



Notes of Meeting: South East and South London

19th November 2020

Attendance

Attendance data is published annually on the GOV.UK website.

HTB members who apologised have been consulted on all projects, where available, before the meeting. This excludes items where there were conflicts. Their views are reflected in the discussion at the meeting (where appropriate).

Regional school commissioner (RSC) chair

- Claire Burton

Headteacher board (HTB) members

- Alison Beane
- David Boyle
- Stephen Carey
- Andrew Carter
- Jon Chaloner
- Mark Ducker
- Paula Farrow

Guests

- Elizabeth Gent (DfE)
- Amala Uthayakumar (DfE)
- Marie Griffiths (DfE)
- Marie Godard (DfE)
- Abigail Rotimi (DfE)

Apologies

- None

DfE senior civil servants

- Anna Barker

General discussion points

Points discussed in the meeting.

Conflict of interest:

- Mark Ducker – St Monica Primary

Minutes to previous meeting - agreed

RSC update

- The RSC gave an update on the current position across the region with relation to the Covid crisis and asked HTB for any reflections.

Discussion of projects, including decisions made by RSC with advice from HTB

All decisions are made in reference to relevant legislation and the published criteria.

Academy Orders and MAT Approvals

Project: Chartham Primary School and St Stephen's Infant School, Kent, to convert and form MAT

HTB discussion:

Proposed governance structure and terminology for roles (ie.CEO, CFO) due to the size of the primary schools. Need to manage expectations around future growth given the opportunities in the area.

Potential financial issues given under PAN and can the capital issues be resolved before the schools convert. 8% GAG is quite low.

St Stephens Juniors should be part of this discussion. Perhaps look to governors to see whether there are any options to bring the infant and junior school together.

RSC decision:

Approve with conditions

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Review governance structure to make it more specific to a small trust.

Significant change

Project: Potential in Everyone Academy Trust and The Village Academy, Kent, to merge

HTB discussion:

This is a positive merger. General point that we are likely to see more trusts merging and should therefore consider whether a one year to 18 months period of consolidation might be needed after mergers to allow time for new arrangements to bed in. Important to have these conversations between trusts before mergers come to the RSC for approval.

Pupil numbers are still not very high so the trust need to be cautious about growth.

RSC decision:

Approve with recommendation

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Discussion with merged trust that it now needs a period of consolidation to embed processes and systems.

New CEO offered a slot at induction event.

Academy Orders and MAT Approvals

Project: Chessington School, Kingston, to join Every Child, Every Day Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

New trust leadership looking at cautious and local growth. Some financial issues previously but LA have agreed to write these off. LA and ESFA are positive about the progress.

RSC decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

None

Significant change

Project: Rodborough, Surrey, to merge with Weydon Multi Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

Financial issues at Weydon MAT but ESFA confident that there is plan in place to help them manage their debt. However, awaiting visit and report from SRMA. Worrying that financial position is deteriorating. Reserves reducing and projected to reduce further.

RSC decision:

Approve with condition

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

To check SRMA report before moving forward with this merger.

Project: Learning and Inspiration for Tomorrow Partnership, Surrey, to join The Howard Partnership Trust

HTB discussion:

Critical that LIFT join a MAT and that it takes place quickly.

Currently two trustees who are also members at Howard.

There was a question on governance.

RSC decision:

Approve with condition

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Condition of reducing two trustees to one.

Project: Windlesham Village Infant School, Surrey, PAN reduction

HTB discussion:

Pupil numbers have declined with expected surplus of spaces in the area. Fear that school will become unviable if action isn't taken quickly.

RSC decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

None

Academy Orders and MAT Approvals

Project: Roseland Infants School, East Sussex, to join The Cavendish School (Eastbourne)

HTB discussion:

Change in governance proposed based on an approval date of April 2021. More urgency needed here.

There was a question as to whether CEO can be a trustee and confirmation that this is allowed.

RSC decision:

Approve with condition

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Trust to reduce the number of trustees and notify the RSC Office of their revised governance structure by the end of January 2021, with the structure in place before the schools convert on the 1st April.

Project: University of Portsmouth Academy Trust application, to become a MAT

HTB discussion:

Question on who was driving the creation of this MAT. Would want to see a named individual to take forward vision and direction and to look at the gaps particularly around governance.

There is concern around school improvement experience and the details of how this would be operationalised.

Potential trust needs a strong school improvement partner to support the trusts' development.

RSC decision:

Reject

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

To consider a strong school improvement partner.

Sponsor papers

Project: Corpus Christi Catholic Primary School, Portsmouth to join Edith Stein Catholic Academy Trust

HTB discussion:

The trust is still revising the number of trustees based on condition from previous HTB meeting. On top of educational expertise, the trust also has a condition that trustees must be Catholic, which is the reason for delay.

Concern that it will be a secondary MAT sponsoring a primary school. Will need to monitor the school and trust given that Ofsted will not be inspecting the school for three years post-conversion.

Wider issue around Church schools having to join a limited number of trusts.

RSC decision:

Approve with recommendation

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Trust to reduce the number of trustees as soon as possible. RSC to discuss with Catholic Diocese possibility of getting trustees in post earlier than September 2021.

Analysis on how mixed-MATs and Church MATs have worked with faith and non-faith schools in other regions, particularly the South-West, and bring back to HTB for discussion.

Project: Application from HISP Multi Academy Trust, to become a Sponsor

HTB discussion:

Clarification was requested around the statement that HISP do not have a Finance Committee.

RSC decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Check with ESFA colleagues whether the Chair of the Risk and Audit Committee can also be a trust board member.

Project: Sponsorship funding for St Monica Primary School, Southampton

HTB discussion:

School Improvement plan in place but there seems to be a lack of specificity.

Budget plan includes for example IT, which isn't currently in place.

There was concern that there will be request for further funding. HTB reassured that trust will not come back asking for extra funding.

RSC decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

Mark Ducker

Further actions required:

Feedback plan to IEB with a request to see more granularity.

Significant change

Project: Hope Community School, Southampton, PAN reduction

HTB discussion:

Question about viability of the trust overall. Latest position is that there are two potential sites now available.

Some concerns on finance which may have been a result of an issue whilst submitting their budget forecast. Autumn accounts to be submitted soon which will provide a clearer picture.

RSC decision:

Approve with recommendation

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Need to have a discussion about the viability of the school in the long term before March/April admissions.

Decisions taken between HTB meetings

Project: Chestnut Grove Academy - expansion to PAN

HTB discussion:

RSC decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

None

Project: Oasis Johanna, Lambeth - significant change

HTB discussion:

RSC decision:

Approve with conditions

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

Trust to consult and seek agreement from RSC before increasing to 2FE, should demand for places change beyond 2026.

To continued engagement with the local authority to ensure the resource unit meets the needs of the local community.

Project: Molehill Primary Academy - age range significant change

HTB discussion:

RSC decision:

Approve

Conflicts:

None

Further actions required:

None

Projects listed on the published draft agenda but were removed before the meeting

Project: The Maplesden Noakes School, Kent - physical expansion

Reason for removal:

Awaiting clarification from the school regarding their new net capacity figure as a result of the proposed expansion.

Project: Endeavour Partnership Trust - application for full sponsor grant and Environmental Improvement grant

Reason for removal:

Awaiting further information needed for the paper.