

**Minutes of an extra-ordinary meeting of Governors of Queen Elizabeth Grammar School, Penrith, held on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2022 at 5.30pm as a virtual meeting.**

Present

Miss R McMann (Clerk)  
Mr M Worrall (CoG)  
Dr J Jenkins (CoG)  
Mr M Bauer (CoG)  
Mr G Miller (P)  
Mr N Ruddick (P)

Mr P Buckland  
Mrs T Boving-Foster (P) (Chair)  
Mr J Ray (CoG)  
Mr P Airey (CoG)  
Mr A Worth (S)

SLT present: Mr Dawson

Visitors: none

10 Governors in attendance until item 6 and 9 Governors for the remainder of the meeting.

Quorum per article 114 – 6 Governors  
(one half of the governors holding office rounded up to the nearest whole number)

GbS – Governor by Statute  
MaG – Member appointed Governor  
CoG – Co-opted Governor  
S – Staff  
P- Parent

.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were accepted for Mr Hansford (work related) and Ms Mills (long-term illness). Mr Bauer had to leave the meeting by 6.30pm to attend another commitment.

2. Declaration of Interest in Agenda Items

There were no declarations of interest in the agenda items.

3. Any changes to the declaration of Business Interests

There were no changes to the declaration of interests.

4. To consider any items to be minuted separately

A confidential update was given and this was minuted separately.

5. Best Suited MAT to potentially join

As per the action points from the previous minutes, Mrs Scott produced a spreadsheet looking at other MATS, which was circulated prior to the meeting. Mr Ray asked if she felt there were any suitable alternatives to which Mrs Scott answered she felt West Lakes were the best fit. This was supported by Mr Buckland who said there are lots of positives with West Lakes and the school is already working with them. Mrs Boving-Foster seconded this. Dr Jenkins passed on her thanks to Mrs Scott for taking the time to complete this, as it is an important part of the process.

6. Feedback from the Visit to West Lakes.

A number of Governors and SLT went to visit West Lakes and Mrs Boving-Foster said that they went to great lengths to ensure there was an opportunity to speak to relevant people. Those who visited individually gave their insight to the rest of the Governors on the time spent there.

- Mr Ray: felt it was a very positive session. Some of the key lessons included the centralised services which takes away the administrative burden, as well as the breadth and depth of expertise. The only question was the 6% of the GAG funding that is centralised, and whether it provides value for money. On the surface it looks like good value, but it should be part of due diligence. There was once again reassurance that no redundancies have ever been made because of a school joining the MAT.
- Mr Miller: agree with above and impressed with the people they were introduced to. It appears there would be more support for everyone (there is a press department, someone who handles CIF bids for example) and the school itself reminded him very much of QEGS. He felt the school would be able to kick start the Master Plan and move forward as a school. More information on One Cumbria would be helpful.
- Mr Worrall: in favour of joining the MAT. There is great potential for the curriculum and staff development. Joining would ensure a strategic role for the future provisions in Cumbria. Importantly, retaining the selective status and assets would be guaranteed. There would be a much more sustainable model of Governance for QEGS and felt that the 6% part of the budget is very reasonable for the support and back-up it would get in return– the LA used to take 15%.
- Mr Buckland: support the move and would add to the above that the school would retain its individual status.

- Mrs Boving-Foster: felt it was a very positive visit. There was a good energy and they were all optimistic, enthusiastic people. The Governing model they are developing is very interesting and will ensure good cooperation between Local Governing Boards and the Trust Board. Additionally, it would be great to be the second pillar to form the educational landscape.

Mr Bauer was invited to comment as he had to leave the meeting. He said that he got the clear sense that this is something which seems exciting for the school to enter by choice, given it was dismissed as an option a couple of years ago. He did feel though that is the collective responsibility to ensure careful and honest communication. Mr Buckland responded that in that time, the political landscape has changed and the intention is that all schools are in MATs and therefore, want to be at the forefront of it. Mr Ray agreed that he would also rather be ahead of time.

*Mr Bauer left the meeting.*

Mr Dawson gave details on One Cumbria Teaching School Hub, particularly in relation to the Early Career Framework support and felt it would be very positive to be part of this. Mr Dawson is delivering some modules already for One Cumbria.

7. Approval to Start Due Diligence Process with West Lakes and if approved, should the aim be to present to RSC on July 14<sup>th</sup>?

Before any votes were taken, there was a full and frank discussion with all Governors given the option to ask questions and give their opinion / share concerns. A variety of documents relating to forming MATS, as well as some specific to West Lakes Academy, were circulated prior to the meeting. In response to a question about West Lakes' accounts, Mr Ray and Mrs Scott felt that they appear to be a positive set of accounts.

There was a discussion about any considerations that may be needed towards UCC. It was noted that they are not presently an Academy. Additionally, it is felt that it would not be a suitable match, as it would lead to competition for places (another advantage to joining West Lakes) and run the risk that there would be an expectation that pupils move between the two schools and; maybe ultimately lead to one school. This could seriously risk QEGS losing its individual ethos, as well as limiting the choices for children.

One of the biggest concerns cited was the timeline of 14<sup>th</sup> July feels like the process is being rushed and thus, there is the risk of not being as objective as should be. It was noted that the potential deadline of presenting to the RSC on the 14<sup>th</sup> July, is just an approval that the MAT can go ahead and nothing would be finalised – it is just the first step in getting the RSC's permission to continue onto the legal phase. Crucially, the school can still stop the process if it felt it was not the right option. Other thoughts were that the timetable was indeed doable without being rushed – it would still allow for a four week consultation period, as per the recommendation from the NGA.

Another concern was that the school must not lose sight of its non-negotiables. Reassurances were given that the non-negotiables would be captured.

This led to a discussion about consultation, the requirements and how it would impact the timetable. It was noted that this is recommended and not a legal requirement. However, the strong consensus was that consultation is the right thing to do in terms of transparency from this very early stage in the process and out of respect to all stakeholders. If consultation began next week, Mr Buckland proposed that staff were briefed on Monday, a ParentMail would be issued on Tuesday and information on the website on Wednesday. Comments can then be collated. Mr Buckland said that out of respect he would also have a conversation with the Headteacher of UCC.

**Mrs Boving-Foster proposed that the due diligence process begins with West Lakes Academy. A vote was taken and it was agreed to proceed with 8 votes for and 1 against..**

**With regards to the timetable of presenting to the RSC on July 14<sup>th</sup>, a vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to aim for this timescale.**

**In order to keep track of progress and to approve that the application to the RSC go forward, a Full Governors meeting will be called in the week commencing 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022.**

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.