

MINUTES OF MEETING



**Nottinghamshire
County Council**

School: Round Hill Primary
Meeting title: Extraordinary meeting of the governing body
Date and time: Tuesday, 12 February 2019 at 6.30pm
Location: At the school

'A' denotes absence

Ms J Marshall
Mrs R Ayoub
Mr R G Jones (Collaboration VC)
A Mr T Kataria
Miss O J Kershaw (Strategy VC)
Mr D Hanslow (Assurance VC)
Mrs M Graham
Mrs E J Miller (Chair)
Vacancy – co-opted
Mr P Smith
Mr C Walker
Mrs H Craik
Mr S Plummer
Ms J England
Ms E Carr
Mr M Sneddon
Mr A K Nash (headteacher)
Mr M Joyce
A Ms J Hewitt (associate member)

In attendance Mr P Robinson (clerk to the governors)
Mr P Heery (executive head, White Hills Park Trust)
Mr A Bird (chair of White Hills Park)

GB/16/19	Apologies for absence	Action
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Apologies for absence were received from Mr Kataria (family commitment) and Ms Hewitt (illness) it was:

resolved

that the above apologies be accepted and consented to.

It was reported that Miss Kershaw had indicated that she would be late arriving and she joined the meeting at 6.40pm.

GB/17/19	Declaration of interest	
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Mr Jones and Mrs Craik both declared general - non-pecuniary - interests in the issues to be discussed arising from their work with the DfE and advising that they were not directly involved in academy conversion matters.

There were no further declarations of interest made.

Presentation from Mr P Heery and Mr A Bird (Executive Head and Chair of Governors, White Hills Park Trust - WHP)

The chair welcomed Mr Heery and Mr Bird to the meeting.

Mr Heery referred to previous discussions on this matter and to the papers circulated in advance of this meeting which set out the WHP offer to Round Hill based on the ongoing changes to the Trust. He summarised the benefits and risks for Round Hill joining the Trust include:

- As the first primary school to join the Trust, this would make Round Hill the lead primary partner with an opportunity to shape the development of the Trust
- Joining the Trust would increase leadership capacity at Round Hill to enable improvements in teaching and learning (an example was cited on economies of scale for staffing appointments)
- The generation of financial efficiencies, with initial savings estimated at around £50,000
- The ability to provide more effective school improvement measures to replace the diminishing local authority support and to ensure governors have a secure analysis of school performance on a termly basis.
- Enable future opportunities to collaborate across the Trust to the benefit of all parties
- In terms of risk, Mr Heery suggested this might include potential loss of autonomy, the need to carry staff and parents with the change (a major task of re-assurance which WHP could assist with) and concerns about any future changes to the Trust
- In summary, Mr Heery said that the WHP ethos was one of a small scale community based Trust with constituent schools working together to the benefit of pupils and the local community.

Mr Bird added:

- The inclusion of primary schools in the Trust would provide a 4-18 phase with better transition arrangements and a better opportunity for local children (it is understood that pupils' learning can dip during transition)
- The Trust was clear that it would offer as much delegation as possible to local governing bodies and that Round Hill would have a strong voice in the governance of the Trust
- Whilst it was inevitable that there would be change over time, the Trust intention was that it would be strong and permanent and based on the ethos of collaboration.

The governing body raised the following questions and comments which Mr Heery and Mr Bird responded to:

- Had the Trust undergone any significant change since its establishment? – the only changes made were in the last year or so as they are re-instating Local Governing Bodies with a Trust Board and the invitation to other local schools to join
- It was understood that the DfE had indicated that small MATs of less than 20 schools would not be sustainable in the future, how did this impact on WHP thinking? – over the next 10 years or so WHP would probably wish to attract around 6 schools. The model for WHP was one of local sustainability and not acquisition
- What would be the position for staff terms and conditions? – if Round Hill joined the Trust then staff terms would remain the same and TUPE would apply. The Trust would always remain cautious in its assumptions about

potential future staff related costs due mainly to national uncertainty around issues such as the funding of future teacher pay rises and increases to teachers' employers pension contributions. In the latter respect it was noted that the Trust employer pension contributions were less than those for maintained schools; Mr Heery stressed that the benefits to staff remained the same

- Would there be a place for Round Hill on the WHP Trust Board? – Chairs of local governing bodies would, at the present time, automatically be Trustees. Other Trustees would be appointed based on the skills and experience required to drive the Trust forward. Adam noted that if RH joined he would anticipate some current governors taking up some Trustee positions. The current governance structure was under review with the establishment of Local Governing Bodies for each school, a Board of Trustees, supported by a Finance and Audit Committee and a Trust Members Board, who are currently being recruited. The Trust Board composition would ensure that the primary focus was not lost sight of at meetings
- Had different MAT models been considered by WHP? – This had been the case and the experience of secondary, faith based and primary and secondary models had been reviewed. To deliver the local ethos previously referred to it was felt that a trust with primary and secondary academies with maximum delegation to Local Governing Bodies was the most appropriate.
- Would it be possible to embed this ethos in the Trust constitution? – current Articles of Association carried this commitment which there was currently no intention to change, but it had to be acknowledged that it was possible for Members and Trustees to make changes in the future
- Would membership of WHP restrict Round Hill's current outward facing partnership arrangements with other schools? – WHP had well established research links with local universities and strong CPD arrangements with a range of other MATs and it was felt that such arrangements would enable more partnership work to take place. Commitment to the local family of schools was re-iterated
- The situation concerning the proposed disposal of land at Bramcote College had been noted and governors asked if there might be any intentions with regard to land at Round Hill? – it was considered inconceivable that WHP would wish to use land at Round Hill for any other purpose than an educational one. It had to be acknowledged, however, that in a MAT situation it was the Trust and not the local governing body that owned the land
- Would there be any significant monitoring and evaluation changes if Round Hill was part of WHP? – pupil progress data was collected on a termly basis to a consistent Trust format and this process would be applied to any schools joining WHP. Trust quality assurance through such processes would support school development. CEO of the trust meets fortnightly with Head Teachers to review current priorities.
- What would be the timeline for the process? – if Round Hill wished to take the matter forward then WHP would offer support in engaging with stakeholders and ensuring that the necessary time was taken regarding consultation. Allowing this time should still make a conversion date of 1 April 2020 achievable.

There being no further questions Mr Heery and Mr Bird were thanked for attending the meeting and dealing with questions and issues raised and left the meeting at 7.40pm.

The chair referred to the 4 working parties that had been established to review the various aspects of the proposal in terms of benefits to Round Hill. Lead governors reported on the outcome of their reviews as under (it being noted that the detail of the reports had been uploaded onto GovernorHub for reference prior to the meeting):

Finance and administration

It was noted that following the working party, further work had clearly taken place, the results of which were evident in the papers provided by WHP in advance of the meeting. A rigorous review of the financial information provided had been undertaken which it was felt was reasonably clear. This was subject to some perceived inaccuracies around for example payroll and catering which appeared open to interpretation and to clarification of existing contracts (a matter for later consideration in due diligence if that stage was reached). Some economies of scale would most likely be delivered if Round Hill joined the Trust and there would be some operational advantages on data presentation and more integrated transition arrangements.

This position had to be balanced against the current financial position of Round Hill as a maintained school. Although the current financial year sees a slightly improved position on forecasts at the start of the year. The current three year forecast shows a challenging picture going forwards. Also of relevance was the current collaboration arrangements which, it was reported, were considered unlikely to bring any imminent financial benefits.

On balance, it was felt that whilst WHP's initial analysis showed some financial benefit, it would not be on financial grounds alone that RH would join the Trust, were that to be the eventual decision.

Governance

Since the working party had met WHP had set out revised governance arrangements which had been explained earlier in the meeting. The division of Trust and local governing body responsibilities appeared to be clear. It was noted that the intention was to provide local governing bodies with as much delegation as possible.

In Summary the Governance Structure outlined appeared reassuring with some questions about long term make-up of the Trust Board – possible conflict between desire to represent all schools within the Trust and a Skills based model.

Teaching and learning

The WHP offer in this respect was felt to be a positive one, particularly around the range of CPD with other Trust partners and that there would be clear benefits to Round Hill. It was also clear that there would be less local authority support going forward (for example there had been no contact from the local authority following the school's 2018 results) and that the approach articulated by WHP in this connection could cover this gap. The headteacher said that he would welcome such enhanced accountability and the support that would come with that accountability.

The above views were noted along with national research.

The difference in attainment in maintained schools and academies is not particularly different overall.

School or academies in either good or outstanding MATs or good or outstanding

local authorities are likely to improve the most.

The schools that improve the most over time when they do convert to academy status are good schools.

One of the most important reasons behind improved teaching & learning and better progress was that good schools in good groups of schools were able to work with outstanding schools whether they be maintained schools or academy schools. Currently Round Hill has little connection to outstanding schools. The local CPD partnership WHP would offer includes several Outstanding schools.

Curriculum and enrichment

The WHP vision in this respect was felt to be a good fit to what was currently happening at Round Hill. Many aspects were already in place, for example sport and music. For there to be a difference WHP would have to enhance Round Hill practice and the school explore greater autonomy in curriculum development. On balance there appeared to be little risk in this area, but the potential benefits would not, on their own, be a reason to join the Trust.

GB/21/19 Headteacher update and position

The headteacher summarised his views arising from the reports made to the meeting as under:

- It would be welcomed if Trust membership, by the provision of for example discrete attendance and counselling officers, generated some additional leadership capacity - freeing up leadership capacity to focus on teaching and learning
- Currently it was felt that WHP did not have a full appreciation of the primary sector but it was noted that Round Hill would have an opportunity to shape this as the first primary partner in the Trust
- In a Trust situation the headteacher would most likely be accountable to the Trust Board rather than the local governing body and this was a very significant change. We would need to be clear on the possible dual accountability to the Trust and the Local Governing Board
- The implications of the above point and for wider performance appraisal arrangements would need to be explored.
- With current levels of information the headteacher thought the invite from WHP was worth pursuing

GB/22/19 Correspondence

The chair reported that a significant amount of correspondence concerning the proposal before the meeting had been received from parents which had been uploaded onto GovernorHub prior to the meeting. This correspondence had been supplemented by the receipt of a further letter signed by 63 parents of pupils at the school which had been received and shared on the day of the meeting – copies of this letter were also tabled at the meeting.

In summary the points being made by parents were that that they had not been kept informed about developments in this matter (which had been accepted as a valid comment), that governors were making plans to academise without informing or listening to parents and some were concerned about the potential direction in which the school appeared to be moving. A high level of satisfaction with the current provision at Round Hill was also expressed. The letter signed by 63 parents requested the governing body not to vote on submitting an expression of interest to the DfE - but rather to enter into meaningful dialogue with stakeholders prior to voting on whether to register an interest with the DfE.

Following discussion, governors understood that the process to join WHP would involve two further votes before any decision to Academise was final – A vote on whether to Pass a Resolution to convert – which released extra funds to allow a formal consultation process and full Due Diligence process. Then a further vote once the outcome from Consultation and Due Diligence had been considered. The chair had been informed that at both points the decision to remain as an LA school was possible. Governors agreed that engaging parents in meaningful dialogue should be the next step if the motion before the meeting was passed. It was understood that once a declaration of interest had been submitted the DfE would appoint an advisor to support the ongoing dialogue and process. It was also noted that by considering a formal step at this stage, staff and parents would be able to hear from WHP themselves. Governors therefore agreed that the vote should proceed as planned.

The chair proposed that, whatever the outcome of the vote on the proposal before the meeting, arrangements would be made to engage with parents as soon as possible after tonight's meeting.

There being no further issues on which governors wished to ask questions, the chair said that the time had arrived to consider the proposal before the meeting. In so doing, governors should take into account all the written information provided prior to the meeting (uploaded onto GovernorHub) and the oral information arising from questions and discussion at the meeting.

GB/23/19 Vote on secret ballot

The chair reported that she had received advice in respect of how to approach voting on the proposal before the meeting as set out on the agenda. That advice strongly recommended that it would be appropriate to hold a secret ballot on the proposal in order that governors were not placed under any undue influence during the vote.

In the circumstances a vote was taken on whether to hold a secret ballot and, on a show of hands, it was:

resolved

to conduct the vote on the proposal before the meeting by way of a secret ballot.

GB/24/19 Ballot and outcome

The chair referred to the proposal on the agenda to decide on whether or not to submit a registration of interest to the DfE as a first step towards joining the White Hills Park Multi-Academy Trust.

The clerk conducted the secret ballot and reported that the result was to submit a registration of interest. In the circumstances, it was:

resolved

to submit a registration of interest to the DfE as a first step towards joining the White Hills Part Multi-Academy Trust.

Following the vote Miss Kershaw left the meeting at 9.05am.

GB/25/19 Next steps

These were identified as follows:

Action

- Contact to be made with the DfE to register the interest **HT**
- Confirm with WHP (specifically Mr Heery, Mr Bird) the outcome of the meeting **HT**
- Write to parents the following day confirming the decision, explaining precisely what this meant, the process for future engagement and that the decision was non-binding. **Chair/CW/HT**

GB/26/19 Determination of confidentiality of business

Governors considered whether any items discussed during the meeting should be deemed to be of a confidential nature and it was:

resolved

that no issues discussed be regarded as confidential and that all papers considered and the record of discussions be made publicly available as necessary.

The chair concluded the meeting by reminding governors of the content of the governing body code of conduct which indicated that governors agree not to speak against the majority decision reached outside of the meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm.

Signed(chair) Date
PR