

COTHAM SCHOOL
Meeting of Full Governing Body
Wednesday 12th February 2014 at 7pm

Governors Present: Dora Alderson (DA), Jim Bowyer (JB), Dave Brockington (DB), Ed Carpenter (EC), Jeremy Krause (JK), Malcolm Willis (MW, Head), David Winter (DW), David Yorath (DY, Chair), Lesley Spring (LS), Caroline Francis (CF), Claire Grocott (CG), Andrew Ellis (AE)

In Attendance: Christine Ansell (CA, Dep Head KS3), Svetlana Bajic-Raymond (SBR, Dep Head KS4), Geraldine Hill-Male (GH-M), Marian Curran (MC, Post-16), Thursa Swindall (TS, Clerk), Richard Sloane (RS, DfE Academy Broker)

Apologies: Bronwen Lewis, Lynda Hay, Marlene Kelly, Sandra Fryer, Helen Gordon, Sujitha Subramanian, Mel Sperring

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The register was circulated for Governors to sign and apologies were received and accepted as above. DB apologised that he had to leave the meeting at 8pm.

2. Co-Op Update

GHM reviewed the Forum AGM and thanked the Governors who attended. She said that the Forum needs better outline proposals from the FGB in order to respond with their views. GHM summarised the most recent Forum minutes, picking out that the Forum would like Governors to agree a communication strategy as a result of a suggestion from a parent rep who is a marketing expert and who had surveyed the parent constituency.. The Branding Group will come to the next FGB to show what they have been working on. MW spoke of his small communications audit and that the Admin staff in particular felt this area required improvement. MW agrees with the Forum that a communication strategy is needed and would fit in well with the current work of the Branding Group – the school requires a more corporate and efficient style.

GHM asked the governors would fund a consultant working in this way.. DY stated that a clear brief was needed in order to get value for money. MW clarified that any consultant would go through the normal staff hiring process. DW said this could also be an opportunity for a better parent–Governor communication line to be established. It was agreed the FP&GP committee would be the best to take this issue forward.

GHM invited DY to describe the Governors and their committee structure for the reps at the next Forum meeting on 17/03/14; he accepted. LS raised a query regarding Community Governor elections, which Appts & Standards will approve.

ACTIONS

GHM: create brief for communication strategy consultant for FP&GP by 24/03/14

TS: email GHM the details of potential new Community Governor

3. Talk on Academy Sponsorship by Richard Sloane from the Department for Education, followed by Q&A

DY introduced RS, a school broker from the Department for Education, who aligns sponsors and schools. His area covers most of the south west (not Devon and Cornwall). He works with schools from the OFSTED 'outstanding' categories to help them become sponsored academies. He works between Governors and Ministers. He said that Lord Nash has brought new rigour and that sponsors are now only approved by Ministers and must go through several phases of slow growth. He said they need schools like Cotham, who have a strong moral purpose and who are willing to take on failing schools and help them to improve their outcomes for children in them. He said that schools wanting to become sponsors would have to have the ability to put in place a Trust Board with typically seven members, with expertise covering legal, financial, business and education.

DY asked about the application process and RS said a clear reason is needed, along with a strong attainment and achievement profile, a track record of supporting other schools, an established group to manage things and a strong finance director. RS said Cotham ticks all the boxes, but that it is also important to determine how the school will maintain its own standards while raising those of other schools, as well as continuing to manage its broader interests. RS hasn't brokered a school in Bristol before, but could provide examples of places to visit elsewhere. He also clarified that the payment the sponsoring school would receive is a one-off and that a school can apply to be a sponsor without having a failing school to join with already in mind.

JB asked whether RS had met with anyone from Bristol City Council and RS confirmed they had regular meetings and that he works closely with other local authorities. He clarified that the sponsoring school cannot approach another school directly, but must go through the formal allocation process. CF queried the consequences for staff if things go wrong; RS said there would be investigations and warnings issued, but that they would receive support before finally losing the sponsorship if all else fails. CF commented that it only be useful to sponsor a failing primary school if it is a feeder school to Cotham; RS said there is no obligation to take a school, and Governors are free to visit any school offered prior to making a decision. CA said she would want to be confident Cotham could make a difference before taking on a failing school.

After the break DY asked Governors if they wanted to ask MW to go through the process of applying to become a sponsor and to factor it into a five-year plan. JB commented that it would give staff the opportunity to develop new skills and could create new opportunities and thereby keep skilled staff who might otherwise move away to progress professionally. CA said Academy Trusts have greater flexibility and it would be good to register in order to be in a position to act if wished. MW stated he would love to work with a primary school and thinks staff would feel the same (especially in regard to sports leadership and mentoring), but would exercise caution in terms of maintaining Cotham's standards at the same time. He thought the school should take the first step in applying, but consider all aspects carefully before proceeding any further. MW knows he holds a position of respect with the children of Cotham, and would not want to risk that by spending too much time in other schools.

It was agreed that MW should undertake the application ahead of time, as long as a clear methodology and level of support is worked out (issues raised by DW). It was also discussed that Cotham could still join with another non-failing school (such as Colston) regardless or in tandem, to share knowledge and resources. This experience could also help Cotham in being more prepared to help a failing school. DY commented that this is a good time to apply to be a sponsor, ahead of the next OFSTED inspection. The Labour party legislation with regard to teacher training was also mentioned as being important, and is something MW believes will of concern nationally. DA

commented that sponsorship seemed necessary but foresees many potential problems, especially as to how Cotham will support the increasing needs of its own students. She said the money that comes from sponsorship would not go far, but DY said they could argue for more.

ACTIONS

MW: complete DfE Academy application and send to RS

MW: prepare a report for FGB as to what the support for mother school will look like and how Cotham will be maintained, as well as list of the pros and cons of becoming a sponsor

4. Headteacher's Report

MW provided an overview of the report, highlighting that the process of organising student trips is now more fairly structured. DY was pleased to see the quantity of activities on offer. MW said that the newsletter would be out by the end of the week. MW also drew attention to the closer scrutiny that is now on all Y11s in English and the range of new strategies that are now in place. CA outlined a new module from WJEC that will help students and teachers feel more prepared for the exams, along with a specific work that has been purchased for all Y11 students. MW congratulated CF on her promotion to Assistant Headteacher KS3, commencing on 01/09/14.

MW spoke of his and SF's recent meeting with the Stoke Lodge Town and Village Green group regarding the pitch the school shares use of. He came away feeling he didn't want to be involved with this uncompromising group and sharing that green space any further, and is currently looking at other suitable options, including a different area called Golden Hill, which is looking for people to work with and could save the school money.

DW raised the question of how much was spent on school trips in total and per (pupil premium) student. It was agreed that MW would report to FP&GP on this.

ACTIONS

MW: report to FP&GP as to how much is spent on school trips and per student.

5. Agree Pay Policy and Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy

The Pay Policy was agreed, subject to DY and DA looking at Appendix 1 and some minor terms of reference issues. The Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy was agreed.

6. Post-16 Report

DY, MC, SF and MW recently met with Governors from Redland Green to discuss moving forward with Post-16. DY will report more substantially on this at the next FGB, after the next meeting of the group on 03/03/14.

ACTIONS

DY: report on meeting re. Post-16 with Redland Green at next FGB

7. Committee Reports and Minutes

P&T: DA outlined their activities.

L&WB: JB reported Cotham is aiming for the Investor in Careers award with Thelma Whedon; MW made a special plea for a Governor to come forward to take part and help Thelma. DY said he could do it if no one else will.

FP&GP: as SF was not present DY summarised their activities and stated that the repairs capital program needs to be sorted.

Performance Review Panel and Remuneration Committee: the Performance Review Panel did not recommend uplift for the senior staff bar Marian Curran. It reported that performance reviews for MS and GHM still need to be done as soon as possible. The Remuneration Committee minutes were not yet available but had received a report from the Performance Review Panel regarding SLT and from the HT in respect of staff moving through the pay threshold. A list of those staff had been provided to P&T Committee but will not be published by the Remuneration Committee.

ACTIONS

MW: conduct performance review of MS and GHM, and report to the Performance Review group

8. Action Lists

All actions completed except for the following from the September FGB meeting:

- 5 DY: with Chairs of Committees, establish clear criteria/audit trail to show how issues raised by Forum are considered and create action log. **OUTSTANDING**

9. Calendar

26/02/14: L&WB meeting
06/03/14: P&T meeting
24/03/14: FP&GP meeting
26/03/14: Audit meeting
02/04/14: FGB meeting
01/05/14: L&WB meeting
07/05/14: P&T meeting
19/05/14: FP&GP meeting
21/05/14: FGB meeting
10/06/14: Audit meeting
17/06/14: L&WB meeting
23/06/14: P&T meeting
30/06/14: FP&GP meeting
16/07/14: FGB meeting

10. Any Other Business

After some discussion it was agreed that there will not be a group of named Governors going to the Forum meetings, but instead that anyone can volunteer to go each time. JB commented that the FGB and Forum meetings are often too close together, which puts Governors off attending the latter. It was agreed that this will be taken into consideration when planning the calendar of meetings for the next academic year. There was also some confusion over the dates of the next three FGB meetings, which TS will look into.

ACTIONS

TS and KH: to plan calendar for next year with FGB and Forum meetings more equally spaced

TS: get dates of Forum meeting and canvass for two Governors to attend each meeting

TS: check dates of following three FGB meetings and report to Governors

11. Summary of Action Points

- 1 GHM: create brief for communication strategy consultant for FP&GP by 24/03/14
- 2 TS: email GHM the details of potential new Community Governor
- 3 MW: complete DfE Academy application and send to RS
- 4 MW: prepare a report for FGB as to what the support for mother school will look like and how Cotham will be maintained, as well as list of the pros and cons of becoming a sponsor
- 5 MW: report to FP&GP as to how much is spent on school trips and per student.
- 6 DY: report on meeting re. Post-16 with Redland Green at next FGB
- 7 MW: conduct performance review of MS and GHM, and report to the Performance Review group
- 8 TS and KH: to plan calendar for next year with FGB and Forum meetings more equally spaced
- 9 TS: get dates of Forum meeting and canvass for two Governors to attend each meeting
- 10 TS: check dates of following three FGB meetings and report to Governors