**Homerton Early Years Centre**

**Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on Tuesday 12th February 2019 at 7.00pm at**

**Homerton Early Years Centre**

**Present**

Rinchen Ato, Kay Blayney, Tandy Harrison, Ken Ong (Chair), Alex Pearson (Head), Mitali Peckham,

Ross Sargent and Marisol Basilio Seyler

By invitation: Sameer Garyali

Clerk: Gwyneth Barton

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|  |  | **Action** |
| **1.** | **Briefing on Safeguarding including the Prevent Duty** |  |
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|  | Ken Ong, Chair and Homerton’s lead governor for safeguarding, gave a briefing on safeguarding including the Prevent duty. The slides of his presentation are attached as Appendix A to these minutes. Governors particularly noted: |  |
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|  | * Cultural change in recent years to place greater emphasis on safeguarding, with increased general awareness
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|  | * Everyone’s responsibility to be aware of possible safeguarding issues and to communicate these effectively
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|  | * Possible indications of a safeguarding issue including physical, emotional or social signs
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|  | * The Governing Body’s particular responsibility for the management of safeguarding within the Centre, as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education, updated in September 2018. All Governors were asked to read Part 2 of this document if they had not already done so.
 | **All Governors** |
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|  | Ken explained that the Governing Body’s responsibilities included ensuring: |  |
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|  | * Compliance with relevant legislation
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|  | * That safeguarding policies and procedures were up to date and followed
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|  | * Effective multi-agency working and information sharing between local authority Education and Social Services, health bodies and the police
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|  | * Safe recruitment of staff, effective staff training
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|  | * Online safety.
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|  | In primary and secondary schools, Governing Bodies were also responsible for managing opportunities to teach safeguarding. At Homerton, this was addressed in an age-appropriate way as part of personal, social and emotional development (PSED), for example by talking to children about who helps to keep them safe or what they might do if they got lost. |  |
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|  | Governors noted that Homerton had a number of specific safeguarding roles: |  |
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|  | * Ken was the lead governor for safeguarding
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|  | * Alex, Melody Wright, Harriet Riches, Julie Beattie and Bernie Cafferkey were all designated safeguarding leads. Several people had been appointed to ensure appropriate cover when Alex was not in the Centre, especially during the holidays. Alex retained overall responsibility for collating logs of concern and seeking advice or making referrals when appropriate.
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|  | The Prevent duty was set out in separate legislation, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. The aim of the duty was to promote the values of democracy; the rule of law; individual liberty; and mutual respect for and tolerance of those of different faiths or without faith. The Prevent duty was often discussed as part of safeguarding in relation to the risk of young people, including family members and other carers, becoming radicalised.  |  |
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|  | Alex was the Centre’s Prevent lead and had attended training; all staff had been briefed. Governors were expected to be aware of the duty and were encouraged to complete the online training. | **All Governors** |
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|  | In conclusion, Ken emphasised Governors’ responsibility for managing and supporting the Centre’s safeguarding culture, to ensure that everyone was aware that ‘it could happen here’ and felt able to raise issues appropriately. |  |
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| **2.** | **Welcome and Apologies for Absence** |  |
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|  | Governors welcomed Sameer Garyali, a Homerton parent who was interested in joining the Governing Body as a co-opted governor. |  |
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|  | Apologies for absence were received from Sophie Bryce, Kate Daenke, Roger Lilley, Mick Patel and Sue Smith. |  |
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| **3.** | **Declarations of Interest** |  |
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|  | There were no declarations of interest. |  |
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| **4.** | **Minutes of 6th December 2018** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the meeting of the Governing Body held on 6th December 2018 were approved as a correct record. |  |
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| **5.** | **Matters Arising from the Minutes of 6th December 2018** |  |
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| **a)** | **Amendment to the Code of Practice for Governors** – Governors had agreed at the previous meeting not to make it mandatory for Governors or the Clerk to use school e-mail addresses, but to emphasise the importance of good practice when handling confidential information. The following amendment to the Code of Practice for Governors was proposed by Ken and agreed unanimously: |  |
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|  | To add the following sentence to the end of the final bullet point under ‘Confidentiality’:  |  |
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|  | ‘This includes using appropriate physical and technical security for confidential papers (e.g. dispose by shredding) and computing devices (e.g. use passwords and lock screens; check recipient addresses of e-mails you send).’ |  |
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| **6.** | **Governor Recruitment** |  |
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|  | Governors noted that there was one vacancy on the Governing Body for a co-opted Governor. Co-opted governors were appointed for their skills and experience and it was hoped in filling this vacancy to appoint a governor who would join the Resources Committee. |  |
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|  | Sam confirmed his interest in becoming a co-opted governor. Ken invited him to submit a brief written statement of his skills and experience, which governors would consider at their next meeting. Gwyneth agreed to send Sam an example of a statement. | **Gwyneth/****Sam** |
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| **7.** | **Head’s Report** |  |
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|  | Alex briefed Governors on the following issues: |  |
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| **a)** | **Places** – Three children had left Homerton; their places had already been filled for the current year. Alex updated Governors on the anticipated situation for September 2019. West Room was expected to be full with 30-hour children and 10 further 30-hour places were being offered across East Red and East Blue. East Red was then expected to be full and East Blue would have 17 children. South, the morning class, was expected to have 10 children. Overall, the situation was positive. Offer letters would be sent out once the Governing Body had agreed charges (see Minute 12 below). |  |
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| **b)** | **Events** – Two recent events had been very successful, Stories in the Dark led by Marion Leeper and Chinese dancing organised by a parent to celebrate Chinese New Year. |  |
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| **c)** | **Parents** – Two workshop sessions on children’s writing had been run for parents and had been well attended. Parent consultations were currently underway. The parent survey would be sent out shortly and the results reported back to the Governing Body. |  |
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| **d)** | **Staffing** –Staff had been badly affected by illness in recent weeks, making it very challenging to arrange cover. Flu jabs for all staff were being considered. Governors also noted the importance of parents keeping children away from the Centre for 48 hours after sickness or diarrhoea, to help contain the spread of germs. |  |
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|  | A second lunchtime supervisor/cover teaching assistant would be leaving Homerton to go to Morley. This person needed a permanent position to complete Level 3 training, which Homerton was unable to offer because of the uncertainty over funding for maintained nursery schools after April 2020. Efforts were being made to recruit a replacement. |  |
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| **e)** | **Centre Development Plan (CDP)** – Alex had circulated the latest version of the CDP with the agenda. White indicated actions not yet started; yellow work in progress; and green actions that were complete. Governors noted that most actions were underway. The following points relating to the CDP were discussed: |  |
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|  | * IT equipment – Kay had identified on her recent Learning Walk that much of Homerton’s IT equipment was out of date. In particular, the three iPads used by the classrooms were not working well, retaining only limited charge and with their touchscreens not working fully.
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|  | Governors discussed the use of screens within the Centre. A Governor suggested that use should be kept to an absolute minimum. Other Governors noted that IT was part of the curriculum and that the Centre could be criticised by Ofsted if available IT equipment was not working effectively. It was noted that considered use of screens could be beneficial, for example, some apps were highly educational; screen time could reinforce learning or current topics, e.g. Chinese New Year; and in exceptional circumstances, using a screen could help to calm a distressed child. |  |
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|  | Governors suggested that it might be appropriate for staff to have a wider conversation with parents about their children’s use of screens. A Governor noted that research in this relatively new area was still limited; however, there was some evidence that screen use itself was not damaging, but that the greater problem was the amount of time spent using screens, which was not being spent engaging in other forms of play. |  |
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|  | The Governing Body agreed that the Centre’s use of screens should be discussed in more detail by the Curriculum Committee; following this discussion, Resources would be asked to consider what investment in new IT equipment might be needed. It was suggested that a large supplier might be willing to donate pre-used equipment; or if the nursery schools became a charity, this would also open up more funding sources. | **Kay/****Roger** |
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|  | * Data reporting – Alex noted that a bespoke training session for Alex and Mitali had been arranged with Target Tracker, the supplier of Homerton’s data reporting software, to try to overcome some of the current reporting difficulties. This would be taking place on 26th February 2019.
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| **f)** | **Children’s Centre money** – It had been confirmed that Homerton would receive some of the carry forward from the former South Cambridge Children’s Centre, to be used for new astroturf. Alex had been expecting the amount to be £12,000 but a recent communication had suggested it would be £9,000; Alex would check this. | **Alex** |
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| **g)** | **Save Nursery Schools campaign** – The campaign was continuing, with petitions presented to Parliament the previous week. 850 signatures had been collected at Homerton, an excellent achievement. |  |
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| **h)** | **Meeting with Jon Lewis** – Nursery school Heads had met Jon Lewis, the local authority’s Director of Education, the previous day. He had promised support from the local authority for the nursery schools to the end of the 2019/20 academic year, irrespective of the Government’s decision on funding from April 2020. He was preparing proposals for what to do if the nursery schools’ lump sums and hourly rate were cut from April 2020 and would be sharing these with Heads at another meeting on 12th March 2019.  |  |
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| **i)** | **Morley early years building** – The local authority had not yet reissued the tender for daycare at The Annexe, the former early years base at Morley. Governors noted that the timing was becoming tight if any new provision was to be operational from September 2019. |  |
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| **8.** | **Key Issues from Curriculum Committee** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the Curriculum Committee meeting held on 28th January 2019 were received. Arising from the meeting, Governors discussed a number of issues: |  |
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|  | * Committee members had discussed the problems with Target Tracker and the actions being taken to address them. In addition to the bespoke training mentioned by Alex under Minute 7 e) above, a briefing was also being given by Jen Barker from the local authority on 20th March 2019 from 4.00 to 5.00 pm for all staff on data use. All Governors were also invited to attend if they wished. Tandy emphasised that all Governors should be conversant with the Centre’s data and the system it used. There was no proposal at present to replace the software, but it was hoped that it could be refined, in particular to give more accurate reports in relation to the month in which a child was born, which was key at this young age.
 | **All Governors** |
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|  | * Tandy’s report of her visit linked to the Communication Policy had been circulated with the agenda. Tandy recorded her appreciation both of the hard work that had gone into the policy and of the plentiful evidence during her visit of its implementation. Governors thanked Tandy for her report.
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|  | * Ross would be carrying out a visit jointly with his wife on children’s understanding of the world and physical play. Marisol would be carrying out a visit on literacy; she agreed to liaise with Alex to arrange a date.
 | **Marisol/****Alex** |
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|  | * The INSET day immediately after half-term would be used for staff training on Planning in the Moment, led by Ann Ephgrave, a child-centred approach to learning that sought to combine spontaneity with teachers’ knowledge.
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|  | * Tandy emphasised the need for all Governors to communicate their support for staff, who were doing an excellent job despite living with such uncertainty over future funding.
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| **9.** | **Key Issues from the Teaching School** |  |
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|  | Alex and Kay updated Governors on key issues from the Teaching School: |  |
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|  | * Alex had recently helped to deliver core book and phonics training.
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|  | * Chinese visitors interested in the Teaching School would no longer be coming to Homerton’s holiday club at half-term, but would be meeting with Kay Blayney and Kay Dimelow.
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|  | * Teacher training would be delivered at Anglia Ruskin, helping to make up for the lack of Initial Teacher Training (ITT) being delivered by the Teaching School this year.
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| **10.** | **Safeguarding** |  |
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|  | It was agreed unanimously to endorse the Safer Employment Policy as circulated with the agenda. | **Alex/****Ken** |
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|  | As Safeguarding lead, Ken noted that there were no specific issues to report. |  |
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| **11.** | **Budget Update** |  |
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|  | Governors received the latest budget reports for the nursery school and for the Nest and Owlets. It was noted that: |  |
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|  | * The school budget showed projected year-end income £49,331 higher than had been anticipated and expenditure £40,625 higher than had been anticipated, meaning that overall a surplus of £8,706 was projected at year-end. Governors noted that the variances were due mainly to accounting changes, in particular to show income and expenditure relating to school lunches coming through this budget this year. Alex also noted that predicted income from the local authority for 2018/19 had been based on 80% occupancy in the autumn term, when in fact the school had been full from the start of the year.
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|  | * The budget for the Nest and Owlets showed projected year-end income £1,983 higher than had been anticipated and expenditure £18,192 higher than had been anticipated, meaning that overall a deficit of £16,209 was projected at year-end.
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|  | This was due in part to changes to pay for some staff in the Nest and Owlets, moving them from playworker rates to teaching assistant rates, as paid to comparable staff in the nursery school. This measure had previously been agreed by Governors as equitable, especially as staff could be deployed across the whole Centre. |  |
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|  | Alex noted that it was also difficult at Homerton, as elsewhere, to make daycare for 2 year olds sustainable, because of the high staffing ratios required. Governors asked whether the fee increase previously agreed for the Nest had helped. Alex noted that it had, but that the take-up of late Owlets was much lower this year than last year. Governors had previously agreed to charge a flat rate of £15 for late Owlets, rather than two separately chargeable hours with an option of taking only the first. Alex suggested that it was too early to tell at this stage whether the flat rate was the cause of the reduced take-up; she recommended that it be continued for another year and then reviewed. |  |
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|  | * Across the Centre as a whole, the year-end projection was for a deficit of £7,503, 1% of turnover and affordable when taking into account the carry forward from 2017/18 of £160,000, which was not currently showing on Orovia. Alex noted that there was some uncertainty over the future use of this carry forward, given the wider uncertainty over the funding of maintained nursery schools from April 2020. Ken suggested that it would be premature to take any decisions at this stage, given that the signals coming from the national political parties seemed positive and that the local authority seemed to be seeking to keep nursery schools open. It was also noted that the nursery schools were currently jointly seeking charitable trust status, which could increase the funding options open to them. Alex agreed to seek an update on this work.
 | **Alex** |
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|  | * Governors asked whether the problems experienced with Orovia had now been resolved. Alex reported that good progress was being made, with Ray Byford from Education Finance due to visit Sue again shortly.
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| **12.** | **Key Issues from Resources Committee** |  |
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|  | The minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 31st January 2019 were received. Arising from the meeting, Governors discussed a number of issues: |  |
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|  | * Ken had requested advice from the local authority on the composition of the Head’s Appraisal Committee, but not yet received a reply; he would chase this.
 | **Ken** |
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|  | * Rinchen had taken photos of Homerton’s outside space, to help promote the Centre’s unique offer. Alex suggested that she, Rinchen and Sue meet to review the website and ensure that it was fully accessible and as streamlined as possible.
 | **Alex/Sue/****Rinchen** |
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|  | * The Committee had recommended that hourly charges be increased from September 2019 to help cover costs, from £6.00 to £6.50 for extra nursery hours and from £7.25 to £7.50 for the Nest. Governors noted that the hourly charge for the nursery had not been increased for three years. The Nest hourly charge had been increased last year.
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|  | Governors noted that even with the increases, Homerton’s hourly rates would be at the lower end as compared with those charged by other local nurseries. Homerton’s offer was also more flexible than most, which was advantageous for parents but could be adversely affecting income. |  |
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|  | Governors agreed unanimously to endorse the proposed increases to hourly charges from September 2019, from £6.00 to £6.50 for extra nursery hours and from £7.25 to £7.50 for the Nest. Governors also suggested that Resources Committee might wish to review the flexibility of Homerton’s offer, or consider highlighting it as a benefit to parents. | **Alex/Sue****Roger** |
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|  | It was also agreed that lunch charges would increase from £2.30 to £2.50 per meal per day from September. |  |
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|  | * The Committee had proposed a change to the Centre’s over-subscription criteria for 3 and 4 year olds, to add the following underlined text to the end of criterion 3:
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|  | Children who have previously attended the 2 year old provision who will be eligible to move into the nursery at the start of the academic year in September. |  |
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|  | The amendment was agreed unanimously by Governors. |  |
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|  | It was noted that if a place were vacated mid-year, any request from a parent to fill it by moving across a child already in another nursery class would be at the discretion of the Head. |  |
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|  | * The following policies were agreed unanimously by Governors:
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|  | * + Freedom of Information policy
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|  | * + Retention guidance for pupil records
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|  | * The Best Value statement would be brought to the next Governing Body meeting.
 | **Alex/Sue** |
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|  | * Governors asked whether the Centre should be making any preparations for Brexit, for example by assisting staff who were EU staff in applying for settlement. Alex reported that she had not yet been approached by any members of staff, but would check whether action might be necessary.
 | **Alex** |
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| **13.** | **Any Other Urgent Matters** – none. |  |
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| **14.** | **Date of Next Meeting** |  |
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|  | It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 26th March 2019 at 7.00pm at Homerton. |  |
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|  | The meeting closed at 9.20pm. |  |