**Finance Officer Report for Leadership & Resources Committee Meeting**

**Date of meeting: 18 May 2020**

**Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Finance Department**

I have been able to set up a temporary Finance Office in a spare room at home. RH was very proactive at the start of the lockdown period in suggesting LH and I were given remote access to the school server and this has meant that I can carry on with most computer based work. There are a few annoyances such as slow remote connection, and printing prints off at school, but these are minor in the grand scheme of things.

So, whilst yes it may appear that it is ‘business as usual’ to a certain degree here, the reality is that progress is frustratingly slow. Adding home schooling a teenager to the mix – like thousands of other families – adds extra challenges to home-life-work harmony.

I am conscious that I have confidential paperwork in my temporary office, but I can assure governors that none of my family have any interest in my piles of paper and only access the room briefly when bringing cups of tea.

**Financial Information**

**Financial Year End 2019/20 – CFR Report**

Our accounts were finalised remotely by our LA Support Accountant on 3 April 2020. This was a new experience for both of us but under the circumstances went well. There were more accruals to process than normal due to the unexpected closure of the school and the associated impact of clubs and activities being cancelled even though income for the sessions had already been received. We could only do our best with the information we had access to at the time, so it will not have been perfect.

A copy of the Final CFR report is attached for information. The CFR codes E19 and E27 show equivalent +/- variances that indicate I need to check the ledger code mapping for sports grant expenses for 2020/21 reporting.

To summarise, the balances being carried forward to 2020/21 financial year are:

Revenue = £48, 264

This includes unspent PPG of £4,049; SPG of £16,681 and Generous Parent Donation (GPD) of £4,040

Capital = £11,926

The accompanying declaration needs countersigning and submitting to the LA by 31 May. I can sign this per pro for DB after the L&R meeting as long as it is minuted that the CFR has been noted.

**Five year budget plan for 2020/21 – 2023/24**

Again, the unusual lockdown circumstances have meant that this hasn’t been as straightforward as usual to compile. I have managed to glean input from RH and KW, and I have tried to err on the side of caution where possible. It is difficult to estimate income/costs when we don’t know when the school will re-open and on what basis.

We have made some savings during the period of school closure – for example we haven’t needed to pay for any PPA cover for Term 5 (approx £1,000), and things like energy and water use will be lower than normal. However, we will have lost out on EMC, ASC, and After School Sports Club (ASSC) profit for Term 5 and (Term 6).

Some contracts we are obliged to keep paying during closure under the Government’s Policy Procurement Notices – catering and cleaning contracts for example.

Only one Scenario is being presented to L&R this year – ‘Scenario A’. A copy is attached along with comprehensive budget notes that show the methodology behind the figures. I urge L&R governors to examine the Scenario and notes carefully and should alternative scenarios be required, let me have the details before the L&R meeting to give me time to prepare them.

The 5 Year Budget Plan needs to be considered by L&R and then formally approved by the FGB, in time for it to be submitted to the LA by 31 May 2020 (having been duly signed by the Headteacher and Chair of Governors).

**Bank accounts and credit card**

The school bank account balances on 31 March 2020 were:

Current account - £44,591.56

32 Day Fixed Term deposit account - £10,074.19

Deposit holding account - £20,000.00

School Fund account - £1,565.47

I have since given notice to move all the money on deposit into the school current account as the interest rate had dropped from 0.75% to 0.10%.

The balance of the credit card account as at 22 April 2020 was £nil.

**Change of bank account signatory**

Please can L&R give approval for the bank account signatories to be changed with effect from 1 June 2020. This will involve removing Richard Hearn and replacing him with Karen Winterburn as a Full Power signatory. The conditions of the bank mandate will remain the same – i.e. two signatories to authorise transactions. Access will also be granted to Lloyds Online for Business, so that KW and either LH or JO can authorise bank payments that I prepare online.

**Staff Absence Insurance 2020/21**

This has now been organised and the cost of £3,935.01 was jointly agreed by RH & ES.

**Grant**

You may recall that SR applied to the Tesco Bags of Help grant scheme for £4,000 towards costs of the artificial grass. We have recently received a grant of £1,166 which is great news. The money cannot be used retrospectively for something we have already purchased, so I have let Tesco know that it will be used for equipment for the playground that can be enjoyed by others in the community as well as the school.

**Rural Gigabit Connectivity Programme**

We have been contacted by the Dept for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport as the school has been identified as being eligible to apply for the above programme. More details here:-

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rgc-programme-key-information>

The Department is engaging with over 300 primary schools with the aim of ultimately enabling connectivity to 500 rural schools with gigabit-capable technology by March 2021.

Lacock School has already gone through the programme which is useful to know. SSQ school are not eligible – I asked!

Very basically, the government will organise and pay for the infrastructure required through our current ICT contractors (usually costs about £35K, they will seek comparative quotations if necessary). It can take around six months to complete. The only cost to the school is an increase in Broadband costs. I am awaiting further information and costings and will keep L&R informed. The school is under no obligation to proceed once quotations are received, but apparently there is ‘no catch’! (and yes the government funding is still available for this despite COVID-19 costs)

**GDPR**

A breach has occurred during the period of school closure. The ‘bcc’ method wasn’t used to email a group of parents so each parent had the email address of everyone else. An apology is being issued and other staff have been informed to avoid it happening again. It is being reported to the DPO. Whilst no excuse, this is apparently an extremely common mistake that is being made by school staff working from home.

**Premises Information**

This is the hardest thing for me to oversee during home working, but I can report:-

* Classroom 001 (currently Hercules) has recently been redecorated.
* Classroom 003 (currently Chameleon) – the LA contractors have been back in touch about the various damp issues. A hatch is going to be fitted in the floor this week to allow examination of the joists to ascertain why the floor is creaking so badly. It is thought that a ground level vent outside could be the reason – water ingress is rotting the joists over time. The contractors are also aware of the damp patches on the walls and windowsill so I will do what I can to make sure all the issues are resolved as soon as possible.
* The LA were not able to fund the new playground gates and other fencing works from their budget this year after all. However, RH & BD discovered undesirable evidence of intruders in the Hercules play area over the closure period which I have reported to the LA. As a result, the LA have agreed to proceed with the works straightaway. I am waiting for an installation date.
* The LA contractors have finally been in to resolve all the issues highlighted in our Legionnaire Risk Assessment (at LA cost) – mainly the removal of redundant pipework.
* I understand that the lime tree in the side garden area has had a protective brace fitted to improve its safety.
* I have been in touch with the contractors who installed the artificial grass to check that they haven’t forgotten they are due back to iron out a few bumpy areas and paint football pitch lines on the artificial grass, and touch up the paint on the netball court. We still owe them £500 against the project cost. Would L&R governors object if the football lines were *not* painted on the grass area as originally intended? Now that the artificial grass has been in situ for six months, RH and I feel that is would remain more multi functional and look more natural if a mini football pitch was not painted on after all. It could still be used for kicking a ball around of course (I’ll order some small portable goals as previously discussed). The contractor has suggested that the £500 could then be put towards a new piece of play equipment instead.

**Policies**

The L&R policy administration exercise is very nearly complete. I have noted L&R comments about length of review dates on policies and agree that many do not need to be reviewed by the committee on an annual basis. Once all the L&R policies are finalised and on the policy management system, the review dates can be standardised.

The policies attached are for L&R review and approval please (I will arrange for them to be house styled and properly formatted by CS where needed) and put on the School Bus Policy Management System (PMS).

1. Career Break (LA model policy)
2. CCTV Policy (LA model policy) – removed all reference to Vehicle Tracking as it does not apply. NB. We have one camera above the front door entrance, installed to allow remote opening of the door from Cherry Hall. Images are recorded. To view recorded footage I would probably need to seek help from the installation company as they showed me once and that was a long time ago. There is an external sign in place, I will arrange an internal sign too. I will forward a copy of this policy to all staff.
3. Collective Grievance for Teaching & Support Staff (LA model policy)
4. Ill Health Retirement (Teachers) (LA model policy)
5. Ill Health Retirement (Support Staff) (LA model policy)
6. Time Off for Fostering (LA model)
7. Lone Working Policy – this mentions that risk assessments are needed for home working – very topical issue – I will contact the LA for a template RA

Other policies that are due to be reviewed:

* School Security – I now suggest this is reviewed in September when the new gates and fencing have been installed; potential changes to pupils arrival times and doors used upon arrival are considered; potential changes to signing in procedures, etc under the new Headship
* Admissions Policy – still with RH for further input
* Staff Wellbeing Policy – still with JO for further input

**Other news**

* I have heard of a large static caravan that *might* be going up for sale soon. Knowing that staff are keen to have more space for interventions, music lessons, meetings, clubs, etc, I am wondering if it would potentially be of use to the school. It would need to be refitted inside of course to look like a bright fun new area, and painted externally or cladded. It would be an exciting project and I would like to think that we may be able to fundraise or obtain a grant to help with the renovation costs. I have no other details on cost/size, logistics, etc. L&R initial thoughts please…

As always, prompt feedback regarding this report and the decisions made at the meeting is always appreciated, as it means I can proceed where I can without having to wait for the minutes to be published.

Lizzy Moor

Finance Officer

13 May 2020