



Bowhill Primary School

Full Governing Body Meeting

The First Extraordinary FGB – Proposal to join Exeter MAT

(Future of the Cooperative trust)

Minutes

Date of meeting	12 th January 2016	Present	Name of Governor	Initials	Category	Name of Governor	Initials	Category
			Caren Brooks	CB	STH	Reg Edwardson	RE	COO
Stephen Cousley	SC		COO	Debra Ward	DWd	STF		
Karen Cronin	KC		FOU	Natalie Bracher	NB	PAR		
Caroline Havard	CH		PAR	Ruth O’Neale	RO	PAR		
Mark Burnard	MB		FOU	Emma Walker-Brown	EW	PAR		
George Littlejohn	GL		COO	Rod Ruffle	RRe	LA		
Matthew Giles	MG		PAR					
Room	Year 6/2							
		Apologies	Julie Harris	JH	PAR	Karen Webb	KW	PAR
		In Attendance	Li Wang	LW	Clerk to Governors			
Minutes to	Attendees							
	Apologies							
	School Website							

Agenda Number	Details of Discussion	Actions
	<p>Fire Alarm</p> <p>RE outlined: There is no fire test today. If the alarm sounds then make your way quickly and safely to the playground</p> <p>Business interests</p> <p>None Declared</p>	
1	<p>To receive apologies for absence</p> <p>Apologies received as above. RE announced that Julie Harris resigned yesterday.</p>	

Cooperative School/Academy discussion

RE had circulated 'Convert to an academy: guide for schools' to all Governors prior to the meeting.

CB introduced the background for the Cooperative School/Academy discussion.

It is for Governors to consider whether they support/reject the proposal that Bowhill Primary School join the Exeter MAT (multi academy trust) as proposed through the Cooperative Trust. Multi-academy trusts (MATs) are groups of academies that have come together to form a charitable company, with a single group of 'members' (who have an overview of the governance arrangements) and a single board of trustees or directors. Maintained schools wishing to form or join a MAT can convert to academy status and join the MAT at the same time – there is no requirement to be a standalone academy first.

Academies are funded directly from the DfE. MATs can choose to pool a proportion of the budget each academy in their group receives to fund central services, such as finance and HR (often referred to as 'top-slicing'). Like federations, MATs can choose to vary the budget they devolve to each school in order to address particular needs.

CB gave background to the formation of the Cooperative Trust as a context:

- 1) LLC was weakened as a result of loss of funding-money still in own budget but no shared pot;
- 2) Any school would be vulnerable to being academised/categorised- the LLC proposed that there would be protection from academisation through the formation of Cooperative Trust.
- 3) Bowhill had hoped that Coop Trust would serve our needs. Subsequent changes in law now meant membership of Coop Trust would no longer be a protection against academisation. Government's commitment is that all schools will become academies by 2020.

CB stated the major impact /differences between Cooperative Trust and MAT:

- 1) Finance - All academies in a multi-academy trust are governed by a single trust and a single board of trustees. MAT would become employer of all staff;

MAT would deal with employment of staff, contracts, grounds maintenance.

Board would consider each school's situation when looking at employing heads in the future- head teachers could become head of teaching and learning.

- 2) Potential loss of autonomy

a. As for Bowhill Primary School, it is possibly vulnerable to sponsored (forced) academisation because of RI status.

b. We could be standing alone if majority of other schools within the Coop Trust joined the MAT.

KC & EW asked: Does the proposed MAT only have primary schools and learning children centres, no secondary schools involved?

CB replied: West Exe School are intending to join a secondary MAT.

CH asked: It is an alarming issue and takes a huge amount of time, attention and energy to do both processes. Could we wait for a later date to make the decision whether we would like to join another group?

CB answered: We need to be clear about what are the next steps.

Other governors affirmed both the high level of commitment and confirmed that other groups could be joined at a later date.

RR thought: If the school becomes academy, there will be no LA representative who remains at schools.

MG asked: How much is it personality-driven if we want to sign up?

CB replied: There are a number of existing groups that have come from the original Coop group so I think it would be fair to say that there is an element of personality involved.

RO asked: If we are not getting involved now, would it be possible that we might not be allowed to join them? What will happen if we don't do it now?

GL asked: Are we forced to join the group?

MG asked: Are we pushed into a specific group?

CB answered: It is not a time to be indecisive. With regards to the characteristics, it depends on the group you are in. If you are part of an academy chain there would seem to be less autonomy with schools having heads of teaching and learning, rather than head teachers overall.

KC stated: If our next inspection repeated our RI status, one option could be that we are forced to choose a chain. Alternatively, although judged good, others could leave the Coop Trust and leave us on our own. But are we strong enough to academise now? By waiting longer we could research both existing MATs and other schools not yet academised and choose which to approach. MATs need to have a mix of strengths and weaknesses to help each other improve. It is important to find schools with a similar ethos to work with.

CH asked: Have staff known what happened? And how are they feeling about it?

DW said: Staff went through the similar process when we became a co-operative Trust member.

Governors asked how much money could be granted for the process?

CB answered: An *Academy Support Grant* to help maintained schools convert to academy status, essential if they wish to join or form a MAT, is available. Through this grant, the DfE provides £25,000 to each converting school to help with costs such as legal fees, stationery and signage. Schools can apply for this grant when their application to convert has been approved in principle. They can only apply once.

CH advised: We could commit to looking at the options.

MB agreed: We could talk to other schools.

KC stated: It is a lengthy process and our responsibilities as governors will increase. It is important that we can still continue to improve our governance.

CB proposed that Governors should vote.

1) Do Governors support the proposal that Bowhill join the Exeter MAT?

All Governors rejected the proposal that Bowhill join the Exeter MAT unanimously.

2) Do Governors support the proposal that Bowhill consider the possibility of an alternative academy group either now or in the future?

All Governors agreed that Bowhill will consider the possibility of alternative academy group in the future.

CH advised: We could invite the Chair of Cooperative Trust to talk about the pros and cons.

RO suggested: We have to make sure what should be done.

DW agreed: It is time to make the conscious priority.

It was agreed by all Governors that the following actions will be taken to make the right decision.

	<p>1) A suggested approach and informal investigation will be considered to help Governors to decide on the best way forward for your school.</p> <p>Raise the idea of partnering with one or more other schools to outline:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the changing educational landscape ● the particular challenges our school is likely to face over the next few years ● the benefits of collaboration ● different types of partnership schools are entering into <p>2) Bring together a small working party of interested governors to explore possibilities to consider specific pros and cons of partnering versus remaining standalone for our school.</p> <p>3) Convene a full governing body meeting for the working party to report back on its work.</p> <p>Allow sufficient time for a full and open discussion. This might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a presentation of the working party's findings ● a recommended way forward ● an explanation of why the working party thinks this would be the best decision for your school ● an explanation of the likely implications for governors, staff, pupils and parents ● an opportunity for the rest of the governing body to ask questions, raise concerns and make suggestions 	
<p>3</p>	<p>To Sign the Code of Conduct</p> <p>All Governors agreed to and signed the Code of Conduct.</p>	

Attachments: Convert to an academy: guide for schools

There being no further items to discuss the meeting closed at 7.10 p.m.

Signed Dated.....