



Notes of Meeting: East of England and North East London Advisory Board

Date of meeting – 16 December 2021

Attendance

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

AB 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)

Advisory Board (AB) members

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

Apologies

- Tom Canning (AB)

DfE senior civil servants

- ESFA representative
- Alan Parnum (Deputy Director)

Representations received

- No representations were made for any items discussed at this meeting.

General Discussion Points

AB member reflections

- The Note of Meeting for the November AB meeting were discussed and agreed.
- The RSC and Board took time for reflections on staffing shortages and contingency plans to keep schools open for the next term.

Converter Academy Order

Points discussed in relation to school conversion.

Project: St Winefride's Roman Catholic Primary School, **Newham** – to convert and join Our Lady of Grace Catholic Academy Trust.

AB discussion:

- The AB heard about the background of this voluntary conversion application including that the Bishop of the Diocese of Brentwood encouraged all catholic schools in the LA to convert and join a MAT as part of their education strategy and that the school already worked closely with the schools already within the trust.
- The Board also heard that the school had a minor deficit in the last financial year. However, the school has forecasted a surplus for the current and next financial years, which would mean the school is in a surplus at the actual time of conversion.
- The trust has also worked closely with the school over the past 18 months to oversee financial planning and remain confident of managing a recovery.
- The Board noted that this was a strong, catholic trust which will bring additional capacity to the school, the LA and families of pupils are supportive and the trust's leadership team are skilful in working with local communities and unions.
- A strong catholic trust will bring additional capacity. Local families are in support and leadership have been skilful in working with the community and unions.
- Based on the reasons above the RSC approved the application and the AB 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.

Free School Presumption – Sponsor Approval

Points discussed in relation to a free school's sponsor status.

Project: Whether to approve the Local Authority's preferred sponsor for the Waterbeach Free School Presumption, **South Cambridgeshire, Cambridgeshire**.

AB discussion:

- The AB heard that the LA had conducted a fair and transparent competition process and DfE officials were provided with insight of the robust shortlisting.
- Following a thorough selection and interview process, the LA selected Anglian Learning Trust as its preferred sponsor for the Waterbeach free school presumption.
- The Board heard that this was due to multiple factors including that Anglian have the educational, operational, and financial capacity to deliver and lead the new provision. The AB reflected on the trust's good track record with their primary provision, school improvement and their strong leadership. The trust also received an award for their governance expertise from the National Governance Association in September 2021.
- The AB and RSC expressed no concerns, and the AB fully supported the RSC's decision to approve the application.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trust, LA and Local MP of RSC's decision.

Trust Change

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

Project: London Enterprise Academy, **Tower Hamlets**, to transfer from Tower Hamlets Enterprise Academy Trust Ltd (SAT), **Tower Hamlets**, to Mulberry Schools Trust (MAT), **Tower Hamlets**.

AB discussion:

- The AB heard about the complex background of this transfer including that the school is the only one within the trust and received an inadequate Ofsted judgement in April 2019 due to a range of concerns.
- This transfer had taken a longer time than originally anticipated due to the impact of the pandemic. However, following a refreshed termination warning notice in May 2021
- The trust board passed a resolution to explore and wanted to work through an extensive due diligence process to look at viable MAT options to join.
- Mulberry Schools Trust was identified as the best option due to successful school improvement track record, stable finances, strong leadership and providing the strongest model to bring rapid school improvement as they already have an existing knowledge on the school.
- The AB also heard that the recent growth of Mulberry is manageable, and the trust have the capacity to bring in new, experienced leaders into the school. The AB expressed that there was an overlap of trustees and members in Mulberry's governance which needed to be addressed. The RSC office said they would bring this to the trust's attention.
- The Board and RSC were fully supportive of this transfer and the RSC approved this project.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

Further actions required: RSC office to inform trusts of the RSC's decision and will address overlap of members and trustees within Mulberry's governance.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes applications.

Project: The Diocese of Norwich St Benet's Multi-Academy Trust to amalgamate Harleston Church of England Primary Academy and Archbishop Sancroft High School, **South Norfolk, Norfolk**, to form an all-through school.

AB discussion:

- The AB heard about the request from the St Benet's trust, the Diocese of Norwich and local governing body of Harleston Federation to amalgamate Harleston Church of England Primary Academy and Archbishop Sancroft High School to form an all-through school. This all-through will be based on the existing two academy sites.
- The purpose of this project is to bring standards and outcomes up for pupils in the local area and provide quality career opportunities and working conditions for staff.
- The AB discussed the implication of the geographical distance between the two sites, the transition of pupils, the performance of all-through schools in general and the rationale behind having the school across two sites.
- These factors were all addressed in prior discussions with the trust and as part of the discussion. The distance of the sites was considered slight (0.8 miles) and argued that this could be addressed with sufficient timetabling. Benefits related to transitioning were supplied including continued provision, emotional support for pupils from specialist staff, shared resources and staff retention.
- The RSC team were confident that the rationale for being across two sites was driven by educational reasons such as sharing best practice, resources and subject specialist staff for the school's curriculum.
- Based on the reasons above the Board and RSC were fully supportive of this amalgamation and the RSC ultimately approved this project.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Brian Conway and Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne did not receive papers and were not involved in the discussion.

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

Decisions taken by another RSC

List of decisions taken by another RSC.

Project: Haringey Sixth Form Education Trust to retrospectively increase the number of school places from 1050 to 1283 in Haringey Sixth Form College, **Haringey**.

Name of RSC who made the decision: Andrew Warren (RSC of West Midlands).

Update:

- The RSC of West Midlands was asked to take this decision as the RSC of East England and North East London (EENEL) had a potential conflict.
- The RSC heard about the retrospective request to increase the capacity of Haringey Sixth Form College from 1050 to 1283 to follow the required department protocols.
- The current level of demand demonstrates that there is still a local need to maintain this level of capacity. The RSC also heard that past difficulties with the trust's finances meant increasing capacity was necessary to remain financially viable.
- The RSC recommended that the trust modernise their governance and assure the RSC EENEL office on progress following their 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted judgement, but overall was content to approve this application.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: Sue Baldwin (RSC of East England and North East London) was not involved in and did not make the final decision.

Further actions: required: Trust to be informed of RSC's decision. RSC EENEL office to follow up with trust on recommendations made.

Decisions taken between AB meetings

List of decisions taken by RSC outside of AB meetings.

Project: West Hatch High School Academy Trust to retrospectively increase the number of school places from 1223 to 1593 and retrospectively increase the PAN from 70 to 370 in West Hatch High School, **Epping Forest, Essex**.

Update:

- The RSC heard about the retrospective request to increase the school capacity from 1223 to 1593, 370 places in total. The increase will be made over the next 5 years, with PAN increasing by 60 each year.
- The RSC heard that the reason this change required approval from her was due to the increase in the overall physical capacity of the academy building so that it can provide places for more than 30 additional pupils. The LA are already funding the new building and should not have a negative impact on the trust's finances.
- The RSC expressed no concerns and decided to approve this application.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Saffron Academy Trust to retrospectively to temporarily decrease the PAN from 60 to 30 in Helena Romanes School, **Uttlesford, Essex**.

Update:

- The RSC heard about the retrospective request to reduce the PAN from 60 to 30 in Helena Romanes School due to a delay in the new build of the primary provision. The capacity of the present site cannot accommodate the capacity of the new site which is why the reduction of PAN is currently needed. This is to be a temporary arrangement for the academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23 until the permanent site for the primary provision is available.
- The LA are already funding the new building and should not have a negative impact on the trust's finances.
- The RSC and team were content with the steps taken by the school to consult the relevant parties of these changes.
- The RSC expressed no concerns and decided to approve this application.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Inspiration Trust to retrospectively increase the number of school places from 810 to 1150 in Hethersett Academy, **South Norfolk, Norfolk**.

Update:

- The RSC heard about the retrospective request to formally increase the capacity of Hethersett Academy from 810 to 1150 as a new building on the school site has enabled them to increase their PAN to 230. This was due local demand for school places.
- The RSC also heard that the new building opened in September 2020 which was funded by the LA and that the school has also received estimate funding to support this change.
- The RSC expressed no concerns and decided to approve this application.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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

Project: Suffolk Academies Trust to retrospectively increase the number of school places from 2036 to 2300 in One Sixth Form College, **Babergh, Suffolk**.

Update:

- The RSC heard about the retrospective request to formally increase the capacity of One Sixth Form College from 2036 to 2300.
- The RSC also heard that this is due to local demand and the classrooms in the school have been reconfigured to enable more efficient use. These changes have resulted in the availability of more spaces and the 2021/22 student number currently stands at 2240.
- Changes will be funded by capital reserves and should not have a negative impact on the trust's finances.
- The RSC expressed no concerns and decided to approve this application.

RSC decision: Approve.

Conflicts: None.

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