



## Lowbrook Academy Extraordinary Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March at 7pm at Lowbrook Academy

**Present:** Dave Rooney (DR), Dominique Du Pre (DdP), Bianca Iasi (BI), Paul Harrison (PH), Guy Van Der Knaap (GK), Christine Sherwood Phelps (CS), James Spiteri (JS), Mary Gallop (MG), Pauline Reid (PR)

**Visitors:** Cllr Ross McWilliams, RBWM (RM), Cllr Paul Brimacombe, RBWM (PB) via telephone

**Clerk:** Kate Bailey (KB)

Item		Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>	
	There were no apologies.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Notification of Any Other Business (AOB)</b>	
	There was no other business to discuss.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Lowbrook Expansion Project 2017-18</b>	
	<p>The meeting started with introductions.</p> <p>RM then outlined to governors the situation with regard to RBWM's position regarding the additional funding required for the school expansion. RM stated that it appeared that the Leader of the Council, Cllr Simon Dudley (SD) and the Lead for Education, Cllr Natasha Airey (NA) had lost faith in the project and that a decision had been made by SD to have a free vote on the matter at a Council meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2017 and that parties would not be whipped before the vote. It was felt by all that this meant that the request for the additional funding required for the project would not be successful and would mean that the project could no longer go ahead.</p> <p>DR expressed his frustration and disappointment and stated that the school had agreed to expand last summer in line with the government policy to expand outstanding schools and that the school had made it clear to RBWM that the initial funding figure of £1.6million offered by them was never going to be enough to deliver the project. DR made the point that this initial figure had been calculated using the national average per pupil place (£13,300/place) but that the Berkshire average was a significantly higher and more realistic figure (£16,700/place). DR also stated that it had been agreed by Kevin McDaniel (KM) at initial meetings that the figure of £1.6 million was a starting point and that it would be revised once the scheme had been fully drawn up in partnership with RBWM. This was confirmed by DdP, GK and PR who had also been present in those meetings. GK stated that he had listened and believed in those meetings that RBWM were prepared to work</p>	

in partnership with the school and could not believe the U-turn in policy. PB joined the meeting via telephone at this point.

DR reiterated that it had been agreed at those initial meetings that Phase I would go ahead in order for the school to accommodate an additional 30 pupils in September 2017 whilst due diligence was carried out for Phase II on the understanding that further funding would be made available when required. RM asked if there were minutes for this meeting. DR confirmed that there were not as you cannot minute meetings in which the MP Theresa May is present. DR informed RM that the school were now considering exit strategies and would walk away from the project unless they had a legally binding contract with RBWM for the additional funding. PB stated that he felt that if the expansion did not go ahead the level of agitation from the community would be higher this year as their expectations had been raised.

RM then outlined the Council's process on the matter which was as follows:

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March – paper regarding RBWM's position on the matter would be published. RM confirmed that the school would have the opportunity to review this document beforehand and correct any misunderstandings and errors in an appendix.

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March – group meeting of conservative councillors to discuss the matter. RM stated that he would know more about the councillors' general position after this.

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March – Cabinet meeting.

Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March – Council meeting and vote. RM explained that questions could be put forward by members of the general public at this meeting and that these would have to be submitted by Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March.

DR explained that he was not prepared to enter into a public 'slanging' match over the matter. PB confirmed that they would only ask DR to come forward at that meeting on technical issues and to correct mistakes.

DR then asked PB and RM why RBWM had now changed their position with regard to the expansion. PB explained that he felt that a number of things had changed in the political landscape that now made this a hot topic and that he and RM would need as much information as possible from the school in order to stand up to those that were no longer in agreement with the expansion. DR stated that all of the information had already been sent to KM. DR also stated that the move to a free vote had pushed the project past significant milestones and that it was very likely that if the project did now go ahead that the additional children accepted in September 2018 would require temporary accommodation whilst the building work was completed. DR stated that he could not enter into this project without the full support of RBWM. PB agreed that the school could not take additional children without funding and support and that he understood that the school was now in the position where it would have to consider an exit strategy. DR stated that he felt that the school would be made to take the blame for the failure of the project by the LA and asked whether Theresa May was aware of the developments. PB stated that he felt that Theresa May would now be aware that the matter would now be put to a free vote. DR expressed again his frustration with RBWM throughout the whole project and outlined the significant delays and difficulties in communication that had occurred to make the school's position very difficult. PB asked the governors whether they were in agreement on an exit strategy as if that was the case the process would be very different. PH stated that he felt that we

	<p>had already established that the timeline had gone. RM asked the governors to wait until they had seen the briefing paper and knew the outcome of the group meeting before they made any final decisions with regard to this. The governors agreed to this with the proviso that they would want a written agreement from RBWM if they were to progress the project further, DR stated that unless RBWMLA were prepared to stand with and support the school on this project in its entirety then it could not be delivered. RM stated that he would try to speak to SD and NA before the meeting. JS asked if the school could lobby other councillors on the matter and PB confirmed that he was already doing this. PB asked the governors to provide him and RM with five of the best arguments for the expansion to ensure that they could cover all angles in their discussions. DR thanked RM and PB for their support.</p> <p>RM, PB and GK left the meeting at 8.20pm.</p> <p>The governors then agreed a plan of action as followed:</p> <p>The scheme would continue to planning on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March.</p> <p>DR would work on an exit strategy.</p> <p>An extraordinary meeting would be scheduled for the 21<sup>st</sup> March to discuss the feedback from the group meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>DdP would meet with Ian Harvey at Cox Green Parish Council to update him on the situation.</p> <p>PR would chase RBWM for the outstanding 80% of the Phase I build costs.</p>	<p><b>PG @ TRL</b> <b>DR</b></p> <p><b>KB</b></p> <p><b>DdP</b> <b>PR</b></p>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Ratification of Admissions Policy 2018-19</b>	
	This policy was unanimously agreed and ratified by the governors	
	<b>The meeting closed at 9.20pm</b>	

Signed.....Dominique Du Pre (Chair)