

FULL GOVERNORS Meeting  
29th JUNE 2011

**Present**

H Jamieson, C Anderson, I Reed, A Dearden, R Alsoraimi, KAwad, A Ismail, P Killen, S Langhorn, A Lomas, G Lunt, C Molyneux  
R Owens (clerk to the Governors)

**Apologies**

R Parry, I Mohammed

**Declarations of interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

**Approval of previous minutes**

Minutes of the Full Governors meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> February were accepted.  
Minutes of the FPPS meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April were accepted.

**Matters Arising/Discussion/Information**

Minutes of 31<sup>st</sup> January.

It was stated that 2 mistakes had been made on an item of the minutes of this meeting which had been previously ratified by Governors.  
The mistakes needed correction.

The mistakes were associated with the proposal that: 'The Governors wish to become an Academy with Chester University as sponsor and would like to begin the consultation process'

There was a clerical error and the use of a proxy vote (the Clerk has now been informed that on this occasion a proxy vote cannot be used)

In the minutes the vote read

'The Vice Chair asked the Governors to vote on the proposal

The results of the vote were recorded as

Against – 0

For - 8(including a proxy vote )

The Acting Chair abstained from voting

The minutes should have recorded the vote as:- Against 1,

For 6 – ( minus the proxy vote and an error in counting)

Abstention – Acting Chair

It was **AGREED** by the Governors to approve the correction and amendment The Governors reaffirmed their decision of 31<sup>st</sup> January to become an Academy with The University of Chester as sponsor and begin the consultation stage.

Clarification was sought from the meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> February regarding the reason for the resignation of 3 Foundation Governors. It was explained that a number of Foundation Governors had been appointed by the Trust in the initial process of setting up the new Governing Body. Since that time it had become apparent, following legal advice, that best practice is that there should be a clear separation of duties between the Trust and the Governing Body. There were too many Trustees and Directors of the Trust on the Governing Body; therefore it was appropriate that this was reduced. It was confirmed that despite these changes all meetings of the Governing Body have been quorate.

Governors discussed the late change to the agenda whereby the Trade Unions had been invited to the meeting. The Chair had in agreement with the Trade Unions allowed 30 minutes in the agenda. After detailed discussion the Governors agreed to proceed with the Chair's recommendation as this would be an opportunity to work cooperatively with the Trade Unions and ensure that the decision making process would be robust.

It was stated that The South Liverpool Education Trust had been briefed on the decisions of the Governors regarding Academy status on 21<sup>st</sup> January and voted in favour of the Governors' decision to consider the possibility of becoming an Academy with the sponsor being the University of Chester.

## **Trade Union Presentation**

The Trade Unions joined the meeting.

The Chair welcomed the Trade Unions but expressed her disappointment at some of the actions of the Unions and asked that this stop along with the personal campaign against the Headteacher. She requested that all parties work together for the good of the school. It was stated by the NAS/UWT that all actions of the NAS/UWT have been legitimate and that they were opposed to personal attacks of any kind.

There was then a presentation from each of the Union representatives. Matters raised included;-

### **NAS/UWT**

1. Questioning of the funding available to the school as an Academy.
2. The view that Academy status would not increase student numbers.
3. A request that Governors consider waiting until the new Director of Education takes up post before making the decision.
4. The view that teachers at Shorefields do not want to become an Academy and not want to work in a private school.

### **ATL**

1. The view that Academy status will not raise standards.
2. The view that Academies exclude SEN students
3. A member of staff left Shorefields at the end of April because she did not envisage Shorefields becoming an Academy as it would not fulfil the needs of the students.
4. Consideration of why opposition to the Academy status is so fierce
5. A request to consider a parental ballot.
6. The view that parents from other areas will not send their children to Shorefields.

### **NUT**

1. The NUT considers Shorefields to be a very good school and asked the Governors to consider why they were Governors at the school.
2. The view that good teachers will leave.
3. The view that the school will not benefit financially.
4. There is no business plan.

5. The view that Academies have a chequered record, some with failing Ofsted reports.
6. The choice of UCAT was questioned as the NUT feel that the LA is committed to the community. UCAT will have 10 Academies. The view that at the other UCAT Academies staff are losing jobs, parents and students are unhappy. There was questioning as to why UCAT want to be Academy sponsors? Will they get a cut of the funding?
7. Concerns about Terms and Conditions of staff.
8. The view that Academies have a poor record of dealing with students with SEN and EAL.
9. The view that a 6<sup>th</sup> form student is strongly against the move to Academy status.
10. There has not been a union dispute in Shorefields in 30 years
11. UCAT will not care about the school, students and staff.
12. A request for a ballot of parents and staff.

A petition of 80 members of staff outlining their opposition to the Academy was presented to the Governors.

### **Presentation of the Consultation report**

Dr Hankinson joined the meeting.

Dr Hankinson led a discussion on the contents of the consultation document which had been circulated to Governors with the agenda. He outlined the consultation and pre consultation processes which had taken place and reiterated the comprehensive nature of the process.

Regarding the Unions' concerns about the credibility of UCAT as an Academy sponsor he responded that UCAT aims to have 10 Academies next year and 25 in the next 4 years. All the Academies will be within a 40 mile radius of Chester therefore keeping them regional and community focussed.

UCAT are committed to the highest standards and have been accredited by the DfE as a high performing Academy sponsor and Dr Hankinson has been invited to sit on the Government's Academy Sponsor Steering Group by The Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove. He is the only regional sponsor to have been invited.

UCAT have followed advice from both the DfE and Cap Gemini (the project management company appointed to support the process) in ensuring that the requirements for the consultation process were met. These requirements have been exceeded by providing pre consultation sessions and additional drop in sessions in response to requests from stakeholders.

As a result of Dr Hankinson's presentation and the issues raised by the Unions, Governors asked a number of questions:-

1. Is it true that there is much staff unhappiness at UCATs other Academies?

Response –Unlike Shorefields both these Academies have grown from the amalgamation of 2 schools into one. Consequently there have been challenges which have been difficult for staff but this is only to be expected. Ellesmere Port Academy has been extremely successful in its first year increasing its results significantly and it looking like Birkenhead will have the same success. On the whole the vast majority of staff at the Academies are happy and Dr Hankinson invited any Governors to meet with staff and Governors from these establishments. There will be no job losses for Shorefields staff associated with the move to Academy status.

2. What was the level of engagement of the consultation process

Response - there were a number of consultation events. The amount of consultation was above what is expected by the DFE with a pre-consultation, a consultation and additional drop in sessions which had been requested by parents.

### **Pre consultation**

Meeting with staff

Letter posted first class to all parents

Information on the website

Pre consultation meetings for staff - groups of around 15 staff per meeting met representative from UCAT over 6 meetings of 50 minutes

Pre consultation meetings for students – groups of about 15 students per meeting met with representatives from UCAT for 6 meetings of 50 minutes

Pre consultation meetings for the community - 3 x 1 hour sessions including evening sessions

Assemblies for students

Meetings with student council

### **Consultation**

Letters posted first class to all parents

Academy consultation prospectus posted first class to all current and prospective parents

Academy consultation prospectus delivered to all primary feeder schools

Consultation invitation to Headteachers of primary feeder schools.

Consultation meetings were offered for staff in groups of around 15 staff per meeting to meet representative from UCAT over 6 meetings of 50 minutes

Consultation meetings for students - groups of around 14 students per meeting met with representatives from UCAT for 6 meetings of 50 minutes.

Consultation meetings the community - 3 sessions including and early evening one – 29 parents

Proposed Academy Website available online

Branding workshops with students: Logo session – 21; uniform - 25

Additional drop in sessions at the request of parents held at different times of the day – 8 parents

SLT met about 42 parents

All the sessions were staffed by senior staff from UCAT for significant periods of time so that stakeholders had ample opportunities to engage with the process at an appropriate time for them and in a comfortable, informal setting. The engagement with stakeholders focussed on the aspirations for the school and the concerns for the school becoming an Academy. Some stakeholders held very negative views about the Academy which they maintained, equally other stakeholders held positive views about the role of UCAT in raising standards at the school. Feedback from the Governors who attended some of these sessions were positive as they felt that once stakeholders had the relevant facts they were supportive of the move to Academy status.

The school is used to low parental engagement and consequently uses first class post to send communication to all parents/carers. One Governor stated that she did not receive correspondence regarding the consultation. Governors were given evidence of four separate communications in this manner, 28<sup>th</sup> February, 21<sup>st</sup> March, 20<sup>th</sup> May, and 27<sup>th</sup> May It was also stated that phone calls had been made to parents by the school and found that the majority of parents had received the correspondence. In addition to current parents, the school communicated with prospective parents and the primary feeder schools. 29 current parents attended the consultation meetings along with 42 prospective parents who were met individually by the Leadership team. The Academy website received a number of hits with mixed responses. Some Governors suggested additional methods of communication could have been used such as texts and approaching faith groups and translated information.

Another Governor pointed out that the newsletters were translated into Arabic and Somali. It was stated that if parents did not speak English, the majority of the children do so and can translate for their parents.

There was a full discussion by the Governors around the effectiveness of the consultation process. Governors recognised the challenges of consultation in these circumstances and appreciated the work of UCAT and the school and that this had been wholly appropriate to the

situation. They acknowledged that UCAT and the school had gone beyond the recommended requirements of the DfE.

3. Will the uniform cost £300?

Response – the uniform will cost the same as the previous uniform. Students have been working on the design of the uniform, in particular the girls have requested a kilt, and costings of these are being looked into with the emphasis of keeping the price down. UCAT are supportive of the involvement of students in the design of the uniform. The initial uniform will be free of charge to all students.

4. A Governor stated that many staff were anxious about job security, will the Terms and Conditions of staff remain the same?

Response – staff will be transferred to UCAT on the same Terms and Conditions and UCAT has no plans to change them. Dr Hankinson said he would be happy to put this in writing.

5. Will the Academy benefit from diseconomies of scale funding

Response – the Academy will benefit from the top slice which normally goes to the LA, approximately 11%. UCAT will take between 3 and 4% of that top slice to provide central services to the school. Diseconomies funding will be built into the transition funding.

6. What guarantees will there be for students who have attended the Academy to get a place at Chester University once they have left the Academy?

Response – UCAT would accept ex Academy students without any restriction to the time scale from when they left the Academy to starting university.

### **Consideration of the proposal**

Governors then considered the Proposal to proceed with the University of Chester Academies Trust as sponsor of Shorefields Technology College and that in doing so this will support the school in raising standards of education and attainment.

Governors considered in detail the presentation from the Trade Unions, from Dr Colin Hankinson and details from within the consultation document. In weighing the information provided by the Trade Unions and UCAT the view was that the UCAT information was more reliable and accurate.

The Governing Body considered carefully the request of Liverpool City Council and the Trade Unions to hold a ballot of parents regarding Academy status. Following this discussion they felt that the consultation exercise had been thorough and indeed was far in excess of what was required by the DfE. They felt parents had had an ample opportunity to express any concerns and that these had been addressed by the consultation process. They felt that it would be difficult to determine what parents they should ballot; furthermore, a ballot is not part of the consultation process. It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to assess; whether the consultation process has been comprehensive, to consider all the information and facts put before it from the consultation process and from this to come to a balanced decision about what is best for the future of the school.

In response to the petition, the Governors considered the morale and feelings of staff. Concerns were also raised by a Governor about the possibility of a split between the staff. It was stated that following individual meetings many staff had said privately that either they supported the Academy or were not against it but kept quiet for fear of repercussions.

It was stated that about two thirds of the staff were for the Academy or could see the advantages for Shorefields whilst about a third are opposed and believe the misconceptions which have been distributed. The Governors acknowledged the strong influence of the Trade Unions in the school and the national campaign against Academies and felt that this had a disproportionate influence on the message which was being delivered. Despite this staff had had worked together professionally throughout the year to bring about huge improvements in the school as evidenced by the excellent Ofsted report. Staff continue to be engaged in raising standards and the school continues to move forward positively.

One Governor raised concerns that the situation was causing unhappiness for the students in the school. Other Governors stated that in their view they had seen no evidence of this and in fact many students were working positively in preparation for the Academy and looking forward to the change.

Governors considered the assertion that SEN and EAL students would be disadvantaged by Academy status. During the consultation a Governor met with the Head of Additional Needs at the school and felt that she had been satisfied with the answers she had received from UCAT. Governors challenged the comments about standards being adversely affected or negative impact on SEN and EAL students, one Governor citing evidence from an Academy he works in where he felt there was excellent support for SEN. Governors were supportive of UCAT's emphasis of trying to ensure that all students make three levels of progress as they felt that the current, excellent support for students with SEN and EAL will have to be at least maintained and most likely enhanced.

The issue of declining numbers was considered by Governors who felt that Academy status could support the growth of the school. Governors recognised the need to attract more local students who currently attend schools out of the local area. They believe that

changing to Academy status would reverse this situation. The Governors felt that the consultation clearly showed that the growth of the 6<sup>th</sup> form would be an important outcome of Academy status and will sustain the viability of the school and job security for the staff.

Governors considered the role of UCAT in raising standards at Shorefields. They felt that standards had risen in the school over the last year and that UCAT will be able to provide the necessary support to further improve the quality of teaching and learning and other aspects of the school in order to bring about increased levels of attainment across the school. Evidence from UCEA where attainment rose from 24% to 38% 5A\*-C with English and Maths in a year is impressive as the Academy is one of the most improved Academies and was awarded ‘Champion School of the Year’ by Scottish Power/Trinity Mirror 2010. They feel that UCAT; as a prestigious, nationally recognised university with an outstanding Ofsted report and over 172 years of excellence as an institution specialising in education and teacher training who pertain only to want excellence, will work hard to ensure the success of the school and the happiness of staff and students.

Governors were satisfied that as a sponsored Academy the school is eligible for start up and transition funding and, specifically, funding which will support its growth over an interim period.

Governors were satisfied with UCAT’s assurances that it fully supports continuing the purchase of those services from the Local Authority where they provide quality support and value for money

Governors were satisfied that UCAT is committed to the local community and has no intention of changing the admissions code for Shorefields.

## **Voting**

The Governors then voted on the following proposals

To hold a parental ballot

For - 4

Against - 7

Abstentions – 1

The Governors confirmed that they had seen the consultation document, discussed the consultation and its findings.

The Governing Body unanimously **AGREED** that the consultation had been carried out to at least DfE standards.

Do you believe that the University of Chester as a sponsor of Shorefields Technology College will support the school in raising standards of education and attainment

The Governing Body unanimously **AGREED** the University of Chester as a sponsor of Shorefields Technology College will support the school in raising standards of education and attainment.

Do you want Shorefields Technology College to become an Academy

For - 8

Against - 3

Abstention – 1

The Governing Body **AGREED** that they wanted to proceed with their application for Shorefields Technology College to become an Academy

There were some agenda items not covered at the meeting. Governors agreed to carry them over to the next Full Governors Meeting  
The meeting finished at 6.40pm

**Signed:**



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**Ms. Catherine Anderson**

**ACTING CHAIR OF GOVERNORS**

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2011