

The Knights Templar School

Minutes of the Governors' Meeting held on Tuesday 12th February 2013

Please note : these minutes will be corrected, if necessary, and approved at the next meeting. Meanwhile, they will be treated as accurate, so please read them carefully and let the Clerk know if you notice any significant errors.

If you want to raise items at the next meeting, they can be included on the agenda if GK gets them by the next Finance and General Purposes Meeting on Thursday 14th March 2013. In the case of an urgent item which arises after that date, please let him know anyway, to help in planning the timing of the meeting.

1. **Members Present** : Graham Kingsley (GKY), Judith Balsom (JBM), Alison Atkinson (AAN), Julie Mutter (JMR), Sue Welch (SWH), Jane Millet (JMT), Andrew Pickering (APG), Richard Picking (RPG), Sarah Barker (SBR), Mike Boxall (MBL), Maria Lukianowicz (MLZ), Wendy Hepburn (WHN), Alan Church (ACH), Ian Burrows (IBS), David Cook (DCK), Janet Wallace (JWA), John Swift (JST), Mark Overton, Jo Johnson (JJN), Jane Cole (Clerk) JCE
 - 1.1 **Apologies for Absence** : Dari Samsami, Chris Gough, Brian Williams, Paul Barnett, Ann Brown
2. **Parents Association report (Mark Overton)** : There is £5,000 in the minibus account and currently around £2,000 in current account, having spent some monies on the Commemoration Evening, the clock for the hall and an embroidered table runner – around £1,800. There will be a fundraising event in the autumn; probably a barn dance. The Committee will plan the event then ask for people to help around one event rather than sign up for the whole committee.
 - 2.1 WHN attended gym and dance display, feels staff to be made more aware of the PTA bar. People were queuing outside the hall area. APG said sometimes last minute rehearsals, lighting etc are going on and organisers do not want audience in the hall until last few minutes until they are due to start.
3. **There were no declarations of pecuniary or other interests**
4. **Governors' contacts with the school** - list circulated.
 - 4.1 Governors at Parents Evenings? - Trialled last year, do we feel it's a good thing to continue? - generally felt no, not unless something specific said SWH. DCK - if you haven't got a purpose you just hang around. SWH - parents want to see teachers, then want to go home, are they going to want to engage with us? JJN - not the best choice of events for governors to attend. AAN - appointment system so parents can make one if they want one? JJN - have a section on bottom of appointment sheet for governors. WHN - said on-line is a good idea. APG said we could do this (appoint a Duty Governor if required).
5. **Notification of urgent items arising since 28th February for AOB** - none.
6. **Minutes of the meeting held on 27th November** were agreed as a true record - one item from 13. 1 Head's Report, last sentence, DCK's comment needs the word '*extracted*' added before the word 'elections'. **Action : JCE (done)**
7. **Matters Arising not otherwise on the Agenda** : None.
8. **Financial Update**
 - 8.1 Budget Progress
Monthly monitoring report to end of January was discussed. In short, we are tracking under plan 5 months into the year and there are no major causes for concern.

Areas of minor overspend were discussed as follows:

- 8.1.1 Line 4. Admin staff £5k overspent due to a long term sickness absence.
- 8.1.2 Line 8. Repairs & Maintenance – some £8k overspent ahead of expected profile. Not uncommon at this stage of the year as we tend to spend a higher proportion on maintenance earlier in the year to benefit from the related work as early as possible.
- 8.1.3 Line 11. Water – overspent to profile due to leaks in the heating system which are currently being rectified.
- 8.1.4 Line 26. Catering – higher than expected costs because the canteen continues to thrive – this is offset against a similar amount of income received from the students.
- 8.1.5 Line 27. Advertising and Recruitment - a little overspent. With hindsight, we have budgeted too aggressively. We have to advertise in recognised Education media which is costly!!

8.2 Sports Centre

As at 31st December, Sports Centre P&L was tracking ahead of plan with YTD profits of £31k versus budget of £27k. A full P&L report was distributed.

9. **School Admission Numbers (APG)** : This has been discussed before, we know numbers are increasing but we have taken the first measure about securing our priority area by changing the Admissions criteria. GKY, JST, APG met with HCC. Priority has been the allocation of primary school places. There will be a deficit for secondary school places and Baldock will be one of these areas. They have visited 18 schools. County's policy for primary school expansion has been to encourage extra places at schools that are over-subscribed and popular - more cost effective. Justin Donovan, Head of County, gave an indication of what secondary school policy will be. The numbers given are forecasts, not exact, based on past three years trend, known planning permissions within priority areas and GP data. They are not precise, but are indicative. We bought some time by changing our Admission criteria this academic year. In future the pressure of numbers means we need to respond to this. One option discussed with HCC was to increase the PAN of the school, another option discussed was that the school is big enough and don't increase but accept that the catchment area will change. This is an issue for medium and longer term. From 2015/16 onwards there will be a significant amount of unsatisfied demand in each year.
- 9.1 JJN asked if HCC gave perspective in terms of plan and catchment area and other schools locally and options for children excluded? APG said they did not, but he has attended the secondary head's meeting and had similar discussions. The forecast for North Herts population, especially in Hitchin is increasing sharply but Letchworth schools are fairly stable. If we have the numbers correct the three Hitchin schools will be over-subscribed, the two Letchworth schools will be at capacity and there will be unfulfilled demand in Baldock.
 - 9.2 JJN – Are there options around each school and catchment areas, children on the outskirts? APG - let's assume 2018 - 15 students would not be accommodated without increasing PAN – children in Hinxworth and Rushton would presumably attend Fearnhill or Highfield or go towards one of the Middle schools in Royston, then onto Meridien.
 - 9.3 MBL – is there an implication of competition/extra places/Da Vinci Schools? – APG said there will be considerable turmoil at 14. We will not be net losers, but we will lose some. Some schools will have a PAN which is full in Years 7, 8 and 9, and smaller in Years 10, 11 and beyond. APG thinks we will fill spare places Year 9 from other students coming in.
 - 9.4 IBS said representative from County Planning seemed very keen to look around the site for expansion purposes. IBS explained curriculum plan. APG - County will get money from Central Government and have a lot of money for primary expansion and seems to feel something similar will happen in senior schools (£94 million for primary expansion).
 - 9.5 DCK asked APG whether pupil numbers are evenly numbered through villages over time. In one year this fixes it, but another doesn't because you can't assume you have the same numbers. APG said Hartsfield and St Mary's were over-subscribed, Ashwell and St John's too. Both Weston and Sandon vary as year on year they are very small.
 - 9.6 DCK asked which students would lose out if population grows? APG said in terms of distance some of Ashwell, all of Sandon.

- 9.7 GKY - if we were to reduce our priority area by excluding Sandon parish (by agreeing that Royston take these in) this still probably wouldn't be enough. If school wanted to do it by excluding a Parish or more than one the only way is to exclude Ashwell as it's the biggest.
- 9.8 DCK - what we haven't got is a distributional problem, we have a capacity problem across the board. These children have to go somewhere. Making conscious choice to link it to a bid for development.
- 9.9 APG personally feels a very strong connection with its community, does not want to change these areas. Good to get into discussion with County about increasing numbers - feels they have no other option than to come to KT, play hardball with County and be prepared to enter into a discussion but at our price - infrastructure of school, dining rooms, changing rooms etc. not just building 6 more classrooms etc.
- 9.10 SWH - when having discussions re academy and talking as governors one of the things we said we still wanted was to be a community school - if we don't increase our PAN it's going against our word.
- 9.11 JWA - people will move anyway or create addresses.
- 9.12 DCK - distinction between physical changes and other changes, want to understand from APG and staff what does that mean for experience of being educated in this school if it increases another form entry and how will that change the feel of the school and what we can offer for education and implications. **Think we should be careful about what we minute said GKY.**
- 9.13 MLZ – we don't have to be bullied by county, turn problem back to them, say this is not our problem, what are you going to do about it. If we do have further buildings they eat up recreation space.
- 9.14 APG - if you look at a plan that Lister Grillet & Harding drew up sixth form block is 2 storey and any development would replace single storey with two storey buildings. Did not want a reduction of 'play' space.
- 9.15 WHN - What is our response? APG feels we should not entertain increasing by more than one more form of entry. 1500 could look and feel like KT in terms of organisation, if it was 1700 we would have to organise the school very differently. Could we manage year group of 240? If we could, could we manage 270? Pastoral, curriculum organisation, two separate schools on the same site? APG - real concern, many staff feel we would not be able to maintain our current ethos if this became a school for Baldock only.
- 9.16 RPG – this would change the dynamics of the school if we take out the urban/village mix.
- 9.17 DCK – it might be worth in our thinking in time there will be a general election; we might be in a '*building schools for the future*' environment. Think carefully, provision available might change.
- 9.18 APG - we have a plan to alter the current site - we don't need to come up with a blueprint - just ask County for money.
- 9.19 ACH - hate to see current catchment area change - mix of pupils does benefit school.
- 9.20 JJN - unknown what impact the studio schools will have in the future - will take more bodies out of schools. Can't imagine they can't survive unless taking in significant number of pupils.
- 9.21 APG - does not think will impact on us as much, even if it were based on curriculum and organisation it will not have an enormous impact.
- 9.22 DCK - have we reached the point where we are playing a long game? Need to see how funding bid pans out, see what County's proposals are and in the meantime our public position is we are very happy, not a problem over next two/three years and let's play hardball and play hard to get. APG - much stronger negotiating position than HCC, they have no other options.
- 9.23 RPG - lot of discussion about housebuilding in Herts, GKY mentioned consultation document out at moment and their thinking in terms of number of 10,000 zone in the district for a whole but that itself is subject to consultation and a lot of areas of land where it would be imaginable to build new housing and these have come from landowners that they have indicated they would be willing to develop. Certainly some areas are attached to Baldock, particularly HCC land by the bypass are shaded in as being possibilities.
- 9.24 SWH - Parish Councils do not make provision for facilities when houses are built.

- 9.25 DCK – nationally, local authorities are tending to say all those targets are taken away but encouraging local authorities to build houses. As soon as property market turns it will start again but do think planning permission is not necessarily a good indication. Wouldn't be surprised if Authority's estimates overstate the number in current climate.
- 9.26 JBM - are we going to get report? APG - yes.
- 9.27 IBS - looking at numbers I do not think it will be an urgent matter till 2018, currently this happened with projected numbers, and these didn't materialise.
- 9.28 APG - definitely time is on our side. Are you prepared for APG and school to liaise with County?
- 9.29 JJN - said have responsibility to catchment area. Want to know from County what are they planning to do about it. Informed decision where they will send the children.
- 9.30 DCK - we need a resolution, the school has no desire to grow and strengthens our position.
- 9.31 GKY - positive aspect would be improvement in the common areas - very nice - bigger hall, dining hall etc. Would feel that this would be essential proposal to increase capacity. What we don't want to do is for HCC to think they will do something different. Say we are prepared for discussion and within limits. Think we have coped well with increase in numbers over the years. SLT said it will be doable to increase numbers.
- 9.32 JWA – from a Head of Year point of view if Governors think of current year group and children within that year group these have caused us the most problems. The issues are that these students came from areas which originally are not part of our catchment area, and we have had pupils historically because of Norton School.
- 9.33 WHN - increasing forms - is it doable she asked JWA? JWA explained yes but it makes a significant difference on mix of children and where they have come from. IBS - because of that amount of students they take up a lot of time and other students suffer.
- 9.34 DCK - GKY you expressed a sentiment, DCK expressed a tactic, is this a good place for us to be? APG - said we should flirt with County, not be seduced. MLZ - not be dogmatic and we lose any goodwill that they may have towards us and sends out wrong message to the villages. We need to show that we are flexible. JJN - if people did hear, ie Ashwell, they can write. IBS - how feasible is it that County can change priority areas. Can they change boundaries? GKY - We don't have absolute power. SWH - county know what our priority areas are, know the ethos and would be completely stupid not to come back to us to say makes more sense to expand your school and take these pupils. Use word 'desire'.....

Action : APG

10. **Governing Body Items :**

- 10.1 **Herts for Learning Aid (APG)** - Local Authority Hearts for Learning. All schools in County have been asked to buy a share at a cost of £25 each. It is clear we need to support and £25 is not enormous investment; if we don't do this there will be no central services within the county. Most services people pay for, but £25 is right to vote. GKY read out wording :
"It was agreed that :

1. The Governing Body will subscribe for one share in Herts for Learning (HfL) for total cost of "35 in accordance with the terms of the HfL share offer; and
2. The Headteacher is appointed to act on behalf of the Governing body as the shareholder and shall report any actions taken at the next Governing Body meeting"

This was agreed.

- 10.2 **Governor Development Coordinator (CGH)** : MLZ and GKY went on course for special needs last week.
- 10.3 **Teacher Governors (JWA)** : This time of year is not happiest. Morale is quite low and not helped by external influences and discussions in media etc. Been number of things brought to staff attention which have meant morale is quite low - things addressed etc.
- 10.4 **Support Staff Governor (BWS)** : Brian Williams was absent from the meeting.

11. **School Redevelopment Update (APG)** : Current building work is going to plan, currently 3 days behind on course to finish by June. Now making decisions regarding fit-out of rooms, internal layout etc. We would like input from governors on what we should call new block. Any ideas please e-mail them to us. Re additional bid we should find out in April for new Science, Art and D&T block. DCK - might be useful liaising with government letting them know that current building project is on time, on budget etc. JST – Government have been forwarded copy of monitoring report.

12. Reports

12.1 Head's Report : APG : Issue of EBac - we were a good way through an options process, having circulated booklet, assemblies, tutors having spoken to students, SLT interviewing students - then dimensions changed with Mr Gove's U-turn. Current situation is consultation about what future might be like. Issue of process, a good way through curriculum plan which presented four different pathways : red green blue and yellow to tailor to students' abilities, belief that this curriculum suits students and last week's decision not helpful. We are reluctant to start whole process again as that will involve thorough consultation with staff. The model curriculum model has been accepted and this would delay the process by at least half a term and then be a rush to complete by Whitsun, this has some impact with staffing. We have been talking about implications short term and beyond.

12.1.1 IBS - Difficulty might be in finding a happy medium about curriculum and flexible to suit everybody, and being aware of what national proposals are and how school may be measured. On one hand some students may/may not take EBac subjects and on other hand value added measure that judges how good school is doing. Extremely difficult decision, see it from both sides.

12.1.2 MLZ - main concern students. Still don't know enough now to advise them for their long term future.

12.1.3 IBS - look at extreme - Humanities and Languages - opening up system may affect Best 8 Value Added Measure and school will appear lower.

12.1.4 SWH - consultation finishes May? APG said students have just chosen their options, final deadline is Monday after half-term. They can't wait till consultation finishes as school can't wait to redo curriculum.

12.1.5 JIN asked IBS if he had an estimate on the Red pathway. Both Humanities and Languages would have at least two or three option classes less.

12.1.6 APG - in broad sense school presents children with broad choices. To open up a 'free for all' is not in students best interests and impractical to plan. We are in very difficult situation. This applies to all schools.

12.1.7 JIN - government have back peddled and said not measuring schools that way. IBS - Ofsted will judge school exactly on DfE measures in Raise on Line, whether it be current EBac and new one it is still seem to be looking at Humanities and Language will carry large weight. Looking at sixth form, big push to encourage schools to increase students who are doing traditional subjects at expense of arts, business studies etc. These have more currency.

12.1.8 DCK - appreciate timing of government is bad, but more important to think who we are think of students. Place in between to stick what we've got and free for all - little bit of room to show bit of flexibility where a parent or child has a really strong case as to why they might ask not to do a certain element of the EBac.

12.1.9 IBS - one of options that we have discussed - difficulty is where do you draw the line and how do you deal with parents that come back and have allowed somebody through the back door to change options.

12.1.10 JMR - if offer flexibility, need to offer it to everybody.

12.1.11 AAN - everybody is an individual.

12.1.12 APG - always shown flexibility where identified special need.

12.1.13 DCK - would you feel given an indication to parents/pupils that we wouldn't advise it but we will be willing to have a dialogue? Is this doable?

- 12.1.14 IBS - we are increasingly faced with pleasing all the people all the time. We opened up green pathway this year.
- 12.1.15 WHN - creative subjects - more likely to succeed what would our stance be then? APG - had same conversation last week - asked student if they were balanced? Talking to her and she moved one of those choices as too many of them were similar. We see each student individually in Year 9.
- 12.1.16 IBS - government relaxed statutory requirements on languages at KS4, we then said we'll open it out for Humanities and Tech, once those got relaxed to try to put back in again causes more problems, but 10 years ago everybody had to do language, humanities, technology and free choice.
- 12.1.17 DCK - brighter children only have one choice from 9, be prepared to show flexibility in other areas. IBS - define bright? DCK - baccalaureate ? Children have one option to pick. One parent he spoke to said his daughter ended up doing double science rather than triple science, because they want a second choice. Not the way we want them to go.
- 12.1.18 APG - we have time to reflect in the summer ready for the current year 8. Situation now : one extreme throw whole thing up in air and very reluctant to do, other option hold the line and say exactly what it was; or look at somewhere in-between.
- 12.1.19 JMR - our year 9 students have thought long and hard, some have handed forms in and to present them with change would cause more turmoil than cause good.
- 12.1.20 DCK - underestimating kids and parents.
- 12.1.21 AAN - need to give them structure and disrupt them now would give adverse affect.
- 12.1.22 JWA - been made very clear that doing double award rather than triple science does not impact if they want to do A level sciences.
- 12.1.23 AAN - perhaps students need that reassurance to suggest and be open.
- 12.1.24 APG - intend to write to parents with clarification. What we are unsure about is what we say and consequences of allowing flexibility.
- 12.1.25 JIN - two years ago opposed EBac, narrows down product. Still opposed, no school is performing particularly well at getting EBac pass rate. My children have been in these year groups. Felt so uncomfortable from Day 1, her children aside, no great conviction. Following a path and strongly feel wrong path, U-turn this week is another nail in the coffin of measurement system. Some students won't progress.
- 12.1.26 IBS - universities never placed emphasis on GCSE's, on A levels. Point is other new enabling subjects which carry more weight for universities - all of those do come from having studied beforehand 'less soft' subjects. More English, Maths, Sciences, Humanities. APG - Universities have been put under lot of pressure. Have to exist in national context.
- 12.1.27 GKY – may be easier to say school will hold the line. The extreme alternative is to say start again - utterly impractical, might even find a result we are not able to provide. Question is, is there a way in which we could offer a small enough flexibility that is containable difficulty to introduce any more flexibility might be an overwhelming rush. Question can APG and colleagues see any possibility to ease the rigidity a bit without going to point of unmanageability.
- 12.1.28 DCK - is it worth asking the question and seeing if we get an overwhelming number?
- 12.1.29 GKY - worse to offer possibility then snatch away. Create more discontent.
- 12.1.30 MBL - only option to stay with what we have got. Really doesn't work to say come and talk to us.
- 12.1.31 JMR - people will have already voiced something if they were unhappy, IBS said around 6 have requested not to follow pathway - don't know how many others aren't happy but just accepted it.
- 12.1.32 SWH – have students been unhappy? IBS said they have tended not to say. JMR - if it is 12 students, is it possible to be flexible? IBS - no more than 12 wouldn't be a problem. Opening it out may be more come back.

- 12.1.33 GKY - proposition is - hold the line. Show of hands - 10 in favour, those in favour of flexible approach - 2, abstentions - 1. **Quote to parents put to Governors and decided to stick to rules.**
- 12.1.34 WHN - as Link Governor for MFL I feel for this discussion perception that reluctance to do a language. At some point need to discuss implications of that going forward. Reluctance will grow. APG - student perception, conversation with Kate Bonail.
Action : WHN
- 12.1.35 DCK - students thinking of going to another sixth form. WHN - word is our sixth form is not that strong. Need to prepare for the future.
- 12.1.36 JJN - studio schools - what's next. APG said first intake in September. Dialogue between local schools and studio schools - expansion of North Herts College, seen as being threatening.
- 12.2 Teaching & Learning Committee (MLZ) - everything is in the Minutes. S Band catch up class for Year 7 seems to be extremely successful.
- 12.3 Premises, Health & Safety Committee (ACH) - looks like being successful with Site Manager's House. Report going to County next month, being allowed to sell property and build another one. Proceeds of how that will be split; some to school, some to County. County might use that money back in school. Caretaker has been offered house on short term lease for 2 years. DCK - do we know share of proceeds? – JST said not yet.
- 12.4 Pupils & Personnel Committee (SWH/RPG) - nothing to report, all in the Minutes. The Sixth Form Senior Prefects have organised a Careers Day for year 12. Many speakers organised, reports very good.
- 12.5 Finance & General Purposes Committee (GKY) - dealt with all things in the earlier meeting.
- 13. **Dates, Times and Topics of SLT Planning Meetings** – 04.03.13 Monitoring; 25.03.13 Homework.
- 14. **Next Meeting** : Monday 25th March 2013 at 7.00pm.
- 15. **There was no AOB.**