



Lowbrook Academy Full Governors Meeting Minutes

Friday 31st March 2017 at 8am at Lowbrook Academy

Present: Dominique Du Pre (DdP), Guy Van Der Knaap (GK), Paul Harrison (PH), James Spiteri (JS), Bianca Iasi (BI), Dave Rooney (DR), Pauline Reid (PR),

Visitors: Anna Smith (AS), Yasmin Thorn-Davis (YT), Ross McWilliams (RM), Paul Brimacombe (PB)

Clerk: Kate Bailey (KB)

Item		Action
1.	Apologies for Absence	
	Christine Sherwood-Phelps (illness) and Mary Gallop (holiday)	
2.	Update from Local Councillors with regard to school expansion project	
	<p>DdP started the meeting by stating that the whole school expansion process had been incredibly stressful and time consuming and that the governing body had been honest and transparent with RBWM throughout the whole process. DdP confirmed that milestones for the project had now passed and that RBWM had let down both the school and its community. The scheme had been agreed in conjunction with Kevin McDaniel at RBWM who had expressed his agreement with the scheme in numerous meetings and had never asked for any changes to the proposal at any time. DdP confirmed that at the final hour the additional funding required for the scheme had not been agreed RBWM and that the school were being asked to take a loan for the shortfall instead which it could not afford to do.</p> <p>DR added that he felt that the school had been betrayed by the council and also misrepresented which had put the school in conflict with the Leader of the Council, Cllr Simon Dudley (SD) and that there would be long term ramifications for this. DR confirmed that the school, had worked tirelessly and ethically on the scheme in conjunction with Kevin McDaniel at RBWM, who had never expressed any concerns about the project during the design process. DR added that the school would be prepared to defend itself against any further misreporting.</p> <p>JS added that he has personally spoken with some design and build contractors and they had confirmed that the architects for the project Thomson, Roddick and Laurie (TRL) were 'spot on' with the financials for the scheme.</p> <p>PB said that he felt that general opinion would be to wonder why the school had spent so long on the project if it was aware that the money was not going to be forthcoming from RBWM and added that the school must have been led to believe that further funding was available and that the £1.6million was a 'placeholder' until further investigations were carried out. PB confirmed that Cllr Saunders had expressed that he would be prepared to add another £200k to the project plus an additional 10% if necessary. PB confirmed that once it had been decided by SD that there would be a free vote on the matter the likelihood of the funding being agreed fell dramatically as he did not feel that he and RM had carried the room at the Group meeting on Monday 20th March. In addition to this the issue had caused enough concern to be removed from the agenda at further Council meetings. PB confirmed that the ideal political solution would be for the school to expand but to carry some debt and that SD had stated that RBWM were not going to give the school and additional £750k for the project as it was not politically viable for them to do so. PB asked the governors what they want to achieve from this process.</p> <p>DR replied that the governors want to develop the school in the right and proper way, to clear the name of the school, the governing body and the senior leadership team (SLT) and for Kevin McDaniel to agree that he had been involved in the development of the scheme and that he had</p>	

been instructed to circulate the paper regarding additional funding. PB replied that there were no incorrect facts in the press that he was aware of. DR confirmed that the press release from RBWM the previous day had inaccuracies in respect of the £200k contingency, the size of the hall and the first name of the Chair of Governors.

RM then confirmed that RBWM would be willing to fund the scheme in full if the size of the hall was reduced and would loan the school the shortfall if the school wished to retain the larger hall. DR corrected RM and stated that the offer had been for a hall of 167sqm, which was below current government guidelines, plus a loan for £500k which was just not financially viable for the school. RM confirmed that the only official document to councillors had included a hall of 167sqm and confirmed that he felt that the whole process had been completely unacceptable. RM then went on to say that the school and RBWM could choose to fight publicly or could continue to work together to seek a solution. DdP replied by saying that it seemed like the only way that the school would be able to expand would be to incur debt. RM repeated that the official paper states that the agreement with the school was for £1.6million for a hall of 167sqm and that it is felt that it is the school who has deviated from this agreement. DR replied that this is absolutely untrue and that the school could clearly demonstrate this. RM commented that if a solution is not found then the school will not expand. DdP confirmed that the governors first priority is to serve the existing pupils and JS reiterated this by saying that the if the school were to agree to a loan this would have a huge impact on what makes the school outstanding. RM asked the governors if they had considered what size of loan they could support. DR replied that the school's accountants McIntyre Hudson had advised that school that if they took a loan they would 'go broke'. PR confirmed this by asking who would step in and help the school if it used up all of its reserves funding a loan which it could not afford. PR then went on to state that these discussions had all happened over a year ago and the school felt very let down by Kevin McDaniel who had now expressed that the mood towards the project seemed to change in January. PB asked if the school had ever received a reply to the letter sent to SD in December 2016. DR confirmed that it had not. JS confirmed that, as a qualified architect, he had become a school governor in order to assist the school with the project and confirmed that in his professional opinion the school had gone through the correct processes at all times. PB confirmed that the community may not understand arguments about the size of the hall but they would understand non-participation in the process by RBWM. RM asked whether the school had ever commissioned a QS report for a scheme with a smaller hall. DR replied that this was never necessary as Kevin McDaniel had agreed the scheme with the larger hall and had confirmed that he would go back to Cabinet to agree the additional funding which had been identified in February 2017. DR confirmed that Kevin McDaniel had told the school that the additional £750k which was identified was to be offset against future expansion grants from central government. RM and PB confirmed that this source of the funding had not been made clear in any of the council papers on the subject. PD then tabled a possible solution to the funding issue in trying to change councillors thinking in that the £420k already spent on the project had accommodated and additional 30 children in September 2016 and that this amount of money could be treated separately to the £1.6 (plus £200k) required for Phase 2 of the expansion. YT stated that she was astounded that it had taken this number of people this amount of time to work out this issue. YT went on to explain to RM and PB how the SLT at Lowbrook had helped to transform Holy Trinity C of E School in Cookham, at the request of RBWM, to an outstanding school and that to question the commitment and integrity of the people on that team was absolutely appalling. PB agreed and stated that he would be happy to email his proposal to the Lead Member for Education Cllr Airey to see if it would be seen as a possible solution to the funding issue. The governors confirmed that they were happy for PB to do this but did not want it to seem as if this message was coming from the school as it was felt that this was an issue purely for RBWM councillors to discuss. RM, PB, DR and PR left the meeting to meet with parents of siblings who will not be offered a place at the school if the school does not expand. YT and AS also left the meeting at this point.

3. Exit/Delivery Strategy for school expansion project

DdP confirmed that following the discussion with RM and PB the governors needed to make two decisions. The first was whether, if PB's strategy was not successful, the governors would be willing to accept a loan for an amount equal to the shortfall in funding from RBWM as discussed with SD at their meeting on the 22nd March. The governors discussed this matter and then voted on the matter. The result of the vote was that the governors unanimously agreed that they would not be

	<p>prepared to accept a loan of any amount from RBWM due to the short and long term financial risks to the Academy as identified by McIntyre Hudson at the Finance, Sites and Buildings Committee meeting in November 2016 and again in their financial statement produced for the governors in March 2017.</p> <p>DdP then asked the governors to vote on whether they would be prepared to reduce the size of the hall as per the request of RBWM. The governors again discussed this matter and voted. The result of the vote was that the governors unanimously agreed that the size of the hall should remain at 290sqm as anything less than this would compromise the outstanding education that the school provides for its pupils.</p> <p>JS left the meeting at 9.30am</p>	
4	Notification of Any Other Business (AOB)	
	There was no other business to discuss.	
5.	Minutes of Meeting held on 25th November 2016	
	These were agreed as a true record of the meeting and signed by DdP	
6.	Matters Arising from Minutes	
	<p>It was agreed that PH and GK would have a training session with BI on Target Tracker on Monday 24th April 2017 at 8.30am.</p> <p>JS confirmed that he had now completed his Safeguarding training as part of his governor's induction training course.</p> <p>KB reported that unfortunately there was no progress on the governors Portal on the website as yet.</p> <p>KB also reported that she and David Morgan (DM) are working together on an Open Day for the school which is likely to be in November 2017.</p>	<p>BI</p> <p>KB/DM</p>
7.	Declarations of Interest	
	These were completed by the governors and will be filed by KB	KB
8.	Review of Governors Code of Conduct	
	It was agreed that this will be updated by KB to include a section on conduct on social media sites and emailed to governors for their review and comments	KB
9.	Governor Visits	
	It was agreed that the governors would carry out lesson observations and learning walks during Arts & Culture Week (w/c 22 nd May). KB to co-ordinate.	KB
10.	Governor Training	
	DdP confirmed that GK and JS have now completed their induction training. It was agreed that KB would continue to make governors aware of future training courses and governors would advise KB of the courses they would like to attend. It was also agreed that BI would carry out a safeguarding update with the governors during their Arts & Culture week visits	<p>KB</p> <p>BI</p>
11.	Committee Reports – Teaching, Learning and Curriculum (TLC) Committee	
	<p>DdP commented that a lot of the updates with regard to assessment were contained within the Principal's' report but that the headline was that every class was making at least expected progress with interventions and rigorous monitoring in place for those working below. BI confirmed that the school has invested heavily in new interventions and had introduced new interventions in reading, spelling and maths and that these were all working well and were being monitored by Kay Redjeb.</p> <p>DdP reported that the 7 persistent absentees reported had all received a letter from the school, BI had met with parents when necessary and that pupil premium children were also being carefully monitored. BI reported that there had been involvement by the Education Welfare Officer for a persistent absentee in Year 6 and that this child had now been taken of role and was being home schooled.</p> <p>DdP confirmed that all scheduled lesson observations had now been carried out and teaching had been found to be outstanding. Observations had been carried out by subject leaders from both schools and BI reported that this had been a really good example of the benefits of cross subject leadership.</p> <p>DdP reported that the TLC committee had also discussed the idea of collaborative teaching when the school becomes a two form entry school and had rejected a proposal from Kevin McDaniel at RBWM that the school should take 10% of pupil premium children ahead of catchment.</p> <p>DdP concluded her report by confirming that she had carried out an audit of the school website and found that it was compliant with its statutory obligations and DfE guidelines.</p>	

12.	Principal's Report	
	<p>DdP invited any questions on the report from governors. DdP then asked if it was possible for governors to view a teacher's performance management folder. BI confirmed that she was happy for governors to look at her folder which can be found in the school office.</p> <p>GK asked if there were any limitations to the school's current assessment software Target tracker. BI confirmed that it is a good system which produces good reports but that it is very time consuming and labour intensive for staff and so the SLT are currently investigating alternatives.</p> <p>DdP asked how close Target Tracker had been to predicting SATs outcomes. BI confirmed that it had been very close in all subjects except for writing as only two scores were given so there were a few discrepancies in terms of progress. DdP asked of on the whole the system as working and BI confirmed that this was the case.</p> <p>PH asked a question regarding the difference in participation in after school clubs between boys and girls in both KS1 and KS2. It was agreed that PH will email this question to NB for a direct response.</p> <p>GK mentioned that he had some additional questions which he would send via email as he had to leave the meeting.</p> <p>GK left the meeting at 10.10am</p>	<p>PH/NB</p> <p>GK</p>
13.	Whole School Overview of Mid-term Data	
	<p>BI reported that her review of mid-term data had shown the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that all children are making good progress • that Year 6 children are working extremely hard and making good progress • that pupil premium children are making good progress 	
15.	Continuous Improvement Planning	
	It was agreed that due to time constraints this would be tabled and reviewed at committee meetings in terms 5 and 6.	
16.	Parent Survey Results	
	DdP commented that the parent survey results for 2016-17 had been really positive.	
17.	SLT - Proposed Structure	
	<p>DR re-joined the meeting at 10.15am</p> <p>DR reported to governors that there may be come changes to the SLT structure for 2017-18 and that he would report more on this in future meetings.</p>	
18.	Staffing 2016 - 17	
	DR reported that the school was fully staffed for 2017-18 and would have a really good structure for the academic year.	
19.	Pupil Premium	
	DdP reported that this had been comprehensively covered in the Principal's report and so there were no further questions.	
20.	Sports Premium	
	DdP again reported that this had been comprehensively covered in the Principal's report and so there were no further questions.	
21.	Policy Ratification	
	Sex and Relationships Policy – this policy was agreed and ratified by the governors and will now be published on the school website by KB	KB
	The meeting closed at 10.30am	