



## ST ALBAN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

*Love one another as I have loved you*

### **PART ONE**

#### **MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE ASSETS COMMITTEE**

**8 FEBRUARY 2022 at 1900 hours**

[draft: 11/02/22]

#### **PRESENT:**

**John McDonald [Headteacher]**

**Peter Matthews [Chair]**

**Kevin Doogan**

**Bernie Mooney.**

**Brigid Gribbin**

#### **Apologies/Absent:**

**Nicola Boyd, Bridget Pullen**

#### **In attendance:**

**Joanne Holmes, School Business Manager**

**Eileen Coyle, Clerk to Governors**

**Daniel Stenhouse, LA Bursar**

**PETER MATTHEWS in the CHAIR**

*The Chair invited everyone present to join in an opening prayer.*

### **1 PRELIMINARIES**

**1.1 INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME:** The Chair welcomed everyone to the Spring term meeting of the Assets Committee. He introduced the new School Business Manager, Joanne Holmes, and the LA Bursar, Daniel Stenhouse. He thanked Brigid Gribbin for responding to the invitation to all the Governors to join the meeting.

1.2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE were received from Nicola Boyd.

**RESOLVED:** To -

- i. consent to the absence of Nicola Boyd for the valid reason given;
- ii. note the absence of Bridget Pullen.

1.3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: The Governors declared that there were no changes to the Declarations of Interest made in Autumn 2021.

Having reviewed the agenda, the Governors confirmed that they had no personal, financial, contractual or prejudicial interest in any item on the agenda for to-day's meeting.

## 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS COMMITTEE on 18 NOVEMBER 2021.

The Chair invited the Committee to go through the minutes, page by page.

Kevin Doogan drew attention to an omission in the second sentence of minute 9, Reports, concerning the school's contribution to the cost of the decarbonisation of the lighting system.

The Headteacher explained that the LA and the Diocese had agreed to part-fund the change to LED lighting with a combined grant of £21,000. The grant would not be subject to the payment of 10% to the Diocesan Building Fund, or payment of VAT, therefore the school's contribution would be 0%.

The Headteacher advised that the Before/After school provision continued to thrive under the new staffing arrangements – the numbers had increased, and were averaging in the mid-20's each day. An additional member of staff had been employed to comply with pupil/staffing ratios.

A report by the SBM would be presented at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:** Unanimously, to confirm that the minutes of the Assets Committee on 18 November 2021 are a true and accurate record of the meeting.

## 3 FINANCIAL ASPECTS.

3.1 BURSAR'S FINANCIAL REPORT AND RECONCILIATION STATEMENT: The bursar's period 9 2021/22 provisional financial report had been submitted to the Committee ten days in advance of the meeting.

The data shown below has been extracted from the report.

In year balance –

**In year balance £121,741; Spend to date £607,411; Estimated spend £489,885; Total estimated spend £117,526; Balance £4,216 Deficit.**

**Including the sum of £317,495 in LMS reserve, a cumulative estimated balance of £313,021 CREDIT is predicted to be achieved at end 2021/22, a CREDIT of 312,862 in 2022/23; a CREDIT of £297,549 in 2023/24; and a CREDIT of £265,410 in 2024/25.**

The Headteacher stated that he expected the pupil numbers of next year to be similar to those of the previous two years, although he was optimistic that the numbers would increase due to this school being considered to be *'the best school in the area'*. However, the lack of a space within the school for use as a Nursery was a major stumbling block in attracting new pupils.

Responding to a governors' suggestion to use part of the Community Centre, the Headteacher explained that he had raised the matter with the Diocese who had explained that such use might create difficulties within the Parish. He would continue to explore the possibility of leasing part of the vacant building, Dominic House, for use as a nursery.

He advised that the development of the whole of the outdoor area towards the Parish Centre would enable the school to provide good quality outdoor provision for the children, but would necessitate the re-location of the staff car park.

Dialogue continued on parking issues, including changes in the management of the Cherry Trees car park; the possibility of parking outside the Victoria Health Centre when space is available at certain times during the day; creating a safe drop off and collection point for parents outside the school; the park and stride scheme and a walking bus.

The Committee rejected the suggestion of parking at Central Park as unworkable and agreed that an approach to Sports England would not be feasible because of the school's lack of access to a grassed area.

It was pointed out that parking was available at the walk in centre and at the back of Iceland. The local MP and councillors have been in touch with the community about Smart Parking.

**Bernie Mooney offered to try and obtain further information.**

The Headteacher thanked the Committee for their advice and suggestions and confirmed that he would continue to look at the various options.

The Bursar stated that the budget is still a 'work in progress' and at that stage, he did not intend to discuss the period 9 report in detail with the Committee.

He added that the Headteacher had taken on the bulk of the work of business manager but the appointment of a business manager means that his workload should now ease. It has been difficult to monitor the budget, but the school has a healthy credit and it does not change the bottom line.

**RESOLVED: To thank the Bursar for his period 9 report.**

**3.2 FORMULA CAPITAL. MAINTENANCE PRIORITIES:** The Headteacher reported that the main priority is the roof.

A plan is in place to replace the roof, in four stages, over the next four years. The first stage would cost around £53,000. The school will be liable for a contribution towards the Diocesan building fund.

The next priority would be to transform a corridor so there is a continuous flow-through for the children to access the outdoor area. This would entail partitioning off part of the corridor and installing two doors.

Although not a statutory requirement, the school has asked the LA to undertake a new asbestos survey. More advanced technology enables more asbestos to be identified, than previous surveys.

**3.3 SCHOOL FUND AUDIT:** The Headteacher explained that audit of the school fund had not been carried out for reasons that will become apparent when agenda items 4 and 5 have been addressed.

**3.4 CLOSURE OF HSBC ACCOUNT/TRANSFER OF SCHOOL FUND TO LA:** Difficulties in accessing the HSBC account had been experienced since the Liscard branch closed; the nearest branch is in Birkenhead. In addition, HSBC has begun charging a monthly fee regardless of whether the account is used, or not.

Following an audit of the account, the proposal is to transfer the balance of approximately £15,000 in the school fund to the main school budget using a separate ledger code.

The Bursar added that any purchases made through the budget would not be subject to VAT, and training would be provided for the staff on how to record expenditure and income etc.

**RESOLVED: unanimously – to authorise the closure of the HSBC account, and the transfer of the balance in the school fund to the school’s budget.**

**3.5 MOVE TO CASHLESS SCHOOL:** The SBM advised that all cash had been removed from the school.

The staff have a tendency to buy items for use in their classrooms, without prior authorisation and to claim reimbursement via petty cash. The staff would be given permission to use the school’s debit card for minor purchases in future, provided use of the card is kept to a minimum.

#### **4 SCHOOLS FINANCIAL VALUE STANDARDS**

The business manager advised that she is currently working on the questionnaire.

The Headteacher explained that one of the reasons for the SFVS is to ensure that the school is getting value for money.

The SBM is seeking three quotes for everything, for example, Printing. She is going through the Financial Value Standards and making sure that the Governors ask appropriate questions.

It is public money, and before signing off the SFVS, the Chair of Governors needs to be satisfied that the school has done everything it possibly can to ensure value for money, and that everything has been done appropriately.

The SBM reassured the Committee that everyone now fills in purchase orders and that nothing is getting through without checks.

The Bursar advised that under the terms of the SLA, schools have an entitlement to ask for help and support with the SLVA.

**RESOLVED:**       **To note that the Chair of Governors, the Headteacher and the SBM propose to meet with the Bursar to discuss the SLVA prior to submission to the LA by 31 March.**

## **5 SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS [SLAS]**

**5.1 SATISFACTION LEVEL WITH CURRENT SLAs:** The SBM reported that following a brief review of the current SLAs she was not convinced that they all offered the best value for money. She was working with the Headteacher on whether the school could get better deals.

The Headteacher explained that, last year, the school had committed to three years in some cases to qualify for a discount.

The Committee considered the report and recommendations contained in a written report by the SBM sent to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

In particular, the SBM justified the reasons for changing Asset Manager to an alternative provider, adding that significant savings could be achieved as a result. The Headteacher supported the SBM's recommendation for Printing on the grounds that although not the cheapest, it offered the best value for money.

The SBM outlined the advantages to be gained by having a cleaning audit as detailed in her report.

The SBM advised that Covid had been added to Staff Insurance this year at a cost of £1,600. A review would be carried out at the end of March to determine whether the additional cover can be removed.

The Headteacher advised that since 2011, the school's contract for toilets etc with PHS has been extended on a rolling contract basis and it has five years to run. The cost, £17,500 over five years, does not represent good value for money. The company charges for many tasks, eg. fitting hand dryers, which can be undertaken by the school. The company has been asked for a total breakdown of the services they should have provided over the past eleven years. A refund of £500 has already been received based on services not provided last year, in breach of the contract. The scrutiny would continue with a view to identifying further potential credits.

The proposal was to ask PHS to revert to the old contract next year, and to seek an alternative provider from 2023.

In each case where a change was recommended, the SBM had contacted other schools who use the service and, without exception, had received very positive feedback.

Derek Doogan stated that he found the SBM'S report on the SLAs to be very useful, and thanked her for producing it.

He enquired under Staff Insurance, whether Education Mutual would insure staff with a pre-existing medical conditions.

The SBM advised, and the Headteacher confirmed, that currently no member of staff has a pre-existing medical condition.

**RESOLVED: To thank the School Business Manager for her comprehensive report.**

## **6 LEASING – SCHOOL MINIBUS**

The Headteacher explained that the reason for exploring the possibility of leasing a minibus was to provide opportunities for the pupils to visit museums etc and to engage with the many cultural activities that are available on Merseyside; to provide a pick-up service for vulnerable children; to achieve savings in swimming transport costs and to transport children to football fixtures etc.

The SBM reported that three quotations had been received. She recommended a three-year lease for a 15/17 seater minibus at a cost of £4,740 per annum, to include full maintenance, MOT, mechanical repair and breakdown cover. It could be driven by anyone who has held a driving licence for two years. The preferred company is not asking for an up-front payment.

Responding to a suggestion by a governor of a partnership arrangement with other schools to share the cost, the Headteacher reported on a discussion with St Mary's College.

**No objections were raised by the Committee on the proposal to lease a minibus.**

## **7 SCHOOL FUND ACCOUNT**

The Headteacher advised that only one cheque from the school fund account had been issued, and no other spending had taken place, for some considerable time. The SBM had prepared the accounts for Audit.

The Bursar offered to collect the accounts on his next visit and to arrange for another bursar to carry out an independent audit.

## **8 PERSONNEL ASPECTS**

**8.1 STAFFING CHANGES – AUTUMN/SPRING.** The Headteacher advised that the post of School Business Manager had been filled, adding that she is doing a really good job and is ensuring that good systems are in place.

Arrangements had been made to cover the vacancy for teacher reported at the previous meeting, and to cover maternity leave.

An issue involving the long term absence of a staff member had been resolved. Other staff absences were Covid-related absences.

A teacher started maternity leave in January 2022, and it is too soon to expect notification of a return date. The salary costs of teachers on maternity leave are met from a fund managed by the LA; the school funds the replacement, the teacher is paid more than her replacement, therefore savings in salary costs have been achieved.

Three additional posts of mid-day assistant agreed at the previous meeting had been filled. .

A new Deputy Headteacher had been appointed and would take up the post after Easter.

**8.2 COVID-19 RELATED STAFF ABSENCES.** The Headteacher reported that the period November/December 2021, had been particularly difficult. Staff had to isolate because they or their children had tested positive for Covid. January was the most difficult in terms of cover staff when staff had been moved around internally and other adjustments had been made. It is really difficult to achieve the consistency the children need.

The indications are that Covid rates are going down nationally. Only one staff member is currently absent.

**8.3 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STAFF WORKLOADS AND WELLBEING:** The Headteacher reported that although staff morale remains high and there is evidence of a certain amount of tiredness. There is hopefulness that the end of the epidemic is in sight, and the country is approaching the endemic phase.

The focus on the Inset day on 19 February would be about getting together, forgetting about the issues and 'rebooting'.

The Headteacher paid tribute to the whole school staff, the majority of whom, without complaint, are doing '*over and above*' what they are normally required to do. Everyone has a common purpose which is to ensure that the children continue to receive the best education possible, to support them in every way and to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

The Headteacher added that he could not thank the staff enough for everything they have done and are continuing to do.

Bernie Mooney asked if it would be possible for a letter of thanks, perhaps from the Chair of Governors, to be sent to the staff, from the Governors.

**Kevin Doogan agreed to draft a letter to the staff and to share with the Headteacher to make sure that everything is covered.**

**8.4 THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE BUDGET:** The Headteacher reported that the spend of £35,000 was above the budget, but some of the additional costs had been offset by savings in other staffing costs.

## **9 PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

There were no Personnel Policies and Procedures specific to the Assets Committee for consideration at the meeting.

## **10 PREMISES AND GROUNDS**

**10.1 HEALTH & SAFETY ASPECTS.** The Headteacher was satisfied that premises and grounds had been covered in the discussion on the SLAs. There was nothing further to report.

## **11 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, 21 JUNE 2022 AT 7 PM.**

## **12 OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business had been notified in advance or raised at the meeting.

Prior to closing part one of the meeting, the Headteacher thanked the Bursar for his assistance with the budget, and also Julie from the school office who had worked with the Bursar, and had been of valuable assistance to the school during the time the SBB post remained unfilled.

**Kevin Doogan agreed to action the Committee's suggestion to send a thank you letter to Julie for stepping up and doing tasks she would not do in a normal working day.**

*The meeting continued in closed session.*



**PART TWO**

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF  
THE ASSETS COMMITTEE**

**8 FEBRUARY 2022**

**PRESENT:** John McDonald [Headteacher]  
Peter Matthews [Chair]  
Kevin Doogan  
Bernie Mooney.  
Brigid Gribbin

**Apologies/Absent:** Nicola Boyd, Bridget Pullen

**In attendance:** Eileen Coyle, Clerk to Governors

**PETER MATTHEWS in the CHAIR**

**13 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ASSETS COMMITTEE on 18  
NOVEMBER 2021.**

The minutes of the meeting on 18 November had been sent to the Committee in advance.

**RESOLVED:** Unanimously, to confirm that the part two minutes of the Assets Committee on 18 November 2021 are a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The Chair thanked everyone and closed the meeting at 2030 hours.