

Extract from Minutes of a full Governing Body Meeting held at 5.30 p.m. on Tuesday 16th December 2008

Item 4 refers to the Trust School Consultation Process

Present: Mrs A Pizzey (Chair), Mr K O'Connell, Mr D. Forrest, Mr A Starkey, Mr M Elliott, Mr R Doe, Mrs M Chapman, Mr D. Burch, Mr D. Thwaite, Mr D. Smith, Mr K. Risley, Mrs K Bedford

Apologies: Mrs E Wiles, Mrs D. Todd, Mr R. Benton, Mrs J. Bingham-Wallis

Guests: Mrs S. Scott (Deputy Headteacher), Mr I. Pearson (Deputy Headteacher)

Clerk: Mrs J Warren – Headteacher's P.A. – Sudbury Upper School

1. Behaviour

2. Introduction of 3-lesson Day

3. Curriculum Policy

4. Trust School Consultation

Mrs Pizzey advised the meeting that responses to the consultation process had been 'meagre' with very similar numbers of response at Gt Cornard Upper to Sudbury Upper; responses had been mainly in favour of continuing into a further period of consultation.

Mr Thwaite asked how we would respond to, for example, union responses; Mrs Pizzey advised that at the last joint steering group meeting a decision had been made to publish the questions and responses on the schools' respective websites and confirm to all stakeholders where the information can be found.

Discussion on specific comments raised by respondents and proposed choice of Trust Partners; view from Mr Smith that he had seen indications of issues over the transfer of land and buildings by local authority (source of information not specified)

There was discussion regarding which local businesses have been approached as potential Trust Partners; some governors not convinced that particular proposed partners can either 'give' anything to the school or 'gain' anything from their partnership with us. Confirmation given of those potential Trust Partners who had been approached and responses that had been received.

Mrs Pizzey reiterated that this meeting was charged with making a decision regarding whether or not to continue with a further consultation period; it was not expected that all the answers are currently known and clearly there are areas of concern which have been raised which require full and careful consideration. She also confirmed that any chosen Trust Partners need not necessarily be 'permanent' and that trustees can change.

Discussion on Union concerns and the manner in which the governing body needs to provide its responses to those concerns i.e. direct or indirect engagement. Mr Forrest provided some background information for governors on the government's Trusts and Academies initiative, the national responses to these from unions and how these are reflected in the unions' local responses to this specific consultation. Variation in governor feeling regarding whether or not using union 'expertise' was sensible/appropriate or whether that expertise is actually grounded in accurate understanding and representation.

Some Governors were keen to hear specific detail of the benefits which the steering committee advise will be forthcoming; they also feel that hearing of the detrimental aspects suggested by the unions might provide a better forum for debate of the issue. One of the key areas of concern surrounds the contractual terms and conditions for support staff.

Governors indicated that they favoured anything which might improve the school and offer benefits to students – but not if the only gain were the ability to apply for Lottery funding. Further issues raised relating to local authority's response to the consultation; Mrs Pizzey ran through their letter addressing the points raised. Mr

Burch reminded governors that the local authority had actively encouraged the school in its investigations of Trust Status.

Suggestion that maybe the Trust Status exploration could be undertaken by other schools so that any glitches could be encountered (and combated) by them before we took on the same process; countered by asking why wouldn't we want to be among the early schools to benefit from taking on Trust Status.

Governor request that in a second period of consultation, all governors receive much more information (such as that which has been available to the steering committee). Concern over initially proposed implementation date if Trust Status were to be the outcome of the consultation; confirmation given that if the school did apply for Trust Status, it would not be implemented until September 2009 possibly April 2010.

Concern expressed over the scale of the potential change, without opportunity for further discussion – also over small sample of individuals who participated in the consultation; all parties had the same opportunity to engage in the process. Mrs Pizzey confirmed that governors would have the opportunity to discuss the issue further before any second consultation period.

Mr Burch expressed no surprise at lack of parental involvement in consultation; parents' interest in the school is very limited. He continued by stating that he would not wish to go ahead with the consultation without obtaining satisfactory answers to the questions raised but, equally, he noted that the government is pushing for many schools to consider Trust Status and it seems sensible to get in on the scheme early. Mr Forrest confirmed that although the change is significant, it is not huge; all voluntary controlled schools **are already** trust schools.

Staff lack of response was queried by staff governors; likely to be because majority of 'teachers' will not notice any difference – Trust Status would simply be 'subsumed' in a similar way to the acquisition of Arts College Status. Support staff concerns were similar in nearly every case and would be covered very thoroughly by any agreements set up by the Trust, should it go ahead.

Mrs Pizzey proposed that Governors approved the move into a second phase of consultation regarding possible Trust Status and a vote was taken:

For – 8, Against – 0, Abstain – 2

The motion was carried.

- Mr Smith requested that an entirely separate governors' meeting was set up to consider the next round of consultation and that it was not an agenda item on a 'normal' meeting. He also requested that all papers are circulated well in advance of the meeting to allow adequate time for governors to read them all.

5. School in the Community

6. Parent Governor Elections

7. Statutory Targets

8. Best Value Statement

9. Camps International – Expedition to Borneo – 2010

10. Any Other Business