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## Governor's Newsletter

Governors had their latest Resources sub-committee meeting last week which covers finance and personnel issues. The financial year end finishes on 31<sup>st</sup> March and so Governors were able to review the final figures for the previous year which were largely in line with expectations. The accounts for the first month of the new financial year were also available and reviewed. Castlebrook continues to operate within this year's very tight budget.

The School year runs from September to August we roll over the academic years in June and neither aligns with the January to December calendar year. With a March year end, I am frequently confused! If we employ a new teacher in say September (at the start of the new School year) we only have to pay them 7 months wages (through to March) in that financial year and with so many staff overall and so many bills, it all takes careful forward planning. The School have been doing this for years and barely give it a second thought but it always tests my mathematical skills.

Each year, Governors also make a decision on which services to "buy back" from the Local Authority. Bury MBC typically provide HR related services, legal advice, utility contracts and Grounds Maintenance services among many other things. The School has the opportunity to buy these services externally if we felt this offered better value for money. As with most schools in the Borough, we have opted to buy back the bulk of our services from the Local Authority. Although on paper the option of buying externally offers the school more choice, the reality is that private sector operators find it hard to compete as the Local Authority already looks after many schools and therefore have the required critical mass to make their services the most cost efficient. Trust Schools and Academies often club together to buy goods and services in bulk between them to drive down prices and with the cost pressures within the Local Authority, Governors spent some time exploring if any opportunities existed to save some money this year. Buying cheaper does not always equate to buying better and on balance, the School decided to renew the vast bulk of buy back packages although we have purchased a specialist insurance package from an external supplier which closed a potential loophole in our previous arrangements.

In addition, Governors were provided with the usual update on the staffing situation including new staff appointments, maternity leave, any performance updates and attendance details. We also approved some proposed changes to the Leadership structure within School. The existing structure has been in place for several years and needs updating as it related to a time when the school had around 200 more pupils than it does now. This will not involve any staff having to leave the school but will mean there is less money in the pot for us to pay for management responsibilities. The School is committed to working through the consultation process before final decisions are taken which includes a close dialogue with the Unions.

At the time of writing this, many Castlebrook learners are in the thick of their GCSE examinations. The feedback from our invigilators suggested good attendance levels, learners arriving in good time and well prepared and an air of quiet determination in the examination hall. Let's hope all this preparation pays off and you achieve the results your hard work deserves. It always seems a long and nervous wait for the results in August but they will be here before you know it. Good luck.



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