

Name	Type of Governor	Monitoring Roles	Present	Apologies
Nick Jefferson (Chair)	Co-Opted	English	Yes	
Madeleine Southern	Headteacher	N/A	Yes	
Lisa Marshall (Co-Vice Chair)	Co-Opted	Safeguarding, Behaviour	Yes	
Louise Wilkinson (Co-Vice Chair)	Co-Opted	SEND, Stakeholder/Community	Yes	
Lorna Cummings	Staff	N/A	Yes	
Marcel Amour	Co-Opted	H&S	Yes	
Emer Gardener	Co-Opted	H&S	Yes	
David Karp	Co-Opted	Maths, EYFS	Yes	
Paul Nann	LA	(tbc)	Yes	
Anne Marie Williamson	Parent	DA/EAL/PP	No	Yes
Sarra Lee	Parent	Finance	Yes	
Abby Hedger-Jones	Associate	Environment, Stakeholder/Community	Yes	
Sam Ledger	Deputy Head	N/A	No	Yes
Niamh O'Shea	Deputy Head	N/A	No	Yes
Sarah Shaw	School Business Manager	N/A	No	Yes
Rachel Jeffers	Deputy Head	N/A	No	Yes
Tom Way	Clerk	N/A	Yes	

Quorum: 10 out of 11 governors were present. The meeting was quorate (at least 50% attending).

Questions from the governors are highlighted in **bold**.

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Item 11 - Future Options/Strategic direction

AAT update

Governors were reminded that discussions remain strictly confidential at this time.

LW provided a short summary for governors as follows:

One year ago we took a decision as a governing body that we are comfortable to go to consultation to join an academy, and we identified AAT as a potential option. A huge amount of due diligence was done to see if there is a fit between the two parties, and so far, this appears to be the case. We are currently looking at logistics, and the final decision lies with the regional director's office and the headteacher's board. The senior team at AAT have been discussing this with them, and at the start of this year the regional director's office said that they would like more information including the financial situation, but then the election happened and this has resulted in a queue and backlog of decisions for the regional director to make. They are in agreement in principle that this looks good, but they still want more information, and they want to know about the position of the LA in the context of their recent proposal to federate schools in the area, as well as the PAN and the financial situation of us and AAT. They've recently confirmed that they are happy to meet, and this will take place next Monday with us, AAT and the regional director. The regional director will meet with AAT first, then with us and the SLT, NJ and LM. We are hoping that they will be comfortable with our plans to proceed, and if so, our consultation will take place after half term. During the consultation we will take into consideration any feedback from all stakeholders, then we will look as a governing body about when we want to proceed further, and we will then put a full business case to the regional director's office outlining the proposal. It could be approximately 4-6 months from the regional director approving this decision and the school joining the academy, but we can't predict this with certainty.

Q: Would we expect this to take place in the middle of next year?

LW advised that the current business case draft will be sent to the regional director's office, and from when they approve the decision it will be 4-6 months, but so much is involved in this process and particularly in the case of our school, as there are further logistics for the LA to deal with regarding property and land, so it could take longer. We don't have to finalise the process at the end of term, and it would probably be more straightforward to do it from the 1st September, and this would make the most sense in regards to school comms.

Q: What do you think the regional director office's angle is? They are talking to both sides; do they want to make the best deal for everyone's benefit?

LW advised that the DfE has acknowledged that BHCC is not an LA that is keen on this, and that the regional director will want to be sure that it is the right thing for schools and all parties, and also taking into account the situation of our deficit and that we need a clear recovery plan in place. They want academies to grow in a sustainable way, and to be clear that this academy can grow with us.

MS advised that there is a project manager who is working on the business case and project plan for this should we go ahead, and that this is part of DfE due diligence, and it is a complex situation in regards to us being a federation.

LW advised that the regional director was satisfied with AAT's results, and confirmed that they have received two positive Ofsted gradings too, and a discussion took place about the context of some AAT schools and comparative progress, taking into account numbers of pupils on FSM/DA.

LW advised that she will look into arranging a few online drop-in sessions for governors to ensure that everyone is clear and has the required knowledge for this topic. SLe advised that this proposal will likely

result in conversations with people at the school gates, and that it will be important to have Q&As in mind etc. LW advised that the project manager is very experienced and that they are advising us to have answers prepared for all stakeholders and all situations, and also what to relay to staff to convey to parents etc. SLe suggested that in the context of BHCC we need to consider other schools' situations in the area and their experience.

LW advised that we need to consider the response from unions, and we need to be able to demonstrate clearly what it means for staff and our concerns for stability if we remain with the LA. There was a broader discussion around this, and the basic issue is the deficit and wanting to continue providing the high level of education that we do, and that we can't carry on in the current situation indefinitely.

DK advised that all staff who have worked with AAT have given positive feedback so far and have had a good experience with them.

NJ suggested that on the part of due diligence it would be good for governors to visit Whitehawk. Parents here will make comparisons with other schools in AAT, and we need to be confident with what we are seeing and able to relay this, and that it wasn't a light decision and that we have researched it thoroughly.

PN advised that in regards to messaging, the policy of the party of which he is a member is that they are not in favour of academisation, and this is also his personal view.

Q: How does messaging from a governing body work? i.e., as an individual I don't support this, and in my position, am I under pressure to put out an opposite message?

LW advised that the role of a governor should be entirely independent politically from their role outside of this, however we still welcome internal criticism and challenge, and LW advised PN that she would send him the specific advice on this which we received from Governor Support.

Q: Is it a collective responsibility for members of the governing body to express support for the decisions made by the governing body?

LW advised that a vote will be held on the final decision with a majority rule, and all governor views and objections will be included in the business case.

LW provided further clarification around the format of the business case and what it will include, and that there will be online and face-to-face meetings that AAT will attend too. We have to listen to the feedback from the consultation, but ultimately it is the governing body's decision, and even if the feedback was entirely negative, we could still decide to proceed with this, but if major issues are highlighted then the RD's office will likely not approve the decision and they will tell us to fix the issues first.

MS advised that we raised the issues that we were having with the LA first, and they were unable to support us, and we are in a unique position compared to other schools in that we two schools across three sites, and we have done exactly what the LA have asked us to do over time, and pursuing this current proposal is not a decision that we have taken lightly.

PN clarified that he is not looking to challenge the decision here, and SLe commented that the questions are welcome though, and that it is important that we work together as a group on this. NJ agreed and advised that it is important for governors to be kept up to date on this and have full knowledge of the factors that have brought us to this decision. There was a broader discussion around the lack of any other viable options and doing what is ultimately best for our schools and their financial sustainability.

LW advised that she has a log of the key events and decisions that have been taken previously and that she can forward this to governors, as it is useful to help us see the timeline and narrative behind this. NJ advised that we will work on presenting the historical context of this, and it is important to work on the challenges that we are likely to receive in response to this decision.

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