



Lowbrook Academy Extraordinary Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 2nd May 2017 at 2.00pm at Lowbrook Academy

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

Visitor: Cllr Simon Dudley (RBWM) (SD), Hillary Hall (RBWM) (HH)

Clerk: Kate Bailey (KB)

Item		Action
1.	Apologies for Absence	
	Paul Harrison and Mary Gallop (work commitments)	
2.	Notification of Any Other Business (AOB)	
	There was no other business to discuss.	
3.	Lowbrook Expansion Project 2017-18	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DR invited SD to explain to the governors RBWM’s current position on the Lowbrook expansion. • SD explained that his position was that because RBWM had not notified the governors of the budgetary pressures on the scheme, that a ‘tacit’ understanding had developed that the scheme and the additional funding required had been agreed by RBWM and that is the assumption that the governors has worked under to progress the scheme to the planning stage. It was only when RBWM had looked at the scheme in detail that the ‘wheels had come off’. • DdP replied that she could not agree with this due to the fact that an RBWM officer had been part of the Steering Committee for the scheme from Day 1 and had been well aware of the additional funding that was required. • DdP went on to add it was not under ‘an assumption’ that the school had progressed the scheme as the RBWM officer was in full agreement of the designs for the scheme as evidenced in various written correspondence. • SD replied that this information, and the quantum of overspend, had not been sufficiently highlighted to members. • DR responded that it was well known, and documented, that the initial calculations meant that the scheme was underfunded from the outset and that additional funding would be required. DR also commented that the governors were not aware of how and when the RBWM officer would have reported this information to the Council or indeed how the funding would have been allocated as this was Council business. • At this point, SD’s tone changed and became aggressive in retaliation to being 	

challenged on his version of the truth about Kevin McDaniel agreeing to the project. He stated that he felt DR had not conducted himself professionally in this process, an accusation which DR vehemently tried to deny but was abruptly spoken over by SD who went on to accuse DR of 'slagging him off' in his 'local boozers'.

- Again, DR tried to defend his position against the accusation made by SD but was again spoken over and challenged by SD to "sort this out man to man and not come into my boozers and slag me off."
- DR again denied this and asked what SD was basing his accusation on.
- SD replied with, "You know what you said." When pressed again, he alleged that DR had been saying negative things about him to people who drink in his local pub.
- DR strenuously denied this several times and said this is something he simply would not do and responded with, "If I were to see you in the pub, you know I would quite happily buy you a pint."
- DR suggested that the only mention of SD was when the lady serving at the pub had asked him why the Lowbrook expansion was being blocked and that he had responded that she would have to ask Cllr Dudley. There was no 'attacking' of him.
- SD then reverted back to a business-like tone and went on to say that due to the 'tacit' understanding that had developed whilst the scheme had progressed that he would now propose that RBWM agree to expand the school on the basis of the agreed scheme with full cost exposure to RBWM and that this proposal would be taken to a free vote after the General Election.
- SD then went on to say that RBWM would close on the Cox Green School land after this vote. SD also invited the governors to talk to RBWM about school room capacity for children for September 2017 and advised that parents should be on the waiting list so that they can be offered a place once spaces become available.
- JS asked whether this would be funding for the full project and clarified that with milestones for the project now passed that the school would potentially need additional accommodation for pupils from Term 1 to Term 4 of the 2018/19 academic year due to the unlikelihood that the project would be completed for September 2018.
- JS also advised that the school had still not received a pre-application report from RBWM, despite having submitted the scheme in November 2016, and queried whether planning approval would be given for the scheme.
- SD replied that he could not comment on this and was not aware of the status of the application but agreed that there was a planning risk.
- DdP commented that the process had been ridiculously stressful; that the running of the school had been compromised due to the time and efforts senior leaders are having to dedicate to this U-turn; and consequently governors were worried about making another 'tacit' agreement.
- DdP asked SD how the two parties could reach a watertight agreement that would benefit both existing and future children.
- SD then asked for confirmation of where the scheme was in planning.
- DR replied that the scheme had been submitted to pre-app on the 18th November 2016 and that there had been no response to this as yet. DR also confirmed that the scheme's architects TRL had been disengaged.

- SD advised that TRL be re-engaged in order to take the scheme to planning and asked who was paying their fees.
- PR confirmed that the school is currently paying these but that RBWM are aware of the costs, which have been included as part of the total project costs.
- SD then confirmed that RBWM would indemnify the school for the costs incurred by the school's preferred suppliers to advance the expansion of the school and that a letter would be written to the school confirming this. SD asked the school to submit a planning application as soon as possible and confirmed that this would go to a Borough Wide Development Panel (which convenes on an ad hoc basis when necessary) with a view to receiving a planning determination in July/August 2017 and work commencing in September 2017. SD then confirmed that a formal decision on the additional funding would be taken by Council when it was in receipt of full and final costings for the scheme. SD confirmed that his proposal for the free vote would be that RBWM would expand Lowbrook Academy to the agreed configuration, whatever the cost and that the school would contribute it £50,000 contingency as previously agreed.
- DR commented that the plans for the scheme are already reasonably lean.
- JS confirmed this by stating that in his professional opinion the school had worked hard to ensure that this was a lean scheme.
- SD then asked how children would be accommodated in September 2018 as the building work would not be completed.
- DR replied that historically the school had rented a classroom at Cox Green School and that they would be prepared to explore this as an option or the school could rent a temporary classroom.
- SD confirmed that RBWM would cover the cost of either of those two options.
- DR then commented that once the school had offered places to an additional 30 children for September 2017 there would be no going back as there was a risk that the free vote would go against the school.
- SD confirmed that there was a risk that the vote may go against the school and agreed that the school should not offer the additional places until after the vote had taken place.
- SD confirmed that the earliest date on which the vote could take place would be the 19th June 2017. JS asked how firm the figures would have to be for the vote.
- SD replied that Councillors would be told that the additional funding required would be in the region of £750k to £1million but that fixed costs would be required for the full Council meeting.
- SD then asked the governors how they would like to communicate with parents and DR suggested joint PR.
- GK commented that whilst he appreciated that SD was now proposing that RBWM would cover the full cost of the build, the additional fees and the temporary accommodation required, there were still trust issues between the two parties and so he also wanted clarification that the school would retain control of the scheme during the build process and that there would be no undue influence from RBWM throughout this process.
- SD asked if the scheme would be competitively tendered by TRL and JS confirmed that this would be the case.
- SD concluded the meeting with the following summary of actions by RBWM:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The school would receive a letter from RBWM confirming this new proposal. ○ SD would update RBWM at the Cabinet meeting that evening. ○ A representative from the RBWM Communications team would be in touch to discuss a joint letter to parents. ○ Children’s services would be notified of the possibility of offering an additional 30 places for the school after the free vote on the 19th June 2017. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SD left the meeting at 2.40pm ● The governors then discussed the proposal put to them by Cllr Dudley and agreed that they could not agree to anything until they had received the letter from RBWM and seen the proposal in writing. 	
	The meeting closed at 3.00pm	

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