

The Viridis Schools Federation of Orchard, Southwold and Hoxton Garden Schools

**Resources Governing Body Sub-committee
Virtual Meeting via Zoom**

On Thursday 23rd May at 4.30pm

Committee Attendees

James Gowland (JG)
Sara Walsingham (SW)
Alberta Senyah (AS)
Giuseppa Colella-Mare (GCM)
Rachel Davie (RD)
Hannah Lownsborough (HL)
Victoria Crawford (VC)
Clerk: Sandra Rodrigues

1. Welcome

a) Apologies/Consent for Absence

No apologies – all present

b) Acknowledgment and agreement that the meeting will proceed virtually.

All agreed virtually

2. Governing Body Organisation

a. Membership

Agreed

b. Acknowledgement of TOR

No changes have been made or noted.

c. Declarations of interest in items on the agenda & Register of pecuniary interests for 2023/24

No new interests. No changes have been made or noted.

d. Code of Conduct

No changes have been made or noted.

e. Governing Body Annual Calendar 2023-2024

Noted next Full Governing Body meeting 06/07/2024 and change of date for the Southwold Sub Committee meeting to 20/07/24 – **All agreed**

3. Agreements of the minutes from the last meeting

All governors agreed minutes.

4. Budget Monitoring

a) The Viridis Schools Year End 2023-2024

The Year End has carried a surplus of £243,608. This is on point as per FBL discussion in the February meeting. A key point of information:

There has been an overspend in some areas. £600K was received more than predicted, but £593K was spent more than was budgeted. Costings have impacted a decreased carry forward for this financial year in comparison the last few years.

Question: what was the carry forward amounts over the last three years?

Answer: 3 years ago: £1.5m, £1.2m and £903,620. Now down to £243,608. There is historic data of 10 years and more available.

Questions: It is very tight and not a large surplus, what is the sustainability of this in the long term?

Answer: Spending has to be revised, there are a number of areas under review, including staffing models. Only one Reception class to be opened at HG in September and only two at Orchard due to falling rolls and temporary caps being put in place. This will mean staff remodelling to accommodate lower numbers.

Question: Is the Federation in line to receive any new children due to other school closures?

Answer: This is not yet known and would depend on where the closing schools were. EHT is on the Hackney advisory board regarding falling roll numbers in schools. The housing situation is a concern for sustainable family living.

Key priority over the next 24 months is looking at Federation structures to ensure sustainable spending in line with received budgets.

FBL clarified that delegated budgets are allocated to schools based on the previous year's October census; therefore, this financial year budget was based on October 2023 census.

EHT is undertaking financial auditing for other schools as part of outreach work. This is proving to be a useful mechanism to evaluate how things are different in other school settings.

ACTION: The end of year budget and the new year budget will need to be presented to the FGB and needs to be signed off by the Chair and Vice Chair of the governing body and then sent to Hackney.

b) The Viridis Schools New Year Budget 2024 – 2025 (including forward projection)

This year's budget is similar to last year's budget with only approximately £20/30K more. In the October 2023 census, there were 1228 children across the three schools. Total budget for 2024/25 is £11.4 million, this includes the Mayor's free school meal funding, recovery premium, bank interest plus any other generated school income.

FBL clarified, from the previous meeting, an observation that was made around 'income and expenditure for the catering service were not the same – the catering costs should be covered by funding. There are three streams of funding towards school meals: the Mayor's funding for KS2, Universal Free school meals for KS1 and an allocated amount given to the schools through the delegated budget for children that are in receipt of Free Schools Meals through means tested. This completely covers the catering expenses.

FBL noted that (E08) indirect expenses covers staff welfare, DBS checks and advertising. Clarified that from (E01) teaching staff to (E18) other occupational costs represents a good number of statutory and fixed expenses, this is a chunk of the budget that needs to be paid and not much room for savings or manoeuvre.

(E26/E27) teaching and support supply staff expenditure will need to be monitored closely.

Therefore the predicted £11.4m funds and the £11.5m predicted expenditure, there is an in year deficit of £100,910; by adding the carry forward from last year £243,609 there is a total of £143k to carry forward this year; a positive figure but extremely challenging. Reiterating the need to be diligent with expenditure across the year.

Question: Will the predicted amount of pupil premium budgeted change during the year?

Answer: This should not happen, as this is based on the number of children on roll at the time of the October census.

Question: What are the key things the school will do different this year to keep in line with expenditure?

Answer: Last year the school had a similar income and slight increase of expenditure, the carry forward was mostly spent on agency staffing costs. This is because the needs of the children are higher and staff are sourced through agencies, as the calibre of TAs coming through recruitment process has not met the recruitment standard historically.

Question: What will this look like for the children if less agency staff are used?

Answer: The challenge is that there is above average number of children with SEND needs but funding does not match need. There are no resources/provisions for specialist schools, putting more pressure on mainstream schools.

Context: Nationally 4.3 pupils in England with an EHCP and 13% have SEND needs, the Federation has just over 20% with SEN needs and 5% with EHCP.

New model means no more allocations to children directly. A set number of adults have been allocated to each school site with a calculation model to reaching the total number of additional staff. Historically teachers have had a protected model where TA's have supported them in class. This will not be possible going forward. To compare: Another federation in Hackney has removed teaching assistant roles and assigns additional staff only to high need pupils. As a federation, we want to continue to support teacher wellbeing through the core offer of additional adult support but this does need realigning to ensure proportionate spend to available funds.

Question: How much understanding do staff have of these arising challenges from external pressures and how is it affecting morale? What is the impact of this on teachers?

Answer: Timely messaging and presenting the context in the right way is essential and this is undertaken through careful leadership decision making. Staff are aware of additional pressures.

Question: Does the Federation model help support the risk across all three schools?

Answer: Yes, a three school budget offers opportunities for sharing of resourcing.

Question: How detailed is the Federation's scenario pupil planning? Is it based on pupil roll numbers?

Answer: Modelling and projection takes place annually as part of budget planning.

Question: Are there any other avenues being looked at to generate income?

Answer: Exploring how the space at Orchard could be used going forward to generate income if the school continues to decline in roll.

Governors Agreed budget

c) Risks & planning (inc. carry forward)

Summary of key risks:

- Pre-determined allocations on maintenance building works have been set in order to not go over budget.
- Selective choices of what building works to carry out.
- Staffing planning that meets essential need.

5. Consideration of procurement

a) CCTV

FBL presented document of three quotes for new CCTV system. Quotes were sourced and received 12 months ago, FBL requested an update of these and presented the newest estimates, FBL suggests DELTA Security to install new CCTV at all three schools. All companies are valid and known to the Federation historically, the choice is based solely on costs, the Delta quote is more manageable and the service is comparable. Governors accepted, FBL to instruct installation during the summer.

There have been three break-ins over time across Hoxton Garden and Orchard, the latest being last summer, the current system does not have the updated technology to produce effective data quickly.

All agreed on GCM's recommendation.

Question: Can anything be done to prevent the break-ins in the first place.

Answer: The issue is the school holidays that put the schools' in a more vulnerable position.

6. Health and Safety

a) Subject Access Request Log

In relation to GDPR this is to inform Governors and make them aware that it is a GDPR requirement to log all SARs requests. The school works closely with an external advice company on the process necessary when SARS are received. This is a tracking document. SARS have become easier overtime to manage as experience has made the process tighter.

Question: Can you refuse a SAR or can be it be refused if it is vexatious?

Answer: A SAR cannot be refused nor can it have a blanket exemption but it can be restricted and must be on a case-by-case basis. For example: if it is deemed harmful to the child under child protection cases or there are safeguarding issues.

Question: Do you get requests from parents who are separated?

Answer: Clear information and clarifying what the request is mitigates the length of the information requested.

7. Premises

a) Premises Works Expenditure 2023-2024

Document presented to Governors listing all jobs that have been carried out across the three schools. Noted that Statutory Testing are legally required tests and may require remedial works following the testing.

The total monies spent across all three schools was £232K. This is a typical spend.

b) Hoxton Garden House Consideration

One of the challenges faced has been the length of time and delays occurred. Hackney has not been forth coming and difficult at key times. The budget cannot withstand this project and it will be withdrawn.

Document 7b. 'Low Risk Business Case Report - Hoxton Gardens Primary School - Caretakers House Refurbishment' shown to Governors gives them an insight of what has been done up to date at a cost of £15k.

Question: Is the building watertight but not useable?

Answer: Works need to be carried out in order to make it useable but not major refurbishment works for its original intended purpose to be used as a 'community hub space'.

Question: Council Rates are high and are still being paid?

Answer: Yes at £5,010 a year because it is empty. SW's caretaker house rates are only £1,005 a month as it is being used.

Question: Is there any scope for getting a campaign going to raise funding do the works on the school?

Answer: Potentially, for now this will need to take a step back although conscious that the school is losing money on a monthly basis. Need to think about how the school can mitigate this loss.

Question: Could there be other funding to dip into?

Question/Suggestion: Governor happy to look at fund raising possibilities and have that conversation.

c) Façade Updates

ORC: work is continuing on an isolated part of the roof and partly delayed due to the wet weather. Key problem is historical significant poor workmanship. A green roof covering has been replaced by Hackney and repairs to a steel beam have been carried out.

SW: work is in progress and keeping to timelines. Outcome of the window survey: internal window assessment is not good enough 30/60 windows may need to be replaced. Hackney will pay for the replacements. The work is due to be carried out during holiday times with an estimated finish by December but more likely March 2025.

8. Policies

a) Emergency Planning

This is an internal document. It has been shared with the resources committee, which outlines all definitions and processes that would be followed in a critical situation. No change to document other than key names. To be agreed by Governors. - **All agreed.**

9. Any Other Business

None

10. Glossary of Common Terms

None

Meeting ended at 18.02pm