



**ALFRED SUTTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Resources Coordination Committee**  
**Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021. 7pm**

**Present:** Faruq Bilbe (Chair); Robert Howell; Adedayo Benson; Dave Dymond; Dave Close; Ian Church.

**In Attendance:** Alice de Croos

**Apologies:** Rachel Lawson; Laura Kerr; Yota Dimitriadi

**Clerk:** Deborah Savage

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>NOTE: This meeting was held virtually in line with government pandemic guidance during lockdown#3.</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies.</b>  Apologies had been received from Rachel, Laura and Yota and these were accepted. Th Chair sought permission from those present to record the meeting for the purposes of the minutes and this was given. The meeting was recorded.
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest.</b>  There were no declarations of interest. Governors were reminded to declare a conflict of interest should one arise.
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020.</b>  These minutes had been circulated in advance of the meeting. Actions were reviewed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The spreadsheet error had been corrected and a correct version posted to GovHub.</li><li>• Skills Audit – <b>OUTSTANDING</b> – not yet been circulated to Governors.</li><li>• Crescent Under 5's is an item on this meeting agenda.</li><li>• No one came forward to discuss taking the Resources Chair.</li><li>• FGB was informed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter financial reports had been approved.</li></ul> The minutes were agreed to be true record. They will be signed as soon as Covid restrictions allow.
<b>4</b>	<b>Matters Arising.</b>  <b>There we no matters arising.</b>

5

**3rd Quarter Financial review: Revenue and Capital.**

Revenue.

The Revenue report along with accompanying notes had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the SBM talked the meeting through the main points. The SBM informed the meeting that she had hoped to have a fairly certain idea of the Carry Forward figure by this time in the financial year but there remains much uncertainty particularly in the claw backs for the Early Years grants and for FSM.

The country went into Lockdown#3 in January and nursery provisions were supposed to remain open but, as a school, for the sake of our staff, ASPS decided to open only to keyworker and vulnerable children. There was no guidance about the funding implications of doing this at the time. In mid-January there was unconfirmed information that we may only be allowed to claim funding for those children who were attending the nursery in Lockdown#3 and not for the other 50+ children who we were supporting remotely. This meant a potential loss of income of £90K. We looked at how we could safely manage wider opening by using some classroom space from other phases, using “bubbles” and additional staffing from the Reception team. We had no option but to offer a place to all families in Nursery but only 9 took up this offer. The guidance says we could claim a head count as long as we offered a place regardless of whether that place is taken up, so we are lucky as we have ensured Covid security and made a full head count claim. However, Kate Reynolds, Director of Education at RBC has said that the LA will look at the whole sector and may be asking schools to reduce their claim. We understand that the LA has to finalise the census returns to the government on 25<sup>th</sup> February.

Payments recorded on the Teacher line include pay rises and two additional R&R payments made to staff who have made significant contributions during the Covid situation.

The school was very pleased with the appointments made and 5 new staff are settling in very well. The Caretaker is supporting our Site Manager who has been doing the roles unaided for almost a year. We have 4 new LSAs, one in nursery, one to support a SEND child and two to do Covid catch-up. All of these are temporary contracts until the end of the academic year.

We have two members of staff on long term sick leave, which we are managing through our Absence Management Policy. We have successfully applied for furlough for one member of staff who is shielding. The criteria for claiming furlough are very limited.

Premises.

We are expecting a very large over-spend in the cleaning line. We had cleaners on site all day for some time, but this has been reduced to a daily 4 hours. Additional costs have been incurred for “fogging” (sterilising of rooms where we have had positive

cases). The costs of cleaning consumables have also increased. We need to think carefully about our plans for premises cleaning in the new financial year.

The energy billing issues reported to you in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter reports have now been resolved.

#### Catering.

Our caterers Chartwells had sought a PPN notice which ensured that they still got paid during the first lockdown. We have just paid that invoice for £12,445. We have sought clarification from RBC to try to find out what this period of lockdown is going to cost us. For children receiving free school meals (80 in school) we have had to buy the food hampers from them at a cost of £15 a week. We have now moved to the National Voucher scheme and are processing claims of about £1200 a week. We don't yet know if there will be any clawback on this.

There will be an under spend on educational supplies due to two long periods of lockdown. We have bought 7 new staff laptops to support staff working from home to deliver remote learning.

#### Income.

Our UIFSM grant has been less than anticipated but we have received £13K more in PP funding than we were expecting. The government's Covid catch-up funding has gone straight to staffing costs for our additional LSAs and there is talk, yet to be confirmed, that this funding might continue.

We had planned to re-start our lettings but have been unable to since the latest lockdown. We have good relationships with two of our lettings who would like to return when it is possible. We have already started discussing staffing and budget for next year. We are looking hard at our staffing model and are using temporary contracts to ensure we appoint the very best people. Anxiety management is a big part of both the Head's and SBM's role now. Whilst anxiety is understandable, it is exacerbated by some staff with long periods of absence. We are taking HR advice on the management of some staff.

**Governor Question: Where are with the planned maintenance that was identified by the whole site survey?** Some of this work will be done over the February half term break. This includes lagging to the Year 1, Year 6 and SEND blocks. There is also a door and window survey to take place over the February half term.

**Governor Question: You mentioned issues with long staff absences. Do we have agency staff coming in to cover and how are we managing this risk if we do?**

We have not yet reached the stage where we need agency staff. We don't have lots of absent staff, more a few staff with long absences. Most of our staff are in on a two to three week rota, working from home otherwise.

	<p><b>Governor Question:</b> The staff with the long absence periods – was this from before Covid started? Yes – but exacerbated by anxiety caused by Covid. Since March last year we have been through the Risk Assessment process with a number of staff so we know what each individual situation is.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> If staff absences are Covid related, we need to make sure we are doing what we can to support them. In a small number of staff we are talking about Covid-based anxiety. Some staff have ongoing health conditions which we are working with HR and Occupational Health to manage.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Is the number of staff we are talking about manageable? Do we have a staffing resources problem? No.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> The Governors unanimously approved the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Revenue Report.</p> <p><u>Capital.</u></p> <p>The only change to the Capital budget report since the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter has been expenditure on an additional CCTV camera to cover an area of the carpark that was not covered previously. We have also installed a sounder in the Crescent Under 5s building for the lockdown alarm. We are not anticipating spending any more of the Capital grant this year so we expect a carry-forward of £14, 655.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> this is well within our 3 year cycle.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> the Governors unanimously approved the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Capital Report.</p>
6	<p><b>School Fund Audit.</b></p> <p>The School Fund account review and a report for 2019/20 had been circulated in advance to Governors.</p> <p>The school fund has now been audited and a report received from the auditor, Linda Stokes. The SBM and Virginia (Finance officer) are due to spend time with the auditor on Zoom going through the recommendations in the report. Feedback we have had stated that there was a huge improvement in the accounts and record keeping for the year 2019/20 over previous years. We had invested in training for Virginia who had taken on the Finance Officer role when Alice became SBM and Virginia is learning quickly and is a support for Alice.</p> <p>The accounts show a loss due to the cancelation of the Year 6 residential that should have taken place in October 2021. We could not get a refund from the company so have booked for 2022 for the current year 5's. We have refunded the parents who had paid for the 2021 trip and will be receiving funds in the future for the next trip.</p>

	<p>Whilst there are no physical trips at the moment, we have had virtual trips to Windsor Castle, the British Museum and to Warburton’s bakery.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> No major recommendations or queries from the auditor? No – we have made good progress and Virginia has worked hard to get the accounts sorted out.</p> <p><b>Governors noted the School Fund Account had been independently audited.</b></p>
7	<p><b>Review of Buy-back services.</b></p> <p>A document outlining the renewal of Buy-back services had been circulated in advance to Governors.</p> <p>The SBM explained to Governors that the document lists the services that the school buys-back from RBC along with a few additional services from other providers. The Head and SBM have reviewed these and do not want to make any changes. The school is considering looking at alternatives for HR services for the future however as they do not feel they get good support from Reading. The school recognises that it needs careful consideration however – the school adopts RBC’s policies and perhaps their levels of service have been hit by Covid. They have proved hard to get hold of and slow to respond when the issues the school contacts them about are usually quite urgent.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> It might worth feeding your experience back to RBC as they have a new head of department there now. Things might improve in the coming financial year.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> In the past, the issue of re-tendering the cleaning contract has been raised. We are very pleased with our cleaning company who have provided a great service during Covid. They are accessible, including over the weekends and keep their prices as low as they can. We value their speed and flexibility in responding to Covid issues.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> there will not be much room to manoeuvre in the costs of cleaning – it is doubtful will get much of a saving elsewhere. It may be good practise to re-tender a big contract like that on a regular basis such as every 3 years. Chances are, you would retain the same company even after the hassle of a tendering process.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> Governors approved the buy-back services as proposed by the school.</p>
8	<p><b>Benchmarking.</b></p> <p>The SBM had prepared a presentation on Benchmarking which she used the Zoom “screen-share” feature to share with everyone on the meeting call.</p>

The SBM talked the Governors through the main points of the Benchmarking exercise she had carried out. On January 28<sup>th</sup> the DfE loaded the latest data from Maintained schools (2019/20) and Academies (2018/19) on to the site. There are some improvements to the site which include the ability to rank by pupil progress which is how data shared at this meeting will be ranked. ASPS makes every funding decision with pupil progress in mind.

When choosing comparison schools, the site looks at the phase, location, number of pupils on roll, % of FSM and per-pupil expenditure.

From the chosen comparative schools, ASPS is third top in terms of progress. However, compared to the most similar school to ASPS, ASPS performed much better. Both schools above ASPS were judged “Outstanding” in their last Ofsted inspection.

On the Teacher Expenditure and Senior Leadership Expenditure tables however, ASPS is at the top, which means we need to consider if our current model is sustainable particularly as the M1 pay scales for teachers are about to rise. We need to consider if the benefits from a high teacher/pupil ratio are sustainable.

**Governor Question:** How many M1 teachers do we have? Only one at the moment - although other grades will rise in comparison.

With regard to Educational Support staff ASPS is mid table – others spend at a higher rate than us. The tables comparing FTE whole school workforce against head count show us that ASPS has a higher number of part time workers than other schools. Perhaps we need to consider if the higher number of part time contracts impacts our pupil progress. There is a wider issue regarding the low pay rates of support staff generally and their ability to afford child care costs which limits the hours they work. Perhaps we need to consider incentives such as free wrap-around care to encourage longer working hours? Is there room for improvement on career progression for support staff too?

An issue that Covid has highlighted is the cost in terms of human admin time that managing the Covid situation has had.

**Governor Question:** Does the headcount figure include lunchtime staff? Yes – it includes everyone.

**Governor Comment:** We did at one point try to use our staff to cover lunchtime supervision, but it was unfair on them.

ASPS expenditure on educational supplies is towards the bottom half of the table. However, the data does raise some questions. Some schools may not be coding their expenditure accurately.

ASPS is low on the income generation table too. Both the schools at the top of the comparative table are Teacher Training Centres and both run their own wrap-around

care provision. In-house wrap around care is something the school would like to explore in the future – both to improve provision but also to raise some income. The SBM informed the Governors that in the summer term 2021 she intends to look into Integrated Curriculum and Financial Planning. The DfE is now strengthening its emphasis on the links between this and effective resource management and sustainability. The DfE have created a Primary Workbook to assist schools and there are some free training webinars at the moment too. These are also available to Governors.

**Governor Question:** We can go on the bench marking website ourselves too? Yes. It might be a good idea for Governors to do some digging into this and the two comparison schools highlighted.

**ACTION:** SBM to send Clerk the presentation and links to share with Governors.

**Governor Question:** When looking at criteria, are there any other wider criteria? Progress is a welcome new criteria. Future plans include a recommended spend per head on certain things rather than just comparative figures.

**Governor Question:** What about health or behaviour? These are not measured really – you would look at staff absence to get a sense of the well being of a school.

**Governor Comment:** Over the last few years we have used a particular staffing model to get us to where we are now. Moving forward we need to consider what we do with the legacy of that staffing model. We need to reflect on the next stage of our journey and what we need to put in place to reach that. We need to consider how we move colleagues on to posts of promotion and how we inwardly promote to fill gaps.

**Governor Comment:** Other benchmarking areas might be how successful remote learning was.

**Governor Comment:** Discussions have been had already about our top-heavy staffing structure and how we move forwards from this. Benchmarking gives you some ideas about how schools arrange their staffing models and how they deliver an enriched curriculum.

The SBM reminded the meeting that for every decision made (perhaps to appoint a new teacher) there needs to be a compensatory decision (no new set of classroom laptops) as it not possible to fund everything. We need to consider how we change our staffing model in such as way to ensure we cause no huge detrimental effects.

**Governor Comment:** you want some of your senior teachers to move on and to consolidate some support staff into longer working hours.

	<p>There are opportunities to improve the annual reviews of support staff to improve their opportunities for career progression internally.</p> <p><b>Governor Comment:</b> The whole Covid experience has shown lots of companies too, in addition to schools, that HR has become bigger in emphasis recently and we are maybe approaching the time when schools need an HR appointment internally. Yes – certainly the Head and SBM roles have had a big element of HR focus now which has been exacerbated with Covid but we can't afford an HR post on our own.</p>
9	<p><b>SFVS</b></p> <p>The SBM informed the meeting that the SFVS needs to be submitted to the LA, along with the budget, by 30th April. The Governors on this committee also need to complete a skills audit and the SFVS document needs to be reviewed by Governors before it is submitted. This can be done as a working group.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> skills audit to be sent to Governors ASAP.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> date for working group meeting to be fixed – in early March.</p> <p>The Chair asked for volunteers to be part of the working group to review the SFVS.</p> <p><b>Governor Question:</b> Can you explain what this is please? It is like a mini-internal audit where Governors look at the school's financial procedures to ensure that they are happy these are working correctly. There is a checklist to follow.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> AB and IC agreed to review the SFVS – probably via a Zoom call with the SBM.</p>
10	<p><b>Register of Certifying Officers.</b></p> <p>The Register of Certifying Officers had been circulated in advance of the meeting and the SBM explained that she had suggested that the Head's signing level should be raised to £240K. This is because, for the last couple of months, the Chair of Governors has had to sign off pay roll as the amount exceeded the signing limit. This is because the latest Teacher's pay increase has seen the limit exceeded.</p> <p>There was some discussion about the amount that should be set as the pay rises for support staff are due to be announced in April. It was considered that raising the amount to £250 gives the school more flexibility for the future.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> Governors unanimously approved raising the Head's signing limit to £250k which would be reported to the next FGB.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> SBM to send amended document to the Chair for signing.</p>
11	<p><b>BACS payments approval.</b></p> <p>A number of documents from the school's bank with regard to moving to BACS payments had been circulated to Governors in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>The SBM explained that many companies now refuse to accept cheques in payment of invoices and there had been a few problems caused during lockdown with people working from home and cheques not being presented to banks.</p>



	<p>ASPS banks with Lloyds who offer schools a free BACS payment service. There is no charge to set up the payment system or for the training that some staff will have to do. The SBM explained that the processes remain the same with invoices input into the school system in the normal way. These are then approved in the normal way. The school will then to upload a .csv file to a commercial banking website. There then needs to be 2 signatories log on to approve the BACS payments. The process will be quicker to process, easier to reconcile and payments will appear in the accounts straight away avoiding problems of delayed cheque presentations. ASPS buys in, via the LA, Bursar support and they will assist the school in implementing this with any additional training. The school's financial procedures will need to be updated. Lloyds have agreed a payment Profile for the school that limits each BACS run to £80K. That equates to the biggest cheque run the school has made this financial year. The SBM stated that once approved by Governors the next stage would be an online application form sent to Lloyds.</p> <p><b>Governor Comments:</b> Two governors commented that they have used this bank to provide this service in both work and personal capacities and were very happy with the service. There are checks in place and Lloyds do make phone calls to ask for approval if there are any unusual circumstances. Another asked that all the procedures were identified and put into place.</p> <p><b>ACTION:</b> SBM to update the financial procedures to reflect the BACS payments.</p> <p>The SBM informed the meeting that currently, the Chair of Governors signs off cheque payments in excess of £15K and there needs to be a way agreed that signing of BACS payments over £15K can be arranged. It was agreed that the current process of the Chair approving the paperwork before a cheque is raised would be followed.</p>
<p><b>12</b></p>	<p><b>Crescent Under 5s lease update.</b></p> <p>There appears to be some misunderstanding on the part of the Crescent Under 5's new staff with regard to the Heads of Terms document received from the LA stating that the commercial rent figure is £20K unless there is a business case made by the nursery that this figure is unaffordable. They are now working on their business case with assistance from their committee and a solicitor. They have had a period of closure due to a Covid case confirmation. The school is expecting this issue to be agreed in the next few months.</p>
<p><b>13</b></p>	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>The Head thanked the SBM and the DHT along with the rest of the SLT for all the hard work they have been doing to ensure the school can still operate. The Head was particularly grateful as the SBM is new in post and the challenges have been enormous.</p> <p>The Chair informed the meeting that all governors should be listed on the GIAS website. It is a condition of being a school governor that you accept that your information goes on the website. There may be some information that we do not have so it may be that governors are approached to provide some data.</p>

<b>14</b>	<p><b>Items for parents/FGB/Confidentiality.</b></p> <p>There are no items to be communicated to parents.</p> <p>The next FGB will be informed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter reports have been accepted by the Resources Committee and also that the Register of Certifying Officers has been amended.</p> <p>There are no items of confidentiality.</p>
<b>15</b>	<p><b>Date of next meeting:</b></p> <p>The Chair informed the meeting that he was not expecting to hold a separate RCC meeting before the next FGB and that the full budget review would be done at the FGB instead.</p>

Meeting closed at 20.15pm.

**New Actions:**

<b>Action:</b>	<b>Owner:</b>
SBM to send Benchmarking presentation to Clerk to share with all Governors	<b>SBM</b>
Chair to send Skills Audit to Governors to complete	<b>FB</b>
Date for SFVS Working Group to meet via zoom to be set to review SFVS	<b>SBM/IC/AB</b>
Amended Register of Certifying Officers to be signed by Chair.	<b>SBM/FB</b>
Financial procedures to be updated to reflect BACS payments	<b>SBM</b>

**Attendance at RCC Meetings 2020/2021 (2 meetings to date)**

Faruq Bilbe	2 of 2 meetings
Robert Howell	2 of 2 meetings
Adedayo Benson	2 of 2 meetings
Dave Dymond	2 of 2 meetings
Ian Church	2 of 2 meetings
David Close	2 of 2 meetings
Laura Kerr	0 of one possible meeting