

Minutes of meeting of Governing Body of Rosendale Primary School

20 September 2016

<p>Present</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Kate Atkins2. Jeremy Baker (Chair)3. Michele Chung4. Dharshini David5. Caroline Gray6. Toby Litt7. Geraldine Pusey8. Biba Stanton9. Rosie Unwin10. Sam van Elk <p>Apologies Adam Baker Stephanie Maltman Natasha Price Shola Salako</p>	<p>In attendance Scott Palmer, Deputy Headteacher Kate Taylor, Deputy Headteacher Jane Boothroyd, Deputy Headteacher Jay Lakhani, school financial adviser</p> <p>Clerk Tom Milne</p>
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1. Apologies

Apologies were received, and consented to, as above.

2. Declarations of Interest

Re. item 8 on the agenda, the Chair noted that he was a governor of The Elmgreen School.

Rosie Unwin noted that her husband is the local councillor for the ward containing Rosendale School.

3. Minutes of Governing Body meetings held on 21 June 2016

Agreed as a true record

4. Matters arising

Fundraising. An ad hoc group of governors had met to consider fundraising options. One of several options considered was an application for funding from the EU Erasmus Programme. Adam Baker is researching science funding streams and Dharshi David is looking at the potential for business sponsorship. Agreed to ask the group to report back to the next meeting.

Sharing school electronic calendar. Agreed to assign governors a Rosendale school email address to enable sharing of the school calendar.

Action: Headteacher

Policy for recruitment and training of governors. Deferred to next meeting.

5. Chair's action

The Chair said that he had had discussions with "Repowering London" regarding the proposed installation of solar panelling on Rosendale School. They had provided a lot of paperwork but this did not include a draft lease. He had been in touch with the Lambeth officer dealing with the company who had advised caution.

Toby Litt, who has been working closely with Repowering London, said that he understood that an application for planning permission had been approved. However, the Chair said that further due diligence is needed from the school before the project can go ahead. This would involve legal advice for which the school would have to pay. When a draft lease had been received, he would contact the Lambeth officer again for his advice before lawyers were instructed.

The Chair said that he would circulate all the paperwork provided by Repowering London about the proposal and that it would be put on the agenda of the next meeting.

Action: Chair

Governors agreed that a structural survey could be carried out in the meantime provided that it is carried out without cost to the school and provided the work was covered by an adequate insurance policy at the cost of the company.

6. Election of Chair for 2016-17

Jeremy Baker was elected, unanimously, as chair of governors for the 2016-17 academic year.

7. Election of Vice Chair for 2016-17

Sam van Elk said that he did not want to continue as vice chair of governors for 2016-17. The Chair thanked Sam for the valuable contributions he had made as vice chair over the past academic year. Election of a new vice chair was deferred.

8. Decision on whether to convert to become an academy

The Chair asked governors to consider each of the three academy conversion documents circulated by the school – three-year financial project, business plan and risk analysis - and to consider questions and concerns arising in the consultation such as they pertained to each.

(1) Three-year financial projection

Jay Lakhani summarised the three-year financial projection for the proposed multi-academy trust (MAT) with The Elmgreen School. The following points and questions arose in discussion.

- Governors asked whether the financial projection included any potential rebate of funds currently retained by the local authority. Jay said that in order to be prudent he had not included any potential rebate.
- Governors asked whether there would be ongoing additional costs in a MAT beyond the legal costs of establishing the MAT. Jay said that there would be additional fixed costs for the annual external audit of the MAT's accounts. Any other additional costs would be at the discretion of the trustees but would include those services provided by Lambeth which should be offset by the rebate.
- Governors asked whether the government academy set-up grant would be sufficient to fund the costs of transition. The headteacher said that pooling the grants paid to Rosendale and Elmgreen would be likely to provide sufficient funds.
- Governors asked whether services that Rosendale currently purchases from Lambeth Local Authority are subsidised to maintained schools. The headteacher said that they are not.
- A discussion was held on questions raised in the consultation about the level of additional revenue that the school could expect to gain from the addition of a bulge class.

Firstly, it appeared that the cost of the additional teacher for a bulge class was not built into the financial projection. The headteacher said that this was because a

number of teachers are expected to return from maternity leave in the 2017/18 academic year. The notes to the financial project explain the position as above and set out the cost of employing an additional teacher should this become necessary.

Second, it was noted that the classroom consumables for the bulge class were not built into the financial projection. The headteacher said that this would be a marginal adjustment.

- Governors raised the question that had arisen in the consultation regarding the potential for increased central and executive pay in a MAT.

Regarding central costs, Kate Atkins said that she and Dominic Bergin, Headteacher of The Elmgreen School, did envisage appointing a paid part-time Director of School Improvement to work across the MAT. This cost is not included in the financial projection.

Regarding increased executive pay, Kate reiterated that the proposed model for the MAT does not include or envisage an Executive Headteacher working across more than one school. Neither Headteacher was looking for an increase in salary.

- Governors discussed the cost of buying insurance as an academy. The headteacher said that there would be no material difference from the current position and indeed the cover could remain the same.
- Governors discussed assurances that have been given about retaining current terms and conditions for staff. The headteacher said that terms and conditions would be guaranteed for existing staff (under TUPE regulations) and that the same terms and conditions would be offered to new staff joining the MAT.

(2) Business plan

- Governors highlighted a question arising in the consultation asking for greater clarity about the potential for additional schools joining the MAT in the future. The headteacher reiterated that this would be a decision for the Board of Trustees and that there would be a set of qualifying criteria. The first priority would be to establish the MAT with Elmgreen successfully and this would need to be achieved before consideration could be given to expansion. It was not anticipated that any further schools would join the MAT for at least two years.
- Governors asked whether Education and Health Care Plans would continue to be funded at current levels. The headteacher confirmed that they would.
- A discussion was held about the request from staff for an extension to the length of the consultation. Governors questioned whether the signatories to this petition had been satisfied with the length of the extension that was made. The headteacher responded that that was an old request made before the consultation period was extended. All meetings requested by staff had been held and all questions answered; that the staff governors had held meetings with staff; and that staff had met with unions.
- Governors asked about whether the Members of any future MAT drawn from representative roles (namely chair and vice chair of governors at Rosendale, chair of governors at Elmgreen, and chair of Elmgreen's Parent Promoter Foundation) would change every time the post-holder changed or whether there would be defined terms of office. The headteacher said that this would be determined by the steering board that would be established to oversee conversion.

- Governors raised concerns that the decision on whether to convert and establish a MAT was being taken without knowing who the fifth member of the MAT (under the proposed structure) would be and without Rosendale governors having had the opportunity to get to know the proposed members from Elmgreen. On the one hand, it was argued that competence-based criteria and a selection process would be put in place and that this would provide suitable safeguards. On the other, some governors felt that an irrevocable decision should not be taken in advance of establishing such criteria and process.
- Governors discussed whether school expansion would adversely affect other schools. The Chair responded that Lambeth had overprovided primary school places in other parts of the borough but not locally. The headteacher said that there was no evidence that other local schools would be affected and that the Rosendale catchment area would remain quite small.
- A discussion was held about the work of the steering group (drawn from the Rosendale and Elmgreen governing bodies) that would oversee the conversion process in the event of a decision to proceed, and whether there was any mechanism to stop and withdraw from the process prior to conversion. While, by its nature, any decision could in principle be reversed prior to conversion, it was agreed that in the event of a decision to go ahead, it would be the remit of the steering committee to oversee conversion, solving any problems that might arise in the course of the conversion process in the spirit of the MAT proposal and vision.

(3) Risk analysis

- Governors discussed the risk that the Board of Trustees could change the Trust's ethos over time. It was agreed that there should be criteria and process used to appoint trustees and that this would provide safeguards. However, the possibility of change over time exists in any institution regardless of the governance structure. The Chair said that he had been a governor at Rosendale for 22 years and noted the huge change to the ethos – for the better – over that period.
- Governors suggested that parental and local community influence over the school was potentially reduced under the proposed structure. At the moment, the individual school's local governing body has a lot of influence over the school, and this could change in the future depending on the Scheme of Delegation that the MAT puts in place at any given time. It was currently proposed to make as few changes as possible to the powers and constitution of the local governing body. This was to be agreed by the steering group. The risk was mitigated by the fact that the members of the MAT would include the chair and vice chair of the Rosendale Governing Body and the chair of the Parent Promoter Foundation.
- Governors discussed the levels of parental, staff and community engagement in the consultation process which had included the following stages:

Headteacher and Chair of Governors presentation to all Rosendale staff (23 June)

Letter to parents announcing the consultation (23 June)

Online public consultation (23 June to 15 September – generating 35 responses)

Headteacher meeting with staff to address questions (4 July)

Headteacher meeting with support staff to address questions (5 July)

Headteacher presentation and public meeting (5 July afternoon and evening)

Drop-in sessions with governors and governors available in playground at the start of day (through July)

Kate Atkins and Dominic Bergin meeting with Helen Hayes MP (12 July)

Kate Atkins and Dominic Bergin meeting with representatives from NUT, GMB, Unison and NASUWT unions (14 July)

Business plan, risk register and three-year financial projection published on school website (1 September)

Presentation from CEO of existing MAT to senior teams and governors from schools (5 September)

Public meeting with governors, headteachers and senior staff from both schools (8 September)

- It was felt that the range and balance of parental views were difficult to objectively assess. The initial public meetings had been well-attended but there had been a relatively low number of responses to the consultation. The headteacher said that many parents had made supportive comments to her outside of the formal consultation process. The Chair mentioned that he had received no adverse comments from parents or anyone else outside the meetings listed above.
- Staff governors were asked about the balance of opinion within the staffing body. Staff governors suggested that – against a range of views about the wider government academies programme and widespread disquiet about forced academisation – that most staff think that this is a good proposal with exciting opportunities.
- Governors asked whether any staff might be expected to leave in the event of a decision to convert to become an academy. Staff governors said that they did not anticipate that any member of staff would leave for this reason.
- A discussion was held on the risks that would face the prospective MAT if and when it expanded to incorporate additional schools. The headteacher said that this risk would be partly mitigated through the criteria for accepting new schools. She said that the criteria would be based on the school's ethos and not its Ofsted category, but that there would not be any specific educational blueprint requirement for joining the MAT. The headteacher also reiterated that the intention was not to extend the MAT for at least two years in order to focus on setting it up successfully in the first place.
- Governors asked about the views of Helen Hayes MP. The headteacher said that she and Dominic Bergin had met with Helen Hayes and that she supported the proposal.

(4) Consultation responses

Governors discussed issues arising in the consultation that had not been covered in the preceding discussion.

- A number of consultees had asked whether it would not be possible to achieve the anticipated benefits of collaboration with The Elmgreen School (and any other schools) without establishing a MAT. The following points were made in response:

- (1) If this were true, then meaningful collaboration would already be happening - it isn't and never has done.
- (2) Collaboration between schools needs structure and accountability if it is to be sustainable and productive.
- (3) The MAT board replaces - and is intended to enhance - the educational support role that was previously provided by the local authority.

- In opposing conversion, it was argued that a decision to convert would remove security that comes from belonging to a larger body (the local authority) and remove safeguards around pay and conditions. Furthermore, the financial case made for converting presents a best case scenario and contains significant variables. In sum, there is not a good or sufficient case for changing the status quo.

In response, the Chair of Governors said that – for better or worse – the status quo no longer exists because Lambeth local authority would have to relinquish its role in overseeing school standards and would in future only retain control over admissions, safeguarding and special educational needs and disabilities provision only. It was incumbent on Rosendale to take control of its own future in this new disposition.

The headteacher said that the financial projection was based on the best available information and contained uncertainties working in both directions.

- A note of a meeting between Kate Atkins and Dominic Bergin and representatives of the NUT, GMB, Unison and NASUWT held on 15 July 2016 was tabled and noted.
- A response to the consultation from the NASUWT union, which had been pre-circulated to governors via email, was noted.

The Chair invited each governor in turn to make any final comment.

The Chair asked governors to vote on whether Rosendale should convert to become an academy with a view to forming a multi-academy trust with The Elmgreen School.

The following resolution was agreed by seven votes to three:

Resolution: The Governors of Rosendale Primary School apply to the Secretary of State for an order to convert to a multi academy trust together with The Elmgreen School.

It was agreed that the following governors would form a steering board, together with six Elmgreen governors (in the event of a decision by Elmgreen School to convert), to oversee the conversion process and setting up a multi-academy trust.

Jeremy Baker
Kate Atkins
Caroline Gray
Rosie Unwin
Biba Stanton
Dharshi David

Toby Litt resigned from the governing body and asked that elections be held for a new parent governor ahead of the next governing body meeting

Action: Geraldine Pusey

9. National test results

Discussion was deferred to the next meeting

10. School Development Plan 2016-17

Governors were asked to email the Headteacher (cc Chair of Governors) with any comments on the draft School Development Plan. It would be discussed in detail at the next meeting.

Action: All governors

11. Key performance indicators

Deferred to the next meeting

12. Governing body membership

Deferred to the next meeting

13. Governance items

Deferred to the next meeting

14. Governor reports

Deferred to next meeting

15. Reports from the Children's Centre Management Board

None

16. Any other business

None

17. Dates of next meetings / calendar of school events

Noted