



Cotham Co-operative Academy Forum
 Wednesday 27 January 2016, 7-8.30pm
 Library

Minutes

Attendees:

Parent/Carer Reps: Becky Chapman (BC), Emma Gibbins, Emma Wheeler, Gareth Edmunds (GE), Jo Eades, Mukhtar Mohamed Ali, Valerie Aspin, Sharon Spink

Staff Reps: Abbie Allender, Ben Jose, Bev Meredith, Gary Hardwick, Ross Geoghegan

Community Reps: Hugh Thomas, Ken Smith, Nancy Coplestone (NC)

Student Reps: Theo Davies

Alumni Reps: Dave Martin, Jeremy Birch (JBi)

School Governors: Jim Bowyer (JB), Claire Grocott (CG)

Also present: Jo Butler (Headteacher - JBu), Nicki Warne (NW), Leanne Sowersby (Clerk),

Apologies: Simon Wilks, Andrew Wood, Beth Aiken, Louise Arnold, Adam Finn, Lynda Rooke, Izzi Triggs, Caroline Francis

		Action
1	Welcome to all and apologies - BC welcomed everyone.	
2	Any Other Business: None	
3	Agree Minutes of last meeting: Agreed by show of hands.	
4	<p>Protocol for visitors</p> <p>A draft document was circulated prior to the meeting. This would ensure that visitors to the Forum are clear what the expectations are.</p> <p>Need to be clearer about when the meetings are in order that BC can be notified, as well as more information about what the meetings are for and where the most appropriate place to raise issues is.</p> <p>NW will put an item in the school weekly newsletter that includes information about how to raise issues through the parent / community / alumni groups.</p> <p>Discussion about observing and contributing. Could allow anyone to observe but would need to give notice in order to contribute. There may be an issue with numbers if there are many visitors.</p> <p>Suggestion that there is a five-minute slot at the beginning where visitors can have their say.</p> <p>Discussion around how open the Forum meetings should be and ways to manage numbers. If a visitor wants to present something, notice would need to be given.</p> <p>Suggestion that protocols could be handed to visitors / observers as they arrive.</p>	<p>Read re-drafted protocol and feedback any comments to NW</p>

5	Key updates on issues from constituency groups	
	Student Voice / Post 16	
	<p>Year reps have met with JBU.</p> <p>Availability of free water in the canteen – a water dispenser has now been installed in the canteen.</p> <p>Kitchen staff will come to assemblies to discuss how it feels to have to clean up other people’s waste. There will also be a poster competition.</p> <p>Tutor group sessions will alternate between feeding back and taking suggestions, rather than trying to do both in one session.</p> <p>There will be a non-uniform day in March to tie in with the second charity week.</p> <p>The Post-16 reps have met to discuss coming in to talk to Year 10.</p> <p>JBU thanked the students for the report and also thanked Helen Ashcroft who is working really well with the student body.</p>	
	Community	
	A report was circulated prior to the meeting. NC talked through the key points.	
	Parents	
	<p>A report was circulated.</p> <p>Parents have been involved in presentations about the website.</p> <p>There was also an update on Stoke Lodge and parents have been encouraged to contact their Councillors about the issue. The meeting is not a public meeting and the number of representatives who can attend is limited.</p>	
	Staff	
	Have conducted a staff voice survey, based around staff wellbeing, the use of the staffroom and links with the staff reps. This has raised some ideas to move forward, some quite simple and some bigger issues that have been raised to be looked at.	
	Alumni	
	Reps have now started to communicate with the other alumni on the e-mail list and are starting to work on projects. NW & JBi to discuss how Future First can help with this work.	
	Governors	
	<p>JB gave an update.</p> <p>Learning & Wellbeing received a report about the improved behaviour in the school and discussed feedback from staff about this issue.</p> <p>Finance, Premises and General Purposes have been looking at developing the space in the school as well as Stoke Lodge.</p>	

6 Multi-Academy Trust Consultation

JB gave some feedback about some of the background to this. Some Academies are moving towards having CEOs rather than Executive Heads and there is a move towards companies delivering education. The DfE are no longer allowing stand-alone conversions to Academy status.

It was important for Cotham Governors to avoid a company running the school. Believe that the Cooperative model was a good way to avoid this and that it would be of benefit to other schools in the area as well as to Cotham.

Governing Body discussions have focused on forming a MAT that other schools would want to join.

Operationally there is little difference in the different type of schools. The GB have no intention to change the structure of how Cotham is run. There will still be a Governing Body of the school. Some of the functions will move up to Trust level – e.g. a safeguarding policy should be the same across all the schools in a trust.

There may be some cost savings. This is more likely to affect support staff than teaching staff. The costs savings will help to ensure that teaching and learning is affected as little as possible by budget cuts.

There is no plan to move staff around schools, but there might be additional opportunities for staff who want to progress within a trust. Some trusts are bringing in professional accreditation for non-teaching staff.

There are advantages for students where there are primary and secondary schools working together in the transition to secondary.

The Cooperative ethos would continue – schools joining might need to set up their own Forums.

Disadvantages could be around Head teachers having less freedom and in funding going to the trust rather than to the schools direct. If we have set up the trust, we are in a position to ensure that this is done in a fair way.

There is a group of schools working together in North Bristol. The Regional Schools Commissioner for the South West spoke to this group – is happy with them being stand-alone academies if he felt that there had been tangible results from the collaboration. He is now the National Schools Commissioner.

The Government are discussing and defining, ‘coasting’ schools. They have also said that, by the end of this Government, they want all schools to become academies.

There are not concrete proposals for the structure as yet.

This is happening quite quickly – there will be a shortage of secondary school places and there will need to be a new school built in Bristol. The only way to build a new school is to build a free school and schools have agreed to put bids for this new school. There has been a tight timescale on this. The GB felt that we didn’t have the opportunity to extend the consultation as it might mean missing this opportunity.

Cotham is a more comprehensive school than many in Bristol. Cotham have missed opportunities to be involved in commissioning new primary schools through not being a MAT.

It is about growing cooperative schools and giving other students the opportunities that Cotham students have, as well as potentially additional opportunities for staff.

Individual schools within a MAT are run independently under the umbrella of the trust.

The Senior Leadership Team feel that the school is in a position to take on this opportunity.

Q – If a school in a MAT is put into special measures, does this have implications for the rest of the trust? It would have an impact – there would likely be discussion about the issues with the Regional Schools Commissioner before reaching special measures. Trustees and Executive Heads have a role to ensure that schools are performing and there would be an expectation on the Heads of individual schools to raise issues with performance. It would be handled internally at first.

Q – Can we be a MAT of one for some time? It is possible to remain alone, but there would probably come a point where this is challenged. It might become part of the definition of a coasting school.

Q – Are there discussions with any other schools? There have been discussions among the Chairs' group of the North Bristol group of schools around the possibility, but no formal discussions. There would be a due diligence procedure on the part of both schools.

Q – If the opportunity was known about in November, why has it been so rushed? The meeting where JBu was informed was the last week of November and FGB needed to discuss before the consultation could begin.

Q – Is there an option to take it or leave it? If we don't do this, we would not be able to be involved in opening a new school in Bristol. It would give parents the opportunity to send their children to a school with the same ethos as Cotham. The expectation on the trustees is that all schools become outstanding. JB believes there is the capacity to develop in this way within the school.

The new school will be in the new Temple Quarter Enterprise Zone. It will be a comprehensive school in an area with no fully comprehensive schools – admissions criteria in other local schools is banded. The new school would have the same criteria as Cotham. Many of Cotham's students come from Bristol East Central and more children in this area would be able to attend a school with Cotham's ethos. JBu feels we have a lot to offer the children of East Central Bristol.

The structure in Cotham will not change – there will still be a Local Governing Body and committees and the Forum. This would be replicated in the new school. The role of the trust and Executive Head would be to ensure that the cooperative ethos and values are consistent in all the schools.

JB was thanked for his input.

Q – What are the real tangible benefits for the students in this school? The main message is that things will not change in a negative way – there might be benefits like Year 10 or 11 students could engage in education related work experience.

The new school might have the most potential to impact negatively on Cotham. However, there is a commitment from businesses in the Enterprise Zone on a wide range of opportunities for students in the new school. These opportunities would also be available to students in Cotham.

It would also provide career progression for staff in Cotham as well as the opportunity to bring in new staff from other areas from who can bring fresh experience and knowledge.

It also reduces the risk of Cotham being forced into a partnership. We do not yet know what the definition of a coasting school is. There is a very large number of schools who will not meet the new criteria to avoid being defined as coasting. It will also afford some protection for other schools, including primary schools who want to convert on their own terms, rather than becoming part of a large chain.

Q – Is there another option? Not really – could possibly join a large Academy chain but that would not fit with Cotham's ethos.

JB to report back on the results of the consultation

	Q – Is there a minimum number of people consulted who need to agree? No, it is not a vote where there is a minimum return required.	
7	<p>Enrichment Fund – progress report</p> <p>A document was circulated. Jeremy Birch talked through the key points.</p> <p>Aim is that a number of smaller projects can happen rather than 1 or 2 large projects.</p> <p>There is an application form being drafted. Reps to feed back any comments to Jeremy as soon as possible.</p> <p>There are already people looking to make applications – there is a desire for it already. Could we look at applications being taken in term 5? This is realistic if much of the discussion happens via e-mail.</p> <p>The committee will need to be in place by the time applications are received. The suggestion is to make it 3 or 5 people, including a student, staff member and a parent.</p>	All reps: feedback any comments to Jeremy as soon as possible.
8	<p>School Fundraising Strategy – update</p> <p>The school could do with some fundraising consultancy support and there was a request in the school e-mail. There has been no response so far.</p>	
9	<p>Website and Re-branding – update and questions</p> <p>There has been a meeting with potential companies to look at the website. Both very similar. Both were impressive but there were some technical benefits of one company. The school's current provider were chosen to work on this as they were cheaper, more supportive and can provide better photography and videography.</p> <p>Hopeful that this can be ready to go live late in summer.</p> <p>It is as important to remember this needs to be user friendly for students, parents and other users to find the information that they need.</p> <p>Q – Will this include the Forum website? Yes</p> <p>Also need to consider how the site might integrate with the VLE, which is likely to remain separate.</p> <p>Q – Can the Forum be involved in testing? The company will communicate with named people, but at key points there will be opportunities to view and give feedback.</p>	
10	<p>Communication between Forum and Governing Body</p> <p>NC reported from the Coop School Working Group.</p> <p>Concerns around the resourcing of the Forum will be discussed at FGB next week.</p> <p>Felt that the discussions about MAT could have been shared with the Forum earlier in the discussions. Welcome being consulted but would like to be involved earlier.</p> <p>There was also a working group around communication between the FGB and the Forum. A report was circulated. There has not been a response as yet.</p> <p>The Forum adopted the proposals.</p>	FGB to discuss and consider adopting the proposals
11	Reflection and AOB None	

FORUM MEETINGS These are the forum dates for the next Academic year. In the Library.

- Tuesday 8th March
- Thursday 5th May
- Thursday 30th June