

**Steeton Primary School Governing Body
Meeting of 04 November 2021
Minutes**

Meeting commenced at 6.19pm

Present: John Cooper (EHT), Annette Mullen, Dave Mullen, Adam O'Neill (from Item 03/21), Claire Redman, Emma Wainwright (Vice Chair), Sue West (Chair)

Associate Member: Kevin Wheeler (HoS)

Apologies: Stefan Mills

In Attendance: Helen Osman (Clerk - SGS)

Agenda papers: available on Skills 4 Bradford

Additional papers: Strategic development of the school attached at Annex A - Items 16/21: Consider options for future expansion or contraction of the school and 17/21 Review the merits of moving to academy status

Summary of actions

Item	Action	Person	Date
90/20	School to send to all governors a CPD form on which to record details of their training	J Cooper	16-07-2021
118/20(i)	E Wainwright to issue staff survey	E Wainwright	16-07-2021
118/20(ii)	(Sub-item Res 94/20) School to circulate a summary of first aid incidents in 2020-21 to governors	K Wheeler	31-07-2021
121/20	School to advise the GB on the im-pact of Covid and PA on pupils with multiple vulnerabilities	J Cooper	21-10-2021
122/20(ii)	NG/SEND to conduct a SEND Governance review	S West	05-11-2021
125/20(i)	Chair to include details of Governor Development Programme on CPD form	S West	31-07-2021
125/20(ii)	DHT to provide copy of monitoring schedule to Chair to inform governor visits in 2021-22	C Redman, S West	31-07-2021
127/20	HoS to share details of revised faculty structure with Chair/Vice Chair to inform assignment of governors to faculties	K Wheeler S West E Wainwright	31-08-2021 21-10-2021
130/20	Curriculum and Staff Policy Handbooks to be brought to next meeting.	J Cooper	21-10-2021
134/20	Vice Chair to co-ordinate 360o review of Chair's performance	E Wainwright	30-09-2021
07/21	EHT to arrange for HTPM review meeting to be held before the end of the Autumn term	J Cooper	17-12-2021
09/21	Chair/Res to discuss timing and days of week for Resources Committee meetings with Stefan Mills	E Wainwright	23-11-2021
11/21	NG/SEND to report outcome of SEND review to next meeting	S West	04-02-2021
14/21	S West to write report on her most recent visit to a Reading For Pleasure session	S West	30-11-2021
16/21	School to prepare costed proposal on before and after-school provision for consideration at next meeting of the Resources Committee.	J Cooper	12-11-2021

With the agreement of the Governing Body, the Clerk took the chair until the completion of Item 03/21.

01/21 Welcome new Parent Governors

The Head of School reported that one application received in the election for Parent Governors. He advised that the applicant was not an appropriate person to be a governor: **the GB endorsed this position.**

[Clerk's note: Following the meeting, it emerged that applications had been received from the two Parent Governors whose terms of office had recently expired or were shortly due to do so. One of these applications had been received four hours after the deadline. By means of an e-mail exchange, the Governing Body noted the receipt of these applications, agreed that the school should accept the late application and, in light of the absence of any other viable application, noted that Stefan Mills and Adam O'Neill had been elected unopposed as Parent Governors on 22 October 2021.]

Sue West withdrew from the meeting.

02/21 Consider co-option of Governor: Sue West

- **The Governing Body unanimously appointed** Sue West as a Co-opted governor.

Sue West re-joined the meeting.

Adam O'Neill joined the meeting at 6.22pm

03/21 Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Governing Body agreed that the term of office of the Chair and Vice Chair should be one year, until the first meeting of the Governing Body in the autumn term of 2022-23.

Chair

Sue West was nominated as Chair and confirmed that she was willing to serve in that capacity. She said that she considered it a privilege to be Chair and expressed her wish to continue to work collaboratively with Governors, the senior leadership team (SLT) and the Clerk. She noted that she had led the work of the Estates Group, which had made positive changes to the school environment, and continued to press the campaign for a new Reception class building. Together, and despite Covid, the GB had continued to fulfil its core functions and had championed significant improvements to the curriculum and pupil offer while supporting the vulnerable pupils and families in the community. The Chair hoped that her style of leadership, as a visible and committed chair, conveyed to pupils, parents, staff – and even the local MP – a positive reflection of the GB's vision and ethos for the school.

No other nominations were made.

Sue West withdrew from the meeting.

- **The Governing Body unanimously elected** Sue West as Chair for 2021-22.

Sue West re-joined the meeting.

Vice Chair

Emma Wainwright was nominated as Vice Chair and confirmed that she was willing to serve in that capacity. No other nominations were made.

Emma Wainwright withdrew from the meeting.

- **The Governing Body unanimously elected** Emma Wainwright as Vice Chair for 2021-22.

Emma Wainwright re-joined from the meeting.

Sue West took the chair.

04/21 Apologies for absence and their acceptance

Apologies had been received, and were accepted, from Stefan Mills.

05/21 Notification of urgent other business and requests to vary the agenda order

The EHT said that he would raise a matter concerning the SENCo role at Item 21/20.

06/21 Declarations of interest:

a) Annual Declaration of Pecuniary Interests

The Clerk confirmed that she had received completed annual Declaration of Interest forms from all Governors and Associate Members present at this meeting. She passed the completed forms to the Business Administrator.

b) Declarations of interest in items on this agenda

There were no declarations of interest in items on the agenda for this meeting.

07/21 Minutes of the meeting on 08 July 2021 and matters arising

- **The minutes were agreed as a true record**

Matters arising

Item	Action	Status
90/20	School to send to all governors a CPD form on which to record details of their training	Ongoing
	To be completed.	
118/20(i)	E Wainwright to issue staff survey	Ongoing
	See Item 22/21 in the minute of the reconvened part of the meeting held to be held on 28 November 2021.	
118/20(ii)	(Sub-item Res 94/20) School to circulate a summary of first aid incidents in 2020-21 to governors	Ongoing
	To be completed.	
121/20	School to advise the GB on the impact of Covid and PA on pupils with multiple vulnerabilities	Ongoing
	See Item 20/21 in the minutes of the reconvened part of the meeting held to be held on 28 November 2021.	
122/20(i)	Chair to write on behalf of GB to congratulate SENCo on the merit she had been	Closed

Signed: _____ Date: _____

	<i>gained for the NAS SENCo Award.</i>	
122/20(ii)	Completed <i>NG/SEND to conduct a SEND Governance review</i> The SEND Governance review would be conducted on 05 November 2021.	Revised date 05-11-2021
125/20(i)	<i>Chair to include details of Governor Development Programme on CPD form</i> The Chair awaited receipt of the CPD form (Action 90/20 above)	Ongoing
125/20(ii)	<i>DHT to provide copy of monitoring schedule to Chair to inform governor visits in 2021-22</i> See Item 26/21 in the minutes of the reconvened part of the meeting held to be held on 28 November 2021.	Ongoing
127/20	<i>HoS to share details of revised faculty structure with Chair/Vice Chair to inform assignment of governors to faculties</i> See Item 26/21 in the minutes of the reconvened part of the meeting held to be held on 28 November 2021.	Ongoing
128/20	<i>Chair to write to staff and attend staff get-together on GB behalf to express the GB's thanks and pride in their hard work thought this difficult year. Vice Chair to provide baked treats for the get-together.</i>	Closed
129/20	Completed <i>School to communicate agreed timings of the school day to parents via Ping, the website and letter</i>	Closed
130/20	Completed <i>Curriculum and Staff Policy Handbooks to be brought to next meeting.</i>	Ongoing
133/20	Handbooks to be brought to next FGB meeting. <i>Resources Committee to review the timing of its meetings with a view to maximising attendance – Clerk to put on agenda</i> Completed but attendance was insufficient for a meaningful discussion. See Item 09/21(b) below.	Closed
134/20	<i>Vice Chair to co-ordinate 360° review of Chair's performance</i> See Item 25/21 in the minutes of the reconvened part of the meeting held to be held on 28 November 2021.	Ongoing
136/20	<i>Adam O'Neill and Annette Mullen to brief Dave Mullen and Emma Wainwright on Pupil and Sports Premium.</i> Overtaken by developments. The monitoring of Pupil and Sports Premium is now the responsibility of the Link Governor (Quality of Education) group.	Closed

The Governing Body (GB) reviewed the membership of the Headteacher Performance Management Committee, which was a joint Committee with Sandy Lane Governing Body.

- **The Governing Body unanimously appointed** Sue West and Emma Wainwright as Steeton's representatives on the joint Headteacher Performance Management Committee; **and was content** that Richard Lait (Primary Achievement Officer, Bradford Council – BC/PAO) should continue to be the external adviser to the Committee.

Action

The EHT would contact BC/PAO to arrange his Performance Management Review meeting with the committee before the end of the current term.

The EHT reminded Governors that, at present, the Link Governors each covered their designated area of the Ofsted framework for the whole school. Given the importance of Early Years and the areas in which Early Years differed from the rest of the school, he recommended that the GB consider appointing a Link Governor specifically for early Years. Existing Link Governors would continue to include Early Years in their work, but the new LG/EY would pick up aspects of Early Years that did not fit easily into the other LG areas.

The GB saw merit in this proposal and **appointed Adam O'Neill and Emma Wainwright** as Link Governors for Early Years. It agreed that the Early Years Leader should attend LG/EY meetings whenever her other duties permitted.

The GB agreed the following meetings:

- Link Governor/Early Years – **Friday 10 December 2021 at 2.00pm**
- Pay Committee (the non-staff members of the Resources Committee) – **Wednesday 24 November 2021 at 2.30pm**

Standing reports

08/21 **Receive Head of School's data report on day to day business**

Agenda paper: Head of School's Report to Governors November 2021

The Head of School (HoS) invited comments and questions on his report.

Asked about the reference in his report to "Team Around the Family", the HoS explained that this was a formal arrangement whereby the various agencies that were engaged with a family (eg Early Help, Social Services) met to assess the needs of the family and how they could best be met.

The Governing Body (GB) noted that the number of pupils on roll would be discussed under a later item on the agenda for this meeting.

Governors commented on the positive data on attendance. The Chair said that, during her recent visits to the school, she had found that both pupils and staff had seemed very pleased to be back in school. She commented that the new staff appeared to be settling in well and were clearly establishing good relationships with pupils. Similarly, the Vice Chair had found that pupils were excited and engaged, and the atmosphere vibrant. Governors considered this to be a testament to all that the school had managed to deliver despite the disruption caused by Covid-19.

The HoS said that it had been pleasing to see the hard work of staff in establishing the Early Years showcase repaid by the enthusiasm of visiting schools, whose staff had been impressed. A Governor who sat on Bradford Council's Admissions Appeal panel said that the admissions data showed that Steeton was doing well, despite the challenges it faced in terms of resources. The EHT said that, while resources were undoubtedly a serious constraint, pupils were generally keen to learn and benefited from first class teaching. Informal discussions with other schools indicated that they had been prevented by Covid from carrying out work such as implementation of the EY Framework: it was a source of pride to the school that staff had managed to do so despite the constraint imposed by Covid.

09/21 **Receive report from Resources Committee meeting of 06 October 2021**

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Agenda papers: Budget Quarter 2 Monitor – versions 1 and 2

- a) Consideration of revision to school budget – Emma Wainwright, Chair of the Resources Committee (Chair/Res) reported that the school had identified an error in the calculation made by the independent Bursar of the costs of teaching staff: several months' worth of the salary of the EHT and HoS had not been included in the original opening budget for 2021-22. This level of detail was not apparent on the submitted budget (version 1) as it affected the figures that sat behind the headline data. The overall effect of this error on the budget was:

- an increase in the costs from £698k in the original budget to £749k; and
- a reduction in the forecast carryforward from £100.5k in the opening budget to £35k.

This error had, unfortunately, been discovered after the school had sunk cost into IT provision and upgrades to iPads and supporting peripheries.

Replying to questions, Chair/Res said that the Committee had recognised that mistakes were a matter of human nature and acknowledged the previous work of the Bursar, which had given greater confidence in the budget, but had been dismayed by the scale of this error and its significant impact on the school's budget position. It had been disappointing that, although the Bursar had apologised to the school for his error, he had not apologised to her or Chair/GB and had not attended the meeting of the Resources Committee as planned or given apologies. The EHT added that the Bursar had offered to attend this GB meeting: the EHT had declined. The GB agreed that this would not have been an appropriate use of the time of the GB but hoped that he would attend the next meeting of the Resources Committee.

The Committee had been clear that any restructuring that would lead to job losses and associated deterioration in the quality of teaching and learning must be avoided at all costs. As the school remained undersubscribed, the Committee had asked the EHT to approach the local authority (LA) to ascertain:

- the LA's latest forecast for pupil numbers in light of the declining birthrate;
- how Steeton fit into the LA's plans for provision in the area;
- the appetite of the LA for Steeton to continue as a 1.5 Form Entry (1.5FE) school; and, thus
- the LA's position on support for the school, which might include the acceptance of a deficit budget until such time as pupil numbers increased.

The Committee had noted that, while pupil numbers at present were insufficient to balance the budget as a 1.5FE school, becoming a 1FE school would run counter to the GB's vision for the school and would reduce its reputation and influence in the area.

The EHT's approach to the LA had elicited a detailed and helpful response from the Senior Provision and Places Officer. Chair/Res quoted from the response:

"A PAN reduction at Steeton is not on the cards at this stage, although that may be something we keep in mind to discuss next year. I am meeting with the school funding team and will pose the question whether there is any financial support that can be provided as we currently anticipate that the 2022 intake may again be low, but require the current PAN in 2023. We are also monitoring the impact of new housing developments on schools as an ongoing piece of work to ensure that the calculated pupil yield we include in the forecasts is as accurate as possible."

Chair/Res advised governors that a new build school in Silsden was already at capacity. Large housing development in the area of the school were going ahead and could be expected to lead to increased demand for places at the school. The houses were expected to be completed and fully occupied by the time of the September 2023 intake.

Governors were pleased that the LA had responded fully to the EHT's approach and would discuss the response further under Item 16/21.

Chair/Res reported that *forecast income* had increased by £22k compared to the original budget, principally due to an increase in Pupil Premium uptake linked to COVID and some additional Phonics consultancy work. The additional consultancy work, which was undertaken by the Early Years Leader, significantly reduced her presence in the classroom, and this was currently covered by supply staff. The Committee proposed to convert this supply staffing into a permanent full time position comprising 0.4FTE¹ teacher and 0.6FTE teaching assistant. This would ensure continuity for pupils and ease the considerable pressure on staff, while continuing to pursue the GB's strategic objective of increasing intake and continuing to lead the way locally in Phonics.

The Resources Committee therefore recommended that the GB approve the revised budget shown in version 2 of the Budget Monitor.

The EHT said that, since the agenda papers had been issued, the EY Leader had agreed with B19² that they would use Steeton's Early Years unit as a showcase. This would lead to further income of between £7k and £15k, but it added to the need to cover her classroom duties. This would increase the forecast carryforward in the recommended revised budget (version 2) from £28.5k to a minimum of £36k.

Governors considered the role of the EY leader as a Phonics consultant and the positioning of the EY unit as a showcase to be important elements in the GB's strategic objectives and that the time spent by the EY leader out of the classroom must be covered. This investment was necessary to avoid unacceptable pressure on other staff and would be repaid as Early Years pupils progressed through school.

➤ ***The Governing Body unanimously approved*** version 2 of the Budget Monitor.

The EHT said that he had discussed with the interim Assistant Director for Education (BC/iADE) at Bradford Council how Steeton could be added to the list of schools that had Outstanding practice that could be showcased for the benefit of other schools. BC/iADE had said that Steeton was now on that list, and the EHT had sent to her examples of the school's Outstanding areas of practice.

Chair/Res said that the Committee had discussed the scope to offer pre-school provision and the most recent communications from Government and the Local Authority about academisation of maintained primary schools. She would report on these discussions under the relevant items on the agenda for this meeting.

- b) ***Review the timing of Resources Committee meetings*** – The GB agreed that Chair/Res should discuss with Stefan Mills whether changing the time or day of the week of Committee meetings would make it easier for him to attend.

Chair/
Res

¹ fte – full time equivalent. A full-time staff member counts as 1.0 fte; someone working 3 days per week counts as 0.6 fte etc

² B19 - Bradford Birth to 19 Teaching School Alliance: an alliance of 50+ nursery, primary, secondary and special schools led by St Edmunds Nursery School and Children's Centre

10/21 Receive report from Governors' briefing by the Local Authority on 21 September 2021

The Chair said that, although she had not attended the Governors' briefing, the EHT had sent her the briefing material. This had included information from the Head of the LA's School Funding Team about future funding predictions, which had included advice that the hard National Funding Formula was expected to come into effect around 2023 and would involve school funding being managed by central government rather than through the local authority. This was the principle reason for the discussion that the GB needed to have at Item 17/21.

The review of SEND funding had been completed and the outcome was due to be published imminently.

The briefing material had offered advice on funding for Nurseries and Early Years providers.

The Government had announced that it would compensate schools for the cost of the 1.25% increase in Employers' National Insurance. It was not clear whether this would be separately identified or not.

The EHT said that it might be reasonable to hope for an increase in government funding next year, in light of its undertaking to return to 2010 levels of funding.

11/21 Receive report from Named Governor for SEND

Agenda paper: SEND Update November 2021

Sue West, in her capacity as Named Governor for SEND (NG/SEND) said that she had circulated the annual SEND report to Governors.

The SENCo had advised that a change to the definition of the bands of SEND needs meant that some children were now in lower bands on the SEND register, although their needs had not changed. This would not affect the High Needs funding received by the school at present, but it raised the bar for new SEND pupils to obtain EHCPs³.

NG/SEND said that, now that the SENCos had obtained the SENCo qualification, the expectation was that her pay would increase. The EHT indicated that it was a legal requirement for school pay for the SENCo role; set out the cost of the proposed pay increase; and described the pay arrangements both for the previous SENCo and the current SENCo pending her qualification. **The Governing Body noted** the pay increase with approval.

NG/SEND said that she was due to attend a NGA⁴ network conference on the governance of SEND.

- a) *Outcome of SEND governance review* – NG/SEND said that events had conspired to prevent the two meetings that she had planned with the SENCo to undertake this review. A further date had been arranged for Friday 05 November 2021 and she would report to the next meeting.

NG/SEND

12/21 Receive report from Named Governor for Safeguarding

Annette Mullen, Named Governor for Safeguarding (NG/SG) said that she continued to maintain regular contact with the Head of School and would shortly arrange a date for their next review of the Single Central Record. There were no current safeguarding concerns to be drawn to the attention of the GB.

13/21 Receive report on any safeguarding incidents since the previous meeting

³ EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan: Introduced by the Children and Families Act 2014.

⁴ NGA: National Governance Association

The HoS said that the family of a child who was currently not attending school was due to move house shortly. The new address was known to the school and, once the family move had been made, the child would be reported as Missing in Education if they did not attend their new school.

The HoS reported that there had been no safeguarding incidents since the previous GB meeting that had required further action. However, he advised the response to cases by Bradford Council's Social Services continued to give significant cause for concern. For example, if a parent said that they did not wish to undertake an action required by Social Services in response to a concern referred by the school (eg attendance on a course), Social Services simply closed the case, which then had to be re-opened by the school in light of continuing concerns about the safety of the child. The school continued to look after these vulnerable children, but the failures of the social services system caused great frustration and wastage of time.

Governors considered it unacceptable that the person from whom the child needed protection could cause the Social Services case to be closed simply by declining to engage. NG/SG added that the failure of parents to engage with Social Services was, in itself, a cause for concern. These cases needed to be investigated by Social Services, which had a statutory duty to assess safeguarding concerns. Schools were not resourced to undertake this kind of investigation; nor would it be appropriate for them to do so, since the school was often the only place of safety available to a child and could not afford to compromise that place of safety by allowing itself to be seen by the family as an agent of Social Services.

The EHT said that a DfE Commissioner was currently working with Children's Social Care at Bradford Council with a view to making a recommendation as to whether it should be taken under direct Government control or linked with another LA (eg Leeds). The Chair of Governors at Sandy Lane⁵ (Chair/SL) was, as governors were aware, a Bradford Councillor and the portfolio-holder for Children and Families. She had met the Inclusion Leaders of both schools and Chair/Steeton to take their views on the response of social services to school concerns: SENCo/Steeton had been very clear about these concerns, of which both Chair/SL and the DfE Commissioner were both aware. The Chair added that the school had also raised these concerns with Robbie Moore, MP, when he had visited the school on 08 October 2021. Quite aside from the risks to which children and families were exposed by the inadequate support from Social Services, the school had been obliged to spend scarce resources on a post whose main purpose was to reduce those risks, and to spend a significant amount of leadership time on matters that should be addressed by Social Services.

Governors agreed that NG/SG should write to the LA expressing in clear terms the significant concern of the GB that the LA was failing children, families and the school, and exposing children across the District to risk. In the meantime, NG/SG and the HoS would continue to monitor CPOMS and the CSR stringently to minimise risk to pupils at Steeton, and were grateful for the dedication and commitment of the Inclusion and Welfare Officer, whose support for vulnerable pupils went above and beyond reasonable expectation.

14/21 Report on Governors' visits to school, training and development

Agenda papers: Reports of Governor Monitoring visits of 06 and 13 October 2021

The Chair said that she had visited the school twice, as described in the agenda papers, to review Reading for Pleasure; Reception; and undertake a learning walk. She had also attended another Reading for Pleasure session and would prepare a report.

Chair

⁵ Sandy Lane – Steeton's partner school

Signed: _____ Date: _____

The Clerk said that, now that Covid restrictions had eased, other governors might find it useful to visit school, perhaps in conjunction with the next round of Link Governor meetings. The Chair urged them to visit Early Years, which was a joy to see.

15/21 Report on Chair's actions and correspondence

As Governors were aware, Robbie Moore MP had visited the school at its invitation on 08 October 2021. The visit, which had lasted for around ninety minutes, had gone well. Mr Moore had seen the Forest School and themed classrooms, the after-school offer, and the support provided for vulnerable families through the creation of the (School-funded) Inclusion and Welfare Officer post. He had officially opened the Pirate Ship, and had taken in good spirit to being barricaded in by pupils. The school had been proud of the behavior of pupils, who had been interested, engaged, polite and questioning.

The school had shared with Mr Moore its concerns about:

- The poor state of the premises, including the Reception building and the longstanding issue arising from deficient works by the Council in relation to Classroom 4.
- The impossibility of planning for the long term – for example producing a three- to five-year budget plan – against a background of short term funding arrangements and unfunded Government commitments to pay and pension increases. This uncertainty, and the lack of recognition of the high level of deprivation and need among Steeton families, had required the school to reduce staffing to balance the budget.
- The need, despite budget pressures, to spend scarce resources on an Inclusion and Welfare post to compensate, as far as possible, for the inadequate safeguarding support from the local authority for vulnerable children and families.
- The transfer of school funding from LA to central government, which appeared to suggest a return to the drive of some years ago to require all maintained schools to become academies. The school was concerned that it might be required to join with a secondary school that did not share its vision, ethos or strategic objectives.

Mr Moore had undertaken to:

- write to ward Councillors about the poor Reception class building and urge action;
- seek funding streams for new building and support the school in bidding for such funding;
- lobby for school funding to follow pupils; and
- lobby for a more flexible academy model.

The EHT reported that Mr Moore had informed him that he had written to Councillors and the LA as agreed and would let the school know when he received their responses. The visit had been helpful in opening doors for the school and in enabling the school to make the point that there was no mechanism for a school that was not in an inner city to gain additional funding to meet the needs of its pupils. Governors noted that the visit had also raised the profile of the school locally.

The Chair said that she, the Vice Chair and the EHT would attend the NGA conference later in the month at which the Secretary of State for Education would be speaking: they would report back to the next meeting.

Strategic development of the school

16/21 Consider options for future expansion or contraction of the school

The EHT “tabled” a slide presentation and explained to Governors how to use the school iPads to view the slides [*attached at Annex A*]. Claire Redman, Staff Governor and Deputy Headteacher (DHT) said that, in the same way that Governors’ iPads were now linked to her computer, so pupils’ iPads could be linked to the teacher’s computer in lessons so that they could see what the teacher saw.

Asked the grounds on which the LA had been adamant in its refusal to consider allowing Steeton to offer Nursery provision, the EHT said that they considered that they had funded sufficient places in the area. They had not been susceptible to arguments about the quality of current provision or the viability of the provider. The LA had, however, indicated that the school was free to offer wrap-around provision for children aged four plus. The school would need to consider the costs and benefits of offering such provision. A Nursery would undoubtedly be better for children in terms of establishing solid groundwork for learning once they moved into Reception, and it would provide a better income stream for the school than running wraparound provision for older children, but it was clear that the LA would not allow the school to offer Nursery provision while Bridge House continued to do so.

Replying to questions, the EHT said that “South Craven” comprised Silsden, Steeton and Eastburn.

The LA had indicated that any decision to change a school’s PAN⁶ was a matter for the LA rather than for the GB. They did not wish to reduce the PAN from 1.5FE to 1FE because they foresaw a growth in pupil numbers from 2023. They were not attracted by the school’s suggestion that it operate an unofficial reduced PAN in the meantime to enable it to balance the budget. On this basis, and as discussed at Item 09/21(a) above, the EHT had indicated that the only option that appeared to remain to the school was to submit deficit budget for 2022-23. The LA had suggested that they might be able to offer support with marketing the school to increase pupil numbers. This suggestion was greeted with some disbelief by Governors, who had been engaged with the school’s ongoing efforts to promote the school.

The EHT had asked that the Sufficiency Team at Bradford Council engage with the School Funding Team to agree how to resolve the conflict between:

- the LA’s insistence that the school should not reduce its PAN, even informally pending the LA’s predicted increase in demand for places in school;
- the cost of running a 1.5FE school as compared with the reduced funding it received due to not being full; and
- the LA’s insistence that schools not submit a deficit budget.

Governors considered that the EHT had correctly summarised the Kafka-esque position in which the GB and school found themselves. They noted that the school had been raising this issue with the LA for some time: they could not claim to have had no notice. The GB confirmed the view taken by the Resources Committee that the school could not reduce staffing again without a significant adverse impact on pupil outcomes and wellbeing.

Asked about the impact of setting a deficit budget, the EHT explained that it would essentially signal to the LA that it had left the school with no options.

Noting the refusal of the LA to consider allowing Steeton to offer Nursery provision, the GB agreed that the next option was to explore the scope to offer before and after-school provision. Subject to demand and costings, they considered that such provision might be of benefit to both pupils and parents, and could benefit the school in terms of pulling pupils back from Silsden. Any impact on Bridge House, which was currently used by eight pupils from Steeton, would need to be managed in a way that was consistent with the school’s ethos.

⁶ PAN – Published Admission Number

- **The Governing Body authorised** the SLT to explore options for before and after-school provision and to bring a costed proposal to the next meeting of the Resources Committee (24 November 2021) for consideration.
- **The Governing Body authorised** the Resources Committee to determine, on the basis of that costed proposal, whether the school should consult parents. If so, that consultation should be carried out in time to inform discussion at the next GB meeting (17 February 2022).

The Governing Body was content that the school informally take the views of parents at open days and other events on whether they would make use of before and after-school provision.

17/21 Review the merits of moving to academy status

Talking through the second part of the slide presentation at Annex A, the EHT said that messages from Government, Councillors and local authority officers about policy direction in regard to maintained schools were inconsistent but that the most recent communications from the Secretary of State for Education (SoS/DfE) were that:

- he believed that “schools do benefit from being part of a multi-academy trust”; but
- “I will promise you this. I want you to get on with your job. I will not set arbitrary timelines”

Although informal advice had been received locally that schools should press ahead quickly to academies before they were forced to join an academy group not of their choosing, the statement from SoS was more recent and chimed with advice that the EHT had received from Bradford Council’s acting Deputy Director for Children’s Services (BC/aDDCS – Sue Lowndes) that “there was no impetus any more from government for school to move quickly into an academy structure”. Governors agreed that the school should proceed on the basis that there was no immediate pressure to academise but that national and local policy development should be watched carefully and the school should review options so that it was in a position to move swiftly as and when necessary.

BC/aDDCS had informed the EHT that Steeton and Sandy Lane would not be permitted by the Regional Schools Commissioner or DfE to join together as a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) on their own, but might be permitted to do so alongside a secondary school or as a group of five or six primary schools. The Chair said that Robbie Moore, MP, had indicated that he was lobbying for a more flexible approach to academisation.

Governors noted that, aside from direct pressure from central or local government, one of the reasons for seriously considering academisation or other strategic relationships was the depletion of the capacity of local authorities to support schools that remained in the maintained sector. The EHT considered that the combination of reduced LA capacity to support schools, including in critical areas such as attendance, with the continuing control exercised over strategic decisions such as whether a maintained school could offer Nursery provision, argued for seeking a solution that removed the school from Bradford Council’s control.

Governors noted that the hard introduction of the National Funding Formula would include a move from delegation of DfE funding to schools through the LA to direct funding, so removing the role of Bradford Council’s School Funding Team. They also noted that, as an academy, the school would no longer have to pay a top-slice of its budget to the LA for provision of central services: the EHT said that BC/aDDCS had advised that the topslice paid by schools to Bradford Council was now only 0.8%. The Chair added that academies had access to funding streams that were not available to maintained schools.

Governors considered that the current lack of clarity about national and regional policy in relation to the development of the educational structure made it difficult to make decisions at this stage. They agreed the following principles:

- Any restructuring would require a significant diversion of leadership time from pursuing the BG's vision for the school and its strategic objectives. It must therefore offer clear benefits to the school and its pupils.
- Any restructuring must preserve the identity, vision and values of the school, particularly in relation to meeting the specific needs of Steeton pupils and the local community.
- Sandy Lane, as Steeton's existing partner, had a similar child-centred vision and ethos to those of Steeton and the current partnership enabled both schools to further their visions and ethos without compromising their individual identities. The leadership teams and staff worked closely together, including through shared planning supported by common IT systems. The GB wished to continue to develop this partnership and would not wish to see it split up due to any external requirement for the schools to academies separately.

Governors noted that, when the partnership with Sandy Lane had been established, the schools had recognised that there might in due course be scope to extend it to one or more other local schools. **Asked** how this would benefit Steeton, the EHT said that providing school-to-school support was an important element in a school itself becoming excellent. It offered development opportunities, valuable experience and challenge for staff of the supporting school, to the benefit of their own pupils and aiding retention, and it demonstrated clearly the strengths of the school. He reminded governors that the partnership with Sandy Lane had begun with Steeton providing support for Sandy Lane to improve: the relationship was now mutually beneficial in a number of very concrete ways. Some governors suggested that there might be a need to guard what had been gained and avoid overstretching: others argued that the schools should jointly seek to share their areas of Outstanding practice with others both as part of school's wider duties to local children and to build its reputation and thus pupil numbers.

Asked about Sandy Lane's thinking on these matters, the EHT said that the GB had not met since his most recent conversations with the LA and were therefore still considering MAT options.

The GB agreed to monitor developments nationally and locally: governors hoped that central government policy might be clarified by SoS/DfE when he addressed the NGA conference. The EHT would keep in touch with BC/aDDCS and Chair/Sandy Lane would continue to share any information she received through her role as Bradford Council's Lead Member for Children and Families. The GB would review the position, including the option of federation, at its next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8.54pm and would reconvene at 6.15pm on Monday 29 November 2021 using Zoom. The reconvened meeting would consider only the outstanding items on the agenda for this meeting.

Confirmation of Clerking time

The Governing Body confirmed that the meeting had been due to start at 6.15pm and was about to end at 8.54pm.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm

Signed: _____

Date:

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