

## St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy

### Meeting of the Finance Committee

#### DRAFT Minutes of Meeting

Date of Meeting : 7.00 p.m., Wednesday 6 July 2022

Venue : Samos, St Cyprian's Greek Orthodox Primary Academy

Mr Christophe Vradis (CV)	Present
Mr Arthur Broadberry (AB) - Chair	Present
Mr Andrew Mantilas (AM)	Present
Mr Adrian Prescod (AP)	Present
Mr Christos Nestoros (CN)	Present
Mr Peter Tragoulias (PT)	Absent
Mr Philip Prodrmos (PP)	Absent
Mrs Zoi Iliokaftou (ZI)	Present

In attendance :

Johanna Scarry (JS) : School Business Manager

Emma Hayward (EH) : Assistant Head (as observer)

Mary Rider (MR) : Clerk

<b>1.</b>	<b>PRAYER AND WELCOME</b>  The Chair welcomed everyone to the Finance Committee.  The meeting started at 7.02 p.m. with a prayer.
<b>2.</b>	<b>APOLOGIES</b>  Apologies for absence were received from PP (ill health) and PT (work commitment), which were accepted.  The meeting was <b>quorate</b> .
<b>3.</b>	<b>PECUNIARY INTEREST DECLARATION</b>  There were <b>no</b> declarations of interest in the agenda.
<b>4.</b>	<b>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING</b>

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 23 March 2022, previously circulated, were considered by Directors.

ZI raised her concerns about the decision to merge Nursery and Reception, believing it was not well discussed and no vote was taken. Subsequent to the meeting, ZI learnt that this change had already been implemented rather than being a future implementation following the Finance Committee meeting. ZI asked if this decision had already been approved prior to the Finance Committee meeting and also raised whether this was a decision for the Premises Committee.

During the meeting the word 'will' was used rather than advising that the merger had already happened. CV confirmed that the report was written in March and the move happened at Easter. AB noted that the item was therefore correctly recorded as written in these minutes

A: The significance of the merger to the Finance Committee is the increase in income which would be made from merging. The decision to merge Nursery and Reception was an operational matter and therefore one made by the Headteacher rather than Governors.

ZI questioned the timing of the merger of the Nursery and Reception asking for it to be noted that this matter was not included in the previous Headteacher Report. As this was not in the report of the Headteacher, the Finance Committee did not have all of the facts to enable them to discuss it.

A : Because this matter was not in the Headteacher's Report before the meeting, it was discussed during the meeting: a discussion did take place about Nursery and Reception merging into one. This focussed on the financial aspect with an improvement of Nursery income from -£20k annually, a deficit, to a £50k annual positive income in a time of financial trouble.

ZI : Questioned whether there was a connection between the saving being made and then the safeguarding incident happened; was there a link between moving classes and the incident?

A : A security/safeguarding incident had occurred in May which was discussed at the Premises Committee and a report had been circulated. A child got out of school but there was no suggestion that this was caused as a result of merging Nursery and Reception or by a lack of funding. The incident investigation report that was circulated to premises committee members identified some confusion about who was responsible for the care of the child at the time of the incident, but this was not related to reduced funding as income was to increase.

ZI continued to drive the point that Nursery and Reception were merged together as a result of which a child left the school. The remit for the Finance Committee should be to reassess and re-evaluate the decision to merge the two classes and the impact of the financial decision made.

AP: Do we reassess the financial decision in that does it affect security? Did the financial changes link to the child leaving the site?

A : In view of the recent incident regarding access to the school, it might be useful to reassess and re-evaluate the decision. However, there was no cut in staff; a member of staff was moved from one class to another. For this school year, the ratios remain the same. The issue is not around staffing but is regarding the location of the room and would another room be safer than the one currently being used.

The level of staffing has remained the same. There are increased numbers in the class and there has been a change of location.

AP: Questioned that as CV has made the decision, should he be the one to reassess it.

A: It was suggested that there should be a re-evaluation of the decision, involving the Safeguarding Governor (who has already been briefed on the matter). CV pointed out that a Safeguarding Governor would be insufficiently qualified to assess safeguarding security. It was discussed whether to bring in someone from another school to look at the matter independently.

AP: Asked in an aside to CV asked whether he was qualified from a safeguarding perspective.

A: CV responded that as Headteacher he is more than qualified but asked if Governors would like him to bring in someone from another school who could assess the decision from all aspects including financial, safety and teaching and learning.

AB asked AP to explain the appropriateness of this question and AP said it was an innocent question but then said that he withdrew the remark.

Governors **AGREED** to look at the options to review the decision, either with someone external to the school such as another Headteacher or Octavo Safeguarding Audit specialist.

**DECISION** : It was **AGREED** that the Minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting. The Minutes were signed.

Matters Arising:

Letter to parents : CLOSED.

Security Policy - with Education Committee : CLOSED

Review of Adjustments to the Risk Register following redundancies : OPEN – the Committee now needs to look at risk register in relation to redundancies to see if there has been any affect

AP requested a copy of the redundancy policy of school. This will be provided to him.

**ACTION : AP to be provided with a copy of the school's Redundancy Policy.**

	<p>The school uses the LA policy; the policy has been approved by Governors. The policy is linked to the school not the HR provider. The policy remains regardless of who the provider is.</p> <p>AB asked AP whether his previous request was for details of the Redundancy Plan but now was asking for the Redundancy Policy? AP confirmed that he had only previously asked for the Redundancy Policy. AB acknowledged that he had misunderstood AP's previous request.</p> <p>The Charging Policy is to be reviewed by the Committee and comments returned in correspondence or next meeting</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p><b>SCHOOL BUSINESS MANAGER REPORT</b></p> <p><b>Income and Expenditure</b> JS presented the three-year Income and Expenditure report forecast for the ESFA.</p> <p>Next year an in-year deficit of £20k is anticipated but there should be a surplus at the end of 2022/23 of £79k. With an in-year deficit of £73k the following year, there should be a c/f surplus of £6k.</p> <p>The income generated from Donations has been overstated and this is a shortfall that has to be made up to make the budget viable. Currently, there is a potential shortfall of around £150k which is significant. If a budget is put in showing that shortfall, the school would be told to cut staff.</p> <p>Q : How realistic are the figures for donations, increasing by 50% from £35k to £65k and then to £90k? A : These donations are essential. They are a buffer to buy time to continue on pupil recruitment. As a consequence of buying time, we can seek to increase pupil numbers to increase GAG funding. There are enough children locally to fill the school but they are going to other schools. We have to ask why the school isn't full and we need to raise the standard to get pupils in. We need to spend to grow and maximise everything possible to get children in.</p> <p>If pupil numbers decrease, it will affect all areas of staffing with less staff in general. There will be less administrative duties with a fall in roll.</p> <p>There has been an increase in expenses but income has plateaued.</p> <p>Costs are constantly rising, particularly gas and electricity. The school is currently on a fixed deal and it is always better to set a deal in Summer when usage is lower rather than in the Autumn when prices go up.</p>

If there is an increase in teaching salary, it is hoped that the Government will fund it. If they fund pay rises, we need to know if they will also fund NI and pension contributions.

Q : Is there an automatic pay rise or can the school influence any increases?

A : It is normal for there to be a cost-of-living increase.

Q : Can we come off of the main pay scales?

A : Yes. This would be for Governors to decide. However, if the school is paying less than anywhere else, it will not attract the right personnel. As a last resort, there can be a pay-freeze.

The strategy is to remain with a higher level of salary to maintain the level of education and improve results to attract pupils which will result in GAG increasing.

Q : Is it possible to have an anonymised list of salaries to give a better understanding of how these are made up?

A : Yes, this will be provided.

**ACTION : Governors to be provided with an anonymised list of salaries.**

A vote was taken on the three-year Income and Expenditure report for submission to the ESFA.

**DECISION :** Governors **AGREED** unanimously to recommend the report to the Full Governing Body.

### **BMR**

JS then presented the monthly School Budget Monitoring Report.

JS drew attention last page which shows a c/f of £100k. The summary provided of the monthly Budget Monitoring Report for June, showed full year projected c/f at approx. £100k. The previous BMR reviewed at Finance Committee meeting projected c/f of approximately £60k. This is a forecast of a further £40k saving.

JS was thanked for providing the report to Governors.

CV expressed his thanks to JS for her work to increase the c/f to £100k.

Governors added their thanks to JS for the work she has put in.

This is the last meeting JS will attend before leaving St Cyprian's. Governors wished JS well in the future and thanked her for her hard work.

JS expressed her appreciation to CV in how he has involved her in his vision and strategy which made her feel very included.

	JS left at 7.50 P.M.
6.	<p><b>HEADTEACHER'S REPORT</b></p> <p>CV introduced the Headteacher's Report and highlighted the following:</p> <p>The numbers in the main school are short by – 7, resulting in a loss of £26k in the budget the year after next. Numbers are constantly changing.</p> <p>Funding in nursery is provided as and when a pupil arrives.</p> <p>The main issue is with numbers in the main school which are 13 short of the target of 370.</p> <p>The percentage of whole school roll leaving is down to 2%. The deficit is less than it was but still needs to get into surplus.</p> <p>Redundancies are now complete.</p> <p>A meeting was held yesterday (05.07.2022) with a parent focus group to ask for parent perceptions. This involved 9 or 10 parents and was very insightful. A selection of parents were chosen and a session was held for parents to speak, to explain why they chose the school and informing of barriers that the school is not aware of such as information being given by the LA that the school is full and that there is a different application form. A full report will go to the Full Governing Body.</p> <p>The school is beginning to get Muslim families coming to the school; this is the predominant religion locally.</p> <p>There is a target of a school roll of 446.</p> <p>There is also a target of getting in at least 100 tours in whatever way possible. The percentage of those having tours who go on to choose the school is very high.</p> <p>We need to look at branding and publicity. When searching for the school on a search engine, the school's website comes down very low on the list. Work needs to be done to put the school on the first page of every search.</p> <p>CV will be bringing a marketing report to the Full Governing Body meeting.</p> <p>Q : What is the number of those who had a tour and then came into the school?  A : Less than 41 as some tours took place after the original offer of places were accepted.</p> <p>Q : Why would a parent search for the website when most parents would look at the results coming out from the local authority?</p>

A : Not all parents would look at this. There is some evidence that good search results draw interest to a school.

While not changing the name or ethos of the school, work needs to be done on search engine optimisation and marketing to spread awareness of the school.

CV plans to speak with someone about optimising the presence of the school. Search engine optimisation is likely to bring in more numbers. CV wants to try everything possible to bring pupils into the school. If the money spent on the website brings in just one child, it will have been worthwhile.

The school needs to be marketed to non-Greeks. Greeks make up 5-6% of the school population so the school needs to look to the wider community.

Q : Can you clarify what needs funding?

A : Branding, we want to grow the school not make cuts. The Members' Trust have made it clear that they want to grow the school.

Q : If the school only has money for one year, from a financial standpoint isn't it prudent to tighten our belts and not spend? If there is only funding for one year we should be making sure that every penny counts and not spending on unnecessary expenditure?

A : By spending an amount on marketing, this could attract pupils to the school which will increase funding. The endpoint is the survival of the school. A school with a reduced roll resulting in mixed year classes would be hard to market to prospective parents. If you start going to a 1.5 form entry then it is likely to reduce to a 1 form entry which is unsustainable. If we can risk some money to prevent that happening, we can stop the decline and start moving upwards.

Q : If 85% of the budget is staff salaries, can the remaining 15% be tightened? The 85% would then need to be looked at – teaching ratios, staffing levels, admin levels.

A : In that 15% there is the money for marketing and website changes. The majority of the budget is wages. Unless there is an item in the budget that we can cut with significant impact, the only changes we could make to reduce costs is class sizes and staffing costs. Building works have been carried out through donations. Marketing is vital to increasing the pupil numbers coming to the school.

The main objective is to move the school to Outstanding. The ratio is high for senior teachers but this is a conscious decision to support with the teaching and learning. The school cannot get to Outstanding at the next inspection. It is a two-stage process Good/Improving then the following year to Outstanding.

In the EFSA report previously circulated, the ratios in all areas were in step with other schools, with only a few areas where the ratios were higher.

ZI had not previously received a copy of the EFSA report, which will now be provided to her.

	<p>If we are unable to raise £150k over three years, this equates to three teachers. Next year is budgeted for; if the view is to go towards reducing, then that will be planned for. The strategic vision is to make sure the school is viable. Governors provide the strategic plan which the Headteacher then implements operationally.</p> <p>A meeting was held with His Eminence and the Members’ Trust regarding pledges, fundraising and personal donations. This will be discussed further at the Full Governing Body.</p> <p>CV then provided the SATs results to Governors. In all areas, the school was 20% above the national average.</p> <p>AB thanked CV for his report.</p>
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>POLICIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Charge Card Policy</li> <li>○ Charging Policy</li> <li>○ Finance Policy</li> <li>○ Lettings Policy</li> <li>○ Risk Register</li> <li>○ Scheme of Delegation</li> </ul> <p>AB invited comments on the circulated policies.</p> <p>CV referred to the Lettings Policy and discussions with Greek School. The Greek School informed CV that when it was set up it was agreed that everything would be provided for them. This was before CV was at the school and he is not aware of this agreement. CV suggested that Governors have a working party to discuss what is going to be charged and what can be done going forward. There is a need to negotiate with them. The observation was made that if they do leave, where could they go for the same low cost.</p> <p>Q : Can the changes in policies be highlighted to enable a full discussion on the proposed changes?  A : Yes, that is something we will be doing. Changes are marked if there are changes.</p> <p>On going through the policies, there are not many changes more about recommendations.</p> <p>Q : On Pg 19 of the policy proposed, £1k can be written off by the Headteacher and over £1k can be written off by the Headteacher with approval of the Finance Committee. £1k is a large sum of money.  A : The threshold is the degree of control given to the Headteacher. The threshold has not been reduced for some time and what would be the strategic background to this. It</p>

	<p>does not affect the cost restraints we are under. If debts go over £1k this has to be referred to Governors.</p> <p>Q : Is there a number you would like to reduce it to?  A : £100 possibly up to £500, which could be discussed with a second person in the school, i.e. the Business Manager.</p> <p>AB asked whether there needed to be a vote on this matter. The committee was advised the matter had only been raised for discussion. A governor suggested that as no need to change this had been identified no change should be made.</p>
<b>9.</b>	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>There was <b>no</b> other business.</p>
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The next meeting of the Finance Committee will be held in the Autumn Term with the date to be confirmed.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 9 p.m. with a prayer.</p>