

# WestBerkshireCouncil college alternative education Management Committee

D1 18.04.21 Finance Committee (virtual meeting) Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 at 6pm

<b>Present:</b> Harry James - Community Governor (Chair) Maureen Sims – Community Governor Judith Fisher – Community Governor Jacquie Davies – Headteacher (to 7.42pm) Darren King – Community Governor		<b>Apologies:</b> None
<b>Absent:</b> None		<b>Duration of meeting:</b> 6 – 8.06pm
<b>In attendance:</b> Karen Price (KP) – School Business Manager (to 7.42pm) Jill Hills (JH) - Clerk		<b>MC members will be referred to as governors</b>
		Action
1.	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b> <b>Declaration of Any Other Urgent Business</b> <b>Declaration of Business Interests</b>	
1.1	Harry James welcomed those present. There were no apologies, all Governors were present.	
1.2	There were no items of any other urgent business raised. There were no declaration of business interests in respect of Part I agenda items.	
1.3	The Chair asked for clarification of agenda Item 5 Budget Strategy 2021/22 as there had not been any paperwork circulated in advance of the meeting. The Headteacher advised that the draft budget strategy had been circulated for the meeting on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021 and questions raised by Governors had been responded to. The SBM advised that she did had a first draft budget which she had just emailed to the Clerk. This did not reflect the outturn position until the final figure is known once P13 has been processed by WBC Accountancy. <b>Governors discussed</b> that as they had not seen the document discussion would be limited to an initial review by sharing the documents on screen via Zoom.	
2.	<b>Minutes of the Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 &amp; Matters Arising where not elsewhere on the agenda.</b>	
2.1	The minutes of the Finance Committee on 23 <sup>rd</sup> February 2021 had been circulated with the Agenda. The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and will be signed by the Chair once icollege is able to reopen fully.	
2.2	<b>Matters Arising</b> (where not elsewhere on the agenda) Governors were advised of the progress on a number of matters arising:  <b>4.9 Look into publicising good news stories such as laptop donations and printing within local press (going via the WBC press office).</b> JF had been in touch with Suzanne Giaever-Enger who had been working with Berkshire Maestros. She needed to speak to the Rotary Club who are supporting the project as any publicity needs to be run past them in addition to WBC. The Headteacher added that they had met with Tim Dyson and Bob Champion (Rotary Club) on 18 <sup>th</sup> March to discuss the project etc. icollege is also linking up with Mark Laurie from Street Games and had discussed setting up a project "i-can". A meeting has been set up for him to meet with both the Rotary Club and icollege to discuss what enrichment activities they may be able to support and the practicalities of running the project etc. This will be attended by the SBM as she has experience of similar activities via her involvement with a primary school PTA. Publicity had not been discussed at this stage.	
2.3	<b>Governors asked</b> whether icollege had access to local press. The Headteacher advised that this needed to be via the WBC Press Office, although getting good news articles to be published in the local press can be challenging given their relationship with the Council. <b>Action: Continue to work towards establishing a way of promoting good news stories in local press.</b>	<b>JF/DK</b> <b>Ongoing</b>

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		Actions																																				
2.4	<p>There were a number of actions to be carried forward from the minutes of 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021 as their implementation date had not yet been reached:-</p> <p>2.3 Book Maureen Sims onto Safer Recruitment training in the Autumn 2021;</p> <p>2.12 Consider how best to feedback to policy holders approval of policies by Committees/MC (including signature) and any queries which need to be addressed.</p> <p>2.15 Clerking Hours review – carried forward to Summer Term 1.</p> <p>6.1 Include Internal Audit report on FC agenda as soon as available.</p>	<p><b>SBM/Clerk AT 1</b>  <b>Headteacher FC</b>  <b>20.04.21</b>  <b>Clerk ST1</b>  <b>Clerk</b></p>																																				
3.	<b>P11 Budget Monitoring Report</b>																																					
3.1	<p><b>3.1 Outcome of WBC review of P9-P11 and Year-end Forecast.</b></p> <p>The SBM advised that for the P11 Budget Monitoring Report the outturn was easier to forecast due to the proximity of the year end and cut off dates for expenditure etc. The year-end forecast is now a surplus of £208,209. This figure had been reviewed and confirmed by WBC Accountancy. The SBM had gone through every single line on the BMR to establish any under/over spends or additional income compared to the original budget, in order to establish why the year-end surplus was so much higher than the £81,420 originally forecast when the budget was set in May 2020. This had identified the following variances:-</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Supply Cover</td><td>Due to being closed and/or having less students in units due to remote learning</td><td>saving £20,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>SEN TA's</td><td>as above</td><td>saving £50,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Less staff recruitment needed</td><td>Due to lower number of students/CV-19</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Student Travel/Transport</td><td>less travel between units and/or to offsite provision due to CV-19 restrictions</td><td>saving £15,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hygiene Costs</td><td>due to CV-19</td><td>Increase in expenditure of £6,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rewards &amp; Trips for students</td><td>CV-19</td><td>Saving £3,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Catering – meals for students</td><td>As not on site</td><td>Saving £14,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Less curriculum resources and photocopying.</td><td>CV-19</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>phone system at Independence</td><td>Not installed as access to unit was restricted due to CV-19</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Reduction in central charges for student transport to and from their main unit.</td><td>CV-19 less students in units/remote learning</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>Offsite Activities – Park Hill, OA, Reading FC etc</td><td>CV-19 still had to pay agreed commitment although students could not attend/others used more to accommodate bespoke timetabling.</td><td>Increase in expenditure £35,000</td></tr> <tr> <td>Cleaning</td><td>Additional deep cleans where suspected or confirmed CV-19 cases</td><td></td></tr> </table>	Supply Cover	Due to being closed and/or having less students in units due to remote learning	saving £20,000	SEN TA's	as above	saving £50,000	Less staff recruitment needed	Due to lower number of students/CV-19		Student Travel/Transport	less travel between units and/or to offsite provision due to CV-19 restrictions	saving £15,000	Hygiene Costs	due to CV-19	Increase in expenditure of £6,000	Rewards & Trips for students	CV-19	Saving £3,000	Catering – meals for students	As not on site	Saving £14,000	Less curriculum resources and photocopying.	CV-19		phone system at Independence	Not installed as access to unit was restricted due to CV-19		Reduction in central charges for student transport to and from their main unit.	CV-19 less students in units/remote learning		Offsite Activities – Park Hill, OA, Reading FC etc	CV-19 still had to pay agreed commitment although students could not attend/others used more to accommodate bespoke timetabling.	Increase in expenditure £35,000	Cleaning	Additional deep cleans where suspected or confirmed CV-19 cases		
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3.2	<b>Governors asked</b> in relation to curriculum resources, as there had been bespoke/remote learning packages put in place with some students being provided/delivered hard copies of learning materials; had this resulted in additional expenditure. The SBM advised that despite this there had been savings overall as there were less students on roll during the year than in previous years and there had been less art and cookery ingredients etc.																																					
3.3	<b>Governors referred</b> to page 4 of the BMR Report <b>and asked</b> for clarification as to whether the items																																					

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		Actions
	<p>listed above equated to the £136,000 saving quoted as being due to underspending due to Covid. The SBM advised that the net saving/underspend due to CV-19 was £108,000. This was a combination of a reduction in activities/materials due to CV-19 restrictions, less students, less recruitment/turnover in staff and some unpaid leave. The Headteacher advised that icollege had planned for an £80,000 underspend so with the £108,000 this increases this figure considerably. At Heads Funding Group (HFG) and Schools Forum meetings the two Secondary Schools who are not academies and the two Special Schools in West Berkshire had all forecast significant surpluses this year, so from this perspective icollege did not stand out. In contrast, nine Primary Schools are likely to be in deficit this year. icollege student numbers have been lower but the average over the year has been 73 whereas by this point in the year there would typically be c80 students with icollege so there will have been some reduction in income due to CV-19. As mainstream schools have been closed for a significant proportion of the academic year, there have been less referrals to icollege. The Headteacher advised that it was anticipated that from September there may be an influx of students going into Year 11 who may be referred to icollege, as during their Years 9 and 10, learners will have had significant disruption to their mainstream education.</p>	
3.4	<p>Whilst Governors understood the reasons behind the variances highlighted, <b>Governors asked</b> if there was a clear understanding of why the surplus forecast differed significantly from that forecast by the LA. The SBM advised that the difference was a result of how icollege was recording its funding. There was still some areas of disagreement and the SBM felt that there may be elements of double counting of income by the LA, although they were confident their figures were correct. The confusion had arisen as a result of the complexities of the funding structure and the way it is recorded across a number of codes. Both the LA and the SBM are now predicting a year-end surplus of £208,000. There are ever changing rules to the way the funding interacts between the HNB and SEN in terms of banding and changes to their systems. This results in "tweaks" to the amount paid compared to the amount invoiced. <b>Governors expressed concern</b> as to how they could be confident in the predictions throughout the year with this level of variation and whether the planned funding review would resolve the situation.</p>	
3.5	<p>The Headteacher advised that the main issue is the complexity of the funding of icollege. There were figures quoted in reports produced by the LA on how icollege would be funded from the HNB/Top Up and SEN funding but the basis of these calculations was unclear and icollege had not input to these. Likewise, it was not clear how the LA had arrived at the under/overspending on the HNB etc quoted in their reports. The figures quoted had not been reconciled to icollege figures. Given that icollege have detailed knowledge of its learners they would be in a better position to inform the LA figures, but there was little or no dialogue between the two. <b>Governors asked</b> if the Headteacher had asked the LA how their figures were arrived at. <b>Action: Headteacher to raise with LA how they arrived at the icollege funding figures quoted in their reports to HFG/Schools Forum.</b></p>	Headteacher FC 29.06.21
3.6	<p>The Chair of Governors advised that in relation to the Funding Review, Michelle Sancho had responded positively to the request that icollege Governors should be involved in the review process. She had advised that she was currently looking at the mechanics of the review and would then contact the Chair for further discussion of Governor involvement.</p>	
3.7	<p><b>3.2 Outstanding Debtors</b> The SBM had advised that Park House had agreed to pay c£9,000 this week for the two oldest outstanding invoices (From 2018 totalling £9221.20) and £8076.90 (Feb 2020). In addition a further £25,603 would be paid which related to invoices raised in 2020/21. In relation to the aged debt, these had been subject to discussion at FC's and despite being chased by icollege, had remained outstanding.</p>	
3.8	<p>An Internal Transfer of £1,144.50 from the HNB relating to January 2020 was outstanding and being investigated by WBC Accountancy. It was anticipated that this would be paid in either P12 or P13.</p>	
3.9	<p>The SBM advised that the majority of the remaining debtors which had been provisioned and related to 2020/21 would be paid by year-end and so there should not be as many which need to be carried</p>	

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Finance Committee (Virtual Meeting) Tuesday 16 March 2021 at 2pm		Actions												
3.10	<p>forward. Any that remained outstanding would be chased on a monthly basis. This would be easier once a member of staff who is clinically vulnerable is able to return to being office based as they will be able to assist with a number of finance tasks. <b>Governors asked</b> if there was any cause for concern over any of the larger debts being paid. The SBM advised that it was not anticipated that any would become bad debts.</p> <p><b>3.3 CV-19 related expenditure</b> This had been discussed under 3.1.</p>													
4.	<b>Funding Implications - Strategies</b>													
4.1	<p><b>4.1 Feedback from Schools Forum 8.03.21</b> The icollege funding review date is now January 2022 which means this would impact on the budget review for 2022/23. The Headteacher thought this had previously been timetabled for June 2021 but would need to go back and check.</p>													
4.2	<p>The HNB deficit in total over time is £4million, the shortfall for 2021/22 being £1.3million. There does not appear to be a plan on how to reduce this deficit although it is comparatively small compared to other LA's. The Chair advised that from his involvement with other Schools Forums, other LA's are heavily overspent and are generally underfunded centrally.</p>													
4.3	<p>icollege funding had been allocated for 2021/22 as follows:-</p> <table><tr><td></td><td>£</td></tr><tr><td>HNB Place Funding</td><td>660,000</td></tr><tr><td>HNB Top Up Funding</td><td>821,000</td></tr><tr><td>EHCP Learners</td><td>571,000</td></tr><tr><td>Outreach</td><td>61,000</td></tr><tr><td><b>Total</b></td><td><b>2,113,000</b></td></tr></table> <p>The above figures do not include top up funding received directly from schools. <b>Governors asked</b> how this compared to previous years. The Headteacher felt that it was slightly more and could represent a percentage increase. <b>Action: Confirm how 2021/22 funding above compares to previous years.</b> <b>Governors asked</b> if the Headteacher was broadly satisfied with the allocation. The Headteacher was relatively satisfied as the 2020/21 budget had been c£2.4million, which meant icollege would need to achieve an additional £330k in top up funding from schools which was realistic and achievable. If icollege has more than the base number of students then the LA will pay extra. <b>Governors discussed</b> that understanding how the LA calculates these figures was key to setting out an SLA. The basis of the funding being per place or per student and the ramifications of this was also discussed. The potential impact of Covid 19 on the number of referrals during 2021/22 especially Year 10 students going into Year 11 was discussed. There is no clear guidance as to whether these students will sit exams in the Summer Term 2022.</p>		£	HNB Place Funding	660,000	HNB Top Up Funding	821,000	EHCP Learners	571,000	Outreach	61,000	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,113,000</b>	
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4.4	<p><b>4.2 Exo Heads Funding Group 23.03.21</b> The Headteacher had attended this meeting earlier in the day which had discussed the transfer of funding from the DSG to the HNB. At an earlier HFG this had been set at 0.25% which was to be allocated to ASD support across West Berkshire. Then a further 0.25% was proposed as not all of the growth funding had been spend as the new school (Highdown Copse_ would not be open until September 2021. This had resulted in an additional £274,000 which the HFG had agreed could be allocated to the HNB. It had not however, been agreed what this should be used for. The SEN Team had produced a strategy for using the funding to support Emotionally Based School Avoidance learners through additional Education Phsycologist support etc. The HFG had agreed that the funding should not be allocated in this way until it knew if these learners represented the highest priority group, as the SEND Strategy had not been evaluated or there has been some feedback in terms of milestones and targets. A further meeting will take place once additional information is available.</p>	<p><b>Headteacher</b> <b>FC 20.04.21</b></p>												

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		Actions
	<b>4.3 Matters Arising from Exo FC 16.03.21</b>	
4.5	The minutes from the Exo FC would be circulated as soon as possible. There were no matters arising to discuss at this meeting. Governors noted that the Strategy Day would take place on 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2021.	
	<b>4.4 Catch up Funding – inc information for website</b>	
4.6	The Headteacher had produced a report for the website detailing how much Catch Up Funding Premium had been received and how it is being used. icollege would receive £15,840 split over three terms. The funding would be used to support blended learning alongside targeted support. KS4 and KS5 learners will receive a 10 week intensive programme of learning. A Science entry level qualification is being introduced for those learners who will not quite be ready for the GCSE. Additional practical Art time to support the production of coursework. Additional emotional support for learners via EHA and Counselling. Funding is also being used to provide additional IT support through additional hardware, kindles and surface Pro's. <b>Governors asked</b> in relation to the second bullet point under Main Aims, whether this should refer to "narrowing the gap" rather than "closing the gap". <b>Action:</b> Headteacher to consider amending wording.	Headteacher MC 30.03.21
4.7	<b>Governors asked</b> for further clarification as to how the £3,500 allocated to Quality of Teaching for All would be utilised. The Headteacher advised that this included CPD for staff and additional IT technical support for the IT Co-ordinator to support staff developing knowledge and skill in relation to on-line/remote learning, some of which had already taken place. <b>Governors asked</b> whether icollege qualified for Catch Up Funding in light of the year-end surplus forecast. The Headteacher clarified that unlike some of the funding for additional expenditure due to covid, the Catch Up funding was not dependent on the schools budget being in a deficit position.	
5.	<b>Budget Strategy 2021/22</b>	
5.1	The Main School Budget 2021/22 spreadsheet which had been circulated immediately before the start of the meeting was shared on screen. The SBM explained that the spreadsheet was the model budgeting tool provided by the LA. The forecast anticipated surplus at the end of 2021/22 is currently £80,587. This is using the carried forward surplus from this financial year currently forecast as being £208,000 although this may change with P12 and P13. The notes section explains how individual budget lines have been calculated. As Governors had not had chance to review the spreadsheet in advance of the meeting, it was agreed that it would be emailed to Governors with questions being raised with the SBM by email. <b>Action:</b> Forward 2021/22 Budget spreadsheets to Governors so questions can be raised by email.	Clerk/SBM asap All FC Governors FC 20.04.21
5.2	<b>Governors asked</b> if there is a carried forward surplus of £208,000 from 2020/21 but the year end surplus for 2021/22 is only £80,000, does this mean icollege is loosing £120,000 in year and what makes up the bulk of this anticipated loss. The SBM advised that the bulk of the difference will be from staffing costs as this accounts for £2,190,000 of the £2,700,000 total expenditure, however this did not mean that icollege would be overspending £120,000 on staffing. The Headteacher referred back to the discussion in 4.3 above and that as the total LA funding allocated was £2,113,000, icollege would need to be confident that it could make up the £600,000 shortfall from schools top up funding. The SBM explained that the budget had been set on a cautious basis given the impact of CV-19 on pupil numbers is uncertain. The Headteacher concurred that icollege was relying on its surplus from 2020/21 to in part cover expenditure the following year and that this could not continue year on year without changes to the fee structure. The SBM added that in addition the 3% increase in funding for 2021/22 had not been agreed.	
5.3	The Chair clarified that the budget would need to be discussed in detail at the next FC on 20 <sup>th</sup> April, so that it could be approved at the MC on 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2021. The date for submission of the approved budget to WBC was discussed with the Clerk advising that the deadline use to be 31 <sup>st</sup> May but had been brought forward by the LA to 1 <sup>st</sup> May for the last couple of years. The date of the MC on 27 <sup>th</sup> April had been set with this in mind, unless the LA have pushed the date back to 31 <sup>st</sup> May due to CV-19. <b>Action:</b> SBM to confirm deadline for submission of 2021/22 budget to WBC.	SBM FC 20.04.21

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6.	SFVS 2021/22	Actions
6.1	The Chair advised that he had met with the SBM to review the SFVS. A first draft would be circulated by the end of the week for Governors to comment on so that it can be approved at the FC on 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2021. <b>Action: Circulate draft SFVS for Governors to comment on and approve at FC on 20.04.21.</b>	<b>Finance Chair 29.03.21</b>
7.	<b>Policies</b>	
7.1	The Headteacher confirmed that the:- ICT and online security policy had been reviewed on 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2021; Driving at Work Risk Management policy had been reviewed 19 <sup>th</sup> March 2021. This is however a WBC model policy which was last updated in 2014; Smoke Free Policy reviewed 4 <sup>th</sup> March 2021.	
8.	<b>Any Other Urgent Business.</b>	<b>Actions</b>
8.1	<b>8.1 Thatcham Rotary Club "Friends of icollege" update</b> This had been covered under 2.2 above. The Headteacher added that there has not previously been an outside body willing to support icollege. If they are able to provide funding it would help provide enrichment activities over and above what LA funding can be used for such as providing a Christmas lunch for learners.	
8.2	<b>Transport for Learners</b> – The Headteacher advised that the Transport Team have expressed concerns over the level of transport used for icollege learners. Need was different this year due to CV-19 restrictions and the need for learners to travel in separate taxi's etc to accommodate these. She had arranged a meeting with the LA to discuss these concerns as a reduction in transport for learners would impact on attendance and therefore outcomes.	
9.	<b>Date and Focus of Next Meeting</b> – The next meeting is 20 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 6pm. The focus will be:- P12 Budget Monitoring Report and Year-end Outturn, Final 2021/22, Debtors – provisions/write offs, SFVS approval.	

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.06pm.

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