



Department
for Education

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

Date of meeting – 24 March 2022

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

- Karen Kerridge (AB)
- Duncan Ramsey (AB)
- Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne (AB)
- Tom Canning (AB)
- Brian Conway (AB)

Apologies

- AL Kingsley (AB)
- Caroline Derbyshire (AB)
- Diane Rochford (AB)
- Alan Parnum (DfE Deputy Director)

DfE senior civil servants

- ESFA representative

Representations received

- Representations were received for item 2.4, significant change, whether Unity Schools Partnership should be allowed to change the age range and physical expansion of Tollgate Primary School, **Bury St Edmunds**, and Bury St Edmunds County Upper School, **Bury St Edmunds**, and seek RSC recommendation on the closures of Horringer Court Middle, **Bury St Edmunds**, and Westley Middle, **Bury St Edmunds**, to reorganise from three tier to two tier.

These representations were shared in advance of the meeting with all attendees and considered alongside their corresponding item.

General Discussion Points

AB Member Reflections

- The Note of Meeting for February AB meeting was agreed.
- The RSC and board reflected on current impact of COVID-19 on schools and staff pressures.
- Preparation for release of White Paper and SEND Green Paper was discussed.
- Reflections on previous use of inadequate schools slide deck, monitoring their progress. Requests to re-establish this moving forward.
- Reflections on Child Q case and OFSTED reports on children and school safety.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes applications.

Project: Lee Chapel Multi Academy Trust should be allowed to amalgamate Greensted Infant and Nursery, **Basildon**, with Greensted Junior Schools, **Basildon**, to form a primary school.

AB discussion:

- The RSC and AB members heard the background to this trust merger, and agreed that this is a straightforward merger, with local trusts managing to avoid gaps in education for the pupils who will be affected.
- The RSC and AB members were confident that the compliance admissions code will be maintained, and finance will be factored into the amalgamation.

RSC decision: Approve

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trusts of the RSC's decision.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes applications.

Project: Inspiration Trust to be allowed to change the age range from 3-11 years old to 2-11 years old in Great Yarmouth Primary Academy, **Norfolk**, to add a nursery provision.

AB discussion:

- AB members acknowledged that Great Yarmouth Primary Academy (GYPA) is a good school.
- There was an agreement that the expansion will benefit the children, school, and community.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: No

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trusts of the RSC's decision.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes applications.

Project: Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) to be allowed to change the age range at Maltings Academy, **Witham**, from 11-18 to 11-16 and amalgamate the Sixth form with New Rickstones Academy, **Witham**

AB discussion:

- The RSC and AB members heard the background to this amalgamation, which is a consolidation of two sixth forms. There were acknowledgements and concerns over the impact of closing sixth forms, however, the Board heard how the trust believe the amalgamation will improve experiences and learning across both academies. The trust have also worked with the Local Authorities to gain perspective on potential pupil numbers over the coming years and are confident that the forecast for students will rise, despite previously poor retention.
- The RSC and AB members acknowledged that the consolidation would help Maltings with education standards by solely focusing on KS4.
- The RSC commented on an interesting debate with the schools local MP, which includes a new focus on standards and the level of delivery, governance, and oversight – which will enable them to excel.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trusts of the RSC's decision.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes applications.

Project: Unity Schools Partnership should be allowed to change the age range and physical expansion of Tollgate Primary School, **Bury St Edmunds**, and Bury St Edmunds County Upper School, **Bury St Edmunds**, and seek RSC recommendation on the closures of Horringer Court Middle, **Bury St Edmunds**, and Westley Middle, **Bury St Edmunds**, to reorganise from three tier to two tier

AB discussion:

- The discussion focused on whether the changes were in the interests of the children and would result in providing good education that is sustainable.
- Maintaining the education standard throughout the transition period will be a focus for the trust. Using the Westly Middle School site for the lower year groups of County Upper initially will help minimise disruption to the children.
- The board and RSC appreciated and sympathised with the parental concerns and believe USP keeping contact and engaging with parents and communities throughout the transition will help to alleviate any concerns.
- Whilst the concerns about timing of the change were noted, it was also agreed a swift change will eliminate uncertainty and stress for children and parents.
- Any further plans to consolidate County Upper School on a single site would need to return to a future AB meeting for approval
- The proposal has support from Suffolk County Council and the local MP.

RSC recommendation: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: RSC recommendation to be submitted to NSC for decision.

Significant Change

Points discussed in relation to significant changes applications.

Project: Whether Abbots Hall Primary Academy, **Thurrock**, should be allowed to expand their PAN from 30 to 60.

AB discussion:

- The RSC and AB members discussed whether Abbots Primary Academy should be permitted to expand. The expansion first began in September 2021, to meet the high demand for primary school places. Thurrock Local Authority have agreed to fund the expansion, and a new block for the school.
- The trust finances are stable.
- Board Members and the RSC agreed that the change will have a positive impact with increased pupil numbers and support the expansion.

RSC decision: Approved

Conflicts: None

Further actions required: Project Lead to inform trusts of the RSC's decision.