

Finance and Resources
Bayards Hill Request for Funding
20th April 2021 @17:30

In attendance

Jonathan Dawson (Chair), Liz Tyler-Bell, Linda Earnshaw, Ann Childs (joined late)
Gareth Griffiths (Headteacher), Maurice East (Chair of LGB)
Ben Hegedus (CSAT AO), Laura Waller (Head of Finance)

GG – sent business case paper in advance, which JD distributed.

GG

Bayards used to hold a high level of reserves, no longer the case. No where near enough to cover for project- projecting surplus very very small. Two issues here;

- Safety concerns
- Educational concerns

Safety

Early Years (EY) team and Oxford County Council all have same concerns. Report commissioned by ROSPA Jan 21 as a result. Results stated 'not suitable for intended use or age range' (4/5 yr olds - just left Nursery). Fall heights significant. Unclear who installed it and how met safety requirements. Never been able to find out. What safety standards were they done compliant with? Suggestion that modifications made. Won't get around all difficulties of equipment. Beautiful. Expect to see at Center Parcs or similar. But not what expect to see in Early Yrs. Not easy to manage. No clear sight lines. Makes it difficult and dangerous. Staffing to cover would be expensive. With reduce PAN. Usually have one member of staff inside, one outside and free flow between all areas. Currently can either be all in or all out only.

Suggest remove completely. Surfacing required for all weathers. Not whole area, but some. Some modifications to ensure sight lines. Additional resources for outdoor learning. No bikes currently. Plus appropriate storage for resources. Has to be accessible for the children, not the adults. This is part of the education.

LTB - Do we need to be so drastic as to remove it. Most risks are low to medium. How brutal do we really need to be? Much lower cost modifications? This is 30 children and with some inherent risk. Don't want to hurt, but can we address for lower amount. Big project for relatively small gain.

GG - Yes big project. EY takes the most money, it's expensive and should be targeted. If start education path well then everyone benefits.

LTB - good start doesn't mean expensive. Just want appropriate environment with appropriate learning.

GG - for me, 'not suitable' in report says it all. The fall height is too high. Open areas of chaining. Slides that can't get to. Difficulty and not suitable for age of children. All in report. Plus, area of location means sight line issues. Would need additional staffing to manage. Should be free flow.

LTB - two things. 1 - is it safe. 2 - how do we manage the children. We could have more staff OR take away and replace OR timetable/provision for access. Q which is most cost effective and has highest

impact. If trying to make management easier, lots of money to do that. Safety seems surmountable. Spend needs to make management easier.

BHE – From a Risk Assessment point of view - identify highest risks and how to mitigate. Understand fall is worst bit, mitigating in cost effective manner- block the gaps? Lose some aspects BUT means don't have to decommission it all. Safeguarding children falling from height.

JD - safety issue need to dig into deeper.

LE – Number of things. Reducing height leaves problem of sight lines, therefore additional staff. TA cost? Quarter of the way to replacing whole thing. Additional bit with learning. Spoken to Charley Middleton - structure takes up the one level space there is in that area. Therefore whole load of activities not open to them. COVID - can't use other playground areas. Education limited, and additional problem of sight lines. Quite panicky. False economy. If try and save too much now - just differing the problem. EY inadequate in last inspections. Could have next inspection at any time. EY needs to be seen to making change or have an impact on change.

LTB - they are more interested in other aspects, but understand your points.

LE – We are cutting the space they use to learn

JD - space and sight lines arguments make more sense. Having read safety report, couldn't see any recommendations that this was an emergency. No of medium risks e.g. slippery areas. When went back to confirm, was a low risk. Appropriate surface should any one fall. Useful to be clear about why we are considering this. Not on safety basis. However, if about better use of space and how children managed and experience they get, then slightly different. GG anything to add?

GG - safety report hasn't outlined industry standard. BPRK - much lower fall height. Good to find out industry guidance. Suitable height and complexity for age group? Sight lines, yes could put more adults out there. Can't get good education if can't interact with them and spend all time worrying about safety. Will give much larger area to do things. OCC attend with advisor? Working with education sector - 'play' piece of equipment. Not designed for education. If compare how constructed with BPRK, they will get much better experience. Nowhere for a child to ride a bike - it's about motor skills. No scooters. Different kinds of bikes. Progression within this. A bike is c£300 as they are designed to do specific things. Opens up so many more opportunities for them. Encourage creation within space. Currently not available to them. With other pieces of equipment around. E.g. better water play. BPRK good example. Not asking for perfection. Don't want same as BPRK. Want to get to point to provide education to drive improvement in EY. Most important area for CSAT at this time. Not irrational in asking for funding. Demonstrate improvements and OCC supporting in making sure improvements in place.

JD - not saying not logical. But question of timing. Business as usual process - operational. Trust have agreed funding and live up to plans. This is something out of ordinary, not foreseen and needs to be addressed here and now. If is genuine safety issue, and high risk then exceptional item. If talking about general improvements, then Q why isn't this business as usual rather than exceptional.

LE - EY was on hold as needed outside area. Not fulfilling rapid improvement plan as not enough money to do it. Might say not high risk in H&S, with GG, probably more general H&S.

JD - report challenged, boss confirmed. Not something anyone has flagged so can only go on this.

LE - OCC consider a risk

LTB - different vision of outdoor space - GG vision great. Cost of outdoor equipment - is that included? How quickly will this be realised? Not emergency, should be built into usual and over time improvement, no immediate change what alternatives within whole school reallocating space - change of practise of existing. Impact on children.

GG - old sandpit on large area. Utilised. Nursery doesn't have strong outside area. No soft surfacing, no natural play or environment, no digging, no planting. Could use bikes. [Bad connection] No one suggesting a plain piece of tarmac. Digging. Planting. Role play. Sand pit. Water. Everything inside should see outside.

LTB - why can't create anyway elsewhere

GG - could be done c49k based on BPRK. Personally think would end up costing more.

ME - moving away from what talking tonight about. Take point on report. Can interpret either way. Manageable. Emergency is improving EY. Should be high on agenda. Moving out from play equipment and much bigger project scheme and sums of money. Unclear how much how much cost. Becomes a nice to have. Falling roll. Points made salient - equipment, staff, implications there and then Trust level what money available and as emergency or as normal business?

JD - yes, getting broader. Getting all opinions. Need to decide on paper in front of us.

BHE - if not suitable for 4/5 yr olds but is for 6/7 yr olds - swap things around and make available for right children. And invest in new area for younger pupils. Worth while thinking of alternatives. Not necessary remove and replace when could be suitable for others. c£250k two years ago. To just get pulled down.

ME - take point but more like £130k. Doesn't make for comfortable listening. BUT there are problems. It's a question for Trustees to consider what sum of money and wider question about improvements. Doesn't matter how much spent. Not quite the risks but problems won't go away but is an impact of T&L and ability to improve.

JD - summary. Take back to paper. Remove equip, flatten and resurface, additional modifications for safety and clear lines of sight. Cover for all weathers. Resources and storage - School. Drivers - start point safety. Does report support? Q management of space lines of sight, better use etc. Acknowledge alternatives but not explored in any great details.

LWA – Cost c£200k and put in April 2018. Support Ben and others – need to look at wider implications and plans. PAN reducing so what else could be done. Waste to just raze to ground. Re money, in short Trust can afford it. No other current calls on fund, but haven't explicitly asked other schools. Further to this, Bayards have more money than they think they have. Appreciate one-off year and need to add to reserves, but do have funds. Huge waste, should ensure we have considered all other options.

GG - might have reserves but are you considering if any of this restricted? E.g. PE funding / PP funding

LWA - No. Not talking about anything restricted. Just unrestricted money e.g. agency, Ed consult budget is £30k but only spent £2k, Agency staffing £15k but only spent £7k, PE contract £24k but not used for full year.

BHE - still in process of recovering reserves for future protection. Future proofing shouldn't be forgotten about. 'Leftover' to be spent. Need to feed back into reserves over years or schools will struggle.

JD any Qs. Re monies

LE - Can we be creative and do a Bayards max £x but expected to fund as much as can from reserves but leaving X in reserves? Thinking about meeting with inspector who will ask why nothing done with outdoor area?

JD – provided Trustees happy with creativity, then no reason why can't. BHE as AO will say otherwise.

LE – What about business side - marketing type of thing. If got EY outdoor area considerable below anywhere else, won't get this pupils. Will continue to reduce PAN.

JD - Q how much of the pot would this take up?

LWA - 60/70% of pot.

JD - if we say yes, saying it is the biggest priority of CSAT. If anything else comes up, then won't be able to do that.

LWA - Cheney / CIF. If doesn't go through then heating massive issue and might want to invest.

JD - what are known issues

LWA - Heating at Cheney. Don't think Chadwick would cope with another winter. Telephone system at Cheney c25k.

LTB - LE point re splitting cost. If can afford some what are we really 'investing'. More from Bayards?

GG hoping to get Bayards contribution from the Ed Consultancy. Won't churn through all that. Might on supply cover? Pushing staff to limit. Have to think about long term. Reserves no where near where need to be. Don't want to be coming to Trustees asking for more money. Don't have the option to dip into reserves currently. Only after starting told heading for massive deficit and didn't know. Manage to turn around. Not loose with money. Anything can contribute will do. Know have problem in EY. Cheney heating issue - could too come along as emergency. Responsible for own school. Reserves are much larger. Wouldn't be here if had other options. In addition, Library would be great and don't have. Coming for something for getting children's education to where it needs to be.

ME - Apologies - going to have to leave.

JD – will catch up with ME post meeting.

LTB - EY Bayards should be one of top priorities. Work been going on for long time. Should be using money to do so. Still don't understand why can't be reconfiguration. Wouldn't be better for all

children in school? Why demolish something would be great for some. BUT need to make experience right. Just might be other options.

LE – Equipment is play equipment. Not learning equip. Realising the size of problem - can it be moved? Or sold? Not suitable for purpose. Not a learning thing. Charley Middleton - no challenge for pupils. Not learning anything by doing it again. Make an empty space with blocks or boles, then creativity starts. Not fit for educational purpose. Don't know why put there. Must be over two years ago.

LWA - put in April 2018.

AC - EY priority. No crystal ball to know what happening at Cheney. Are we doing stop gap? Think need to do something along lines of paper. Is there another option. Have we got time? Ofsted coming up soon. Quite a priority. EY priority. How much time do we have. Not sure we have luxury. GG thought about it carefully.

JD - agree EY priority. Happy to support making best educational use of space. £ - if we have enough to fund £32.5k we could commit in principle. Expect that be matched by Bayards c£20k. Then Gareth consider trade off and how spent. Safety concern not high. Not comfortable diligence on best use of space - might have been done and not seen it? Go around table - but happy with agreement in principle. In practise before spent, would want DD to be done. We don't have exact costings, suppliers or any options in detail. Can't see this would cause great delay. Discuss.

LTB - think agree. Most important EY have appropriate environment. Release funds to support. Don't feel confident this is most effective way of realising needs of all children in school. Trustees or Gobs to sign off? Someone needs to be sure we are making decisions for benefit of ALL children and cost effective. Needs to be done.

AC - Good compromise. Agree.

LE - Agree. Yes. However question over timings – e.g. covering needed when wet, but maybe next year not this ... needs to be planned over 'period'. Knowing what I know, the only way to get around problem is to move EY and this could be huge amount more cost. Where is can only get to this tarmacked area.

JD - re creativity - yes plan over two financial years? If can?

LE - will be more necessary come Sept.

JD - should be under budget so could do this year.

LE - makes sure that not double counting. And that what GG says available is what I say is available.

JD – Due diligence on project, can LE pick up on Trustees point of view?

LE - yes happy to. Work with GG, Charley Middleton and OCC to complete circle.

JD - need to make sure all options considered and comfortable. Is removing the only sensible option? Happy to take LE advice. LTB/AC agreed.

Recap - agreement in principle up to £32.5k funding to make best use of educational space. Expectation school pay out in in year budget - can spend over two years. LE will lead. To GG does that make sense? Do need to consider options. Make sure through LE, she has seen this. Thankyou.

GG - thankyou on behalf of the children. Hopefully good morale boost for staff.

BHE - Suggest a site visit. So you can see. Is a really helpful way to see the work of options and figures. Seeing with own eyes. Provide full picture. Can be arranged outside of school hours.

JD – Have been hesitant due to COVID, but yes. Okay now.

Meeting ended at 18:56.