

COTHAM SCHOOL

Extraordinary Meeting of the Academy Governing Body to consider MAT Consultation

Monday 7 November

MINUTES OF MEETING

Governors Present:		
Dora Alderson, CG	David Brockington, Coop	Claire Grocott, PG
John Bass, PG	Jo Butler, Headteacher	Jeremy Krause, LA (<i>from 6.25</i>)
Jim Bowyer, PG (Chair)	Jo Feather CG (<i>from 6.30pm</i>)	
Paula Bradshaw, PG	Sandra Fryer, CG (<i>from 6.20pm</i>)	
In Attendance (non-voting) Leanne Sowersby, Clerk	Apologies	Governors in Post: 15/19 Quorum = 5 (1/3 rounded up)

Minutes of Meeting

Consultation Responses

JBo welcomed everyone.

JBo felt that there was not the support from the responses to go ahead with working with Prima.

Feeling that people have reached conclusions based on incorrect information about Prima.

Suggestion that could continue to work with Prima but consider using the Model 6 Articles.

The consultation report was very thorough.

Surprised by the strength of feeling in favour of the Coop.

Could still have people from Prima or Best Practice Network as trustees without having a formal arrangement with Prima.

Would be interesting to know what Prima's response to this consultation would be. They have not seen the consultation report yet.

Feeling that the issue is more with safeguarding the future of the school. Need to rethink what the Coop should work and what it should look like. There is a lack of resources to support this.

Discussion around the role of the Forum and vehicles for expression of concerns, and how it might work. Parent support groups, used in the past, were not very effective. JBu's proposals were good. It will now be a MAT Coop, rather than a single school Coop, which allows for a re-think of the role and process. Need to manage expectations and what the Forum is there to do.

Disappointed with the way Prima failed to sell themselves to the public meeting.

Discussion about the public meeting and how it progressed. There seemed to be concerns about losing control / a stake in the school.

JBu reported that Prima would like to be involved in some way – support, providing trustees etc.

Feeling that one of the issues was in proposing to take the name of Prima Learning Trust, which created suspicion. They could still be involved as individuals without the name.

Discussion around the consultation and the relationship with Prima. Prima changed their approach from proposing to be a sponsor to more of an equal partnership.

The Consultation will be published publicly.

Need to give a clear message that what we are doing is for the benefit of all the students in the school. Will need to look at effective and efficient ways of working.

Whatever way we do this, we will lose some degree of our freedom – need to work on a level with other schools.

Need to make sure that we have heard as many views as possible.

Need to take a measured view on the next steps, taking into account all the views expressed in the consultation. Need to make a decision on the basis of the consultation and do something about it.

There are things to be gained from working with other schools in the form of a MAT, these need to be communicated.

Need to carefully consider the response we give and manage the message. Need to be clear about the reasons for not wanting to keep the Model 6 Articles in the first place and why we would now be prepared to keep them.

Discussion around the view of the Regional Schools Commissioner on the Cooperative Articles. The RSC did not say she would not approve the use of cooperative articles in public.

There are changes that are relevant – the Model 6 Articles are quite different to the original version and have now been approved, and believe the RSC would approve their use.

Need to consider the consultation responses and respond to some of the issues raised in the responses.

JBo had some feedback from other schools. There was not a strong response in favour of working with Cotham. There are not many examples of MATs where good schools have come together to work in a MAT.

JBo has also discussed with other local secondary schools the possibility of working together.

Discussion around the need to know who we are working with and to be in control of the way we move forward.

JBu gave her view. Disappointed that more staff did not engage in the process and that Prima did not take a more active role particularly in the public meeting. There have been some very personal comments and attacks on JBu from some stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement needs to be reviewed. The people involved in Prima can still offer a great deal of expertise.

There would be some additional administration in a MAT using the Model 6 Articles. Will need to do some work to ensure that can be done effectively. Schools joining the MAT would not have to have individual forums (they would have had to with the previous version of the Model 6 Articles).

Discussion around the involvement of a Forum in decision-making processes, appointment of trustees / Members etc. and the need to be clear about its role. Need to be able to explain the gains for the students in moving ahead with a MAT with the Model 6 Articles.

We would not need to consult again if make a decision to move forward taking into account the consultation. There was enough support to move forward with creating a MAT. Can use the Model 6 Articles without being members of the Schools Cooperative Society or calling ourselves a Cooperative MAT.

Need to create our proposal.

Need to make what Governors feel is the right decision, then get PR help and advice to ensure we tell the story well in a professional way.

Proposals

The proposals set out by JBo on GovernorHub before the meeting were:

1. To continue with Prima as per consultation.
2. The school continues to work to forming a MAT using Model 6 articles, by continuing discussions with schools and other interested parties that have so far expressed an interest in working with Cotham. Extending the timeline for the application as necessary

Governors voted unanimously not to continue working with Prima with Model 1 Articles, as per the original consultation.

Governors voted unanimously to continue to work towards forming a MAT using Model 6 Articles, by continuing discussions with schools, and other interested parties, that have expressed an interest in working with Cotham.

Next Steps

Discussion around the possible RSC response to the use of the Model 6 Articles. JBu has asked whether an application for a MAT using the Model 6 Articles would be viewed favourably, and has not received an answer. The key is that any MAT helps schools improve.

Need to know what Prima's position is.

Need to consider the MAT's overall vision.

Suggestion to set up a small working group to look at a structure that would work.

Need to find partners to ensure

Important to consider how to communicate the response to the consultation. One group could work with Christine, or employ a HR professional, to ensure the message is well communicated. The initial statement does not need to be long and complicated, to be followed by the story and full responses.

Need to include the message that it was not just the Cotham stakeholders, it was other people who were consulted and the changing landscape.

Need another paragraph briefly setting out Governors' next steps.

SF to do a first draft and send to JBo and JBu. This will be sent out by Friday, as a separate mailing from Governors, in a coordinated way.

Agreed that the consultation report will be published at the same time as the response.

No further publicity is needed.

To discuss working groups at the next FGB on 7 December.