



Bowhill Primary School

**The Third Extraordinary FGB – Proposal to form Exeter Learning Academy Trust
(Future of the Cooperative trust)**

Minutes

Date of meeting	12 th July 2016	Present	Name of Governor	Initials	Category	Name of Governor	Initials	Category	
			Caren Brooks	CB	STH	Reg Edwardson	RE	COO	
Stephen Cousley	SC		COO	George Littlejohn	GL	COO			
Karen Cronin	KC		FOU	Natalie Bracher	NB	PAR			
Caroline Havard	CH		PAR	Emma Walker-Brown	EW	PAR			
Matthew Giles	MG		PAR	Debra Ward	DWd	STF			
Ruth O’Neale	RO		PAR	Lizzie Clough	LC	PAR			
Joanne Radford	JR		COO	Nikki Denison	ND				
Room	Year 6/2			Mark Burnard	MB	FOU	Rod Ruffle	RRe	LA
			In Attendance	Li Wang	LW	Clerk to Governors	Justin Stone	St Thomas	
Minutes to	Attendees								
	Apologies								
	School Website								

Agenda Number	Details of Discussion	Actions
	<p>Fire Alarm</p> <p>There is no fire test today. Fire Exits were outlined by RE. If the alarm sounds then make your way quickly and safely to the playground.</p>	
1	<p>1.1 Welcome & Apologies</p> <p>Apologies received as above and sanctioned.</p> <p>1.2 Attendance & Business Interest Register Business Interests Register</p> <p>Governors were reminded that they must declare any conflict of interest which becomes apparent during the meeting. None Declared.</p>	
2	<p>Co-opt the prospective Governor - Nikki Denison</p>	

	<p>Nikki Denison’s brief introduction was circulated prior to the meeting.</p> <p>KC proposed Nikki Denison as a Co-Opt Governor and this was seconded by SC and accepted by other Governors.</p>	
3	<p>Vote for conversion to Academy and forming an MAT</p> <p>CB circulated reports in connection with conversion to academy status of Exeter Learning Academy Trust & Alphington Primary School/St Thomas Primary School/Bowhill Primary School/ Ide Primary School, Scheme of Delegation (draft) 2016 05 16 and a Multi –Academy Trust Letter prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Question-and –answer sessions were held prior to and at the meeting.</p> <p>The Solicitor - Amy Laver – answered questions about forming MAT (Multi Academy Trust) from Governors through emails.</p> <p>Justin Stone –the Principal of St Thomas was invited to attend the meeting, answering a number of key questions as Governors considered the MAT model.</p> <p>The questions posed prior to the meeting were:</p> <p>1. Is there any mechanism by which a school’s LGB (Local Governing Body) could initiate a withdrawal from the MAT in future? If so, what would the possible process/cost implications be? (In contrast to the Coop Trust this is a very permanent arrangement.)</p> <p>Amy answered: No, any decision for a school to leave the MAT would be for the SoS if they felt a school was ‘underperforming’ or on notice by the Directors, the period of which is 7 years.</p> <p>2. There is some confusion on page 13 1.1 of the Scheme of Delegation of Exeter Learning Academy Trust: Is the Chair – Mr Reg Edwardson - able to be elected as Chair of Bowhill again, bearing in mind that we reappoint annually?</p> <p>Amy replied: I assume we are referring to the draft scheme of delegation. Reg is not a director. Yes, he can be re-elected.</p> <p>3. Is the plan to stick with the existing number of governors initially? As all co-opted governors need to be approved by MAT directors in writing before the LGB can co-opt them, we need written permission up front ahead of our AGM? If not, no maximum is specified, and presumably we need to decide at EFGM what that number should be.</p> <p>Amy answered: There are no plans to amend the numbers of governors initially.</p> <p>3.1 What happens to the surplus parent governors?</p> <p>Amy replied: The Scheme of Delegation will be amended to say at least 2 parent members.</p> <p>3.2 Can directors also be governors, or does one have to stand down as a parent (is being a parent a problem as a director?)</p> <p>Amy replied: There is no issue with being a director and a parent governor.</p> <p>4. Can parents be co-opted governors?</p> <p>Amy answered: Yes, subject to director approval, parents can be co-opted Governors. The directors will be mindful of the make-up of the governing body when considering such requests to ensure no one group is dominant and there is an appropriate mix of skills.</p>	

Questions raised at the meeting:

Background information about MAT and Academy.

What is an MAT?

An MAT is the structure that allows more than one academy to work together under an academy trust. It has one overall board of directors which runs the trust, with each academy having its own local governing board.

The MAT gives the chance to share knowledge and teaching and learning between schools. It gives the schools within the trust the opportunity to make collective decisions about contracts with strategic partners thereby releasing more money for teaching and learning.

What is an Academy?

An Academy is an independent state school, funded directly from central government rather than through the County Council. A charitable company limited by guarantee (the Academy Trust) is responsible for the academy, and the Academy Trust signs the Funding Agreement (the contract) with the Secretary of State as part of the establishment of the academy. Academies are governed through their articles of association.

Why should we consider becoming an academy?

Governors agreed to think about 'why' first and then about the 'how' and the 'what' with regard to forming an MAT.

1. What are the motive/ advantages to leave Co-operative trust and form an MAT?

Justin explained:

- An honest and open meeting among schools resulted in the admittance that the Co-operative trust was inefficient and ineffective owing to a lack of commitment, schools making major decisions without consultation, the ambition of some leaders and no evidence of a clear vision for the future. Meanwhile the political landscape was changing, not necessarily in the immediate future, but the vision for Multi-Academy Trusts was explicit. In addition, struggling to find someone willing to lead the trust meant there was no clear direction or focus. Indeed the original strengths of the partnership were weakened as no lines of accountability were established. Furthermore when we received a 'requires improvement judgement' within the trust we were not well supported by the other members.
- A strong sense of moral purpose and an aspiration to improve the quality of teaching and learning as key drivers for forming an MAT model. It enables schools to build on existing partnerships, work collaboratively and support schools to improve attainment.

CB added:

We came to the conclusion that this would be the best option to formalise our partnership for the benefit of our children. At all stages this involved the Chairs of Governors and combined meetings for all governors.

The four Head teachers have devoted a significant amount of time to establishing the core principles, the vision, the underlying principles, the structure and the leadership. One of the determining factors has been the united belief that the individuality of our schools should be entrenched in the vision, preserving our own governing bodies, curriculum and the appointment of staff. However sharing best practise and making optimum use of the strengths could only be conducive to further improvement.

Those schools invited to become academies all sought sponsors whose philosophy and values were strongly aligned with their own.

2. Would we receive more money as an academy?

Justin explained: Academies receive the same level of per-pupil funding as maintained schools receive from the LA, but they also receive an additional amount called the education services grant which is currently retained by the LA to pay for some services which the LA provides. However, out of this money we would have to purchase some services which are currently provided by the LA.

The Government states that becoming an academy should not bring about a financial advantage or disadvantage to a school. The main change is that academies have greater freedom over how they use their budgets. As an academy, we would therefore have more freedom to buy the services we need from a range of providers and obtain best value for money and the best quality services for the benefit of the children.

In a multi-academy trust, a single trust is responsible for a number of academies. The MAT consists of the members and the trustees.

3. As for Term of office (from Draft Scheme of Delegation): 'persons who are "Co-Opted" to the LGB who will serve for 1 year...'. Can we consider extending the term of office for Co-Opted Governors from 1 year to 4 years because it is not easy to find suitable and qualified Co-Opted Governors and 1 year is not long enough for them to get into the role?

Justin agreed to get back to Amy to look at the possibility to amend the term of office for Co-Opted Governors.

Justin/CB

4. Do schools have to cover the costs of conversion to academy status?

Justin answered: No. The DfE pays a flat-rate grant of £25,000 into each school's bank account after an application has been approved and an academy order has been issued. This grant is provided for the detailed exploration of academy status and, if the school decides to proceed with the implementation. There are costs relating to the legal conversion (i.e. setting up the Trust, preparing the lease and Funding Agreement, and the TUPE process) and other 'one-off' costs relating to preparing each academy for successful operation. To reduce potential legal costs, the DfE has produced model legal documentation.

5. What about the way in which the school is governed? Would that change?

Justin answered: A new 'Academy Trust' would be established with a small number of Members (only 3 to 5) who have a substantial interest in and knowledge of the school and its local community. In addition there would be a committee of Trustees who would be a group made up of people with specific skills to provide the overall strategic direction of the MAT. Each school in the MAT would then have a Local Governing Body to oversee the day to day running of the school in the same way as they do now.

6. Governors asked about what the role means for governors in the local community and at system level in the MAT model? Governors raised their concerns that shrinking the size of LGB could increase Governors' workload and affect the efficiency of governance.

Justin replied: Individuals who sit on local governing bodies (LGBs) are referred to as 'local governors'. This is because trustees can delegate governance functions to the local level. Trustees have complete discretion over what is delegated to each LGB. The importance of modelling the differences in governance roles and responsibilities between directors and local governing bodies and making explicit what these differences are. There is a need for governor training, exploring the different roles and the specific skills required at different levels.

CB confirmed that there should be some shared policies; therefore, Governors' workload

should not be increased.
Justin left the meeting at 7:40 p.m.

7. What else would not change?

CB answered: There will be very little that obviously changes in the day to day running of our school. Keeping all that is special about our school whilst allowing us to continue to grow and develop is one of the drivers for academy conversion. Academies have to ensure that the school will be at the heart of its community, collaborating and sharing facilities and expertise with other schools and the wider community.

8. Are there any changes to the timetable of conversion to an academy?

CB replied: The timetable was originally set up for a 1 September conversion. Issues such as the land transfer may postpone this, preferably not beyond 1st October 2016.

9. Has the CEO been chosen?

CB explained: It was agreed that there will be two people who share the role. One is responsible for management and the other focuses on school improvement. There were discussions around appointing a CEO not connected with any school at all. This idea was rejected, and an honest discussion around capacity and skills followed. The posts will be seconded in the first instance. During the conversion phase, the chair of governors will ensure to lead the process, Governors are prepared to challenge in a constructive way, and the LGB will clarify the governance, structure, roles and responsibilities.

10. Would staff remain the same after conversion?

CB replied: All current school staff would transfer to employment with the MAT on academy conversion and there are no plans to change the staffing structure. The governing body is committed to continuing to recruit and retain high quality staff and will support existing staff through the transition and beyond if the school does convert to academy status.

CB confirmed that the MAT will not be in a rush to take on other schools, besides there will be consultation meetings with parents and Governors to decide this issue.

Governors cast a vote on forming Exeter Learning Academy Trust together with Alphington Primary School, St Thomas Primary School and Ide Primary School. There were 14 Governors attending the meeting.

12 Governors were in favour of forming the new MAT and there were two abstentions.

The Proposed Structure of Exeter Learning Academy Trust



