

GREENHEAD COLLEGE CORPORATION
Minutes of Governors' Academisation Briefing
Wednesday 10th November 2021, 4.00pm, at College Room G17

Govs present: Chantal Forrest; Chris Kneale (to 4.50pm); Craig Shannon; Daniel Bellanfante; Ella Briggs; James Reeve; Lisa Wilkinson; Mark O'Connor; Michelle Wheatcroft; Richard Armstrong (Chair); Richard King; Simon Lett (Principal); Stuart Irving; Vic Wright

In attendance: Anton McGrath; Louise Castle; Tom Morrison; Jess Norcliffe (to 4.50pm); John Blake; Mark Mitchell; Mo Bunter; Tom Rowley; Ian Leedham (Clerk)

Apologies: Alison Jones; Danyaal Malik; John Holroyd; Kasim Sheikh; Sue Ellis

AGENDA ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION
<p>1. Welcome & introduction</p>	<p>1.1 RAR welcomed Governor & S.L.T. participants, and three visiting speakers specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom Morrison & Louise Castle, Stone King Solicitors • Anton McGrath, Principal, Ashton Sixth Form College. <p>Apologies noted, as above. CKN had indicated he would be leaving early.</p> <p>1.2 RAR emphasised that this session:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. is a training/development session and that Governor questions are encouraged 2. is not a decision-making forum – rather, information & discussions will feed into deliberations at Strategy Day 1/12 and Corporation meetings 6/12 et seq. 	<p>Clerk re agendas</p>
<p>2. <u>Introductory context:</u> Richard Armstrong</p>	<p>By way of context, RAR pointed out that non-academies are increasingly in a minority and that at some point academisation will need to be considered by Greenhead.</p>	
<p>3. <u>Session 1:</u> Tom Morrison & Louise Castle, Stone King Solicitors</p>	<p>3.1 Presentation and discussion covered introduction & objectives, options for academisation, introduction to Academy Trusts, conversion & dissolution process. At outset, Tom pointed out that most SFC's will become academies given political agenda & context.</p> <p>3.2 Stone King is a public benefit law firm with FE specialism. SIR questioned about potential vested interests – Tom said no vested interest, with Stone King seeking impact above profit maximisation.</p>	

- 3.3** Main points presented and discussed (often in response to **Governor questions**) included:
1. focus is on Multi-Academy Trust (M.A.T.) opportunities – create own M.A.T. or join existing M.A.T. – as opposed to Single Academy Trust (which is out of favour with Government)
 2. linked to this, focus is on *local system leadership* as a way of driving wider improvement, so any application would need to demonstrate how this will be achieved locally
 3. in response to **SIR question on geographical footprint** – a M.A.T. could have national footprint but with local clusters/hubs
 4. in response to **CSH/CFO questions about who the members are** – they are akin to shareholders (individual or body corporate shareholders), holding trustees to account
 5. in response to **RAR question about who decides on who members will be** – applicant decides/specifies this
 6. there are typically around nine trustees
 7. in response to **RKI question about exempt status, Stamp Duty obligation etc** – upon academy conversion, most property transfers into academy trust would have nil £ value
 8. legal and regulatory framework is more demanding for academies; three core documents are Articles of Association, Funding Agreement, Academies' Handbook
 9. in response to **SIR question about employment arrangements** – M.A.T. is employer
 10. in response to **SLE question about potential Regional Schools Commissioner assistance with finding partners** – yes, R.S.C. could point an establishment towards potential partners
 11. in response to **RKI question about liability if academy trust wound up** – this is limited to £10
 12. borrowing rules are different; as a general rule, academies, which are seen as explicitly part of public sector, don't borrow (but existing loans can be transferred across to the academy trust)
 13. in response to **JBL question about pension liabilities** – academies underwritten by government so probably in better place to deal with liabilities
 14. in response to **RKI question about interface with capital development programme**, SLE emphasised that there is no threat to the already-agreed DfE capital funding
 15. academisation application/process would take many months, up to around a year
 16. in response to **CSH question about costs of academisation process and who would pick these up** - £25k DfE grant should more than cover costs.

4. Session 2:

4.1 Presentation, under the banner 'Academisation and Ashton SFC', covered history, process, pros & cons,

reasons for conversion, benefits and costs, business as usual, final views on current DfE position. Related Governor discussion.

4.2 Anton's M.A.T. is relatively new, 11 months old, so not much time to yield results.

4.3 Main points presented and discussed (often in response to **Governor questions**), over and above those covered in minute 3 above, included:

1. Government preference is for an establishment to join an existing M.A.T.; second option might be to set up a new M.A.T.; note that setting up an 'empty M.A.T.' is out of favour with government
2. need to have strong strategic reasons for academisation application
3. in response to **SIR question about the nature of M.A.T.s** – noted that a larger M.A.T. is in many ways akin to a small local authority
4. doing nothing could be risky given that academisation is government policy; related sense that it could be better to 'choose your own partners now' rather than be subject to external encouragement or imposition or else a predatory M.A.T. entrant to the local market
5. in response to **MOC question about how Ashton chose its two school partners** – Anton wanted to work with two schools and to improve things for the students there (as well as at Ashton), i.e. that was the vision
6. in response to **LWI question about Ashton's incentive to academise** – Anton emphasised desire to be system leader, improving Y7-11 provision and as part of this improving feed of students into Ashton SFC
7. in Ashton's case, recoverable VAT is c.£225-250k p.a.
8. if over 3,000 students, can more easily get capital allocations
9. economies of scale give opportunities for procurement savings, for affording specialist cross-trust roles (e.g. an Educational Psychologist in Ashton's case), and for Initial Teacher Training programmes (to 'grow your own')
10. in response to **LWI question about international students** – academies not able to charge fees, on basis that they are state schools (so no international students)
11. in response to **MOC question about business capacity/expertise** – essential to get the right team in place in respect of overall trust business functions, including 11-16 expertise in respect of secondary school partner(s)
12. in response to **SLE question about whether teaching staff work across establishments** – yes, some early examples of this, on voluntary basis
13. application is a significant endeavour, with significant input needed from professional advisors; DfE Academies Team very helpful; one lesson learned is to put more support into financial due diligence workstream

	<p>14. essential to have proactive marketing-communications as core part of academisation process (responding to VWR question) – key is to have clear message, engender trust, keep all stakeholders on board at each stage.</p> <p>4.4 Anton is happy to share information and materials related to all aspects of the academisation process.</p>	
<p>5. Endpiece</p>	<p>5.1 Agreed Clerk to circulate Stone King and Ashton SFC presentation slides to Govs.</p> <p>5.2 RAR thanked visiting speakers and participants for a productive session.</p> <p>5.3 RAR formally thanked CFO for her service over the past 7 years as a Governor. This is her last all-Governor meeting prior to her term of office ending on 30/11/21. Governors reinforced RAR's thanks to her.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

Minutes prepared by Ian Leedham (Clerk to the Corporation) on 18/11/21

Signed off by Corporation at its meeting on 6/12/21