

**Hovingham & St Hilda's, Ampleforth CE Primary Schools' Federation**  
**Minutes of the Full Governing Body**  
**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING: APPROVAL OF THE SFVS**

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021, Virtual Meeting**

*[Meeting was conducted using Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19 restrictions]*

**Present:**        **Clare Almond** (Vice Chair)                      **Adrian Bond** (Chair)  
                          **Kim Colenso**    **Jayne Conacher**  
                          **Amy Kirk**    **James Pynn** (Head)  
                          **Jane Richardson**    **Jo Senior**  
                          **Lucy Wilshaw**

**In Attendance:**    **Heather Leggett** (SBM)  
                                  **Helen Lowdell** (Clerk)

*Meeting started at 5.20pm*

| Item      | Minute  | Action |
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| FG/21/019 | <p><b><u>Welcome</u></b><br/>           The Chair was experiencing technical difficulties, so the meeting was chaired by the Vice Chair</p>   |        |
| FG/21/020 | <p><b><u>Sports Premium</u></b><br/>           Governors were reminded that approximately £6.5k Sports Premium funding carried over from 2019-20 must be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> March or it would be clawed back. The 2020-21 funding should also be spent by 31<sup>st</sup> July. It was uncertain as to whether this funding would be clawed back as well, and it was also uncertain as to whether Sports Premium funding would continue in the future.</p> <p>The Head proposed that the funding is spent on outdoor areas of both schools to refresh them and to benefit Early Years and KS1 pupils. This would help in the achievement of Early Learning goals.</p> <p><b>Q. What are the goals for those areas?</b><br/> <b>A. We have to demonstrate lots of milestones, and this would be about facilitating greater activity for the children</b></p> <p><b>Q. How would you rate the provision of KS1 against KS2? Should KS2 be more of a priority, especially at Hovingham given the lack of space?</b><br/> <b>A. I think there is scope of KS2 [but they already have] the Hawks who bring in a range of equipment. I feel that committing expenditure to Early Years and KS1 would be good start and it also looks attractive to new parents.</b><br/> <b>A. £6.5k is only a small part of the funding.</b><br/> <b>- It is quite a significant amount of money. A fair amount has been given to KS1 already. It is good to make improvements, but we have got to remember KS2, especially at Hovingham.</b><br/> <b>- Isn't this predominantly about money being clawed at the moment?</b><br/> <b>- Yes, and I'm fine with that but we need to take the future into consideration.</b><br/> <b>- In the immediate, let's spend this money and put it to good use. This is a relatively small amount and there are larger amounts for the rest of the year so we can give more thought to KS2. We discussed reinstating Forest</b></p> |        |

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|           | <p><b>Schools for example.</b><br/> <b>- [Head] That's right. Since the last meeting, I have shared the Sports Premium document with the Chair, and I have met with North Yorkshire Sports [who advised that] benefitting KS1 as well as Reception was a good thing to do. I'm certainly not dismissing KS2, but this has a benefit, and the planning is easier. I'm also thinking about resources that would have a legacy. If the money goes into this, we have those resources – they're ours.</b><br/> <b>Q. Is there any going on training?</b><br/> <b>A. It's a proposal to be discussed at a later date. This is only about the part that needs to be spent now. The remainder will be for your consideration at the next meeting.</b></p> <p><b>Q. If we agree it tonight, do we have to have spent it by the end of the month?</b><br/> <b>A. I can put orders in by the end of the month.</b></p> <p>Governors <b>AGREED</b> that the Federation should spend the excess Sports Premium funding from 2019-20 on improvements to the outdoors areas for EYFS and KS1 at each school.</p>  |  |
| FG/21/021 | <p><b><u>School Financial Value Standard</u></b><br/> <i>[SFVS and guidance had been circulated with the agenda]</i></p> <p>Governors decided to agree each point of the checklist one by one.</p> <p><b><u>A) Governance</u></b></p> <p>1. Does the governing body have adequate financial skills among its members?<br/> A. In part. Relevant governors and staff are completing a skills audit (Nov 2019) to identify training needs. Budget issues including 3-year financial plans are regularly reviewed and discussed. The FMS service is used to provide advice and guidance.</p> <p>2. Does the governing body have a finance committee (or equivalent) with clear terms of reference and a knowledgeable and experienced chair?<br/> A. In part. All finance decisions are made through the full governing body. The above skills audit will identify any required needs / expertise required. The Chair has been in this role since Sept 19, having served as Vice Chair for the preceding 12 months.</p> <p><b>- These two questions refer to a, now out of date skills audit and we have new people now. We need to rephrase this as it's dated.</b><br/> <i>[A Bond joined the meeting at 5.35pm]</i><br/> <b>- We've got Adrian now who had financial skills so that's one improvement. The 'in part' statement shows that we are improving – that we've been reflective and have taken action.</b><br/> <b>- I understand that there is some training coming up from NYCC so we can state that we have governors intending to take training.</b><br/> <b>- We should also say that we are considering a finance committee.</b><br/> <b>- It is important that we have scrutiny, but we don't want to disenfranchise the rest of the governing body.</b><br/> <b>- We could say that the matter is going to be discussed with the National Leader of Governance.</b></p> <p><b>1 &amp; 2 APPROVED subject to updates as suggested.</b></p> |  |

The Vice Chair explained that she had discussed the SFVS with Governance Support, particularly the issues surrounding benchmarking. A finance committee had been recommended as well as an independent person, such as Jill Stockdale, to look at the SFVS with the Head and the SBM. The Vice Chair stressed the importance of improved financial scrutiny so that the governing body can have full confidence that money is being spent in the best possible way to support the education of pupils in the schools.

3. Does the governing body receive clear and concise monitoring reports of the school's budget at least six times a year?

A. In part. The full governing body receive reports on at least a termly basis.

**- This is largely because the governing body doesn't meet when I do reports so it's a question of timing.**

**- With a governing body planner, in future years we can do this better.**

**APPROVED**

4. Are business interests of the governing body members and staff properly registered?

A. Yes. The business interests register is updated annually. There is also a standing item on the agenda relating to business interests. The Governors' business interests can be found on the school websites.

**APPROVED**

5. Does the school have access to an adequate level of financial expertise, including when specialist financial staff are absent eg. on sick leave?

A. Yes. The school employs an appropriately qualified and experienced School Business Manager. The Federation buys into the FMS service for additional advice and support. The school buys into the Staff Absence Scheme relief bursar service.

**APPROVED**

### **B) School Strategy**

6. Does the school have a realistic, sustainable and flexible financial strategy in place for at least the next 3 years, based on assumptions about future funding, pupil numbers and pressures?

A. Yes. The school proposes a 3-year financial forecast at the beginning of the financial year. This is reviewed in the autumn term and a revised budget produced, based on the best available information. The school buys in to the FMS service and uses specialist budgeting software to produce the 3-year forecasts.

**- I asked about projected pupil numbers. We are struggling in this area. I think you should look at other school projected numbers.**

**- [SBM] I'm not sure how I would find that out...**

**- [Head] I have accessed that through HR, but it is more about percentages related to local population. I have also had informal conversations with other headteachers. At the last meeting I mentioned anticipated number.**

**- [SBM] I think we're cautious, but we look at as much data as possible. St Hilda's is slightly easier to anticipate because of the nursery. Hovingham is more difficult. At St Hilda's we are expecting an increase because of siblings but at Hovingham we don't have that so we're waiting for new families. We seem to go through peaks and troughs with intake. I don't know how accurate we can be but in terms of budgeting, we try to be cautious.**

**- Some people who have been through St Hilda's nursery have gone on to**

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|  | <p><b>Hovingham. Maybe it should be on our radar to get the nursery to serve both schools.</b><br/> <b>APPROVED</b></p> <p>7. Is the financial strategy integrated with the school's strategy for raising standards and attainment?<br/> A. In part. Items in the SDP are including in the 3-year financial plan, but costings of individual elements could be sharper.<br/> - <b>[Head] This is something I will pick up on with Ian Clennan.</b><br/> <b>Q. Should the SDP come with a costings document?</b><br/> <b>A. It may be a separate document, or it may be in the budget. That is why I'm working with Ian. At the moment it's not costed.</b><br/> <b>APPROVED</b></p> <p>It was noted that Ian Clennan is a National Leader of Education and former Ofsted inspector, providing support during the Covid period. He had met with D Dunning, F Dodds-Aston and A Kirk.</p> <p>8. Does the school have an appropriate business continuity or disaster recovery plan, including an up-to-date asset register and adequate insurance?<br/> A. In part. The Federation follows the guidance in the Schools Emergency Response Guide 2016, which includes information on how the schools should deal with a situation relating to business continuity or disaster recovery. The schools are compiling an asset register for all equipment worth £100 or more, or items of an attractive nature. A register for items taken out of school (eg. laptops) is to be reviewed. The schools buy insurance from the LA.<br/> <b>Q. What about insurance?</b><br/> <b>A. We have insurance.</b><br/> <b>Q. When we get insurance, do we shop around?</b><br/> <b>A. Up until this year, we always bought our insurance through NYCC. As of 1<sup>st</sup> April, this is no longer available. Instead, there is a government scheme called RPA [Risk Protection Arrangement] which used to be just for academies but is now available to all maintained schools. NYCC looked at that policy and it was cheaper, so they are no longer offering theirs.</b><br/> <b>Q. Is the insurance for buildings as well?</b><br/> <b>A. I'm fairly certain that it is.</b><br/> The SBM would check whether insurance covered buildings and inform governors.<br/> <b>Q. Are there any complications with the Hovingham building in that it has a room above a property that is not part of the school?</b><br/> <b>A. I'm not aware of any difference.</b><br/> <b>Q. I have asked about our responsibilities in terms of the agreement. Can we see it?</b><br/> <b>A. There is a handwritten document from 1851 and there is also something for the rent. I can find those for you.</b><br/> The SBM would find the original documents linked to the lease of Hovingham school building.<br/> <b>APPROVED</b></p> <p><b><u>C) Setting the annual budget</u></b></p> <p>9. Does the school set a well-informed and balanced budget each year (with an agreed timed plan for eliminating any deficit)?<br/> A. In part. The schools set their budget using the most up to date information as advised by the FMS Service. The schools recognise the need to have a balanced</p> | <p>SBM</p> <p>SBM</p> |
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budget and are working to achieve this across the lifetime of the three-year forecast.

**Q. Does that mean we shouldn't pass a budget with a negative outcome?**

**A. No. It's just that we need to be able to say what we can do about it. You should aim not to, but this is asking, are you aware and what plans do you have to do something about it.**

**APPROVED**

10. Does the budget setting process allow sufficient time for the governing body to scrutinise and challenge the information provided?

A. Yes. The Governors receive finance reports including the draft start and revised budgets seven days prior to Governors meetings, which provides opportunity for information to be reviewed and considered prior to the meeting and formal approval.

**APPROVED**

11. Is the school realistic in its pupil number projections and can it move quickly to recast the budget if the projections and the reality are materially different?

A. Pupil number projections are based on actual / worst case scenarios. Revised budgets produced in the autumn term, and any known changes in pupil numbers for the new academic year can be included in this updated financial forecast.

**APPROVED**

12. Is end year outturn in line with budget projections, or if not, is the governing body alerted to significant variations in a timely manner, and do such variations result from explicitly planned changes or from genuinely unforeseeable circumstances?

A. Yes. Half termly reports to Governors highlight significant variances to budget, with suggested impact and or actions to be taken.

**APPROVED**

13. Are balances at a reasonable level and does the school have a clear plan for using the money it plans to hold in balance at the end of each year?

A. Yes. Three-year financial forecasts identify the level of balances. This enables a controlled approach to balance management.

**APPROVED**

#### **D) Staffing**

14. Does the school review and challenge its staffing structure regularly to ensure it is the best structure to meet the needs of the school whilst maintaining financial integrity?

A. Yes. Staffing is reviewed at least annually as part of the process of matching future teaching and learning needs of the schools with available and future financial resources.

**Q. In terms of the SEND budget and the amount of time that Daisy spends on this per week, we seem to spend more than we get. Can we get more?**

**A. No. It would be good if we could! There's nothing else available.**

**- I asked about a 12-month staffing review and you said that you don't produce a document. Perhaps we need to sharpen up on that. It might be helpful to have more technical knowledge in the event of staffing matters.**

**A. The staffing review isn't something that we do at a fixed time. It's constant. It would be reviewed whenever a member of staff leaves or if we need maternity cover, the needs of pupils might change. Governing body**

*meetings are where things are raised so I'm not sure that a fixed point is necessary.*

*- The most common committees are finance, staffing and curriculum. Looking at us as a governing body, do we scrutinise workforce planning? Do we have very good knowledge of where we're spending funds? Are we in control of that?*

*A. I would think, any time staffing changes, it would be in the headteacher report or brought up in the governing body meeting. If you do have committees, I'm not sure if it's useful to do it at a specific time of the year. Things happen.*

**APPROVED**

15. Has the use of professional independent advice informed part of the pay decision process in relation to the head teacher and is it tightly correlated to strong educational outcomes and sound financial management?

A. Yes. The Diocese are used to provide advice and guidance in the performance management of the Headteacher.

***Q. Is our Headteacher performance management tightly correlated to sound financial management. I think it is correlated to educational management but does the advice come from an organisation with a financial management background?***

***A. The diocese doesn't have an HR department. My interpretation is that if you award a point, you look at the budget and decide [whether to increase pay].***

***- If we ensure this in the coming years, we can put yes in the box.***

***A. There are no longer any pay implications.***

**APPROVED**

#### **E) Value for money**

17. Does the school benchmark its income and expenditure annually against that of similar schools and investigate further where any category appears to be out of line?

A. Yes. Benchmarking data is considered annually by the Governing Body, variances are identified and discussed.

***- This is where I have a grievance. With our benchmarking, we are always given the caveat that we can't do it properly because we have two schools and one budget. Elaine [Trehitt] was very clear that we can benchmark, nationally if necessary. If we can't benchmark, we are working blind. There is a theme, and it comes up in the DfE benchmarking. As governors we know it, we can see it, but we don't do anything about it. This is public money. We could look into it and agree it's alright, but we are accepting the view that we can't compare.***

***A. I'm not saying that you can't, but you need to be aware that it's not like for like. You can specify that you only want to compare with other federations and pupil numbers, but it doesn't always show two schools combined, [which involves] covering the cost of two buildings.***

***- Elaine says we can do it.***

***A. If she says that, I would be happy to know how to do it because we can't do it with this information. I have had a meeting with NYCC and specifically asked and I was told that it's not possible. I am not trying to be obstructive, but I want you to know that it's not a straight like for like.***

***Q. Isn't the whole point to look at where we're off the scale?***

***A Yes, absolutely but you need to be aware that it's not like for like.***

*- I notice that it's not RAG rated in the same way*  
**A. Yes, it's red, amber, light green and dark green.**  
*- So we are not in the middle. It is worth looking at the benchmarking, Did we say we do this?*  
**A. We say that it is 'discussed'.**  
**APPROVED** subject to a change to 'in part' and to the narrative to indicate that benchmarking needed further scrutiny.

18. Does the school have procedures for purchasing goods and services that both meet legal requirements and secure value for money?

**A. Yes, Goods are ordered in accordance with NYCC terms and conditions, and LMS rules / LMS contract procedure rules. Where possible separation of duties is maintained. Major service contracts are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure best value.**

*- I think this is just a matter of fact.*

**Q. How often do you review contracts. Is it annual?**

**A. Yes.**

**Q. How do you do that? Do you make comparisons?**

**A. Of the these are rolling from NYCC so it's a question of looking at the service we're getting. Is it meeting our needs? What will it cost to maintain? It's not always something that we can just go out and find elsewhere, like clerking. Energy is not easily moved and there is some benefit from bulk buying. But we do look at them each year.**

**Q. Do you quality monitor?**

**A. We have a meeting with the NYCC manager to make decisions.**

**APPROVED**

19. Is the governing body given the opportunity to challenge the school's plans for replacing contracts for goods and services that are due to expire shortly?

**A. No. Procurement decisions are considered annually. Eg. Property maintenance and ICT consultancy.**

*- This partly comes down to the governing body schedule and when things are considered.*

**Q. If we have finance committee, could they become part of the process?**

**A. They could be, or it could be the full governing body as long as we consider [at the right] time.**

**Q. Who creates the specifications for tendering?**

**A. Properly maintenance and ICT have been discussed with the GB.**

**Q. When did you move to these?**

**A. I would have to go back through the minutes, but I think ICT was in 2016 and property maintenance was 2016 or 2017.**

*- [SBM] We would have a record of the date that these were accepted.*

**Q. If we put 'no', do we need an action plan?**

**A. Yes, if you want to say what you'd like to do.**

*- It depends on the finance committee. We need to think about how governors can ratify.*

**A. I could put that there will be possible involvement of a finance committee pending further discussion.**

**Q. The contracts that are licences – in terms of governing body scrutiny, I would assume that things like Curriculum Maestro and TT Rockstars are contracts? Anything that's an order is a contract?**

**A. Purchase orders are not specific to contracts. They purely indicate that**

*you are buying something. I don't include licences on the list because they are a one-off payment and are not going to roll on.*

*- Curriculum Maestro is controversial. In the scheme of delegation, we have £5k or 0.5%. I would argue that Curriculum Maestro is significant, especially given staff feedback. I looked through the minutes and I can't find a reference to costing before entering into a licence. We've done it now, but it is something we need to sharpen up on.*

*A. When it comes down to individual things, governors have scrutiny when the budget is set. When governors have agreed that budget and given the go-ahead for spending – so if the licences budget is £5k and you say 'yes', that means we are authorised to spend that on licences. [We shouldn't have] to come to you every time we wanted to buy something if the finance is already approved on the budget line.*

*- It says here 'significantly different policy'. I would say Curriculum Maestro is that.*

*Q. When we get the start budget, can we get a list of contracts?*

*Q. Why hasn't this happened before? This is not a guessing game. I am sick of asking questions.*

*A. I am trying to strike a balance to not send reams and reams of information. I apologise if you feel that I'm not sending information. This is not my intention. In the past I have sent information and there have been no questions, so nothing is recorded [in the minutes].*

*Q. I'm not picking on you, but I'm not trained in this.*

*A. So, possibly a finance committee is sensible. It's about what works for you. Just make sure the finance committee doesn't look at everything in depth for it to be just repeated at the FGB.*

**APPROVED** subject to addition of reference to potential finance committee.

20. Does the School consider collaboration with others, e.g. on sharing staff or joint purchasing, where that would improve value for money?

A. Yes. The schools entered Federation working arrangements in April 2015. The schools also work within the cluster to obtain expert advice and within the wider Teaching School Alliance.

**APPROVED**

21. Do you compare your non-staff expenditure against the DfE recommended national deals to ensure you are achieving best value?

A. No. The schools use a number of the NYCC approved contracts such as YPO, Lyreco and bulk fuel.

*- I'm not sure whether they're specifically DfE recommended deals. One of the main ones is ICT. When it comes to the purchase of ICT equipment, John Crabtree sources equipment for us from suppliers. I think that, because he works with other schools, he can get better deals from the suppliers [with bulk purchasing].*

*Q. How do we decide what we want?*

*A. If something breaks, we get a replacement.*

*A. We have also purchased smart boards and if there is an increase in pupil numbers we would purchase more Chromebooks.*

*Q. Do you counter check John's provider on price?*

*A. No, because that's John's role.*

*A. [Head] I do look – for example when we got the whiteboards.*

*- I think it's good practice to check against market providers.*



**Q. Do we know how many schools John has?**

**A. No, but I can check.**

**APPROVED**

22. Does the school maintain its premises and other assets to an adequate standard and make best use of capital monies for this purpose?

A. Yes. The premises are reviewed by our independent property consultant and by LA property service with appropriate actions taken, subject to budget. The Schools maintain a list of desired repairs and improvements which are ranked relating to priority.

**Q. Do we have a property maintenance manager and the LA property service?**

**A. Yes. The LA has a duty to carry out a property survey to make sure we don't build anything or know anything down.**

**Q. Are they much more expensive than our service?**

**A. The MASS programme has three levels and last year we were in the mid level, which gives us annual services of fire alarms etc. There is an element of reactive services. For the schools to go back in, it would cost £11k, compared to [total of £9k] for Andy. Going back would be more expensive but it would also be more restrictive. For example, electrical and plumbing aspects would not be covered. They would do basic services and reactive works but no improvements.**

**APPROVED**

**F) Protecting public money**

23. Is the governing body sure that there are no outstanding matters from audit reports, internal audit reports or from previous consideration of weaknesses by the governing body?

A. No. From 2020 the schools will complete the self-evaluation financial control checklist on an annual basis.

**APPROVED**

24. Are there adequate arrangements in place to manage conflicts of interest or any related party transactions?

A. Yes. The Governors' business interests register is updated annually. Opportunity to declare business interests is included on every agenda. In 2020 this will be expanded to also include senior members of staff.

**Q. Why are only senior members of staff doing this?**

**A. Because they are the ones who make decisions.**

**Q. I do this where I work.**

**A. I can change this.**

**APPROVED**

25. Are there adequate arrangements in place to guard against fraud and theft by staff, contractors and suppliers? (Please note any instance of fraud or theft detected in the last 12 months)

A. Yes. LMS procedure rules are followed. Purchases are approved in advance by wither the Headteacher or School Business Manager. Where possible separation of duties is maintained.

**APPROVED**

26. Are all staff aware of the school's whistleblowing arrangements and to whom they should report concerns?

Head

A. Yes. All staff have received a copy of the schools Whistleblowing policy. Posters are displayed in school offices.

**APPROVED**

27. Does the school have an accounting system that is adequate and properly run and delivers accurate reports, including the annual Consistent Financial Reporting return?

A. Yes. Software used for these purposes is approved by the LA and Veritau.

**APPROVED**

28. Does the school have adequate arrangements for audit of voluntary funds?

A. Yes. Arrangements are being made for the audit of 2018/19. Minimal funds are maintained, and their continuation will be reviewed.

**- This is a separate account used for donations from Friends, charities etc. I will change this to 'in part' as there's nobody to do this at the moment and I'll change the date. There are minimal funds in there.**

**- The checklist says we have to audit this annually.**

**- Last time, Martin Boothroyd arranged for somebody to do this. I will have to organise it. I think there is about £500 in the St Hilda's account and around £2k in the Hovingham account.**

**Q. Is it a registered charity?**

**A. Yes, and I do the returns for that.**

**Q. Are they separate?**

**A. Yes, because they are funds raised locally for separate schools.**

**Q. Have the Friends organisations closed?**

**A. Yes, I think so.**

**- Perhaps we could whip up some enthusiasm for a joint Friends group.**

**APPROVED subject to updating the response to 'in part' and changing the date.**

*[JR left the meeting at 7.10pm]*

### **G) SFVS Dashboard**

29) Have the results of the dashboard been carefully considered and potential follow-up actions identified?

The SBM explained that this had been left blank until discussions had taken place at this meeting. She gave an overview of the dashboard and raised the following points:

- The highest 20% in admin and clerical related to the fact that they were two schools in two buildings compared with one school.
- The Federation was paying for a SBM rather than a combination of cheaper admin solution and the full bursar service from NYCC.
- Energy was in the highest 20%, primarily due to the Hovingham building, which had unique costs. Double glazing had been fitted but it was difficult to do much more.
- Teacher costs were high as many of the staff were long serving so had moved up the pay scale.

**Q. How many are leaders?**

**A. We have one on the leadership pay scale.**

- Pupil to adult ratio is in the lowest 20%, again related to the two schools as opposed to one.
- Smaller class sizes meant a higher number of TAs

**Q. Do we pay them less?**

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|           | <p><b>A. TAs used to get 52 weeks per year. Now, if they are recruited after a certain date, they are paid term time only.</b></p> <p><b>Q. In terms of the highest 20% and the lowest 20%, will a lot of this related to the two schools?</b></p> <p><b>A. You are comparing them to a mix of schools and we can't be sure which [are two buildings and which are one].</b></p> <p><b>- I would like to look into that a bit more. Can we get that more precise benchmarking? I will get back to governance support and try to get a definitive answer about what we need to do. It would be very helpful to have this every year.</b></p> | CA |
| FG/21/021 | <p><b>AOB</b></p> <p>The Clerk reminded governors that an election would take place at the next meeting for the role of Vice Chair and she urged everyone to consider standing.</p>   |    |

Meeting ended at 7.20 pm

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