



**Blue Hills
Federation**

MINUTES OF GOVERNORS' EXTRAORDINARY MEETING

**Tuesday, 7th February 2023 at 6:30
at Clunbury School**

SPRING TERM 2023

Present: Miss. Anna Cook (Head) Mrs. Di Cosgrove (Acting Chair)
Mrs. Janet Hartin Mr. Nigel Hartin
Mrs. Ruth Gittins Mrs. Julie Saunders
Mrs. Jenny White Mrs. Anne Gledhill
Rev. Caroline Bullimore

In Attendance

Mr. Ian Urry (Clerk)

1. Opening Prayer

This was led by (Rev. Caroline)

2. Apologies for Absences

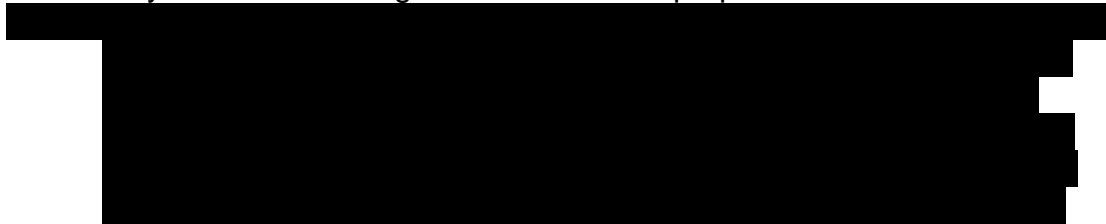
None

3. Declaration of Item(s) to be discussed under Any Other Business

None

4. Declaration of Interest in any Item listed on this Agenda

- (i) (R.G.) and (J.W.) acknowledged that although, as Associate Governors, they would be able to take part in the ensuing discussions, they would not be eligible to vote on the proposal.



5. Minutes

4.1 To review and confirm minutes of the previous Extraordinary Board Meeting of 18th January. 2023

The minutes were approved and signed by the Acting Chair.

4.2 Matters arising from the minutes.

a) Election of Chair of Governing Board

(D.C.) confirmed that she does not wish to take on the role of Chair of Governors but is prepared to remain in the role of Acting-Chair for the duration of the current emergency.

(N.H.) also confirmed that he is happy to accept the role of Vice-Chair but does not want to be a Co-Chair.

6. Newcastle School – the Prescribed Alteration

6.1 Those attending last week's 2-hour meeting with representatives of the L.A. and the Diocese: the Head, the Acting Chair, (R.G.) and (A.G.), summarised the ideas and views expressed in the meeting.

- The L.A. appears to favour the adoption of a two-phase approach to the possible closure of Newcastle School
- This would begin with an initial proposal to move to a Prescribed Alteration (P.A.) to end the provision of education in Newcastle School, resulting in a transfer of the pupils to the other two schools in the federation: Clunbury School and St Mary's School, Bucknell.
- This would be followed by a four-week consultation period involving all interested parties. The results of the consultation would then be considered by the L.A., leading to a decision on the proposal. If the decision is to approve the proposal, action to close the school for educational purposes and transfer the pupils could be enacted by the beginning of the new academic year in September.
- The second phase would involve submitting a proposal to the L.A. Cabinet that the Newcastle School be closed. This would prompt a four-week consultation period, leading to a decision by the L.A. If the decision is to accept the proposal to move to closure, the earliest this could be achieved would be by Christmas of 2023.
- The L.A. made it clear that both of these proposals must be driven by the federation's governing board, although they confirmed that full support would be offered throughout the process.
- At the time of the meeting, no guarantees regarding transport provision were made.
- It was also suggested that the governors took the earliest opportunity to confirm their support for the continuation of the federation.

6.2 Reaction of the governors to the meeting

The governors readily understood that the proposal to follow the P.A. route was prompted by a desire to make the whole process smoother and quicker. By effectively closing the school at the beginning of September, it allows the federation to be pro-active and make arrangements for the continuance of the pupils' education. The alternative, whereby parents would be confronted with the likelihood of the school's closure at some point in the year, would almost certainly result in pupils being removed from the school before September. This in turn could well affect future funding.

Some consternation was expressed about how much and when parents could be told about the ultimate goal of closing Newcastle School. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The key point to communicate, however, is that these are proposals and that it is not in the power of the governors to take the final

decisions. Governors expressed their determination to conduct themselves throughout this process in such a way as to demonstrate the genuineness of the consultation procedure. At the end of the day, Newcastle School may not close; that decision will be in the hands of others.

All governors acknowledged that, should Newcastle close, parents would be entitled to choose any replacement school they see fit. Although the governors will make the strong case that, by sending their pupils to schools within the federation, parents can be assured of consistency in the curriculum, ethos and staffing, such arguments may not ultimately convince them when there are more convenient options available.

Governors recognised that the P.A. route is the preferred one for the L.A. and that if we chose to reject it, we might not be able to rely on quite such fulsome support from the authority.

Some trepidation was expressed regarding the whole process. Governors were all too aware of the rancour that had marked other closure experiences in the county and they agreed that one way to minimise this would be to be as transparent as possible in their dealings with parents.

It was agreed that the transport issue was of paramount importance and that any decision to proceed with the P.A. proposal should be contingent on satisfactory arrangements being made to transport Newcastle students to either of the other two schools in the federation for the duration of their primary school career. The idea of the federation offering to pay for all or part of these transportation costs for the Autumn term was also agreed upon in principle.

The Head and (R.G.) had produced a draft proposal for the P.A. to transfer children from Newcastle to alternative sites, and this was discussed and amended by the governors.

6.3 Vote to proceed with the two-phase P.A. process.

The governors unanimously voted to reject the original proposal to move to close Newcastle School in favour of the new proposal, to follow a two-phased process: Phase 1- to seek a Prescribed Alteration to cease offering education services at Newcastle School: and Phase 2 - propose the permanent closure of Newcastle School. (Rev Caroline had to leave the meeting before the vote was taken) The vote was dependent on the condition that the governing board is provided with detailed arrangements for transport provisions in the event of the closure of the school.

6.4 Implications of the decision to proceed.

The governors will be responsible for much of the process, but they can rely on the support of the L.A. officers. The Diocese has made it clear that it will not be getting involved.

A provisional timeline for the necessary actions was presented and governors indicated which meetings they would be able to attend.

Letters/emails will be sent out to Newcastle parents on February 27th urging them to attend the meeting on 2nd March

2nd March	Inform Newcastle staff (4:30). Inform Newcastle parents (5:30). An agreed and rehearsed presentation will be delivered at both meetings. This will not be the opportunity to answer questions about the proposal. The Head and as many governors as possible to be in attendance. Mr. Copestake at Bucknell School, plus (J.H.) and Mrs. Jones, plus (A.G) at Clunbury School will inform their staff members of the proposal at 5:30.
3rd March	Consultation period begins
7th March	Staff consultation meeting at Newcastle School at 3:45-5:00 Other federation staff at 5:00- 6:00 Head, (R.G.) and all available governors in attendance.
8th March	Parent drop-in consultation at Newcastle School Head, (R.G.), (D.C.), (J.S.) and (J.H.) in attendance.
9th March	Parent drop-in consultation at Newcastle School (N.H.), (J.H.), (A.G.) and (J.S.) in attendance.
31st March	Consultation period close N.B. between 3 rd and 31 st March there are opportunities to arrange additional meetings.
4th April	Governors' meeting to go through all the responses before they are sent off to the L.A.
?	Proposal and views of the communities and governors presented to Cabinet
June 2023	Likely date to receive news of the decision.
September 2023	If the proposal is approved, Newcastle children will be transferred to an alternative school site.

Governors also agreed to meet at 6:30 on Monday, 27th February at Newcastle to go through the announcement presentation.

7. Any Other Urgent Business

(i) Vote on the continuation of the Federation

Governors voted unanimously to continue with the Blue Hills Federation

(ii) The position of Chair and Vice-Chair

(D.C.) confirmed her willingness to continue in the role of Acting Chair, at least to the conclusion of the present business over Newcastle School.

(N.H.) also confirmed his willingness to act as Vice-Chair.

This information will now be amended in the official records.

(iii) Governors discussed the need to recruit new governors, and the Pressing need for (J.W.) to be confirmed as a full foundation governor.

8. Date for Spring Term Board Meeting

This was set for 28th March at 6:30 at Clunbury School

Governors were led in a closing prayer by (J.W.)

