



APPROVED MINUTES

DATE: WEDNESDAY 28 NOVEMBER 2012

PRESENT:	Vicky Cole (Chair)	Parent	PSP member
	Greg Cookson (Vice Chair)	Parent	PSP member
	Sally Cunningham	Parent	PSP member
	Dave Neillans	Parent	PSP member
	Derek Simpson	Parent	PSP member
	Ian Smith	Parent	PSP member
	Kim White	Parent	PSP member
	Kath Anderson	Staff	PSP member
	Colin Dempster	Staff	PSP member

IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Ingham	Head Teacher
	Bev Skirrow	Business Manager, Knox Academy
	Tom Trotter	Local Councillor
	Mary Benson	Clerk

1. Finance Presentation by Bev Skirrow, Knox Academy's Business Manager

A financial review has been carried out this year by the school to look at ways to better manage the budget for the benefit of the whole school. This has been informed by several factors such as this year's Secondary School Management Review, the introduction of Curriculum for Excellence and the need for a rolling maintenance programme for school equipment.

Background

The school's annual budget for this year is £3.4 million. Of this, the vast majority is spent on staffing (£3.25 million). Heating and lighting and any building-related costs are met directly by East Lothian Council under the PPP (Public Private Partnership) agreement, and so are outwith this budget. The staffing aspect of the school budget is predictable; however Ms Skirrow and Mrs Ingham have been looking at how best to make the rest of the budget more predictable. The school has always taken a prudent approach to financial matters (such as doing costings for a worst-case scenario, i.e. working on the most expensive costing, to make sure money is available before they proceed) and has been able to achieve nearly the maximum allowable amount of budget carry-forward each year. However, this can sometimes lead to Managers being over-cautious and making savings, but then having to spend funds at the last minute before the money is lost and not spending wisely. It has also made the planning of rolling maintenance of equipment more difficult to achieve.

Dave Neillans came into the meeting.

New Approach

The challenge for the school is to make the 2% non-staffing section of the school budget more predictable. The 9 Managers within the school are being asked to work together more coherently and to see the bigger picture. This can be achieved by Managers keeping in mind that the school budget is just one pot of

money, with one overall goal; rather than several separate pots of money solely for use in the separate Faculties/Departments. Managers are asked to compile long and short term plans for their Faculties, with the ethos more towards spending what is given for the pupils at the moment for their curricular needs rather than stock piling future supplies (such as jotters) in individual departments. This is achieved by Managers spending what is needed but flagging up any surplus by Christmas, so that it can be redistributed to different departments that have a specific need for it.

The non-staffing section of the budget has been broken into five sections to help with this:

- Base Capitation – jotters, stationary, photocopying, printing, text books etc.
- Curricular Enrichment – funds to assist with things like planned excursions. This section of the budget allows for planned spending throughout the school year, rather than rushed spending at the end of the year to avoid losing funds.
- Rolling Maintenance– this budget is ring-fenced to fund 3 year plans for replenishing equipment.
- Pupil Contributions – these are monies brought in by S1-S3 pupils for supplies for Home Economics (HE) and Craft Design and Technology (CDT).
- Additional School Funding – Funding for S4-S6 practical option subjects, such as HE and CDT. These subjects perhaps do not require so much from the Base Capitation budget, but require funding for items such as food and wood. This budget can also be used for whole school initiatives.

Spending controls have been put out to those on the front line. Each Faculty has been provided with a suggested order of spending over the financial year; however, Faculties do not have to spend in the way suggested. They must, however, keep the Business Manager informed of their spending.

The final budget for the school year is confirmed in October each year, after the school census has taken place in September. The school roll has fallen this year, and so the budget has gone down too; however the school is predicting a carry-forward of around £46,000 and is aiming to achieve a financial cushion equivalent to a full-time teacher's salary. The school has just had a Management meeting, and all concerned feel that the new system is working, that they have more money available when they need it, and that they are planning their budgets better than before. Constant monitoring of budgets with the Managers means that the new approach is not high-risk.

Extra-curricular activities

Due to rising costs and budgetary constraints, the school is also looking at the cost of extra-curricular activities and considering how they can be continued without the same funds being available.

Parent School Partnership (PSP) budget

Ms Skirrow noted that the PSP have not used much of their annual budget (allotted by East Lothian Council). These monies are held by the school. The majority of last year's PSP budget was not used either which means that the PSP have £455.00 available to them in the school fund account. There was a brief discussion about what this could be used for, for example towards the previously discussed school careers event, or to provide a specific prize for school prize giving.

Ms Skirrow noted that she would be happy to come to another PSP meeting if there was anything that the PSP would like further information on. Vicky Cole thanked Ms Skirrow for her excellent presentation and for giving up her time to come to talk to the PSP.

Ms Skirrow left the meeting.

2. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Donald Smith, Sally Wilson, Councillor Broun Lindsay and Councillor McMillan.

3. Minutes of 31 October 2012

The minutes of the last meeting were approved without change.

4. Matters arising from the minutes – see item 5.

5. Chairperson's report and action points from the last meeting

Vicky Cole has forwarded Sally Wilson's contact details to Mary Benson.

Vicky has contacted North Berwick High School for information regarding their careers event and is waiting for a response. She hopes to go to the next ELAPCM meeting to raise the idea there. **Action VC**

Mrs Ingham has not yet had chance to speak to Mrs Bartholomew (Ross High School) regarding "charity fatigue", but will do so in due course. **Action SI**

Mrs Ingham will invite Mr Swinney to speak to the PSP about Literacy Plus in the New Year. **Action SI**

Mr Flood has sent the coaching information to Vicky Cole, but as Knox PSP's Edubuzz site is still down, she hasn't been able to advertise it yet, but will do so in due course, Edubuzz permitting. Vicky has written some posts to go on Edubuzz for parents about sharing expertise and these will also be published in due course.

Parents were thanked for their comments on the School Handbook. These have been taken on board, where appropriate, and the Handbook is currently being proofed and will shortly be printed.

Vicky Cole will check with Val McIntyre tomorrow if Dave Neillan's Recruitment & Selection training is still valid, or if he needs to attend the training course next Monday.

6. Pupil's matters - see Head Teacher's report: *Dress code*.

7. Head Teacher's report

Outdoor Education Challenge – Knox have won 3 out of the 3 Outdoor Education Challenges against five other secondary schools.

Communication Faculty – Lennoxlove, War Horse, Literacy Plus, Staff Debate, Accelerated Reader "Millionaires".

2011 KWN - Knox's 2011 KWN (Kids Witness News) team attended a Stonewall (the lesbian, gay and bisexual charity) seminar with Mr Flood and Ms Adam to present their film "It Gets Better", which deals with homophobic bullying in schools. The group took questions and delegates at the event was very impressed with them.

Children In Need – S6 organised the fund-raising for this year's Children In Need and raised £817, which is a record for this event.

Tots and Teens - Two pupils visited Preston Lodge High school to make a presentation to 180 of their peers there about their experiences at Tots and Teens, and did a great job. Preston Lodge is setting up their own version of Tots and Teens.

Dress code – Mrs Ingham gave parents at the meeting a copy of the results of the dress code survey of pupils, staff and parents. 300 or so pupils responded, however only approximately 15% of parents completed the survey, which was disappointing. Greg Cookson noted that he had not been able to get the online survey to work.

Mrs Ingham discussed the suggested way forward with the PSP, who felt that most parents would be happy with the proposals. It was agreed that the new dress code would be launched at the start of the new term in January. The launch will involve an assembly with the youngsters, information on the school website and a letter home to all parents. It was noted that staff consistency in enforcing the dress code will be key. Vicky Cole noted that it may be difficult for some families to comply with the dress code in the current financial climate, if their youngsters do not have the correct clothing and perhaps cannot afford to replace items until worn out or outgrown.

Miss Anderson asked if a set of “yes/no pictures” could be produced of a male and female pupil wearing the acceptable new dress code, and another set wearing unacceptable dress, for illustration purposes in class. Mr Dempster agreed to do this. Vicky Cole asked for clarification about what was “unobtrusive” jewellery. Mrs Ingham will clarify this in the final version of the dress code.

Action CD & SI

Underperforming S5/S6 pupils – Mrs Ingham is continuing to meet with S5/6 pupils who are felt to be underperforming. Monitoring of their progress is continuing and most seem to be improving.

Work experience – went very well, with pupils being praised for their attitude and enthusiasm.

Curriculum for Excellence – Mrs Ingham will send out a letter to S3 parents before Christmas with an update on Curriculum for Excellence and a copy will also be posted on the school website.

Calendar:

4 December – S5/6 Parent’s Evening

5 December – Talking to Teens – spaces are still available and parents should email Mrs Ingham if interested.

6 December – Christmas Dance – Mrs Ingham handed out a list of rules for this event for information.

10-12 December – Christmas production

18 December – Christmas Concert

19 December – S6 Panto – Parent’s Performance

20 December – End of Term

8. Staff members’ report – no items.

9. Parent’s matters

Mobile phones – the question of pupil’s use of mobile phones was raised. Mrs Ingham is looking at the school policy on this. Mrs Ingham noted that pupils are not permitted to use their mobile phones to take photos or film in school. Pupils who do so are asked to take their phones to the school office for safe keeping during school hours. However, parents also noted that mobiles can be an important way to stay safe, particularly for pupils who live in rural locations. Mobiles can also be put to good use in school, with QR codes (Quick Response codes – the pattern of black squares on a white background which can be scanned by smart phones to give a link to a website) being used by the school to provide a link for pupils to access the dress code questionnaire with a smart phone. Mrs Ingham noted that the school can accept no liability for loss or theft of phones at school.

PSP website – Edubuzz is now up and working again, but Knox PSP’s website does not seem to be operational yet. It is assumed that East Lothian Council IT Department’s Dave Gilmour is working his way through the websites and will eventually get Knox PSP’s site operational again. However, Ian Smith agreed to contact Dave Gilmour to check this. Ian will also check out MailChimp the free alternative to Feedblitz (a notification system for parents subscribers about updates on the PSP website) to see if it would be feasible to use with Knox PSP’s website.

Action IS

ELACPM – Ian Smith gave a summary of items discussed at the last East Lothian Association of Parent Council Members (ELACPM) meeting on 8 November. Concern was raised over the Education Authority’s response to

questions raised by Knox PSP regarding roll capping and transparency in S1 admissions. Vicky Cole will write again to Don Ledingham (ELC Executive Director of Services (People)) on behalf of the PSP on this matter.

Action VC

Concern was also raised by parents with regard to the possible future Education budget cuts.

10. Correspondence – has been emailed to all parent reps.

Vicky Cole raised the recent correspondence from Carol Snow, from the National Parent Forum for Scotland, who is trying to “assess the level of preparedness for S2 options across Scotland”. Following the change to Curriculum for Excellence in S3, Knox pupils do not choose their options at the end of S2, as they used to. Vicky will email Carol Snow to bring this change in some schools to her attention.

Action VC

11. Any Other Business

Knox Academy Support Group (KASG) – Sally Cunningham advertised the planned KASG Family Burns Supper, to be held on Thursday 24 January 2013.

Fundraising ideas for KASG were discussed. These included a Christmas Bazaar (for the run up to Christmas next year), a family ceilidh, a Blingo (bingo, where everyone gets dressed up to attend) evening and auction, a talent show, a car boot sale and a battle of the bands. One idea from another school was for a bed and breakfast, where pupils paid £15 to stay overnight in the school, with the school staff cooking them breakfast the next day. Sally will take these ideas back to KASG for discussion.

Depute Head Teacher – PSP Parent member Derek Simpson was congratulated on his appointment as the new Depute Head Teacher at Knox. He will continue to attend the PSP meetings as a Parent Representative.

12. Date of Next Meetings:

9 January, 6 February, 24 April and 22 May 2013.

Action points	Who	When
Attend next ELAPCM meeting to discuss careers event	VC	Musselburgh Grammar School, 17 January 2013
Speak to Mrs Bartholomew (Ross High) re any “charity fatigue” following their sponsored walk.	SI	For next meeting.
Invite Mr Swinney and pupils to attend a future PSP meeting to talk about Literacy Plus.	SI	At a suitable date in the New Year.
Produce a set of yes/no pictures for staff to illustrate appropriate and inappropriate dress for school.	CD	In time for the introduction of new dress code (8 Jan 2013)
Contact ELC IT’s Dave Gilmour re PSP’s Edubuzz website	IS	As soon as possible
Investigate MailChimp as a free alternative to FeedBlitz	IS	Once PSP website is online again
Write to Don Ledingham re ELC’s response to the PSP’s question at ELAPCM re roll capping and transparency	VC	As soon as possible.
Email Carol Snow (NPFS) re S2 options	VC	As soon as possible.
Check with Susan McNaught re Dave Neillans Recruitment & Selection training	VC	Tomorrow.