



**Exceptional Meeting of the Full Governing Body
Western Road Community Primary School
Monday 17th September 2018 at 6.30pm
MINUTES**

Governor members present:	Sam Caughey, Alison Teagle, Matthew Montebello, Kerry Bedford, Daniel Hahn, Tom Jeffery, Jenny Westaway, Stephen Docherty, Andrew Willcocks, Jonathan Sharpe
Associate members present:	Irena Wooler
Officers present:	Nicola Gibson (clerk)

Agenda Item	Action
<p>a) Apologies for absence – Apologies were received from Christine McCarney, Roy Watkinson & Ruth O’Keeffe & duly accepted by the FGB</p> <p>b) Declarations of Interest – There were no declarations made</p>	
<p>JW welcomed & thanked governors for attending this exceptional FGB meeting to examine in more detail developments for a local multi academy trust. All questions & issues raised in this meeting will be discussed with Tony Smith from Priory, Joanna D’onoghue from South Malling and the chair of Priory, and the key issues raised by JW and MM at the Lewes Cooperative Learning Partnership (LCLP) meeting as appropriate. A series of documents pertaining to the proposals were shared with governors well in advance of this meeting & are listed at the end of these minutes..</p> <p>JW reminded governors about the context for the development of the MAT proposal. These include greater partnership working through the LCLP and heads group, budgetary concerns, declining ability of the LA to provide support and a belief that schools can achieve more by working together. A significant amount of research on multi academy trusts (MATs) has now been carried out by the MAT working group and school governing bodies. The priority for Western Road FGB now is to consider whether and how becoming part of a MAT might benefit our pupils now & in the future.</p> <p>JW then went on to give an overview of the vision & strategy for a Lewes multi academy trust. The proposal is for a mixed MAT of 6 schools which includes 3 local church schools. Initially, it is expected that there would be around 2000 pupils in total & the proposed start date is September 2019. There is an emphasis in the proposals on maintaining the ‘unique individual character of each school’ & one of the main aims for the trust is for it to become one of the highest performing MATs in the region by 2023.</p> <p>Following this overview, JW then invited questions from governors which fall broadly into the following categories:</p> <p><u>Vision</u> Concerns were raised about the lack of detail regarding vision for the MAT & specifically how it will enable WRS to retain its unique identity and enable it to move from being a good school to an outstanding school (in more than just Ofsted terms). Governors stated that they would like the proposals to be more aspirational, imaginative and specific about what the MAT could achieve so that they are able to understand better why WRS should be part of the MAT. Examples of what the governors would like to see included: an aspiration for all children to love learning; great preparation for secondary school; good and improving</p>	

educational outcomes for all; quality SEND provision; specialist sports provision; Gifted and Talented schemes; a focus on parental engagement and communication; excellent CPD for teachers.

There was a view that there is a need to much better understand how the specific needs of WRS as a small good school will be met through the MAT, and whether it is possible to provide any prognosis on the future for a school such as ours within a MAT.

Leadership & Achievement

Governors requested greater detail on the vision for leadership within the schools should a MAT be set up – what is the expectation regarding having a headteacher and senior leadership team in each school?

It was suggested that some of the documentation implies the removal of a headteacher role from the leadership structure – governors were of the view that the role of headteacher is crucial to support the continued achievements of good academic results and wellbeing outcomes for WRS children.

Governors wished to know more about the executive leadership of the MAT, and how this layer will bring added value to WRS on its journey to provision of outstanding education to its children.

A request was made by governors to receive further information about executive team proposals at the outset and further down the line should the growth strategy be met. It was queried who within the team would provide support on: inclusions and SEN, attendance and behaviour management; governance support; communications; compliance and policy development; and fundraising.

Inclusion

The governor present who is responsible for special educational needs & disability expressed concern at the lack of information in the vision on inclusion & well-being. How would a MAT benefit vulnerable pupils? Is there a vision around how SEN provision will be provided across the MAT? What about alternative provision and provision for those at risk of exclusion?

Governors asked if pupils, particularly those with SEND, would be expected to move between schools within the MAT to access resources. They would like more clarity with regard to this.

Governance

JW outlined the governance structure of the proposed MAT which is detailed in the papers accompanying the meeting. Ensuring good governance rests with 5 members – there was some confusion about the number of church members but possibly two are appointed by the Diocese, and one from a Church school - clarification will be sought. The main remit of the members is to hold the trustees (12 in total) to account regarding good governance and financial management. The trustees are the accountable body for the successful running of the MAT. The member role has been described as 'hands off, eyes on'.

Within each school sits a local governing body which reports into the trustees via a number of committees.

Governors felt they needed to understand better

- the role of the LGB and the other layers of governance, e.g. who has responsibility for aspects such as safeguarding and welfare of children, who line manages the headteacher and what is the LGB role in this
- suggested that the standards committee is narrow in its remit – and that it should be about learning and achievement and aspiration rather than simply raising

standards

- clarity about who sets the AIP and how much flexibility is there within each school to set their own and to influence budgetary spend

In addition, it was highlighted that the committee structure may not be compliant as outlined given the expectation within the Academies Financial handbook that the majority of members on committees must be trustees.

Finance

One of the expected benefits of MATs is that centralisation of services can result in greater efficiencies. Governors remain unclear about the way in which the 7% top slice and the executive team costings are related to each other. They recognised the fact that schools are not yet aware of the amount that is taken from ESCC at source and so it is difficult to understand the impact of the 7% stated in the proposal and how and when the efficiencies generated by the MAT might be expected to outweigh the finance foregone by WR. Nonetheless, Governors felt that there is a need for much greater clarity about the process for allocation of resources to schools within the MAT. They wished to have an understanding of how resources to each school will be allocated and how the interdependencies will be managed – is there a risk that resources will be diverted away from WRS to other schools?

It was also recognised that as a group of schools, the MAT may have access to additional funding for buildings etc, for example through the Condition Improvement Fund.

Staffing within schools

The staff governor stated that it was unclear from the information how being part of a MAT might impact on terms and conditions, what benefits would arise out of it, and what risks there might be. The FGB agreed that there is a need for greater information about aspects such as mobility, for example will contracts require staff to move between schools or will this be a choice. All also recognised that there would be many positives from closer working across staff teams in each school.

Policies

There was some confusion about what policies would be shared templates, and how standard the procedures are expected to be – for example, is there an expectation that there will be a shared approach to exclusion and behaviour, safeguarding and admissions. It is understood from the material that there will be but there is a need to look at this in more detail and understand what it means.

Converting to a MAT

One governor asked if embarking on the MAT route is a one-way journey. JW explained that once one has joined a MAT it is very difficult to withdraw. AT mentioned she knows of a school that it is trying to return to the local authority but it is not common practice.

Governors also agreed that it is important to consider in-depth what the risks of not being part of a local MAT are. It was recognised that it is very difficult to predict what will happen in the future, but we should consider aspects such as whether it would impact on how pupils felt about transition, and the long-term impact on WR sustainability if all the other schools are in the MAT.

One governor asked that about the target date of September 19 for conversion and how it feels very rushed – there was a discussion about the need for a more phased approach enabling schools to develop and engage with the proposals in more detail.

It was also agreed that it is not possible to make an informed decision without having a fuller understanding of the current position of all the schools within the area, including: financial projects; building conditions; staffing; educational outcomes; number of pupil;

SEN/PP figures etc.

Parental views & consultation period

There was a general discussion about the need to engage with parents and staff of WRS as early as possible once the FGB has made a decision about moving forward. It was agreed that it is crucial that FGB can become confident about the benefits and advantages of WRS being part of the MAT, and able to answer how the school is expected to be better off within rather than without a MAT, bearing in mind some of the vulnerabilities that a small school such as ours faces, including the likely capacity of ESCC to support a small school in future given constraints on local authority funding. Once the FGB can do this, it will be in a better position to be able to engage and take parent and staff views into account.

It was understood that there will have to be a formal consultation period, but the FGB consider engagement of the school community prior to the submission as being an important aspect of the process.

JW and MM explained to the FGB that an INSET day is currently planned for the 6th November at which they understand the MAT proposal is to be discussed. The FGB agreed that JW should let Tony Smith know that they are concerned that this will be too soon, given the likelihood that the FGB will not yet have made a decision and that we wish to engage with our own staff first prior to a wider session.

Next steps

JW explained that once NG has written up the notes, she will use these as a basis for a meeting with Tony Smith from Priory, the chair of governors at Priory, and the head of South Malling where FGB concerns will be raised.

It was agreed that the FGB will not be able to make a decision about proceeding with membership of the MAT on the 8th October, as governors will need to have further discussion at the meeting in the light of responses to the concerns raised. Following the 8th Oct, the FGB hopes to be clearer about when it can make a decision to proceed.

Date of future FGB meetings: 8th October 2018, 26th November, 28th January 2019, 25th March, 20th May, 8th July

Documents to accompany this meeting:

- LCLP Draft June 2018 of Multi Model CoFE vc Non Faith Articles 1
- WRS MAT Briefing Papers
- Draft MoU June 2018
- MAT WG Summary of Work Presentation 2018
- Road Map Lewes Coop Indicative Timeline June 2018
- LCLP Draft June 2018 of Multi Model CofE vc Non Faith Articles
- Lewes Multi Academy Trust Scheme of Delegation – Optimum Sized MAT FINAL
- MAT Meeting Schedule
- MAT Organisational Chart Year 1
- Central Services Team – Mature MAT
- Structure Chart 1 June 2018
- The MAT Central Services Team Summary Paper June 2018
- The Local MAT Overview June 2018