

WestBerkshireCouncilcollege alternative educationManagementCommittee

Final Extraordinary Finance Committee (virtual meeting) Tuesday 15th March 2022 at 8am

Present: Tim Pritchard – Community Governor (Chair) Maureen Sims – Community Governor Jacquie Davies – Headteacher Darren King – Community Governor		Apologies: Judith Fisher – Community Governor		
Absent: None		Duration of meeting: 8.00 – 9.13am		
In attendance: Annette Priestley – LA Governor Joseph Clarke – Community Governor Karen Price (KP) – School Business Manager (SBM) (from 8.23am) Jill Hills (JH) - Clerk		MC members will be referred to as governors		
				Action
1.	Welcome & Apologies Declaration of Any Other Urgent Business Declaration of Business Interests			
1.1	The Chair welcomed those present including Annette Priestley and Joseph Clarke who were attending as observers. Apologies had been received from Judith Fisher. Karen Price had advised that she would be unable to join the meeting until 8.30am.			
1.2	There were no declaration of business interests or any other items of urgent business.			
2.	Minutes of the FC 18.01.22 and Matters Arising (where not elsewhere on the agenda)			
2.1	The Clerk apologised that the minutes for this meeting were not yet available.			
3.	Minutes of the ExoFC 08.02.22 and Matters Arising (where not elsewhere on the agenda)			
3.1	The Clerk apologised that the minutes for this meeting were not yet available.			
4.	Roof work for Independence			
4.1	Governors had received a summary of the quotes obtained by the SBM for repairs to the small, low level roof on the rear extension at Independence. The roof tiles had slipped and water had leaked into the dining area. The Caretaker had put some tarpaulin into the roof space to stop water ingress, until repairs could be undertaken.			
4.2	The Chair had approved acceptance of the quote from Newbury Roofing and Building Ltd for £5,190 excluding VAT (£6,228 in total) under emergency powers between meetings so that the repairs could go ahead. This was the lowest of the four quotes received. Governors unanimously agreed to ratify the Chairs decision to approve the works.			
5.	P10 Budget Monitoring and Year-end Forecast			
5.1	The P10 Budget Monitoring Report along with the Forecast Fund Spreadsheet for the Main School Budget had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The P10 position was as follows:-			
	21/22 P10 (January 22) Budget Summary for Main School Budget (98422)	Original Budget	Current Budget	Current Position as at 31.01.22
		£	£	£
	STAFFING BUDGET	2,162,450	2,209,950	1,721,274
	NON STAFFING BUDGET	758,800	708,920	523,919
	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,921,250	2,918,870	2,245,193
	TOTAL INCOME	-280	-280	-6,376
	NET EXPENDITURE	2,920,970	2,918,590	2,238,817
				Year-End Forecast 31.03.22
				2,825,499
				-6,656
				2,818,843

Signed: Approved 28.06.22

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21/22 P10 (January 22) Budget Summary for Main School Budget (98422)		Original Budget	Current Budget	Current Position as at 31.01.22	Year-End Forecast 31.03.22	
		£	£	£	£	
FUNDED BY (input as negative)						
BALANCE BROUGHT FORWARD		-352,760	-352,760	-352,757	-352,757	
101 FUNDS DELEGATED BY THE LA		-842,550	-842,550	-707,954	-707,954	
I03 HNB/SCHOOL FUNDING		-1,987,020	-1,987,020	-1,036,658	-1,963,994	
I05 PUPIL PREMIUM		-20,660	-20,660	-18,286	-23,571	
I18B/C COVID GRANTS		-6,600	-6,600	-39,231	-43,556	
I18D ADDITIONAL GRANT FOR SCHOOLS		-220	-220	-1	-220	
TOTAL FUNDING		-3,209,810	-3,209,810	-2,154,887	-3,092,052	
SURPLUS (-)/DEFICIT(+)		-288,840		83,930	-273,210	
5.2	Governors noted that the year-end position was close to the budgeted/forecast position, with expenditure being within 3.2% of where expected. However, there had been underspends on property related costs, admin and learning resources. These had largely offset the overspend of c£91,000 (25%) on professional services. The Headteacher advised that this was due to the impact of covid on staffing during the year and the need for additional supply staff and support from external providers such as Outdoor Academy (OA).					
5.3	Governors noted that income from the Local Authority (LA) had been c£155,000 (5%) less than budgeted. The Headteacher advised that this was due to there not being as many learners referred to icollege in the Autumn Term 2021, where there had been an average of 57 learners. Hence icollege income for that term had been lower. Currently icollege was experiencing an influx of referrals/learners at the end of the financial year, which still meant that the usual average number of learners had been lower than budgeted for across the year. icollege didn't have the capacity to accommodate all of the learners now being referred. The Headteacher explained that it is usual for there to be less learners during the Autumn Term followed by an increase in the Spring Term, however, the latter had happened much later than typically had been the case. The Pupil Placement Panel was meeting later in the week at which there were twelve referrals to icollege being discussed. The income/funding for these learners would impact on the 2022/23 financial year.					
5.4	Governors had also received a copy of the questions raised by WBC Accountancy following their review of the P9 Budget Monitoring Report and the SBM's responses. Governors asked if the LA were happy with the responses and the Headteacher confirmed that they were. The LA is aware of icollege's dependency on its income streams and the complexities of managing the budget, so a 3.2% variance at year-end would be considered remarkable.					
5.5	The Headteacher advised that P11 was now available and this showed an increase in the forecasted surplus from £273,000 to £325,000. However, this could still change when P12 is received and as a result of any adjustments made in P13.					
6.	Heads Funding Group (HFG) & Schools Forum					
6.1	HFG 01.03.22 and Schools Forum icollege Report for 14.03.22 feedback – The Headteacher advised that the HFG Working Party review of icollege had gone to HFG for the second time on 1 st March and then to Schools Forum on 14 th March 2022. The issue had been around the roll status of learners attending icollege and the planned introduction of places commissioned by the LA. Secondary Schools had not been keen on having commissioned places but Primary Schools had been in favour of this change. The concern related to the lack of transparency within the process should the LA be able to agree to fill a commissioned space in agreement with a School in order to prevent a pupil becoming permanently excluded (PEX).					

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6.2	<p>The report to HFG and Schools Forum had contained a number of recommendations which had all been agreed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding from the LA would be paid upfront. This would benefit icollege as it would go a significant way towards stabilising the budget position, thus reducing the swings between deficit and surplus throughout the financial year. There would be commissioned places for Primary but not Secondary Schools. The LA and Schools would split the cost of places 50/50. No issues had been raised at Schools Forum and so this recommendation was agreed without challenge. Post 16 places would only be for learners with an EHCP. Exclusion guidance was due to be reviewed however, where a learner had been suspended, the recommendation was that for Fixed Suspensions (previously Fixed Term Exclusions) then icollege would be used to provide education from day six. Schools would need to meet 100% of the cost rather than the previous 50/50 split with the LA. Short Term placements would be reviewed every six weeks (as current) with a view to returning the learner to mainstream school. SEN places at the POD and POD+ would reduce by two each year up to 2028/29 (thirteen places in total). This had been agreed, but given the demand for places, the Headteacher felt this was unrealistic. <p>This meant that there would be 66 commissioned places with an additional 5 SEN places available if required.</p>	
6.3	<p>Governors referred to the section of the HFG report which stated that there would be an opportunity for an increase in icollege places as part of an invest to save initiative and asked what the implications of this were. The Headteacher advised that this has always been the case and reflected that icollege provides a service which needed to be flexible in order to meet the LA's needs/demand. Typically this would be as an alternative to sending a learner to a more expensive provision out of area and hence the service would be flexible in finding space to accommodate the learner. These would usually be SEN learners. In addition, the new SEMH provision was due to be available from September 2022. If there was a delay, the LA/icollege would need to cover these learners so that they were still receiving an education.</p>	
6.4	<p>Governors asked whether for 2022/23 the number of learners attending icollege, including the POD and POD+ was still 78. The Headteacher advised that this could be 87 learners and that currently there were 89. The funding available from the LA as identified in their budget was sufficient to fund 87 learners. There was however, some flexibility if placing learners with icollege was a better use of public funds than sending learners to provision out of area.</p>	
6.5	<p>The Headteacher advised that although the HFG Working Party had asked for information relating to learner outcomes and the impact of the service which had been provided, no questions had been raised.</p>	
7.	First Draft Budget 2022/23 and Three-Year Forecast	
7.1	<p>Governors had received copies of the 2022/23 draft Budget and three-year forecast along with the agenda. The Chair advised that from a Governors perspective there was some unease about submitting a deficit budget for future years and the current surplus situation declining. Under these circumstances there would usually be a narrative accompanying the budget outlining the extenuating circumstances or alternatively revisions made to the budget to remedy the situation. For example, did this reflect the way icollege was organised, were staffing levels too high, or if icollege needs to retain</p>	

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	<p>the ability to be flexible to meet the needs/demand on places, does icollege need to retain the current staffing levels. Or as icollege is cost effective were the LA not providing sufficient funding through the banding rates. Should icollege therefore be submitting a deficit budget, to emphasise the point that there was a wider funding issue. The Headteacher was confident that in reality there would not be a deficit position. Historically, icollege's budget forecast has always followed the same profile whereby the carried forward surplus reduces into a potential deficit, but that this had never materialised. The Headteacher advised that she didn't think the SBS report carried forward the surplus from the previous year as the actual figure wasn't know at this point, adding that she would need to check this was the case when the SBM joined the meeting. The SBM and Headteacher had spotted that within the draft budget there had potentially been some double counting of certain staffing roles. For example, the Primary Teacher vacancy which has been covered by existing staff on fixed term contracts during 2021/22 academic year and that the cost of both have been included in the draft budget for 2022/23 financial year. This required further checking. icollege was not overstaffed, but there were some staffing issues which impacted on the budget. There were a number of staff who were covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) who required support and covering of their roles at certain times. Whilst icollege is happy to provide this support, it does mean that there would be some partial double staffing, which in reality does not provide the best in terms of value for money. There were also a number of maternity leaves which would need to be covered next year. This was why the staffing budget looked as if it had increased by c£200,000 in 2022/23.</p> <p>Karen Price joined the meeting at 8.23am.</p>	
7.2	<p>Following on from the comment above, the SBM clarified that there would not be a deficit in 2022/23 once the surplus from 2021/22 had been carried forward. The Chair advised that he had been referring to the in-year position, whereby over the three years, the buffer provided by the surplus diminishes into a deficit position by year three. It therefore appears as if icollege is overspending year on year, although as discussed earlier in the meeting this could be offset by additional funding based on learners needs etc. For 2022/23 the figures indicated an overspend of £277,000 which equated to 7.5 additional learners to counteract the potential in-year deficit position. Governors asked if this was feasible. The SBM advised that it was really dependent on the needs of the learners placed with icollege and this would not be known until they were referred. For example, if all learners attracted Band 1 funding, then their needs could be met more easily without as much input from offsite activities or increase in staffing. However, they could also all be assessed at Band 3 which would require a greater need for offsite support and additional staffing. The SBM advised that for 2021/22 icollege had been just under the average number of learners for the provision to be full, but in previous years icollege learner numbers had been above the average needed. The Headteacher explained that there was a direct correlation between the number of learners on Bands 1 to 3 and the level of offsite activities needed and that this was mirrored within the income and expenditure budgets. If there are more Band 1 learners then expenditure on offsite activities would be lower and so expenditure would be lower. If there were more Band 3 learners who were often unable to manage a 25 hour in school curriculum, there would be an increase in the use of offsite activities. Whilst expenditure would increase, so would income as Band 3 learners attracted a higher level of funding to reflect the greater level of their needs. This was however, hard to predict other than for those learners who icollege knew would be staying for a further academic year. The rest of the cohort consist of new learners.</p>	
7.3	<p>Governors discussed the rebuild of Integration and the additional pressure this would put on the 2022/23 budget, e.g. as the costs associated with relocating the Unit during the build was unknown at this point. The Headteacher advised that there could be an issue with the tender relating to the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) which if not resolved by 25th April 2022 would result in the need for a retendering exercise. This means icollege does not know if the learners at the Unit will need to be relocated by Easter. If this was to happen then the LA would relocate Integration to the old school house on the former Theale Primary School site until the end of the Summer Term 2022. The Unit would then need to relocate again for September 2022. The LA had identified a site for September 2022 but this had not been made public yet and so the Headteacher was unable to provide any additional information. The LA had undertaken to support icollege with the costs of moving twice including staff transport costs. Governors sought clarification</p>	

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	as to whether this meant that the potential expenditure associated with the project had been included in the draft budget without clarity of the level of additional income that would be received from the LA should the project go ahead during 2022/23. The Headteacher confirmed that this was correct. The SBM advised that if the Unit moved to Theale there would be very little change in mileage for staff as they either live in the Theale area or already travel from further west to calcot. However, should the Unit be relocated further west than Theale then there would be an additional cost for those staff travelling from the Theale area to the Unit.	
7.4	In addition, the SBM had been working on the assumption that icollege would continue to occupy the top floor at Moorside (currently POD+). However, heating costs were unknown due to national increases in costs of energy, as per the other Units which could considerably increase premises costs overall.	
7.5	Governors discussed that in terms of submitting the 2022/23 budget with an in-year deficit, given the exceptional circumstances and a number of currently unknown factors, this would provide some justification for the budget position. The SBM clarified that once built, the new Unit at Integration would be able to hold additional learners but currently there were not any plans to increase the number of places at icollege, so there would be no additional funding.	
7.6	The Chair reiterated the comments in 7.1 above around the need to either explain the financial position through extenuating circumstances or revise the budget until it was in balance. The Headteacher advised that there was a need to revisit/check the staffing budget to ensure that there had not been any double counting as discussed in 7.1 above. The Headteacher sought clarification relating to the Chair referring to a deficit budget for 2022/23 and whether this referred to it appearing as if the level of expenditure was greater than the level of income icollege would receive from the LA. The Chair confirmed that this was correct. The Headteacher advised that the difference between expenditure and income for 2022/23 was c£300,000, expenditure being at £3,200,000 compared to income of £2,800,000. Governors discussed that whilst this was high in 2022/23, the in-year deficit for 2023/24 and 2024/25 was also forecasted as being c£100,000. These two years would use up the surplus being carried forward into 2022/23 and then there would be a deficit of c£200,000 with no surplus to carry forward to negate this position. This concerned Governors. The Headteacher advised that when setting budgets, it usually followed this pattern, but the deficits did not materialise in practice. Governors discussed that it was important to be able to articulate this so that they and other stakeholders understood why this position/budget profile was occurring. The SBM advised that although the budget forecast was predicting a deficit by 2023/24, the £96,000 deficit did not include the carry forward surplus of £48,000 which would in effect half the deficit. During this time unless LA plans change, icollege would lose the fixed term staff employed at POD+ along with the costs associated with the unit at Moorside, reducing costs. The running costs at Moorside were relatively small compared to other units. The LA was apportioning costs based on the percentage of the floor plan icollege occupies (21%). The LA undertakes any running repairs needed although icollege is responsible for the cost of any damage caused to their section of the building. The reduction in costs once POD+ is shut down would be unlikely to reduce the forecast deficit completely.	
7.7	The Headteacher advised that there had not been an opportunity for her to review the staffing costs for icollege with the SBM. This would need to take place before the budget was finalised. Governors discussed that as this was the largest proportion of expenditure this was an obvious point of challenge and it could be open to the suggestion that icollege was overstaffed, hence the need to ensure that this expenditure could be supported. The Headteacher advised that one of the misconceptions around being "over staffed" related to icollege operating over multiple sites. This meant that there was a need for an Admin presence in each Unit along with a Lead Teacher/Senior Staff to manage each site. Due to the shape of the LA, it is necessary to have provision at either end of West Berkshire. These costs would not be necessary if icollege operated on one site.	
7.8	Governors discussed that the pupil numbers and needs were kept relatively constant for budgeting purposes which did not necessarily reflect the actual position as it transpired throughout the year. Governors discussed how, against this context, the dilemma icollege faced for example trying to	

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	<p>reduce its expenditure on external providers/professional services such as Outdoor Academy which was used to enable provision to fluctuate to meet changing pupil numbers and needs. The Headteacher explained that icollege provides a full curriculum for learners but does not have access to onsite PE facilities so needs to hire premises/use external provision in order to deliver this. In light of this, Governors discussed that the reduction in expenditure for professional services may not be as firm as the figures suggested. The Headteacher clarified that expenditure would be dependent on the needs of learners at that time. There was currently a bulge in the number of learners who should be in receipt of SEN funding but who did not yet have an EHCP in place. Some of these learners should be in a Special School but come to icollege as they are not managing in mainstream and icollege then work to ensure that an EHCP is put in place. Whilst Primary schools may have been able to manage their needs, on transfer to Secondary School, they become unmanageable. This is part of a wider problem with the LA strategy. The knock on effect is that it is difficult for icollege to have a stable financial position. Governors discussed that this was an explanation of why icollege needed to maintain its flexibility and employ the number and range of staff that it does in order to be able to meet this need. The financial impact was a forecast deficit at the start of the year which is unlikely to materialise. The alternative was for icollege funding to be increased to smooth out the deficit forecast. The Headteacher advised that the budget position would be much more stable if there weren't so many learners who had SEN. It had not been the intention that icollege would have so many SEN learners but it has become a reflection of the increase in demand from learners who need additional support and the absence of suitable SEN places elsewhere within the sector. The Headteacher advised that whilst there were three new providers coming into the sector including The Grange and Mile House, these would now not be up and running until January 2023. If icollege stuck to its original 66 learners, although they would come in and out of mainstream to icollege, the budget position would be more manageable overall.</p>	
7.9	<p>Governors asked, other than reducing expenditure, what other options were possible referring to the options for future years highlighted within the P10 Budget Monitoring Report. The Headteacher advised that as vacancies arose, staff could be appointed on lower salaries than the current postholders. As a number of staff based in Primary Units were leaving icollege, there could be some scope for restructuring this provision. Currently vacancies in Primary were being covered by Internal appointments from Easter to the end of term.</p>	
7.10	<p>The SBM advised that there was some scope to reduce expenditure on Catering as not all learners attending are fed as some will arrive/depart before or after lunchtime having been at another provision. Costs could be reduced through sensible consideration of the nature of catering being provided.</p>	
7.11	<p>The SBM advised that the budget includes contingency for Supply Staff based on current usage and the shortage of staff e.g. TA's nationally. If icollege could recruit to these posts and retain staff then the need for the Supply budget would reduce. In some instances icollege was meeting the salary of staff who were on long term sick leave or phased return as well as using Supply cover for their role which increased costs.</p>	
7.12	<p>It was agreed that further discussion would take place between the Finance Chair, Headteacher and SBM when they met later in the week. Governors asked what the next steps would be. The Headteacher advised that she and the SBM needed to review the staffing figures to ensure everything was included and that there was no double counting. In addition, the higher level of funding had been agreed at the Schools Forum the previous evening, so these figures could now be applied to the budget. The SBM advised that WBC Accountancy were in the process of reviewing the budget and this should be completed by the 25th March 2022. Then P13 would be available from WBC around the 12th April which would be needed to confirm the final year-end figures and carry forward surplus. The deadline for submission of the budget was 1st May 2022.</p>	
8.	<p>Sports Premium</p>	
8.1	<p>Governors asked for an update on how the balance of funding would be utilised to avoid any balances being clawed back if not used by 31st July 2022 deadline. The SBM advised that the level of expenditure had increased, mostly on Forest School, however, she did not have the precise figures with</p>	

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	her. The POD had purchased some equipment for the garden and some would be used to buy in coaching time during the Summer Term. Action: Finance Chair and SBM to discuss further at their next meeting. The Headteacher advised that the Government have not yet confirmed whether they intend to continue with Sports Premium Grant post September 2022.	FC Chair/SBM
9.	Schools Financial Values Statement (SFVS)	
9.1	The Finance Chair advised this was being worked on in conjunction with the Chair and Clerk and that a draft would be forwarded to the Headteacher and SBM later in the week for them to review and input to. The document could then be approved at the FC on 29 th March ready for submission to the LA.	
10.	Health and Safety	
10.1	The Finance Chair and Joseph Clarke had arranged to meet with Monica Romano (Health and Safety Co-ordinator) on 23 rd March 2022 at Independence to talk through the latest risk assessment. This would be followed by a series of visits to Units to undertake a Health and Safety Audit.	
11.	Policies	
11.1	The Gifts and Hospitality and Additional Payments policies had been circulated with the agenda. These policies were not statutory. Governors unanimously approved both policies.	
12.	Any Other Urgent Business	
12.1	Governors thanked the Finance Chair for his work in getting to grips with the budgeting process, working in conjunction with the Headteacher and SBM. The Headteacher and SBM were also appreciative of the constructive approach being taken by the Finance Chair.	
12.2	Internal Audit Follow Up exercise – The Headteacher advised that all of the information supporting the implementation of the recommendations agreed following the Internal Audit in November 2021 had been provided but no further update was available from the Auditors.	
13.	Focus of Next Meeting	
13.1	Focus of Next Meeting - FC 29th March or 5th April 2022 1st March 2022 8am (tbc) P11 Budget Monitoring Report/Year end forecast Budget 2022/23 and Three-Year Forecast SFVS Sports Premium Covid-19 Related expenditure No Policies for this meeting Review of Outdoor Academy Feedback from Internal Audit follow up exercise Review of reporting to Governors in terms of SBM workload to produce report etc.	

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.13am.

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