



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

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY 2ND JULY 2020 AT 8.30AM VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE**

Present: Mrs S. Beecroft (19/20 Committee Chair)
Mrs E. Best (Interim Principal)
Mr M. Conboy (Board Chair 19/20)
Mr A. Kheratkar
Mr M. Wright

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)
Ms P. Lightbown (Staff Governor)

Apologies: None

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies to note

Item 1 – Resolved:

ITEM 2 – DECLARATION OF INTEREST

SB declared an interest based on her role at Liverpool Hope University

Item 2 – Resolved: The interests declared were noted.

ITEM 3 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30TH JANUARY 2020

SB confirmed that members had read the minutes circulated. The minutes were confirmed to be an accurate reflection of the meeting held on 30th January and were approved.

Item 3 – Approved: The minutes of the meeting of the Resources Committee held on 30th January were approved as a true record to be signed at the next face to face meeting.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 30TH JANUARY 2020

The Clerk advised that due to the pandemic and following government guidance for governors and governor meetings to focus on essential business only, staff had not been asked to prepare responses to the matters arising, focusing only on priority areas of current relevance. Chair SB, added that the cancellation of the April meeting due to the pandemic meant many of the matters arising were no longer relevant due to the time that had since passed. The clerk confirmed that relevant matters arising would be carried forward to the next meeting, with SB asking if staff wanted to raise anything under matters arising, with nothing raised, the item was deferred.

Item 4 – Deferred: Matters arising were deferred

ITEM 5 - NURSERY UPDATE

TE was thanked for the report and asked to focus on any key points.

TE advised that all 3 nurseries had now been inspected by Ofsted, with The Park and SMC rated as good and Wensley Fold as outstanding. TE felt the rating of 'good' for the Park nursery was a true reflection of the performance on the day, and as previously discussed, there was feeling that SMC was unfair however the appeal had failed. An **action** was noted for TE to distribute the Ofsted report to the Committee.

Numbers: TE confirmed that only some children had returned since the reopening of the nursery, with some having been taken off role at the parents request and others having their places held until September.

Staffing: TE advised that staffing requirements were being closely managed for maximum efficiency utilising part time furlough, bringing back more staff as the numbers in nursery increased. TE advised that staff sickness was due to be reported in this meeting with LC agreeing to cover the details within item 7, the HR report. A CPD summary was provided, with TE confirming that training was currently focused on COVID-19 requirements.

Quality of education: TE confirmed that all students were on one site, with a review of the safeguarding policies and procedures, including updating the appointed DSL's to ensure qualified staff were always on site.

Concerns: TE advised that occupancy levels remained concerning, with the effects lessened by the ability to utilise the furlough scheme. TE advised that since reopening, although numbers were lower than anticipated, they were increasing as parents gain confidence, supported by the risk assessment and a video for parents to share with children to ease any anxieties about returning to nursery. TE informed the Committee of the intention to end the summer term early for WF as there were only 4 attending for summer term, offering places for remaining students at SMC.

Risk Assessment (RA): TE confirmed the RA had been shared with staff and parents, with children guided through the requirements, with some issues with some parents which had been tackled directly by staff.

TE advised that the bubbles based on earlier guidance were limited to 8 children, asking the Committee for support in moving to the latest guidance, allowing up to 16 children per bubble giving more leniency to offer more places and making the offering more financially viable. **A member commented** that they would be in support of increasing the bubbles as this was in line with

government guidelines, with EB commenting that the LA health and safety team had been on site and reviewed the safety measures and were also supportive of the increase.

Staffing proposals: TE provided an overview of the information within the report, highlighting the need to reduce staff with 6 redundancies to be undertaken with the support of KH and LC. **A governor asked** if this would be necessary if occupancy was increasing, suggesting that redundancies insinuated occupancy would not return to pre-covid levels, **asking** if it would then be possible to bring the staff back if needed. TE confirmed that apprentices were being used to support full time qualified staff and the redundancies were for staff that would not be those the nurseries would actively look to re-recruit should additional staff be needed. **Another member asked** if the redundancy costs would impact the budget, with TE advising that they were expected to be minimal due to low hours and minimum wage, with LC interjecting that due process would be followed to ensure the process was fair and not selecting those with the lowest redundancy costs.

TE advised the Committee that the staffing plan within the report outlined requirements to the 13h July, to then be reviewed weekly. TE stated that providing a forecast for September was too difficult with occupancy remaining uncertain, having been flexible with parents whilst furlough funding was in place, having not requested fees for absent children. TE confirmed that there would now be a cut off with a text sent asking for all fees to be paid to prevent the place being lost for September, whilst continuing to recruit for remaining places, with two new full time places being offered in the previous week.

Risk Register: TE highlighted occupancy as the biggest risk, which had been an issue for the previous few years, compounded by COVID-19. TE advised that studies had indicated that one third of nurseries would not reopen, which was the picture nationally, although she had not had any information on anticipated local closures. TE added that the risk of Ofsted had been removed with all three inspections having been undertaken, with an expectation that once routine inspections resumes, there will be a backlog, prioritising the most at risk nurseries, with preparations on-going.

A member commented that they were surprised there was nothing specific about lockdown within the risk register, stating there was a need to include the financial impact.

A member asked about incorporating local lockdown and infections outbreaks at the nursery into the risk register with TE advising that the process is detailed in the CV-19 risk assessment, providing a summary of the process, which includes the availability of PPE, the isolation of the child, contacting the parent with an expectation that the child is collected within half an hour and a test booked immediately. **The governor clarified** that they were not questioning the process, but the reputational risk associated with a local infection within the nursery, suggesting that it needed to be included in the risk register with mitigating actions. EB responded to advise that there was a separate COVID-19 risk register designed with TE and the BwD health and safety lead, signed off by EB and MC. TE agreed to taken an **action** to add this into the risk register, with **a member commenting** that they felt this was the biggest risk facing the business, agreeing that it should be included, with TE confirming that the COVID-19 RA would be circulated after the meeting for members to review. **A member commented** that local infection rates were rising, with the potential for a local lockdown if rates do not improve within two weeks which would have significant impact on the nurseries.

TE was thanked for the update and the clear, concise report.

Item 5 – Noted: The details of the report were noted with the following actions:

- WF Ofsted report to be circulated

- Nursery Covid-19 risk register to be circulated with risks added into the general nursery risk register

TE left after this item.

ITEM 6 – TERMLY HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

PL provided a summary of the circulated report, advising the Committee that work on recruitment and maintaining interest of previous applicants had been continual. PL stated that despite increased interest, applications were lower than at the same point in the in the previous year. PL expressed concern over summer recruitment, with recruitment anticipated to improve if rates of coronavirus reduce, however accepted that if infection rates were maintained or increased it would be unlikely that recruitment would increase in line with previously set targets. **SB commented** that recruitment was up at LHU and nationally, questioning the impact on recruitment at SMC. PL suggested that the decline could be due to the demographic within HE at a college, with adults nervous about sharing facilities with young people, with the perception that teenagers are less cautious creating a greater risk to the mature learners that traditionally enrol at SMC. PL added that the inability to clarify the delivery method of the offer at SMC was also having an impact, with older students nervous about undertaking a degree online, particularly if they have been out of learning for a long time and with limited IT skills which traditionally SMC would be supportive of.

PL outlined details of a 4 week summer taster programme to reengage applicants as well as creating new interest with recent events involving meeting university academics having been successful, adding that LHU had been working closely with SMC, involving SMC in their virtual open days. PL concluded that interest had been higher than in previous years, but this was not converting to confirmed applications, suggesting uncertainty around the campus and delivery methods were the cause.

EB added that meetings had been held with PL, LC and KH to consider the safest HE delivery models, with consideration for working in bubbles, housing HE in a different building, with staggered start and finish times to 16-19 provision, enabling a safe face to face induction. EB indicated that the model resulted in their being no cross contamination with FE students, and now the model was agreed, there was the opportunity to market and celebrate the safe process, to reengage the students and convert interest into applications. PL confirmed that this had been done for UCLAN, with SMC having ownership for course delivery, however, they had been asked not to market the delivery for LHU courses until they received the paper from Penny (Haughn – LHU Student Director), with SB **taking an action** to chase this.

PL advised the Committee that in collaboration with Holy Cross, they had agreed to offer face to face opportunities to study even if this was not the method offered by LHU, with plans to provide facilities and support to conduct the online learning, however, this could not be communicated until the paper from the university is received. PL advised that at a recent meeting with LHU, feedback was provided regarding students expectation to be taught, even if delivery was online, there was an insistence that there would be lessons delivery and not just a VLE, with the feedback being taken away about the need to offer more support to students. PL advised that for UCLAN students, successful online lessons had been delivered since the closure in March, however, noted that students would still need supporting and inducting to this delivery method. EB added that IT facilities and space within college would be allocated, recognising the need for some students to have a space away from home to complete their studies.

PL was thanked for her paper and with no further questions or comments, PL left the meeting after this item.

Item 6 – Noted: - The Committee noted the details of the report with the following action noted:

- SB to chase PH at LHU for the paper on course delivery

ITEM 7 – TERMLY HR UPDATE

LC confirmed that all members had received and read the paper, outlining the content, covering resignations including reasons and summarising the new appointments, informing the Committee that the process used for recruitment since lockdown had been online.

LC informed the Committee that all contracts offered were now temporary, advising that the new safeguarding officer post had been omitted from the report but had been appointed and already seen to be having a positive impact on students. **A member indicated** that they were pleased to see the safeguarding team had been strengthened, having recognised how much pressure the DSL and the safeguarding team had been under.

LC confirmed that there were no long term absences, with all staff working from home since 23rd March, therefore there had not been any staff absences recorded although some staff had been shielding. LC advised that a member of the cleaning team was off with a wrist injury that may not return, having commenced proceedings with them.

LC indicated that the College had recognised the impact of the pandemic on mental health, with a drive on staff wellbeing and supporting mental health, with LC having undergone training as an adult mental health first aider, sharing and receiving updates with other colleagues across the industry, which included the impact of working from home. LC stated that a wellbeing support booklet was sent to all staff with personalised emails to those struggling; with it considered that the College had done well in supporting staff throughout the college closure.

EB extended her gratitude to LC for a successful recruitment strategy, indicating positivity around the appointments and the process used for online recruitment with significant cost savings as a result of the structure, utilising NQT's that had fresh ideas and enthusiasm. EB advised that teaching observations had been online and the new staff had been invited to attend the online inset and introduced to Heads of Faculty.

A member commented that not all staff that had left or had been replaced were detailed on the report, **asking** what the overall position is against this time in the previous year. LC advised that there had been agency staff used where staff had left last year or mid-year; therefore not all appointments were to replace staff that had just left. LC indicated that the science department had needed considerable additional recruitment to refresh the faculty and this had necessitated well timed recruitment. **The member asked if** staff pay had impacted on the resignations or recruitment, with LC advising that the positive Ofsted inspection had helped with recruitment, having not seen any indication that pay had influenced resignations or recruitment, with considerable interest in a number of the posts.

A member asked about the use of furlough, asking how many staff had been placed on furlough and when the college planned to bring these staff back in. LC advised that there were strict terms and conditions linked to the scheme, which had only been utilised for nursery and leisure centre staff. LC confirmed that most staff had worked from home, with KH adding that if funding was not affected, the college could not claim, which also included free place nursery staff. LC confirmed that when the

scheme was first introduced, there had been difficulty in clarifying its use, noting that the solicitors had not heard of it previously, confirming that upon review, it is considered to have been used correctly at SMC. With no further questions or comments, LC was thanked for her report and the support given to staff.

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

ITEM 8 – TERMLY FE REPORT

EB advised the committee that considerable work had been undertaken to ensure strong results and successful recruitment, highlighting the lower rate of applications compared to the same point in the previous year by 49. EB highlighted a 33% reduction in applications from catholic partner schools, however, indicated that there was some positivity in the data, with an increase in non-partner school applications which historic trends demonstrated had higher conversions rates. EB outlined the expected enrolment based on applications and anticipated conversion rates, reflecting a shortfall of 20, however, highlighted the summer application increase of 15% the previous year, which if repeated would result in meeting the recruitment target.

EB highlighted the presence of SMC across the local area, with EB participating in the SIG groups and EP accessing the transition events to support enrolment. EB outlined the marketing campaigns updated during lockdown, focusing on locality, size and safety, embedding the caring safe environment into the strategies. EB updated the committee on the success of the 'out of the blocks campaign' shared previously, with over 1000 visits to the website, and a virtual open day with 300 students accessing the event, supported by the 'secure your place' campaign, contacting all applicants to assure them that their offer of a place remains secure.

EB informed the Committee that enrolment would be completed online, using an in house system, designed by EP, saving around £12,000. EB offered an overview of the format, with staff working in pods, utilising mobile phones and Microsoft Teams to ensure conversations would be held with every applicant. EB advised the Committee that due to a variety of results distribution methods used by schools, with some being posted, SMC would be extending enrolment to ensure availability across the results period, supported by schools who had made IT facilities available for students to access online enrolment services.

A member commented on how they had been initially disappointed at the data, however, agreed that upon closer analysis, there was positivity around the anticipated conversion rates with higher non-partner applications which were more likely to attend, thanking EB for what had evidently been a considerable amount of work. **Further comments** were made in support of the enrolment system, **with members expressing** relief that the SPA process did not appear to have impacted on recruitment, with EB confirming that this had not been mentioned by any schools or applicants.

A member asked about the impact of the Trustees withdrawal and the removal of the catholic status of the college, which had been announced after recruitment had begun, with EB considering this had also had no impact. EB confirmed that the historic trend over last 7 years with a decline in catholic applications had been maintained. **A member commented** that an article about the removal of the catholic status had reappeared 6 weeks ago with no interest, with EB indicating that the coronavirus pandemic had overshadowed the local issues. **A member commented** that school communications were limited to necessary information, therefore this could have served to minimise the awareness of SMC's challenges.

EB indicated that the concerns regarding the pandemic that had dominated schools and colleges had minimised bad publicity and was considered to have the potential to improve recruitment and had been a focus of the stay local campaign, with learners nervous of public transport and larger busier colleges, preferring to stay local and attend a less densely populated college and this had been used in the marketing materials. **A governor urged** the college to be cautious of the delivery of the message, with the potential to put off learners from outside the locality travelling in to the college.

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

ITEM 9 – HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

KH advised that this was the annual report for 2019-2020 running up to June 2020, reminding the committee that the college and nurseries had followed government advice and closed in March 2020, with a subsequent reopening of the nursery, with the risk assessment to be sent to the Committee by TE as detailed earlier.

KH described the difficulties covering the increasing demand of the role with the skeleton staffing structure; with limited time allocated to the health and safety officer who was shielding, therefore the decision was taken to subscribe to the BwD health and wellbeing service to ensure that the College remained compliant with the evolving guidance.

KH summarised the content of the report highlighting the following:

- The need for additional first aid trained staff to reduce the frequency staff appear on the rota and to ensure sufficient cover in the event of staff isolation, with this being addressed early in the next term.
- Issues around increased use of e-cigarettes in college, which had been addressed and supported by the student disciplinary process.
- Priorities around training including the need to increase the number of fire marshals in the coming year, with the cancellation of earlier training due to the pandemic considered beneficial as it would now enable the newly appointed staff to access the training which would be particularly beneficial in the science department, where there were increased risks.
- Risks associated with the water ingress due to the damaged roof, advising that the CIF bid had been unsuccessful, with further attempts to be made to secure funding through a capital repairs grant application. KH assured the Committee that staff would continue to monitor and risk assess the areas.
- Internal audit recommendations from the limited assurance report had been addressed, with the urgent recommendations rectified immediately, following agreed timescales for the implementation of all others, with some delayed due to COVID-19.

KH concluded by advising the Committee that the BwD health and wellbeing service would undertake an annual audit as well as supporting the college with a full review of their health and safety policy.

A member commented on the quality of the report, finding it useful with an easy to follow layout. With no further questions or comments KH was thanked for the report.

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

Member AK left after item 9.

ITEM 10 - SEPTEMBER 2020 DRAFT COVID -19 RISK ASSESSMENT

EB advised the Committee that the COVID 19 risk assessment had been written with the support of the BwD wellbeing service, with college oversight managed by EB and LC. **A member asked** if this had been reviewed by the Audit Committee, with EB advising it had not as it had not been finalised at the time of the Audit meeting, and was still in draft format. **A member commented on** how comprehensive it was, **asking** if this format would be shared with staff. EB confirmed that the full document would be shared to ensure that detail was not lost, with staff being asked to confirm that it had been read and understood ahead of returning to onsite working. EB indicated that the document remained in draft format and would be presented to the Board then signed off by the Chair ahead of full implementation.

Item 10 – Noted: The Committee noted the detail of the report.

ITEM 11 – RISK REGISTER AND RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

KH advised the committee that the risk register had been analysed on a line by line basis by the Audit Committee, with a full verbal presentation of the risk management report, which would be documented into a written report for the full meeting of the Board of Governors. **A member commented that** the register was comprehensive, **asking** if this was a live document, with KH confirming that it was updated at each meeting of the executive committee.

Item 11 – Noted: The Committee noted the details of the risk register.

ITEM 12 – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

With the committee confirming that the management accounts had been read, **a member asked** if KH had any concerns relating to the budget, with KH advising that the college remained on track to deliver the updated budget.

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

ITEM 13 – BUDGET UPDATE

A member commented on the considerable increase in the size of the deficit, which KH confirmed had been reviewed on a line by line basis by Committee Chair, SB.

SB commented on the accuracy and considered approach taken by KH, indicating that whilst it was overly prudent, this was considered sensible due to the College's position. KH confirmed that cash flow issues result in the College becoming insolvent on the basis of this budget, with SB adding that the concern in recommending the budget was not in relation to the accuracy of the numbers, but the position it places the college in, without confirmation or assurances of what support will be available, making it difficult to recommend the budget to the Board for approval.

Board Chair, MC responded by advising of significant work undertaken by KH, EB and LC, to assess where costs will occur, indicating that there continued to be areas of uncertainty, with possibilities

for some costs to be reduced or avoided, for example, with staff cover less likely if the risk assessments are followed and infection is avoided. MC agreed that there would be a shortfall, but the timing and amounts were still unclear, preferring a prudent estimate than an overoptimistic one, with a meeting the previous day resulting in possible savings in the region of £150,000.

MC advised that whilst this would not avoid the insolvent position, the College had been open and honest with the ESFA, breaking down the costs associated with COVID-19. This had resulted in the SPA process being accelerated; expecting a conclusion by the end of July, which would support the funding decision necessary by the ESFA in September and dictate the subsequent timetable of the merger.

MC added that the request for additional support had been made and was received positively by the ESFA, agreeing with SB, that the budget was comprehensive well thought out. MC reminded the Committee that the issue of the lease, which had been due to coincide with the structural solution would now fall due in the next academic year. MC advised the Committee that the new lease incorporated clauses to protect the College; however, it would need to be signed and entered into before funding is agreed. MC advised that the new lease would be written on a tenure repair basis, therefore the College would not be liable to repair any existing faults, but there would be an expectation that the existing condition would be maintained.

EB confirmed that she had been working closely with the FEC team, regularly updating them on the position of the College which had resulted in MS contacting EB after consulting with FEC, to confirm that the SPA process could be resumed, with a time line that would deliver a final decision ahead of the start of term.

Committee Chair, SB raised concerns over the committee recommending the budget, that would see the college become insolvent, causing the college to close, **asking** how this could be documented. SB reiterated how well thought out the budget was, commending it as an accurate reflection, but **asking** if the SPA offered protection, or if the college, and its governors, remained at risk. MC reassured SB that this had been discussed with deputy FEC, MS, who, on behalf of the FEC, had offered the view that the Board had done everything that they could by engaging with the SPA process. MC confirmed that the opinion of the FEC was that the Board had continued to work tirelessly towards a finding a long term solution, having done everything that could be reasonably expected of them. MC highlighted that the funding need had been recognised and communicated in a timely way, with an application to the ESFA made, insisting that governors could not be criticised for their actions in relation to the current financial position. MC concluded that the budget could be recommended for approval, as factual and supportive of the solution, as without the budget, they could not proceed with the SPA that would prevent closure. EB added that the meeting with the ESFA had clearly demonstrated that most of the additional costs have been as a result of the pandemic and were unavoidable, having been closely monitored, with updates by KH carried out on a daily basis.

A governor indicated that changes would be continual given the fluid situation, and asked if revised versions would be sent. KH advised that the updates would be included in a revised version to be made available to all Board members ahead of the Board meeting.

SB asked for the resolution in the minutes to reflect recognition of the concerns over recommending the budget due to the cash position, with acknowledgement for the accuracy and insight provided by KH which could not be criticised.

Item 13 - Approved: The Committee recommended the Budget for approval on the basis of accuracy and in order to support the SPA, however, noted concerns at placing the college into an insolvent position if the ESFA did not provide additional funding support.

ITEM 14 – TRAVEL AND SUSTENANCE RATES

The committee recommended that the rates remained unchanged for the 1920/21 academic year.

Item 14 – Approved: The committee approved the existing rates for the 2020/21 academic year.

ITEM 15 - ANNUAL REPORT ON INVEST AND BORROWING

The committee acknowledged the detail provided by KH in the annual report on invest and borrowing.

Item 15 - Noted: The Committee noted the details of the report.

Item 16 – TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Clerk advised that in line with government recommendations to only address urgent items and due to the imminent constitutional changes, the review of the terms of reference should be deferred. The committee approved the deferral.

Item 16 - Deferred: The terms of reference for the Committee would be deferred until the Instruments and Articles of Governance are approved and the constitution updated.

ITEM 17 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

With no items raised under any other business, members and attendees were thanked for their time and the meeting closed at 10.15, with a reminder for those involved in the stocktake to take note of the date of 13th July.