through to 2022. The Committee were informed that for the month of May, no emergency funding was necessary, with no claim being submitted, noting that the PMO remains supportive and is pleased with the progress.

KH indicated that there was a possibility that the College would not need to claim in June, with balances coming close to the £50, 000 buffer but manageable, however, indicating significant redundancy costs in July would result in a claim for July.

Item 11 – The Committee noted the details of the report.

Action – The Clerk would detail the report on the agenda of the Full Governing Board in May.

ITEM 12 - ACCOUNTS DIRECTION

KH advised the Committee that there was planning meeting scheduled with the auditors to review the changes in the Accounts Direction, with the document presented to the Committee for information.

In response to a question, KH advised that there were significant changes impacting on the amount of audit work, with the industry expressing concern over the late introduction of the requirements.

A member noted the amount of additional work that had been required the previous year due to the going concern statement and pensions. **Another member** added that with the funding profiled to closure, with no reliance on recruitment, the College was in a more fortunate position than some colleges.

The Clerk noted that this had been raised as a concern across the sector, and was receiving significant interest and input from the network of Clerks, with concern also being raised for the need for auditors to report directly to the Board, with SMC having already demonstrated this as best practice for a number of years.

Item 12 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 13 - PRINCIPAL'S EXPENSES

No expenses were presented for approval.

Item 13 – Noted:

ITEM 14 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members noted how there had been considerable pressure including requests for additional time bound information from KH, noting these were always met with professionalism and accuracy. Members expressed their gratitude and noted how pleased they were that KH was pursuing her qualifications despite the extra workload, noting that it was their request that time for these continued to be prioritised.

The meeting closed at 9.45am

Matters arising/actions

Item 1 - Apologies for Absence - Clerk to ascertain the reason for absence of AK to be detailed at the next meeting of the Resources Committee for retrospective acceptance

Item 5 – HE Update - The Interim Principal will share the minutes of the planning meetings held with LHU with the Committee Chair.

Item 11 – Emergency Funding Update - The Clerk would detail the report on the agenda of the Full Governing Board in May