



WALTON & LEES HILL CE PRIMARY SCHOOL EXTRA-ORDINARY 'ZOOM' GOVERNORS MEETING

MINUTES OF FRIDAY 12th FEBRUARY 2021

1. Apologies for Absence

Action

No apologies were received but Mrs F Ritson, Mrs F Stobbart and Mrs L Rooney were not in attendance as they had declared an interest in the agenda item.

Present:

Mrs M Alston (MA-Chair), Mrs K Lamb (KL), Mr G Lamb (GL), Mr G Shaw (GS), Mr P Cronin (PC), Mrs L Irving (LI) and Mrs T Mitchinson (Clerk).

Also present were Lynsey Slater, LA General Adviser and Calum Campbell, Interim Senior LA Adviser.

2. Introduction to Mr Calum Campbell

Mrs Slater introduced Mr Campbell to the Governors and explained why he was in attendance at the meeting.

3. A Brief Resume of the Headship of Walton & Lees Hill CE Primary School from Sept 2019 and the Proposed 'Way Forward'

Mrs Alston gave a comprehensive resume as to the discussions that had taken place and decisions made so far by the Governing Body regarding the Headship of Walton & Lees Hill CE Primary School from September 2019 and the agreed proposed way forward.

4. Local Authority Comment of the Governing Body Suggested Action on 'The Way Forward' from Sept 2021

Mrs Slater started by thanking Mrs Alston for explaining very clearly the process the Governors have been through so far and agreed with the comments made about Mrs Stobbart's ability in the role but that what the LA are here for at this meeting was to draw the Governors attention to and discuss fully any risks that may be involved with our decision, especially to Mrs Stobbart and not only the school.

Mr Campbell made it clear that the LA's views focus on care for the school, the community and the staff concerned and were not here to argue against our proposals but to put forward reasons why they would advise to go through an official recruitment process therefore putting in place a mandate to lead for the future.

The LA worked on the assumptions that in the next few years there would be lots of change at the school with pupils/parents/governors/staff etc. and if Governors didn't follow a recruitment process then this may put Mrs Stobbart in a position where should there be a conflict of interest she may be accused of only being given the job rather than earning it in her own right.

Governors were asked to consider the pitfalls if we didn't explore any alternatives that may be available for the post.

Signed as true and Correct

Mrs Alston began by saying the main point is that, even if we wanted to, we were unable to hold a recruitment process at present. To which Mr Campbell explained that many schools were in the same position but are running on temporary arrangements for the foreseeable.

Mr Lamb added that school have been in a precarious position now for 18 months and he sees it that as far as parents are concerned it is stability going forward that they are looking for. He agrees with the LA's views but thinks there will always potentially be a conflict between parties whichever process the Governing Body take, be it appointment or recruitment and not making an appointment now could potentially add another 18 months plus to the uncertainty and school being no further forward.

Mr Campbell once again drew the Governors to a mandate to lead which would mean even if our intended appointment was the only applicant to the recruitment process then we wouldn't be putting them in a position to have to defend their appointment in future years.

Mr Shaw understood what was being tabled by the LA and that there would always be question over due process but that the current situation is unprecedented and Governors feel that they wouldn't want to risk anything that was already in place and the here and now in the schools best interest in maintaining the stability even without the added pressures brought by Covid 19.

Mr Campbell noted that everything appears very stable within school at present and why would any recruitment process affect this detrimentally?

Mrs Lamb felt that it was wrong timing for Mrs Stobbart to take up the role full time having returned from her maternity leave to take up the post of Acting Headteacher as school was struggling following the resignation of the previous Headteacher and that the Governors wanted to acknowledge this by giving their support to her wishes to continue part time for the time being after 14 years with the school until a time when she may feel ready to commit full time.

Mr Cronin found it difficult to believe that going through due process would give Mrs Stobbart any more or less credibility in this situation.

Mrs Slater said that ultimately the Governors needed to be open and transparent on all accounts throughout any decisions that were made.

Mr Shaw added that there would be risks whichever path the Governors chose and it was all about assessing the balance and making sure that all avenues were thoroughly discussed before a decision was made but that he recommends it would be in all stakeholders' interests to settle the issue now.

Final words were that the LA recommends due process but ultimately the final decision rested with the Governing Body; seen as there were no more questions from the Governors Mrs Slater and Mr Campbell left the meeting.

Discussion then ensued as to the advice given from the LA against the proposed way forward already agreed at previous meetings. Many seen that it would undermine Mrs Stobbart's position and standing within the school and community and would be detrimental to both Mrs Stobbart and the school if we did not take into account the commitment and support that Mrs Stobbart had given to both the school and community over the years.

The Governors unanimously voted to offer Mrs Stobbart a permanent Headship of 0.6fte and Mrs Rooney an Acting Headship of 0.4fte from September 2021.

It was agreed to inform them of all the advice that was received from both the LA and HR to show that we are being transparent and fair but that they both have the full support and backing of the Governing Body.

Mrs Alston and Mr Lamb will meet via Zoom with Mrs Stobbart on Thursday 18th February 2021 and then with Mrs Rooney on Friday 19th February 2021 to discuss and offer the posts accordingly; the outcomes will be reported back to the full Governing Body.

Finally, Mrs Irving asked what would happen if, in the future, Mrs Stobbart felt she would like to take on the role full time? *Yes, this would be possible as Mrs Rooney's Acting Headship would only be on a temporary rolling contract initially until September 2022 with a view to extend if required.*

5. Date of Next Meeting(s)

Full Governing Body –
Monday 22nd February 2021, 6.00pm via Zoom Video Call