



Department  
for Education

## **Notes of Meeting: East of England and North East London Headteacher Board**

**18 March 2021**

### **Attendance**

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

HTB members who sent their apologies for the meeting have, where possible, been consulted on all projects before the meeting. Their views are reflected in the discussion at the meeting (where appropriate). This excludes items where that member declared a conflict of interest.

### **Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) chair**

- Sue Baldwin (RSC)

### **Headteacher Board (HTB) members**

- Tom Canning (HTB)
- Caroline Derbyshire (HTB)
- Diane Rochford (HTB)
- Al Kingsley (HTB)
- Karen Kerridge (HTB)
- Duncan Ramsey (HTB)
- Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne (HTB)
- Brian Conway (HTB)

### **DfE senior civil servants**

- ESFA representative
- Alan Parnum (Deputy Director)

## **Representations received**

- Representations were received for Cyril Jackson Primary School, Tower Hamlets – to convert and join University Schools Trust, converter academy order.
- These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees, except to those that had conflicts, and considered alongside their corresponding item.

## **General Discussion Points**

### **RSC update and HTB member reflections**

- The Note of Meeting for the February HTB meeting were discussed and agreed.
- The RSC and Board took time for reflections on the latest government announcements and looking ahead to the future following Easter term.

## Converter Academy Orders

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

**Project:** Wells Park School, **Chigwell, Essex** – to convert and join The Beckmead Trust.

### **HTB discussion:**

- The HTB heard about the background of the conversion application including that the school and trust have an existing working relationship and share the same values on supporting children with complex needs.
- The Board also noted that the transfer would bring mutual benefits including building capacity within the trust and bring a seamless transition from the school's pupils beyond KS2. The trust has also been developing their leadership capacity by recruiting at senior management level and the appointment of a new Chief Finance Officer.
- The trust has forecast a significant in-year deficit. The scope of a School Resource Management Adviser visit proposed for June will be extended to include the school as it has also reported financial deficits. The ESFA representative commented that there will be some action planning going forward to mitigate the risks and was content for the project to continue.
- There was a question on budgets and capacity, but this was assured by the South East South London (SESL) RSC's confidence in the trust's approach to growth plans following conversations with the CEO and Chair, and ESFA's observations.
- Following these discussions, the RSC decided to approve the conversion and the sponsor option, and the HTB supported this decision.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** RSC office to send out Academy order to governing body, Director of Children's Services and Director of Education. Project lead to inform trust of RSC's decision. SRMA visit to be deployed by ESFA team.

**Project:** Cyril Jackson Primary School, **Tower Hamlets** – to convert and join University Schools Trust.

**HTB discussion:**

- The Board were reminded of the conversion application which was rejected in the February 2020 HTB meeting due to a perceived conflict of interest. The HTB were informed that this was resolved.
- The school was also asked to rerun their trust selection and consultation, make clear their rationale and robust evidence behind their decision.
- The HTB heard that the governing body considered five MATs but ultimately based their decision on geographical proximity, capacity, shared ethos and shared pedagogical approach which involved a trust that had expertise on both primary and secondary provisions. The governing body considered University Schools Trust to be the best option that fit their criteria.
- Representations were also received and considered as part of the discussion. The HTB noted that different parties had objections to the academisation and the consultation process running during the pandemic.
- The Board noted that the governing body ran their consultation over an extended period, which was adapted in light of COVID-19 restrictions.
- The RSC and HTB scrutinised the consultation but concluded that the governing body did run a robust and transparent consultation, addressed the points made following the last HTB meeting and had effectively responded to the concerns raised.
- Following these discussions, the RSC decided to approve the conversion and the sponsor option. The HTB supported the RSC's decision.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** Tom Canning did not receive the papers and was not part of the discussion.

**Further actions required:** RSC office to send out Academy order to governing body, Director of Children's Services and Director of Education. Project lead to inform trust of RSC's decision.

## Trust Change

Points discussed in relation to academies moving to a new trust.

**Project:** IES Breckland, **Brandon, Suffolk**, to transfer from Sabres Educational Trust to Unity Schools Partnership.

### HTB discussion:

- The HTB heard the background of the voluntary transfer application, including the atypical nature of the school's education provider being contracted from an organisation in Sweden and the tumultuous journey of the school.
- With the arrangement ending in February 2021 the trust was looking at joining a strong, established multi-academy trust. The Board heard that the trust decided Unity Schools Partnership (USP) was the best fit due to shared ethos and values, geographical proximity, school-to-school support offers and active SLA.
- The RSC and HTB discussed the active service level agreement between the two organisations, recognising that this was important to IES Breckland. However, at this time, USP have a number of schools that have transferred relatively recently, some of which require a significant amount of school improvement and leadership capacity. It was important to understand the impact in those schools and to withhold a decision on a formal transfer until that was done. The RSC was keen for the SLA to continue and that subject to progress in the summer term, would welcome a second approach.
- The RSC decided that it would not be appropriate to approve this transfer. The HTB fully endorsed the RSC's decision.

**RSC decision:** Decline.

**Conflicts:** Tom Canning did not receive the papers and was not part of this discussion. Diane Rochford was also not part of the discussion.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision. RSC to speak with CEO and Chair of the trust over concerns. RSC office to confirm that there is no end date to SLA.

## Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes application.

**Project:** The Active Learning Trust Limited to add a SEN unit in Chantry Academy, Ipswich, Suffolk.

### **HTB discussion:**

- The Board discussed the background to The Active Learning Trust's proposal to add a SEN unit for pupils that required additional support with cognition and learning in Chantry Academy.
- The HTB acknowledged that there was a shortfall in this type of provision and demand in the local area.
- The HTB expressed no concerns and supported with the RSC's decision to approve the proposal.

**RSC decision:** Approve.

**Conflicts:** None.

**Further actions required:** Trust to be informed of RSC's decision.