



Debenham High School

A Church of England High Performing Specialist Academy



Extraordinary Meeting of the Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held at the school on Friday 20th March 2015 at 4.15 p.m.

Present:

Mr R Barker		Mrs F Hotston Moore
Mr D Carruthers	Chairman	Mrs S Janson
Revd P Cotton		Mr D McMillan
Mr P Debenham		Dr H Marlow
Dr D Egan		Mr D Ralph
Ms S Goodrich		Mr R Stevenson
Mr T Green		Miss J Upton Headteacher
Mr C Grover		Ms E Wnukoski

In attendance:

Mr R Grimsey	Member of the Academy Trust
Mr N Serjeant	Member of the Academy Trust
Mr S Martin	Deputy Headteacher
Mrs L Ramsay	Assistant Headteacher
Mrs T Darby	Business Manager
Mr S Wright	Clerk to the Governors

1. Absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs J Brown, Mrs C Driver, Miss S McBurney and Ms J Newman. Dr Egan joined the meeting at 4.45 p.m.; Mrs Hotston Moore at 5.07 p.m.
- 1.2 Governors consented to their absence.

2. Financial Outlook

Miss Upton dealt with this item by means of a presentation. She said that the financial prospects were not generous for the coming year and that Governors were aware of the pressures brought about by increases to National Insurance and Pensions contributions. Having received the 2015-16 budget figures she had felt that these needed to be shared with Governors as soon as possible because, though there was no magic wand to resolve the issues raised, decisions needed to be made on admissions numbers for the coming year.

Miss Upton made the following additional points in relation to the slides.

[The presentation is attached to these minutes.]

Gracechurch Street, Debenham, Suffolk IP14 6BL

Tel 01728 860213 Fax 01728 860998 Email office@debenhamhigh.co.uk Website www.debenhamhigh.co.uk

Headteacher Miss J Upton BSc

Senior Leadership Team: Mr S Martin, Miss S McBurney, Mrs L Ramsay, Mrs T Darby

Chairman of the Academy Trust Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Chairman of Governors Mr D Carruthers

Slide 1 – Income Streams (1)

Per Pupil Funding (PPF) works a year in arrears – 2015-16 funding is based on the October 2014 funding. PPF had gone up for next year but not by the £100 per pupil promised by the Government – this had been top-sliced by the LA. Consequently, the school will receive only £59 per pupil.

Slide 2 – Income Streams (2)

It was noted that the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) had been reduced significantly and that the Educational Services Grant (ESG) had been similarly cut. (The increase of £59 mentioned above is not protected funding from the MFG.) The DfE has indicated that there was no certainty that these two grants would remain at current levels in coming years.

Slide 3 – Total General Annual Grant (GAG) income

Overall this was down by close to £72k.

Slide 4 – Costs

These figures are based on current year's staffing levels (actuals should vary little from this) and include the NI increases (it was noted that the 3.4% NI rebate had been cut from April 2016) and those for Teachers' Pension (employer contribution increasing from 14.1% to 16.48%). Support staff employer pension contribution also increases a further 1% to 19.8%. Both increases fall due in September 2015. Together, these changes mean that staffing costs will rise from 91.12% of GAG income (2014) to 97.53% (projected 2015-16). Miss Upton pointed out that staffing (teachers) at DHS was generous but this had been a deliberate policy which had contributed to the success of the school.

Slide 5 – Projected deficit

Reduced income and increased costs leads to a projected shortfall in funding for 2015-16 of £197k - this before other expenditure items are taken into account.

Miss Upton then paused for questions and the following points were made:

- It was agreed that the election result was unlikely to make any difference to funding streams.
- Employers' increased pension contributions would begin in September.
- Figures did not include funding for the Pupil Premium (PP), Looked after Children (LAC) and High Tariff Needs (HTF). These could bring in £90k (PP) and £17.5k (HTF) but funding calculations were complex and timed differently to GAG. The money from these would bring some buffer but it was noted that the 2014-15 figures in the presentation had direct equivalence to those for 2015-16 – i.e. they did not include monies from these additional funding streams.

3. Future Planning

Slide 6 – What next

This stressed the need not to panic and the desire to maintain the staff complement whilst making DHS more efficient and lean. This funding picture had been expected (though the exact figures were uncertain until this point) - hence the prudent approach taken by governors with regard to reserves.

Slide 7 – Options

- Admissions – see below.
- KS4 Options – there is the possibility of raising the minimum group size for KS4 course viability from 10 to 15. This could lead to the loss of subjects such as Textiles, Drama and Music, which would be contrary to the school's desire to offer breadth in the curriculum. There was also the possibility of ending the courses currently offered at Otley College and instead providing vocational courses at DHS – this could lead to a cost reduction. The six sets that currently existed in Maths and English could be reduced to five.
- Timetable Management – the current timetable was lean with only 18 or 19 'slack' periods but there was still the capacity of logistical changes that might lead to some savings.

- Planning and Preparation Time (PPA) – this non-contact time given to teachers was generous at DHS (5/30 periods – 16.7%) as opposed to recommendation (3/30 – 10%). This could be reduced but such a decision would not be taken lightly; in any case any positive impact of such a change would take time to work through financially.
- Decreasing hours for support staff – for example fewer individuals on a 52 week contract or putting more individuals on term time only contracts.
- Collaboration with other schools through shared teaching based on a common timetable or through shared support services. It was noted, however, that the history of local collaboration for such purposes was not strong.

Miss Upton then paused for questions and the following points were made:

- Collaboration might be possible with IT services but is unlikely in relation to catering
- The loss of Otley courses would lead to some, but not substantial, savings.
- All the options listed above would lead to a reduction of staff hours.
- The changes did not need to be approved by Governors but Miss Upton would wish to share with them any strategies to plan for leaner times that the SLT were hoping to put in place.
- That the installation of the new boiler would not lead to any immediate savings as funding was partly based on a Salix loan.

4. Admissions

[Mr Grover declared an interest at this point as he had a child in Year 6 who had just been accepted at DHS.]

Miss Upton informed the meeting that Year 7 (September 2015 entry) was heavily over-subscribed. 125 places had been allocated in line with the Planned Admissions Number (PAN). Since this allocation two applicants had withdrawn to attend independent schools. There was a waiting list of 25 applicants – all these had been contacted in the past few days and 16 had indicated that they still wished to take up a place at DHS. It was proposed that the September entry for Year 7 be increased to 140 (rather than the PAN of 125) leading to the number in each of the five forms increasing from 26 to 28. As DHS is an academy this could be done without increasing the PAN – it was simply a question of informing the LA. An added implication of this would be that, given that there were always in-year applications, the number in years 8, 9, and 10 should be raised to 135.

There was then a general discussion which was prefaced by Mr Carruthers reading a submission from Ms Newman representing both her views and those of other teaching and support staff. This made the following points:

- There were Health and Safety issues given that the DHS was already overfull.
- Some rooms were too small to accommodate extra students.
- Rates of academic progress would be adversely affected – particularly for lower ability groups
- There would be further Health and Safety issues in the practical subjects.
- Extra departmental resources would be needed and this would require increased funding.
- There would be an expectation of teaching staff that they would produce the same top quality results despite extra pressures brought about by the increase in numbers.
- It would be better to delay any increase in admissions numbers for one year to see how the situation evolved, using reserves to fund any shortfall.

These points gave rise to further general discussion – the points made being grouped together under related headings for ease of comprehension.

Health and Safety (including room size)

- There would only be 10 extra students in Year 7.
- A recent injury to a member of staff had been occasioned by congestion after assembly.

- Students often had to eat their lunch whilst sitting on the floor.
- Further risk analysis needed before any decision is made.
- There would come a point when a school that was originally designed for 500 students simply could not cope.
- A successful Capital Improvement Fund (CIF) bid (three classrooms and a drama studio) would alleviate some pressure and should help issues of circulation and social space.
- Problems could potentially be alleviated by re-organisation/different management of the school day.
- An external health and safety review might be required but generally it was felt that this should be carried out internally.
- Any approval could be conditional upon careful preparation to ameliorate Health and Safety concerns before September.
- If numbers were to be increased then priority in capital works should be given to those projects that would alleviate problems caused by increased numbers.
- Fire safety is of paramount importance. It was felt that this is highly efficient at DHS and would not be affected by any increase in numbers.

Pupil progress

- Miss Upton was confident that educational outcomes were unlikely to be affected given the professionalism and commitment of DHS staff.
- Any impact on pupil progress would be difficult to measure.

Delay for one year

- There may not be the same level of applications next year meaning that an increase in numbers subsequently would not be possible.
- Given that budget is based on the previous year's census, to delay an increase in numbers by one year would similarly mean delay any anticipated increase in revenue. Furthermore, there would be no guarantee of receiving a similar level of applications in future years.
- Even if numbers were not increased there is a potential for a relative increase in class size as the staff-pupil ratio may fall should it be necessary to reduce staff numbers. There could be a case made for a half-way house of increasing numbers to 135 (27 in each form) for next September.
- Could the deficit be met in three ways – from reserves, by increasing numbers and by reducing costs?
- Given the commitment to maintaining a reserves contingency of £250k, the current anticipated shortfall (£175k) could only be covered from reserves for two years (though the policy of maintaining this contingency could be reviewed). Successful CIF bids would reduce reserves by a further £150k. There may also be even more pressing need for reserves in the future if the financial situation continues to deteriorate.

Other points

- To increase numbers went against DHS ethos as a small school.
- To increase Year 7 to 140 could lead to other year groups quickly reaching the same number as appeals would be harder to defend. To counter this it was argued that the PAN of 125 would still be important when it came to appeals, and that, historically, the number of in-year applications for admission was limited.
- It was likely that funding issues, as in the Health Sector, would remain for at least the next three years.
- Other schools were facing the exact same issues – some (especially smaller secondary schools) more so.
- Other funding sources could be explored but potential lack of permanency meant these could not be used for day-to-day running costs. The Funding Agreement does not allow parents to be asked to pay for their child's education.

- Parents' views on this would not be sought.
- It was important not to change the PAN as demographic indications were that, in the near future, the level of applications could fall.
- Would it be possible to reduce student numbers to gain the same savings? It was felt not.
- All the SLT supported the proposal.
- It was felt that an increase to 28 in each Year 7 form would not make it more difficult to resist a move to 29 or 30 as DHS had successfully defended class sizes of 26 in the past.
- There were no in-catchment applicants on the waiting list.

After discussion there were two proposals put before the meeting:

1. That DHS should raise its admission number for September 2015 to 140, but that plans should be made beforehand to, where possible, alleviate the health and safety concerns that had been raised by Governors and Members. In one year's time there should be an assessment of the impact of increased number of students on health and safety issues within the school.

This was put to the vote with thirteen supporting the proposal and three opposing it. The proposal was therefore approved.

2. That the numbers in Years 8, 9, and 10 (at entry in September but not beyond due to the possibility of GCSE course disruption) should be allowed to rise to 135 by means of in-year admissions.

This was put to the vote with thirteen supporting the proposal and three opposing it. The proposal was therefore approved.

The Chairman thanked the meeting for the quality of input and discussion.

5. Any Other Business

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 6.02 p.m.