

**HITCHIN GIRLS' SCHOOL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY
HELD AT 6.40PM ON TUESDAY 21 FEBRUARY 2017**

Present:

Mrs. C. Astill	Mr. S. Lucas
Mr. K. Balfe	Mrs. F. Manning (Headteacher)
Mr. K. Down	Mrs. M. McPhail
Mrs. C. Emmings	Dr. K. Middleton
Mr. C. Hall (Chairman)	Mr. S. Mills
Mrs. N. Job	Mr. C. Minton
Mr. A. Jones	Mrs. S. Morrison
Mrs. M. King	Mr. M. Seaman Hill

In attendance: Mr. T. Hankin (Clerk)

1. Welcome & Apologies for Absence

Mr. Hall welcomed everyone to the additional meeting of the Governing Body. Introductions were made to Dr. Middleton who was attending her first meeting as a Parent Governor. Apologies were received and accepted from Mr. T. Fitzakerly, Mrs. J. Marland, Mr. G. Montgomery and Mr. S. Sprawson.

2. Notification of items to be raised under Any Other Business.

None

3. Declarations of Interest

Governors were reminded of the need to declare any interest in the items for discussion. There were none.

4. Minutes of previous meeting.

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2016.

The minutes were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 Matters arising.

None.

5. Admissions Committee Report

Mrs. Job reported on the meeting held on 7 February. The committee reviewed and discussed the responses received during the consultation on proposed changes to the admission arrangements for 2018/2019. These changes relate to an increase from 80 to 120 in the places allocation to the parish of Hitchin, a cap of 20 on places allocated to the parish of Letchworth and removal of the parish of Baldock from the list of priority parishes (although siblings living in Baldock will still be eligible under the sibling rule). The Published Admission Number (PAN) will be 180, with a local agreement to take an additional 30 students, with the PAN formally increasing to 210 once the buildings

required for the expansion are in place. 24 responses were received during the consultation, with a majority in favour of each of the changes.

The committee therefore recommended to the Governing Body that these revised arrangements were adopted for September 2018/19. This was proposed by Mrs. Job and seconded by Mr. Hall.

Governors unanimously **AGREED** to adopt the amended admission arrangements for 2018/19.

6. Consideration of Multi Academy Trust and Governance structures

The Chairman reminded Governors that the main purpose of this additional Governors meeting was to consider and discuss options for the school in relation to Multi Academy Trusts and academy sponsorship. He, along with the Chairs of the Committees, had met with Mrs. Manning and Mr. Hankin to discuss these matters and, following this, a proposal paper and information on governance structures had been prepared and circulated to all Governors in advance of this meeting for discussion.

Mrs. Manning summarised the information provided in the proposal paper which covered the National position, local context and known changes, opportunities available as a MAT and/or Sponsor Academy, benefits, risks, and what would need to happen if the school decided to form a MAT or become a sponsor academy.

Information on changes to the governance structure that will be required as a MAT or sponsor academy was also explained. It was noted that the current governance structure is no longer the recommended structure for Single Academy Trusts (SATs) such as HGS and, whilst there is no requirement to change, the preferred Education Funding Agency route is for SATs to move towards a structure where there is greater independence between Members of the trust and Directors/Trustees/Governors.

The Governors had a thorough discussion on the issues, opportunities, benefits, need, risk and possible timescale relating to a strategy that could result in HGS becoming the lead school in a MAT and, or, becoming a sponsor academy.

Concerns relating to any perceived loss of ethos and identity, reduced governance control, impact on students and staff and financial strain were discussed. Opportunities and benefits such as strengthening the high quality education provision that is available across the local area and establishing more formal collaboration to help improve standards and increase financial efficiencies and sustainability were also considered. The ability to support or sponsor any new school that may be required in the local area as a result of new housing development was also discussed.

Mrs. Manning advised that a number of schools in Hertfordshire are considering or exploring options relating to academisation, but within the local area there are limited options. Establishing a structure at HGS now would provide another option for any school that might wish to explore this. The decision on who joins a MAT is taken by the Academy Trustees once a due diligence process has been completed and they would need to be happy that any school joining is the right fit for the Trust.

Governors also discussed the changes that will be required to the Governance structure to support a MAT, the separation of the different layers of Governance, and the impact that this may have on HGS. As the lead school, the opportunity exists to create a structure that meets the current requirements of the Department for Education, using and retaining the knowledge and experience within the existing Governing Body.

It was noted that there is a considerable amount of work to be done by senior staff if the Governors wish to proceed with this strategy, and it is therefore important that the Governors give a clear indication as to whether or not they wish to pursue it.

Mr. Hall put forward a proposal that 'the school should start the process to become a Multi Academy Trust and a sponsor academy and reconstitute the Governance structure to reflect this change'. The proposal was seconded by Mrs. Job. Governors then voted on the proposal.

There were 11 in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention. (Two Governors had unfortunately had to leave the meeting prior to the vote due to other commitments).

Following the vote, Mr. Hall informed Governors that he would meet with Mrs. Manning and Mr. Hankin to discuss the next steps. Governors will be regularly updated but are asked to treat the matter as confidential at this stage until further information and detail is available.

7. Any Other Business

None.

8. Date of next meeting

Tuesday 14 March 2017.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm