

Minutes of a (virtual) meeting of the Governing Body of Blatchington Mill School held on 9 July 2020 at 17.00 hours

Those Present (via Google Meet videolink) : Peter Sowrey (PS) (Chair), Ashley Harrold (AsH - headteacher), Claire Harrington (CH), James Moncrieff (JMo), Judith Mackenzie (JMa), Adam Harvey (AdH), John Barker (JB), Deborah Hillier (DHi), Mariea Christodoulou (MC), Lee Redmond (LR), Addy Balogun (AB), Janet Such (JS), Alex Morrison (AM) and Gareth Chan (GC).

In attendance (via Google Hangouts videolink): Sarah Hextall (SH – school business manager), Alessandro Capozzi (AC – staff), Kate Claydon (KC – staff) and David Harvey (DHa – clerk).

Quorum: 14 governors present – meeting was quorate throughout.

1. Appointment of Local Authority (LA) nominated governor

1.1. PS explained that his term of office as the LA nominated governor had run out on 4 July 2020; and that the LA had agreed to renew his nomination with effect from 5 July for a further four year period. PS emphasised however that this nomination would have to be approved by the Full Board of Governors (FBG). PS duly suspended his videolink feed, in order that the FBG consider his reappointment – both as LA nominated governor and Chair of Governors – which were both approved unanimously.

2. Apologies for Absence.

2.1. Were accepted from Richard Mills (RM).

3. **Declarations of interest** – None.

4. Minutes

4.1. The minutes of the meeting of 14 May 2020 were agreed by governors as a true record; the Chair undertook to sign a hard copy at a later date.

5. Matters Arising

- Updated figures on staffing spending – for discussion at the present meeting.
- Circulation to governors of draft planning for next steps – done.
- Draft letter of appreciation to school staff from the board – done.

6. School budget

- 6.1. SH explained that it had not been possible to produce an outturn forecast document, given difficulties experienced by the LA in producing up to date information. SH anticipated further delays from the LA, because of having to manage the current challenging circumstances of working; e.g. the April salaries report had not yet been reconciled with the school's accounting system.
- 6.2. SH stated that her present focus was on Covid-19 costs and the variation on the budget spend that these had caused. SH believed that there would be potentially a high spend, but with the prospect of reimbursement of some of the expenditure.
- 6.3. The Chair asked about accessing the government fund of £75K per school and that SH's Covid-19 report went up to 21 July. SH explained that schools could present a claim against this fund, but only for spending on areas not normally budgeted for; e.g. it would not cover items such as agency staffing but would for items and measures to be put in place for the September reopening.
- 6.4. The Chair noted that the budget for catering was set at £10K, but the actual amount spent was £18K and asked if the £5.7K voucher scheme was related to those entitled to Free School Meals (FSMs). SH confirmed this was the case (£15 per student per week) and also applied to other eligible groups such as children of asylum seekers. SH added that the school had provided financial assistance to some families, prior to the voucher scheme coming into force. SH confirmed that this voucher scheme would continue in the summer holidays.
- 6.5. Governors asked about the future provision of information about the catering budget. SH believed that the outturn forecast for September would be more accurate; the current situation had meant that only one out of three finance reports were available.
- 6.6. Governors asked if any major risks had been identified. SH commented that lettings was the main uncertainty; income had plummeted as a result of no bookings being made by drama or sports organisations. SH confirmed that this issue was being looked at by the school's facilities team.

School Financial Value Standard (SFVS)

- 6.7. The Chair noted the circulation of the SFVS dashboard document earlier to governors; the previous 2019/2020 version had shown four areas in red, now there were only two – relating to the pupil/teacher ratio and the average class size. AsH explained that this reflected the direction of travel for the school, in the sense of having a more efficient timetabling system in place and to ensure the finances worked. AsH added that the school was still working through the impact of the Sixth Form closure; with the expectation that the number of teachers would balance out over the next two years.

6.8. The Chair noted that the average teacher costs had now been corrected and figures quoted were a more accurate representation of the current situation. SH added that, on this point, the school was making more and more financially advantageous decisions on recruitment.

7. Headteacher report

Covid-19 situation update

- 7.1. AsH drew attention to government guidance sent out on 2 July on schools' September reopening; also that Blatchington Mill's planning was constantly changing. AsH highlighted the email sent out to all parents and carers on 7 July, which set out the arrangements for the new academic year. AsH explained that different criteria had been applied and other schools had been consulted; Blatchington Mill had taken a more risk averse approach than others in Brighton and Hove. AsH believed however that the school could deliver all its undertakings without compromising safety.
- 7.2. AsH stated that Blatchington Mill had gone for maintaining all the safety measures recommended by the government for secondary schools, i.e. using the bubble system. AsH noted that this guidance had acknowledged it would not be possible to enforce social distancing rules between students; in this regard therefore the focus would be on staff and teaching. AsH stated that the model of following the normal timetable would not be followed, at the same time observing the need to provide as much certainty as possible to students.
- 7.3. AsH acknowledged that access to specialist rooms would be a challenge; plans were to do this by rotation, with priority given to Year 11s. AsH confirmed that the school would be able to shut down small sections selectively if this action was required. AsH added that use of chromebooks and other technology would help considerably in delivering most lessons.
- 7.4. AsH acknowledged that usual activities such as assemblies and lunch queues would not happen; instead a system of rolling break or lunch times would be put in place. AsH confirmed that nevertheless students would have access to outside spaces, e.g. for Physical Education (PE) sessions. AsH stated the main challenge was managing the unprecedented level of planning required; staff support in this regard had been exemplary.
- 7.5. AsH reported that parent and carer response to the 7 July email had been largely positive; one key question had been how bubbles would be chosen for students. AsH explained that, for Year 11, this would be done by option subjects; for lower down Years there would be more control allowing a good combination of students. AsH added that the basis would be to stagger the day in having four periods of tuition; with students attending three of them – Key Stage 3 for the first three, Key Stage 4 for the second three.
- 7.6. Governors asked about managing social distancing issues for Special Educational Needs (SEN) children. AsH stated that individual plans were

being worked through; with the SEN pupils' needs duly checked, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) requirements assessed and advice sought from special schools.

- 7.7. Governors paid tribute to the extraordinary amount of work necessary to make all these arrangements happen and asked how staff resources would cope. KC stated that the school had started from scratch on the revised timetable, working with staff on its delivery; e.g. some lessons would be recorded and the same ones delivered to different groups of students.
- 7.8. Governors asked if the school was planning to revert to the normal timetable during the academic year. AsH stated that two full timetables had been written; the normal one could be brought into operation with a week's notice. AsH added that the school would review this situation in December, with the possibility of introducing a hybrid version from January to July 2021, adopting aspects of both timetables that pupils and staff would like.
- 7.9. Governors asked how staff were managing with their changed workloads. AsH stated that the process had required a degree of considerable flexibility from all; however there had been no demands for staff to work extra hours, the access to technology had helped significantly in this regard. AsH added that staff in the school business section had been offered the opportunity to work from home; this had helped free up office space.
- 7.10. Governors recommended the Curriculum Committee explore the curriculum issue more thoroughly in September and asked about the availability of classrooms. AsH stated that the school could make specialist rooms available for different subjects, subject to cleaning requirements being met.
- 7.11. Governors asked about the start to the day and if the lessons would be longer. AsH explained that each lesson would be allocated one hour forty minutes; for four such periods to take place in one school day; Key Stage 3 would take the first three, i.e. from 08.30 to 14.00 hours; and Key Stage 4 the second three, i.e. 10.00 to 15.00 hours.
- 7.12. Governors asked about transport to and from the school. AsH stated that the school was in contact with the local bus companies to ensure there would be enough transport to meet requirements.
- 7.13. Governors asked about management of risk. AsH acknowledged planning for this aspect was complex, in the sense of managing the perception that Year 7 were low risk and Year 11 high; with the linked requirement to put a hierarchy arrangement for staff in place as well as considerations of cleaning, access to different areas and equipment to keep in mind.
- 7.14. Governors asked about teachers' planned schedules. AsH stated that staff would be asked to teach three out of the four planned lessons a day, with the opportunity to take breaks.
- 7.15. The Chair asked if there had had to be a degree of compromise adopted for Year 11, when having to deal with pupils of different abilities. KC

acknowledged that this was the case, highlighting science and mathematics. KC stated that the school had looked at ways to deliver lessons, whilst providing different levels of source material. KC added that this had been less of an issue for Year 10 students, where solutions to manage this aspect of teaching had been found.

- 7.16. Governors asked about the examination results process. AsH stated that results would go out by email, to ensure these were delivered at the same time. AC added that a lot of tests had been applied to ensure a fairness of the process, with a limited facility of appeal to be allowed for parents.

School Partnership Advisor report

- 7.17. The Chair recalled that this report had been circulated earlier to governors and noted the very positive comments made therein about AsH's strategic approach, morale at the school and staff work with disadvantaged students. The Chair noted too that the SPA had highlighted the parental appreciation expressed for individual telephone contact; also how the school had ensured supply of laptops to students and Wi-Fi connections. AsH added that next week over a thousand telephone calls had been booked to go over the end of year reports.

Long term planning and risk assessment

- 7.18. AsH stated that the Risk Assessment document was the subject of constant change and continued to be worked on. SH added that the template provided to schools had been adapted and extended to apply to a full reopening of the school. AsH pointed to the issue of yet another template by the LA, which would have to be looked at in the context of this exercise.

8. School policies

- 8.1. AsH confirmed that there were no policies to review and approve.

9. Governors' meetings dates list for 2020-2021

- 9.1. Governors asked why the day for the Pay & Personnel Committee had been changed to a Wednesday. DH explained that this was to do with managing the insertion of dates for a new Committee (Curriculum) into the schedule.
- 9.2. SH asked that the Finance Committee dates of 18 January and 1 March 2021 be moved to 11 January and 8 February 2021 respectively. DH agreed to action these changes.
- 9.3. The Chair noted the FBG's approval of this list, subject to the requested changes being made.

10. Any Other Business

Website

- 10.1. AsH recommended that governors look at the school website to view two particular aspects; the virtual sports awards and concert.

Radio interview

- 10.2. The Chair drew governors' attention to AsH being interviewed on the Radio 4 Today programme on 2 July. The Chair commented that AsH had put over his points very clearly and had been a good ambassador for the school.

Letter to staff

- 10.3. The Chair informed governors of his intention to write a letter to staff on behalf of the FBG; thanking them for all their hard work and efforts to prepare the school for its reopening in September; this had been a commendable and impressive exercise.

- 10.4. Governors agreed this proposal, suggesting that the Chair might like to record a videolink style message instead.

Actions

Amendment of governors' meetings dates list for 2020-2021 – DH

Recording of appreciation video to staff on behalf of FBG - PS

Next meeting – Thursday 17 September 2020

These minutes are an accurate reflection of the meeting.

Signed ...

Position ...

Date ...