



**ALFRED SUTTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Minutes of the Virtual Meeting of the Resources Co-ordination Committee**  
**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2023. 7pm**

**Present: Adedayo Benson (Chair); Robert Howell; Dave Dymond; Attia Rafiq-Sharif; Andrew Burrell; Kate Gordon; Hajar Alami; Zoe Watling.**

**Apologies: Yota Dimitriadi.**

**In Attendance: Alice de Croos; Vincent Onuchi.**

**Clerk: Deborah Savage**

<b>Agenda Item</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies.</b> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting – especially Zoe and Vincent who were attending their first Resources meeting. Apologies had been received in advance from Yota and these were accepted.
<b>2</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest.</b> There were no declarations of interest made.
<b>3</b>	<b>Part 1 &amp; 2 minutes of the meeting held 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022.</b> Parts 1 & 2 minutes of the last meeting held on November 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2022 had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the committee was given the opportunity to ask for any errors to be corrected. The minutes were accepted as a true record and <b>ACTION: Will be signed in GovernorHub by the chair as soon as possible.</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Review of Actions and Matters Arising.</b> The actions from the last meeting were reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It will not be possible to keep the modular if it is needed at another local school – there is currently no date arranged for its removal from site.</li><li>• The edits to policies that were agreed have been done and the CCTV system has been serviced.</li></ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>3rd Quarter Revenue Report.</b> A report on the 3rd Quarter Revenue along with accompanying notes had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the SBM spoke about the main points. <u>Teachers</u> A pay agreement for teachers was agreed at 5% across the board, with higher increases to the lower scale points. The pay increase was backdated to 1 September 2022 and paid in the November pay. At budget setting, the school had predicted a 4% inflationary pay rise.

A large proportion of ASPS teaching staff took industrial action on 1 February, and we are expecting further disruption on the 1st and 15-16th March. The unions have already declined a 5% inflationary pay award for September 2023, so it is difficult to predict pay rises for 2023/2024. The school are expecting further guidance from HR and the finance team to help us set a pay rise allowance in next year's budget.

There are currently three teachers on Maternity leave, with one returning on the 15 February.

One member of the SLT is now on a phased return to work, and another is currently signed off on long term sick leave.

The Year 1 vacancy has been filled by a strong candidate, who is due to commence employment with us on 6 March.

The school has an underspend in the teacher's budget line due to the resignation of our ICT lead at Easter, who did not have a class teacher responsibility, and whom the school did not replace on a like for like basis.

#### Support Staff

Inflationary pay rises for support staff were eventually agreed at an increase of £1925 on each scale point, and an extra days holiday from 1 April 2023 – the biggest increase for several years. Despite this, in real terms, support staff continue to be significantly underpaid for the skills and competencies required for the job, and we have had 7 resignations this financial year. Three members of staff have been internally promoted and are all thriving in their new roles.

Two key staff members have been on long term sick leave, but are now back - albeit to reduced hours or reduced responsibilities. Their absence was very impactful on the school.

We have just filled our vacancy for 1 EYP with a strong candidate which is very pleasing but we still have vacancies for 3 LTC's, as well as the Midday Supervisor post which is being covered by Taz C. We are awaiting HR advice before we can advertise this post. The NJC have requested a pay claim for 2023/24 of RPI + 2% so roughly 12.5% overall. The NJC claim that support staff have lost an average of 25% from the value of their pay scales since 2010. In 11 of the last 12 years, NJC pay awards have fallen below average pay awards for all sectors of the economy. This, coupled with the cost-of-living crisis is impacting significantly on recruitment and retention, especially as the national unemployment rates have reduced. This is an issue affecting schools across the country.

**Governor Comment:** I raised the issue of regional pay allowances with the Director of Education and RBC seem receptive to this. We will await an outcome.

#### **Energy**

RBC were fortunate to have secured energy for 2023/24 that is priced at 86% below market value, however we are expecting this to rise exponentially in the next financial year and have been advised to budget for a 95% increase in gas and 50% increase for electricity. It will impact on our ability to complete large scale projects next financial

year. This will mean that our annual bill for electricity will be in the region of £38K and gas will be about £43K – which are huge amounts.

#### **Water**

There is an overspend in the water budget line. In January we received a water bill for £27500. Upon investigation with the company, it emerged that since February 2020 we had only been billed for 2 of the 5 water meters on site. After a lot of negotiation, the company agreed to decrease this to £12000, and we are expecting to settle this bill this month.

#### **Bought In Professional Services**

We have an overspend in this line due to support we've had to buy in for some of our high needs pupils including Alternative Provision and specialist bought in services. Most recently we have purchased an emotional literacy package where a therapist attends the school for one full day a week, and supports children with emotional trauma, including 5 children who have lost a parent over recent months.

**Governor Question:** How are you managing to cover the roles of those on long-term sick leave? It has been tricky. We try not to use supply teachers which cost around £195 a day. The school does have insurance which equates to a payment of £100 a day but this only kicks in after a person has been off sick for 10 days and staff often return to work after fewer days absent. Where we use our own staff to cover lessons this does impact on the planned interventions to support children. We could seek a quote to change our insurance policy to reduce the number of days absence before it pays out – but this would be at a more expensive premium. **ACTION:** seek a quote for insurance to pay out after 5 days absence. If there is not much difference in the premium cost this may be beneficial.

*(19.10 – at this point Attia joined the meeting)*

**Governor Question:** The income lines for funding for ethnic minority pupils and for donations are empty – do we not receive any funds? We do yes – they are distributed by the LA are included within the delegated funds income line. We received an additional grant of £6250 and also a payment for some newly arrived Ukrainian pupils and a small grant to support our ECTs training.

**Governor Question:** Can I ask the nature of the conditions that the staff on long term sick leave had – were they physical conditions or were the absences due to stress related issues? Two absences were due to serious physical medical conditions and their long periods of absence were very impactful.

**Governor Question:** Are you finding that increasing numbers of staff are taking sick leave due to stress? Governors will know that our SDP now includes well being and our intention to upskill our staff to handle mental health concerns - to recognise and support their own mental health. We aim to empower our staff and work in partnership with them to support mental health and wellbeing. Post-Covid, education is in a very different place to where it was a few years ago and we are trying to support our staff adapt to the new challenges and ways of working.

**Governor Question:** You mentioned that the rise in pay will impact on major projects – what are these projects that will be affected? Pay increases and also increased energy costs will impact on our ability to fund major projects. We need to improve the Wi-Fi around school and have a quote for this for £27K. There may be grant funding we can apply for to assist with funding this project and we are investigating this funding. We have invested heavily in funding resources for the new curriculum over the last few years so feel we are in a strong position here fortunately.

**Governor Question:** What is your procedure for large investments? For any project over £15K we have to obtain 3 quotes. The quote we currently have for the Wi-Fi improvements is from our IT support company Turn IT On. We will see if we are able to apply for a grant and seek an additional 2 quotes.

**Governor Question:** there are schemes to reimburse customers for any energy not used – are you expecting any reimbursement? No. We buy our energy via RBC who negotiated a rate pre-crisis, and this means that RBC as a whole will save £5 million against the current energy market rates. They are currently negotiating with our supplier – West Mercia Energy – for next year's energy which we expect to rise in cost but to still be below market value.

**Governor Question:** You mentioned you are waiting for RBC HR advice about the Lunchtime Supervisor role and the delay in advertising this post which has been ongoing for some time now. Can you update us please? Our temporary supervisor has stepped up and is doing a good job and will continue to do so until the Easter break. We do intend to advertise and hope that there will be a resolution by Easter.

**Governor Question:** Have we, as a school, fully explored all energy saving options we might implement? We have been told to expect an additional capital grant of around £23K which we must spend on energy efficient measures. We are expecting this grant soon along with a visit from an energy efficient advisor at RBC to discuss how best to spend this. We will take advice in this area, and this might include spending on LED lighting or upgraded doors. We will work to obtain best value from this additional funding.

**Governor Question:** Can you explain in more detail what happened with the Water bill please? Historically we paid about £200 a month for water, but in January received a bill for £27K. The school changed its water supplier in February 2020. The new company were informed we have 5 water meters on site, but only billed us for 2 of these. We did have a major water leak some years back too. The bill has been reduced to £12K and we expect that billing will be straightforward from now on. RBC will monitor the water expenditure of all schools moving forward.

**Governor Question:** Will the company allow a payment plan as this bill is so large? I think they would be open to that but the school would rather sort this out now and pay it in this financial year so it does not carry over.

<p><b>6</b></p>	<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Capital Report.</b></p> <p>A report on the 3rd Quarter Capital budget had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the SBM spoke about the main points.</p> <p>£15K had been spent from the capital budget to part fund new interactive whiteboards and the remaining £2140 balance would be carried forward. In addition, around £23000 additional capital funding is expected soon following the Government announcement in Autumn term. We must spend this grant on energy efficiency, and the school will work with RBC to understand how best to spend this sum in the next financial year.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Benchmarking.</b></p> <p>Governors were reminded that benchmarking is a key part of the SFVS (Schools Financial Value Standards) exercise and that governors must look at their school compared to other similar schools and consider the reasons behind any marked differences and if there are any areas that need a closer examination.</p> <p>The link to Alfred Sutton’s benchmarking pages had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the SBM shared her screen with the meeting to be able to talk governors through some of the key spending areas. It was noted that the financial data is more up to date than in previous years as it does include last year’s financial data. The comparison is made against 15 schools all with similar characteristics to ASPS in terms of pupil cohort / FSM children/ EAL children / SEND numbers etc.</p> <p>The system uses a colour code to place a school’s performance against other comparative schools and ASPS is mostly “green” (performs in line with/slightly better than other schools). For example, we perform well in our spend on supply staff for reasons discussed earlier in the meeting. ASPS has no “red” markers and the only “amber” area for ASPS is spending on Educational Support. The SBM outlined the reasons for this to the Governors. One reason why ASPS shows a higher level of spending in this area is that we staff our Early Years provision above the legal minimum ratios as the school knows that many children are below expected when they join us, and the hope is that this gap will be closed before they enter Year 1. The school also use a phonics programme that is staff resource heavy and the school also run planned interventions throughout the day to support children who need it – which also requires a higher level of staff. The school also has 4 pupils with significant need who require 1:1 support all of which combined means a higher spend on Education Support.</p> <p>Whilst the school does save on Supply costs – which are lower than many schools, using support staff to cover lessons does impact planned interventions to support children who need extra help.</p> <p>Governors were informed that the nature of recent admissions to the school – children with a high level of need including some that should be in special schools means that the school needs to have a flexible workforce to be able to respond fast to in-year arrivals with additional needs. There was some discussion that wondered if the school was being unfairly penalised within this dashboard system as the higher spend was</p>

	<p>necessary to support the cohort of children attending the school. It was noted that the “amber” category is not a punishment but is indictive. The school can explain the higher spend and offer context for it. ASPS currently has 85 children with a SEND need and 4 of these have EHCPs in place. RBC has run out of money to fund EHCPs – they have a massive deficit which needs DfE intervention. It is getting much harder to secure additional funding for children with higher levels of need. Mid-year transfer children often arrive with a SEND need – sometimes we don’t know about this in advance. We now have a higher number of children with high levels of need and this is staffing resource heavy.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Is it possible to see evidence of the spend on higher staffing levels in the early years working? Do we know it is having an impact? We know that it is and can demonstrate this from the achievement data – children mainly arrive at “below expectations” and at the end of their Reception year are mainly judged at GLD (Good level of Development). By Year 6 they are on average “above expectations” so through out their journey at ASPS they make good progress. The number of SEND children are rising but also within this the number of high needs children is also rising.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> How can we secure more funding for this work? As previously discussed, RBC has run out of money for this, but we continue to argue our case. We do keep data that demonstrates our spend and our success rates but funding for SEND is a national problem. We continue to raise this with the RBC Director of Education and discuss it amongst the Reading Head teacher network.</p>
8	<p><b>Bought-In Services (SLA).</b></p> <p>A document outlining the bought-in services had been circulated to governors prior to the meeting but governors were informed that the cost of these services for 23/24 from RBC had not yet been sent to the school. The costs given on the circulated document were this years prices plus a 5% inflationary marker. There were no changes proposed to the services the school buys in – no additional services are planned and none will be cancelled.</p> <p>The SBM explained that the Property Services package involves RBC Property Services organising and paying for all of the statutory and routine works that we legally have to carry out on an annual basis. This includes things like servicing the fire alarm, gas safety, emergency lighting and fire extinguishers. It also involves checking the playground and gym equipment are safe, legionella testing and H&amp;S legislation compliance. The Caretakers Property SLA is for anything that goes wrong with the caretakers flat, for example they’ve recently fixed a leak in the roof.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Are there any services which you feel you do not get value for money? HR has not been great in the past but it has improved in the last 12months and we do need to use this service often.</p>

	<p><b>Governor Question:</b> Inflation is a big issue currently – can we put pressure on suppliers not to pass on inflation costs to customers? Since these services come from RBC – who we have mentioned are running a deficit in some areas – I don't think we will be able to negotiate this – they will pass on inflation increases to us.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> We use Judicium – do we get policies from them? They provide us with our Data Protection Officer and policies in this area, yes.</p>
9	<p><b>SFVS.</b></p> <p>The meeting was informed that the annual SFVS needs to be completed and submitted by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Completing this is the Governing Board's responsibility. It takes around an hour to complete and involves a deeper dive into benchmarking and answering a number of multiple-choice questions. This is best done in person in school and will result in a financial Risk Assessment being given.</p> <p>Two governors volunteered to do this (AB and AB) and it was suggested that the week beginning 20<sup>th</sup> March would work well. <b>ACTION:</b> SBM / AB /AB to liaise over dates/times by email to confirm a date.</p>
10	<p><b>Policies for Adoption.</b></p> <p>Four policies for adoption had been circulated in advance of the meeting – all were based on model polices from RBC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Managing Poor Performance – <b>DECISION: Adopted.</b></li> <li>b) Staff Disciplinary Procedure – <b>DECISION: Adopted</b></li> <li>c) Staff Code of Conduct – <b>DECISION: Adopted</b></li> <li>d) Financial Procedures Manual – it was noted that a minor typo had been spotted and fixed. <b>DECISION: Adopted.</b></li> </ul>
11	<p><b>Wellbeing &amp; Equality.</b></p> <p>The Chair asked the HT for an update on wellbeing and the meeting was informed that the school have an action plan that they are working through. The recent survey results indicated that children are happy in school and that parents are supportive of the school and the work it is doing. The fact that Ofsted have not yet visited the school is both good and bad – as staff are anticipating the visit. The impact of the recent loss of a Reading primary HT has been substantial across the whole community. Ofsted have returned to visit some Reading schools. There have been minor illnesses in school but not enough to cause mass absences. The children remain positive and motivated to learn – they tell staff they enjoy the depth of curriculum the school offers.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> we know that the understaffing at lunchtime has had an impact of staff and that you are awaiting the go-ahead to advertise the Midday supervisor role. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to support you. Thank you for all that you do in challenging circumstances.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Can we organise a staff &amp; governor lunch again – it would be good to introduce the new governors and show governor support for the whole staff? <b>ACTION:</b> SBM to look at suitable date and put in the calendar for a lunch.</p>

	<p><b>Governor Question:</b> This is a question for our two new governors – how are you getting on settling into your new roles? One new governor responded that she has done lots of reading and was coming to terms with all the acronyms used in Education. Another new governor commented that he realised it was a long journey learning all that he needed to know as a school governor but that he was pleased to take on the challenge and get to know more about his community and education as a whole.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> The committee chair noted that the CoG is outside school every day for the School Streets scheme, and he was thanked for this valuable contribution. It was also noted that any all questions are welcomed in governor meetings – there are no “stupid” questions.</p>
12	<p><b>Training.</b></p> <p>The Clerk drew governor attention to a number of training courses that are coming up over the next few months including new governor training. <b>ACTION:</b> Clerk to email dates/times of new governor training to the two new governors.</p>
13	<p><b>Issues for Parents/FGB/Confidentiality.</b></p> <p>There were no issues to be reported to parents/FGB and none of a confidential nature requiring part 2 minutes.</p>
14	<p><b>Any Other Business.</b></p> <p>It was noted that the next Pay committee meeting is scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> March.  <b>ACTION:</b> SBM / Clerk / Pay chair to liaise over this date to confirm/change it.</p> <p>The clerk reminded the meeting that there is a PEC meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> March by which time <b>ACTION:</b> reports from governor visits into school to discuss subjects and talk to children should be ready for discussion.</p> <p><u>Strike action.</u></p> <p>The meeting was informed that the school had a robust plan for strike day (which was shared with governors) and that the school had capacity for 140 children to attend school on 1<sup>st</sup> February. There were 38 children in school on the day – the most vulnerable FSM children. Governors offered there assistance if it was needed on future strike days and it was noted that it is hard to plan in advance as the number of staff on strike is not accurately known until the day. For the strike day held recently, the school was over-staffed for the number of children in school, but this may change. Losing pay will have a bigger impact on younger staff. Governor assistance is not needed at the moment, but the school would ask for assistance from Governors if it was needed.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> I spoke to the picket line and it was friendly – but this may alter during future action.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Is it possible that the HT may strike? The HT informed the meeting that he (and the SBM) are members of a different union whose ballot of members did not result in a vote to strike.</p> <p>It was also noted that the RCC meeting held in April 2022 had been a daytime meeting in school which made budget setting discussions more straightforward. <b>ACTION:</b> SBM/RCC chair to discuss time of next RCC meeting.</p>



<b>15</b>	Date of Next Meeting: 19 <sup>th</sup> April 2023 – time to be confirmed.
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Meeting closed: 20.17pm

**New Actions:**

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Owner:</b>
Part 1 & 2 Minutes of meeting 2nd November to be signed in GovHub	AB
Seek quote for teacher absence insurance to pay out sooner	AdC
Date for SFVS to be completed to be arranged	AdC/AB/AB
Staff/Governor lunch date to be arranged	AdC
New Governor training dates to be distributed	Clerk
Pay committee meeting date/time TBC	AdC/Clerk/AB
Governors to meet staff/pupils in school and write report for PEC 29/3/23	ALL
Time of next RCC meeting to be confirmed	Clerk/AB/AdC

**Governor Attendance at RCC Meetings 2022/23 (two meetings to date)**

Robert Howell	2 of 2 meetings
Dave Dymond	2 of 2 meetings
Adedayo Benson	2 of 2 meetings
Yota Dimitriadi	1 of 2 meetings
Attia Rafiq-Sharif	2 of 2 meetings
Andrew Burrell	2 of 2 meetings
Kate Gordon	2 of 2 meetings
Hajar Alami	2 of 2 meetings
Alice de Croos	2 of 2 meetings
Zoe Watling	1 of 1 possible meeting
Vincent Onuchi	1 of 1 possible meeting