

The Priory School

Full Governing Body

held at 18.30 on Tuesday 15th March 2016

MINUTES

Members:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Yvonne Rimmer | <i>Chair</i> |
| Robert Adams (RA) | |
| Michael Barratt | <i>Principal</i> |
| Don Burgess (DB) | |
| Tim Goodman (TG) | |
| Sarah Goodwright | |
| Pam Jebb (PJ) | |
| Gareth Jenkins | |
| Paul Kitchener (PK) | |
| Peter Pack | |
| David Sidaway | |
| Eric Stannard (ES) | |
| Gary Turner | |
| Lisa Twidale (LT) | |

In attendance:

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| Alison Bell (ABe) | <i>Deputy Principal (Learning & Teaching)</i> |
| Adrian Burns | <i>Clerk</i> |
| Mary Massey | <i>Assistant Principal (Data & Operations)</i> |
| Simon Jones | <i>Corstorphine & Wright, Architects (item 5)</i> |
| Philip Tilman | <i>Educational Facilities Consultant (item 5)</i> |
| Bryan Warr | <i>Assistant Principal (House System)</i> |
| Duncan Wright | <i>Business Manager</i> |

action

1 **Apologies for absence and Welcome**

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr P Pack and Mr D Sidaway. Mr G Jenkins was not present. The Chair welcomed Gary Turner, parent governor, to his first meeting.

2 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest in the business of the meeting.

3 **Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2015 were approved.

4 **Matters arising**

- .1 (*Minute 9*): The Deputy Principal reported that she and the Head of RP had worked on the mapping of curriculum model 2 in order to ensure coverage across the years of the different RP elements in statutory orders, highlighting identity and sense of belonging. Key Stage 4 provision was being extended down to Year 9. The subject would be considered further in the Learning, Teaching & Achievement committee.
- .2 (*Minute 10*): The Principal confirmed that the agreed amendments to the Pay and Prevent policies had been made.

ABe / AB

5 **Sixth Form**

The Principal introduced discussion of a future Sixth Form with a presentation on the changing landscape for education, noting the announcement of legislation that would lead to nationwide academisation by 2022. The focus on five A*-C grades as the main measure of educational standards had gone and a national Fair Funding formula was due to be implemented for 2017, under which a minimum of 2000 students was expected to be necessary to achieve economies of scale. Intervention in Local Authority schools would move to Regional Commissioners, with DFE staff leaving London for regional offices. LAs would no longer be responsible for school improvement.

There was now a paucity of sponsoring Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) but good and outstanding schools could join together to form them, as Priory had applied to do. He envisaged cautious growth, with a pinch point in terms of infrastructure at around the five school mark. Nationally about 1000 MATs were expected, implying an average of 20 schools each, but about 10,000 schools had fewer than 150 pupils. There would be changes in governance, with formal accountability lying with a Board of Directors and delegation to schools according to status.

He introduced Philip Tilman, consultant advising on MATs and Sixth Forms, and Simon Jones, national director for education from Corstorphine & Wright, architects. They outlined the process of opening a new Sixth Form and gave examples of previous projects.

Construction would potentially take 21 months from establishing the brief to completion. Planning could take 13 weeks but there were seasonal timing constraints relating to flora and fauna. The tender would require publication in the OJEU. Construction would take a year. For budgetary purposes a cost of £2,000 per sq metre was indicated, with inflation of 5% per quarter, giving a potential cost of £4.5m including FF&E and fees.

The DfE required schools to carry out a consultation lasting at least four weeks and including meetings, letters, booklets and advertisements. The outcome of this would be a consultation review paper for consideration at a governors' meeting.

Application for a Sixth Form would then be made to the DfE, making the business case for significant change, citing school performance over the previous five years, confirming Ofsted status of good or outstanding and that a minimum of 15 A levels (including BTEC Level 3) would be taught. A single application would be made for Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) grant of up to £4m for accommodation to house a minimum of 200 pupils. This could be done in September 2016 (with a deadline of 14th December) and must take into

account a repayment limit of 4% of GAG. It was noted that only 15% of the fund was allocated to expansion projects. The application would be assessed by the Regional Schools Commissioner, looking at demand and financial resilience. The EFA would take eight weeks to reach a decision.

In response to questions, Philip Tilman acknowledged that Sixth Form funding was falling and said that his experience had been with schools of between 1000 and 1200 pupils. The minimum feasible size was 600-700 on roll.

The Chair thanked them for their presentations.

Discussion ensued as follows:

TG said that opening a Sixth Form was an exciting idea but he was concerned about the resources and time that would be required to create a Sixth Form at the same time as establishing the MAT. He believed the MAT was more urgent and that resources should be applied to developing governance.

ES was of the same opinion and was cautious about the uncertainty that could develop if the school tried to tackle too much at the same time. But he recognised the need to grasp the Sixth Form issue promptly before initiatives by other schools removed the opportunity. The Principal said that the same concern applied to the MAT.

TG was concerned about the risk of Priory's excellent leaders becoming too preoccupied with the projects. PJ felt that the staff would be stretched and should not have too much demanded of them. RA pointed out that governors' original discussion had concluded that the same problems might be faced if Priory did not undertake the projects.

DB asked whether it was possible to run both projects at the same time. The Principal replied that he was confident of being able to manage the introduction of a Sixth Form, but would not want to start before 2019 and would prefer it to be a year later. He did not believe the school could undertake two major projects at the same time. But MATs were central to government policy and were likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. Priory could have ten schools in its MAT within 18 months. He could use the top slice to provide additional resources and thereby protect the day to day running of the school.

PK said that it had been a good presentation, but found the many different Sixth Form components daunting. The purpose of the MAT was to support schools that were in trouble, which would involve SLT, Heads of Department and other managers. He believed it would be wise to see what developed from the new amalgamation of Shrewsbury Sixth Form College and College of Arts & Technology before committing Priory to Sixth Form expansion.

The Chair thought that teaching 15 A levels was an ambitious target, although LT thought it would attract teachers and the Principal said he would want to aim for up to twenty. The response of Year 11 pupils to a survey of their interest in a Priory Sixth form was favourable but non-committal. TG asked how many staff were already able to teach A levels and was told that the Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal (House System) could do so. PK commented that a longer timescale would help current staff prepare for A level teaching. LT saw the value of delaying but believed it was important that Priory should be able to have a Sixth Form.

The Deputy Principal said that admission to the Sixth Form needed to be well managed in order to ensure maximum retention at the end of Year 12. BTECs would be popular. The Chair wanted to be in a position to work together with

Meole Brace School in due course. Others queried the viability of expanding the school to the extent necessary on the existing site and wondered whether relocation might be an option over five to ten years.

6 **Strategy**

The Principal's original and 2016 strategy papers were noted. The Principal led discussion of their four main areas of focus:

.1 *Multi Academy Trust*

He reported on the growing pace of activity in the area of Multi Academy Trusts because of the imminent bill. Legislation was likely develop the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner in giving instructions for schools to become or join MATs. The members of Priory's MAT were already established. The directors would need to create Local Governing Bodies with schemes of delegation according to their categories from the latest Ofsted inspeciton. Terms of Reference would be rewritten, with this change affecting Priory's governing body probably within a year. Reporting processes would change and delegation levels would be differentiated according to the status of the school in the MAT.

The Principal believed that Priory had the resources to support one Requiring Improvement secondary school. There could be four or five local primary schools wanting to approach Priory for inclusion in the MAT.

LT commented that the new assessment regime for primaries raised the likelihood of a drop in performance, so schools would be looking for opportunities to make a positive choice about linking with MATs before being obliged to do so. In response to a question from PK she said that the most important issue for primary schools wanting to link with secondaries would be the securing of a smooth transition for pupils into their new setting.

The Chair commented that steady progress must be made but not without bringing business arrangements into alignment.

.2 *Teaching School Alliance*

The Principal was uncertain of the future of the Teaching School Alliance. School to school support was likely to diminish because academies would be expected to take it on. Initial Teacher Training work should continue but a school did not have to be a teaching school to do it. Other aspects of the Teaching School role were not essential. The Deputy Principal anticipated competition from another secondary school, making it more difficult for Priory to fill its CPD programme.

ES asked whether the school should take the initiative in withdrawing. Commenting that three or four members of staff were trained to deliver teacher enrichment programmes, the Deputy Principal said she thought the burden of delivery could be reduced as the initiative declined. It was agreed that Priory's role should continue for the next year, with the Principal advising that funding was likely to end thereafter.

.3 *Sixth Form*

Sixth form planning had been considered at item 5 above.

.4 *Capital Investment*

The Business Manager introduced discussion of capital investment by advising that the school could use its reserves for refurbishment and could bid for grant from the EFA's Capital Improvement Fund.

Infrastructure proposals included replacement of the Maths block and a new Astroturf sports pitch, each estimated to cost in the region of £500k. Two bids for funding for a new block had been unsuccessful. The school would need to use all of its reserves to fund a new Maths block, making them unavailable for other purposes such as working capital for the MAT.

TG referred to the relocation option, which he assumed would cover all the other issues if it took place. He asked what would benefit current students most and believed it must be new Maths facilities, although he disliked the idea of having no cash reserves. An Astroturf pitch would be a second priority.

PJ also favoured new Maths classrooms over Astroturf, regarding the present Maths classrooms and demountables as not fit for purpose. ES asked about the possibility of acquiring new demountables, which the Business Manager said would be expensive. ES also considered the Maths teaching facilities more important than an Astroturf pitch. RA asked whether there could be any other method of funding the Astroturf. The Principal explained that previous efforts to achieve external funding had been unsuccessful. He confirmed that excellent Maths teaching was taking place despite the poor conditions in the classrooms, which the Resources Committee had seen during its most recent meeting. He added that the school would need extra space for back office functions as the MAT grew.

At the Chair's proposal it was resolved that the Resources Committee should consider at its next meeting how to proceed, taking into account what the school's minimum working capital requirements should be for the foreseeable future.

7 **Approvals**

On the recommendation of the relevant committee, the following policies and procedures were adopted:

- .1 Learning & Teaching Policy (LTA, 20th January)
- .2 Staff Discipline Procedure (Resources, 9th February)
- .3 Staff Grievance Procedure (Resources, 9th February)

8 **Committee Minutes**

The minutes of the following meetings were noted:

- .1 Learning, Teaching & Achievement Committee, 20th January 2016

Matters arising

(Minute 5): The Chair asked whether the numbers for triple Science the following year would be 30 or 60. The Deputy Principal had consulted the top and second sets and compared the data with FFT targets. The number of students wanting triple Science was 38, which implied one class of 30. Letters had been sent to the parents of the students identified for triple

unapproved

Science. The Chair asked for more detail and information about parents' responses to be provided to the next meeting of the committee. ABe / AB

(Minute 9): The Chair asked for guidance about how to facilitate governors, especially parent governors, coming into school for informal learning walks. The Principal undertook to discuss the process with her and bring proposals to the FGB. MJB

(Minute 11): PK agreed to chair a further meeting of the committee. PK / AB

.2 Student Welfare Committee, 27th January 2016

(Minutes 6 & 7): The Deputy Principal reported that Tony Walters had provided *Understanding your Teen* training for parents in the form of a three week course which had been well received.

.3 Resources Committee, 9th February 2016

Standing Item

9 **Fraud and Going Concern**

The Business Manager reported that no fraud had been detected.

10 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be held at 18.30 on Tuesday 12th July 2016.