

THE THOMAS ALLEYNE ACADEMY LOCAL GOVERNING BODY

A meeting of the local governing body for the Thomas Alleyne Academy was held in the Conference Room, the Thomas Alleyne Academy, Stevenage, on Wednesday 15 June 2016, starting at 18.00.

PRESENT

Jonathan Ellam (Chair)
Julia Cooke
Howard Crompton
Carol Hayman

Mark Lewis (Headteacher)
Stuart Melbourne
Rod Pullen
Lynsey Steadman

IN ATTENDANCE

Sam Forrest (Item 0)
Bruce Galliford (Item 0)

Andrew McLeod (Finance Manager)
Robert Dale (Clerk)

ITEM 0: PRESENTATION FROM RAW BIOMASS

The Chair welcomed two Directors from RAW Biomass, a business helping clients make use of renewable energy for heating, to make a presentation about an option to replace the school's existing heating provision. The approach would enable the school to replace existing gas boilers which were near the end of their useful lives with a centralised and integrated system fuelled by biomass (wood pellets) and with a gas backup without having to find capital investment. This would come from external investors who would derive a return on their investment via the government's Renewable Heat Initiative (RHI) scheme.

Schools were attractive sites for long lasting investments like this (a 20 year commitment) because they were inherently stable and likely to exist over that period.

The cost of wood pellet fuel was broadly similar to the current (very low) cost of gas, and there were few inherent reasons the price should rise faster than the cost of non-renewable fuel.

RAW Biomass had undertaken an initial technical investigation and offered two options; the first, a full 'district heating' system based on the construction of a new central boiler house; the second, a smaller scale partial replacement covering some (but not all) of the school's buildings.

Once the system had been installed, the government's payments via the RHI were locked in for 20 years; this gave investors certainty. However, the scheme would not be available indefinitely. A review in April 2017 was expected.

Governors asked:

- *The equipment had a ten year warranty. What happened at the end of that period?* The manufacturer's warranty covered the first ten years; RAW Biomass maintained the equipment thereafter, and had a financial interest in its efficient operation; there was no income if heat was not being generated.

- *What happened to the equipment at the end of 20 years?* The school could buy the equipment for £1, and either continue to operate the system (there would be no RHI income) or replace with other arrangements.
- *What was the cost difference between wood pellets and gas fuel?* The school was currently paying 4.5p per unit for gas, and the cost of wood pellets was similar. A more efficient heating system (as this would be) should generate savings from a better use of heat.
- *What influence would the school have over the appointment of a project manager for any installation?* RAW Biomass appreciated that installation quality was critical and outsourced all installation services to competent businesses. The school would be welcome to comment on proposed suppliers. It was also in RAW Biomass' interests that the installation was properly carried out to minimise the risk of future outages and consequent loss of income.
- *How sustainable were wood pellets as a fuel?* The sector had to meet strict targets for sourcing wood sustainably and ensuring planting replaced wood used. Sources included forestry management such as coppicing and harvesting (and replanting) trees planted some decades ago. Distance travelled by the fuel was also regulated.
- *How easy was on-site maintenance?* Most maintenance was undertaken by RAW Biomass contractors. On site staff would be trained in the day-to-day work that would be needed, and this would be maintained over the duration of the contract. There were guaranteed callout times should things go wrong to keep outages to a minimum – based on the manufacturer's standards.
- *How much space would be needed for storage of pellets?* One of the options saw the old coal store being used, while the other provided storage in the new boilerhouse structure. The intention would be to hold a maximum of 26 tons (this was a standard lorryload). Lorry access had been checked.
- *How would biomass impact on the school's carbon footprint?* The carbon footprint could be readily identified, but in essence, because wood pellet fuel involved a cycle of harvesting and replacement, it was regarded as carbon neutral – so would reduce the school's carbon footprint. Biomass boilers were about 90% efficient in converting fuel into heat – slightly better than modern gas boilers and considerably better than the existing equipment.
- *What would happen in the event of the failure of RAW Biomass?* This was an unlikely event as the company simply owned the assets (the boilers) and took in the RHI support as income, but in the event of failure, the boilers would represent a valuable income stream from the RHI and would be taken on by another business with the same interest in ensuring that they ran efficiently.
- *What support for education might be available?* RAW Biomass had previously supported education projects linked to their installations and would be open to discussions.

Governors thanked RAW Biomass for the presentation; they would raise the issue of replacing heating provision with the Hart Schools Trust at its next meeting.

Governors agreed to make contact with some of the case studies included in the presentation to get a sense of their experience with RAW Biomass.

THANK YOUs

The Chair recorded thanks to Julia Flanagan for eight years of hard work and leadership in the school. Governors wished her well for the future. He also noted that Rod Pullen would be stepping down later this year. He had served for seven years on this and the predecessor Governing Body, and it was hoped that Trinity College would nominate a successor shortly.

ITEM 1A: APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- Julia Flanagan, Eirwen Palmer.

ITEM 1B: DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- None.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

- Agreed and signed as an accurate record of proceedings.

MATTERS ARISING/ACTIONS

Actions agreed at the last meeting had been completed or were being followed up.

- **Governor Skills Audit:** an on-line survey would be circulated shortly.
- **Electrical work:** some had been completed and the remainder will be undertaken during the summer.
- **S275 Resolution:** to be presented to the next Trust Board meeting.
- **Amended School Policies:** now available on the school website.

ITEM 2: CHILD LOOKED AFTER REPORT

Governors thanked Lesley Thompson for providing such a clear report and congratulated the team for achieving a Green RAYG rating. There was very strong evidence of the quality of support given and the progress achieved. It was important to try to manage the number of pupils in this category so as to be able to continue to provide high quality support without unduly impacting the school as a whole.

ITEM 3: GOVERNOR ENGAGEMENT

A new approach was proposed for implementation in the new academic year, which would include half-termly 'governor in school' half days which would enable governors to see lessons, undertake work scrutiny, speak to pupils and staff etc. The intention was that the programme for these days should be directed by governors.

In addition, it was proposed to link Governors with individual members of the school's SLT, with a commitment to hold a termly review meeting with that person – ideally to enable a report to an adjacent LGB meeting. Governors would be invited to attend INSET and staff briefings where appropriate, as well as school events and less formal meetings, though it was appreciated that members' time was limited.

Governors were reminded about the Red Carpet event on 13 July for which booking was essential!

The Local Governing Body endorsed the approach outlined and looked forward to receiving more detail at a future meeting.

ITEM 5: FINANCE REPORT

The Chair commended the report which was clear and easy to read.

- The paper proposed a budget for 2016/17 which had been difficult to set and involved some hard choices. A meeting with the staff would take place later in the month to put it in context, but factors which influenced it included a growing student roll, but no more income, and higher staff costs – extra staff to cope with the higher roll, plus the impact of taxation changes.
- Non-pay costs had been reviewed very closely, and a culture in which questions were asked before costs incurred encouraged. This would include very low limits on departmental authorisations – though there was an impact on the head's time which could probably not be maintained for too long.
- Some expenditure had been cut to very low levels – such as agency supply. Staff were being asked to avoid sickness absence if at all possible.
- Staff costs had been reduced by not replacing posts when there was an opportunity, and by thinking carefully about the cost of new appointments. There had also been an increase in teacher classroom time by one hour per fortnight. Senior teachers, middle leaders and the Head would all have an increased teaching commitment. This had reduced vacancies by two.
- There was no capital available for projects in 2016/17 – any developments not already agreed would need to be funded separately.

The outcome was a budget which balanced, and **the Local Governing Body recommended it to the Trust Board** accordingly.

Governors thanked Andrew McLeod for his excellent work on this paper.

ITEM 4: HEADTEACHER'S REPORT

- School performance was on track with good exam attendance, though it was hard to predict outcomes with confidence. Recruitment had been largely successful, though there were still some gaps. Governors found the Reading Ages report very useful – Y8 was a group particularly in need of support.
- The Chair thanked Rod Pullen and Eirwen Palmer for supporting the recent disciplinary panel.
- One to one meetings with all staff would be completed by the end of term. Staff had welcomed them, as they enabled issues to be identified and fixed quickly. The process would be repeated next year – over a longer period.

ITEM 6: RISK MANAGEMENT

- **The Local Governing Body reviewed and endorsed** the updated Risk Register.

ITEM 7: TRUST UPDATE

- The Trust was developing greater clarity over the different roles of the Trust Board and the local governing body, leaving LGBs to focus particularly on individual school issues and teaching and learning quality while it concentrated on strategic issues. The presentation from RAW Biomass exemplified this

approach; while the decision to accept the proposal or not rested with the Trust, the views of the LGB about its suitability for the school would be critical.

- Adrian Hawkins and/or Matt Hamnett would be invited to a future meeting of the LGB.

ITEM 8: POLICY REVIEW

- The amended Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Policy had been circulated; the only changes were updating names and job titles.

The Local Governing Body adopted the updated SEND Policy, which would be reviewed again in June 2017.

ITEM 9: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A plan for Governor training would be drawn up based on responses to the evaluation survey questions, and would include potential Safer Recruitment training; there was cover available from the in-house HR team who were all appropriately trained.

ITEM 10: DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- The proposed calendar of meetings for 2016/17 was agreed. The next meeting would take place on Thursday 13 October, starting at 18.00.
- Governors were reminded about the Open Evening on Thursday 15 September (18.00 to 21.00) and encouraged to attend.

The meeting closed at 19.50.

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 Signed – Chair of Governors
 Date

LOCAL GOVERNING BODY ACTION LOG

Meeting	Item	What	Who/when
19/01/16	1d	Governor Skills Audit	Clerk – 27/05/16
15/06/16	0	Submit proposal to HST Board for replacement of heating system	Chair/Head – 07/07/16
15/06/16	3	Governor engagement – add to agenda for next meeting	Clerk – 01/07/16
15/06/16	5	Propose school budget to the HST Board.	Chair/Head – 07/07/16
15/06/16	7	Invite Adrian Hawkins and/or Matt Hamnett to future meeting.	Clerk/Chair -
15/06/16	9	Develop draft Governor Training Plan.	Clerk – 31/07/16