



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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 27th JANUARY 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 L. Cain (HR Manager) Mrs T. Ellett (Nursery Manager) Mrs K. Hollern (Business Manager) Mrs P. Lightbown (Staff Governor attending in capacity of HE co-ordinator)
Apologies:	Mr M. Wright
Absent:	Mr A. Kheratkar

OPEN AND WELCOME

SB thanked members and attendees for their time and extended her gratitude to the staff that had supported the writing and collation of the papers, acknowledging the high quality of the reports.

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.

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

Action: The Clerks 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

SB and EB declared their standing interest.

Item 2 – Resolved: The interests declared were noted.

ITEM 3 - APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 12th NOVEMBER 2020

SB asked members to give their approval for the accuracy of 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 12th November 2020.

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 and matters arising.

ITEM 5 - STUDENT APPLICATIONS 20/21 AND RETENTION

PL clarified governors were aware of the information circulated to the Board previously regarding the withdrawal of LHU courses, with students transferred to Holy Cross, adding that recruitment for UCLAN and masters courses had progressed with 9 students recruited to year 1 of the UCLAN programme, a small cohort with concern over the engagement of 3 students.

In response to a question PL confirmed that students had settled in well with minimal issues until the Christmas break, with SMC LHU students unhappy with the change in delivery method which had been at the request of Holy Cross students. PL advised lesson delivery had changed to 2 hours per week rather than one per subject per week, with the timing of 6pm to 8pm inconvenient for parents. PL stated that there had been considerable work to support the students and mediate, advising level H having been back for a few weeks and level I now back and willing to try to engage in the new lesson times.

In response to a question, PL advised that masters students and year 2 degree level students had engaged well so far this year, including those that had disengaged towards the end of year 1. This was attributed to the work done at the end of last semester to prepare students for online learning. PL informed the Committee that there were concerns over the small year 1 cohort for UCLAN, with 3 of the 9 students failing to engage despite considerable work being undertaken to support the students to reengage.

PL added that the number of extensions and deferrals both in SMC and across the sector were unprecedented with pastoral support focusing on maintaining engagement to keep students motivated to the end of the year, anticipating a considerable amount of work needing to be undertaken in the summer.

With no further PL was thanked for her time and left after item 5.

Item 5 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 6 - TERMLY NURSERY REPORT

TE provided an overview of the content of the report:

Staffing: - TE advised staffing requirements were changing on a daily basis with staff working additional hours and not taking leave to ensure ratios were met. TE confirmed that sickness absence had been minimal and the transfer of the preschool children and staff from SMC to Wensley Fold would relieve the staffing pressure on the two full time staff currently working 8-6 daily.

CPD: - due to the pandemic and closure announcement CPD had been scaled back to essential and online training only with the exception of a 6 day SENCO refresher for the Wensley Fold SENCO.

Performance against budget: - to be covered in more detail by KH in the management accounts.

TE highlighted the drop in attendance since the closure was announced, including a number of new children not taking up their places in January with parents wanting continuous preschool provision through to starting school. TE informed the Committee that the financial impact of occupancy and staffing was reviewed weekly with KH adjusting the budget based on updated actuals.

A governor asked if staff were paid overtime for the additional hours, with TE informing the Committee that time off in lieu was offered, with some concern that if staffing remained tight, there would be considerable hours owed when contracts came to an end.

EB informed the Committee that there had been a positive response from staff and parents following the careful communication of the closure, thanking LC, KH and TE for their work in what had been a challenging time, dealt with sensitively with those involved working hard to support a resolution that would allow the preschool children to have continuous provision until 31st July 2021.

A member asked what the occupancy was expected to be at Wensley Fold (WF) in the period up to the July closure, with TE advising that the figure was currently 13. TE informed the Committee that parents of SMC children agreed to transfer to WF following assurances that their child's key worker would transfer with them and support the settling in process, although TE acknowledged that following the settling in period, staff changes could be expected.

EB invited LC to discuss the work done throughout the consultation process, with LC admitting that it had been a difficult process due to the strong bond between staff, made harder by the pandemic preventing LC from coming on site and conducting meetings in the usual approach. LC informed the Committee that one to one consultations and dismissal meetings had been held with staff and whilst sad, staff were supportive of the caring approach taken.

A member asked if there were positions and opportunities locally for the staff being displaced, with TE confirming that the good reputation of the nurseries meant that the staff were well thought of and would be welcomed by other local providers, with many already having offers of work to commence immediately after closure. LC added that others were considering different professions following the impact of the pandemic including the and treatment of early years settings throughout the last twelve months.

A member asked for clarity around the reduced number of preschool children at WF, asking if this was due to isolation, questioning the impact on the financial plan, with TE drawing attention to section 4 of the report where those isolating were listed, which included 23 children utilising their free education allowance at WF. TE advised the Committee that under current rules, the nursery continued to be funded for free education places not utilised due to families isolating, although the LA was seeking clarity from the DfE for the funding of places for children choosing to isolate.

A further question was asked about the financial impact if the funding would be withdrawn for optional isolation, with TE insisting that it would be significant, but considered unlikely due to the wider impact it would have on settings throughout the borough and nationally, noting how hard hit the sector already was, with political pressure mounting from nursery associations regarding the treatment of early years providers during the pandemic.

TE summarised the final sections of the report, inclusive of the risk register and actions for closure with a **governor commenting** on the comprehensive risk register, representing assurance for the Committee that risks were acknowledged and well managed.

Closing comments were made to thank TE for all that she had done in what had been a difficult and challenging situation, handled with professionalism and courtesy to all involved, enabling the dignified closure that the Board had intended. The Committee extending sincere gratitude to TE for all she had done throughout her extensive career at SMC and wished her every success in her future, asking that this is passed on to the staff of the nurseries too.

With no further questions or comments, TE confirmed this would be her last meeting, asking for her gratitude for 18 years of support to be passed on to the rest of the Board.

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

Action - the gratitude of TE to be passed on to the Board for supporting her through the last 18 years.

TE left the meeting after item 6.

ITEM 7 - TERMLY HR REPORT

LC summarised the termly report for the Committee, inviting questions on the content, with none received.

LC then provided a summary of the work undertaken to support the orderly closure, with the nursery process concluded, with EOI invited for the remaining roles dependant on funding and retaining the preschool places until 31st July. KH added that this was dependant on there being no detrimental impact on the financial plan. LC advised that the next phase of work had begun with the 16-18 teach out consultation underway, informing the committee of the extensive work undertaken to ensure that this was both compliant and fair, engaging unions and the support of a HR consultancy firm.

EB added that in addition to the procedural aspects, extensive soft HR initiatives were supporting the wellbeing of staff, with the unions supportive of the approach taken. EB advised that the staff meetings had been difficult to conduct virtually, which had been necessary due to the increased risks of the new strains of COVID-19, however, they had gone well with no queries or questions to the dedicated email address.

LC provided detail of the additional soft HR initiatives which included providing access to employment agencies, support with interview preparation, CV writing and exploring the option to offer counselling, which was dependant on the cost.

A member asked who Nicola Tomlinson was, with LC informing the Committee that she was an experienced HR consultant with extensive experience in the College sector. **A further** question was asked regarding support for the HR department and plans to provide cover for the College's HR department during LC's maternity leave. LC advised that with the support of the consultant and senior staff in college, she felt sufficiently supported. In outlining plans for covering her leave, LC advised that the first phase of the teach out would conclude ahead of her maternity leave and whilst on leave, KH and the SLT would provide in house support for general queries including pay and pay roll, with the consultant providing continuity of expert HR support. LC stated that she intended to undertake a KIT day per week from weeks 6 to 20, with shared parental leave commencing from week 20 enabling LC to return to work to conclude the second phase of the teach out. LC added that it was considered difficult to hand over at this stage in the process, with EB confirming that staff know and trust LC, with LC's knowledge of staff and the college curriculum key in handling the process sensitively, something that a new appointment would not be able to provide in the timeframe.

A member asked if there had been evidence of working from home fatigue or increased incidences of staff asking for mental health support, with LC confirming that she was mental health first aider, trained in spotting the signs and provided regular reminders to staff to seek support if necessary. LC stated that the only concerns had related to bereavement and not the pressures of working from home. EB added that the option of safe onsite working for staff had ensured that they maintained the ability to come to work if that suited their needs, providing the Committee with the details of safety measures in place. EB informed the committee that she continued to provide weekly briefings to staff on a Monday, with a weekly update on a Friday, to ensure that staff continued to feel connected, adding that the intention to provide counselling in relation to the closure, would also provide support for those struggling as a result of the lockdown.

A governor commented that they felt assured by the awareness of the mental health impact of the pandemic and closure, agreeing that if financially viable, the counselling would be a welcomed measure.

With no further comments or questions, LC was thanked for the detailed report and subsequent closure update.

Item 7 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 8 - HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

LC confirmed that the report had been written with the support of the site manager, acknowledging that the term covered in the report had not been standard, with considerable focus on COVID-19 requirements and ensuring the robust risk assessment was in place and followed. LC advised that as she was not able to be on site, EB and KS managed the site and students. LC provided details of the background work undertaken and processes put in place for the lateral flow testing

EB reminded the Committee of the measures in place to minimise risk to students and staff, highlighting the low rates in the college despite the local area having some of the highest infection rates nationally. EB provided details of the number of positive cases, with 16 year 12 students, 21 year 13 students and 8 staff testing positive, all considered to be from community transmission, with the risk assessment ensuring there was no internal transmission evident. EB confirmed that after the

Christmas break, staff had returned to onsite working for the inset day, with a seamless transition to full online delivery following the announcement of the new lockdown.

EB informed the Committee that the test centre had been set up under the guidance of the Local Authority, with processes in place to implement this once students return to onsite delivery.

A governor queried the date of the risk assessment, **questioning** if the college was able to demonstrate regularly reviewing it based on the date of August. EB provided reassurance that this had been updated for the new term; however, as the report had covered September through to December, the previous risk assessment covering that term had been added as an appendix to the report. EB added that the College continued to work with the local authority, who had provided an updated risk assessment template for January and they would conduct a follow up visit ahead of SMC reopening to students to provide further reassurance that all risks are minimised.

Item 8 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report and associated risk assessment.

Action: Circulate the updated CV-19 risk assessment once completed.

ITEM 9 - PROPERTY AND ESTATES

LC asked the committee to confirm that they had read the report circulated ahead of the meeting, highlighting that general maintenance and repairs had continued, with on-going issues relating to the poor state of the roof, with KH adding that an update on the repair work would be provided under item 11.2.

LC informed the Committee that cleaning had increased in line with the COVID-19 risk assessment and notified the Committee of the long term absence of two cleaners.

LC again indicated that the term had not been a normal one in terms of the limited and restricted use of the estate, both in terms of water ingress restricting the use of some areas and the pandemic limiting the general use of the college, however, added that the site team were beginning to give consideration for the future of the buildings and their most efficient use as the College moves towards closure.

With no further questions or comments, LC was thanked for her time and detailed reports.

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

ITEM 10 - RISK REGISTER (RR) AND RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT (RMR)

SB clarified that the risk register had not undergone any revisions since the Board review in December and asked if there were any points that needed to be highlighted. KH confirmed that no revisions had been made since the line by line review by the Audit committee who had presented their update to the board in December.

Item 10 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

ITEM 11 - FINANCE

11.1 - Management accounts

KH provided a detailed summary of the December management accounts, highlighting:

- a deficit of £64, 316 against a budgeted deficit of £70, 960
- £15,197 lower than anticipated staff costs, with cover provided internally and teachers delivering lessons from home when isolating reducing cover costs
- £2375 overspend on general education costs, with higher than budgeted IT costs, considered essential to support remote lesson delivery
- Lower than budgeted teaching costs attributed to remote lesson delivery
- Lower financial costs of £4332 with legal and consultancy costs less than anticipated
- Higher than budgeted post and telephone costs as a result of remote working and the implementation of the closure communication plan
- The cumulative costs of redundancies were £50,910
- Higher than budgeted gas usage is to be reviewed
- Budgets to be revised quarterly

KH advised the Committee that the gas usage was under review, acknowledging that in the Autumn term, the need to open windows for ventilation meant that heating use was high, however, usage and costs were still in excess of what would be expected. KH has requested a report from the estates manager on the heating times throughout the site with a follow up action to review the contract with the supplier.

KH summarised the financial position of the nurseries, providing detail from the management accounts of the monthly position and expected final positions of each nursery at closure. KH reminded the Committee that December was not a typical month, with only three chargeable weeks. KH summarised the intention to maintain preschool provision at Wensley Fold for children due to start school in 2021, advising that this was dependent on there being no further loss of income and could be impacted by external factors, including decisions to continue providing funding for isolating children.

Governors commented on the reassuring detail and knowledge provided by KH.

Item 11.1 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the monthly management accounts.

ITEM 11.2 - CIF BID UPDATE

KH advised the committee that the first tranche of money was received in January, with the asbestos survey completed and the site to be set up in the following week for work to begin.

KH informed the Committee that the insurers had requested additional information and reassurances relating to hot works, which had been provided by the contractors and would be sent to Zurich today.

EB added that recent bad weather had caused further deterioration, expressing relief that the students had not been in due to the health and safety risks. EB advised that assurances had been provided by contractors in relation to carrying out work while the site is in use, however, it was considered beneficial that the works were commencing while students were not on site. KH provided details of areas to be cordoned off and how this would be communicated to staff and students.

Item 11.2 - Noted: The Committee noted the verbal update regarding the CIF bid funding and work.

ITEM 11.3 - IFMC

KH advised the Committee that the information from the management accounts and the previously approved budget would be reconciled into the IFMC, which dependant on workload, would be completed ahead of the Board meeting on 28th January. KH asked for the support of MC and SB in taking chairs action to review and support the submission of the IFMC if the document was not completed in time for Board approval. This was given. KH highlighted the issues and problems with the document, requiring several workarounds which had been provided by the PMO.

KH confirmed that the submission deadline was Friday 29th January and although the PMO had said that it would be beneficial to have Board approval, it was not a statutory requirement as it was last February and would be again in July.

KH agreed to keep MC and SB updated on progress towards completion of the IFMC.

Item 11.3 - The Committee noted the verbal update of progress against the completion of the IFMC.

ITEM 12 - PRINCIPALS EXPENSES

KH confirmed that the principal had not made any expense claims in the reporting period.

Item 12 - The Committee noted the verbal update.

ITEM 13 - ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No items were raised under any other business.

Thank you and well done.

Matters arising/actions

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 - **retrospective acceptance in April**

HE - 3 year 1 students were disengaged - **update on their reengagement to be provided in April**

Nurseries - the gratitude of TE to be passed on to the Board for supporting her through the last 18 years.

HR - Was the counselling being explored put in place or too costly - **update to be provided in April**

H&S - new CV19 RA to be circulated when approved by the LA - **Action ahead of the April meeting**

Management accounts/estates - Review of the site heating timings and the deal given by the provider to ensure best value plan. Review of the telephone package to see if there is a more suitable plan available - **provide an update to the committee in April**

IFMC - confirmation that it was reviewed by MC and/or SB and submitted within the deadline - **update to the committee when available**