

MAT News 1st December 2016

1. **Meeting with DfE**: Senior representatives of the Regional Schools Commissioner's office met with Sid, me and Julie on 22/11/16. They were very supportive and said they had confidence in what we were doing. They said they would want meetings with us each term to monitor progress (and more often if needed). They advised that the 2nd cohort of schools should apply in February with a view to converting on 1st September to give us the time to consolidate. They advised us to bid for the Regional Capacity Growth Fund to help us pay for expansion costs and also for the Primary Chains Grant, which is to help primary schools convert in groups. They said we should look for a further trustee who has business experience but no links with the schools. We also discussed different options for including another secondary school in the MAT in the future.
2. **Consultation**: A parents' consultation meeting was held at TAHS on 28/11/16 for all 5 founder schools; parents from other schools were also able to attend. About 30 people attended (including some heads and governors). Questions were searching but constructive. Overall the response was very positive and there were no objections. The founder school Heads and I attended a meeting with trade union representatives on 23/11/16 to answer their questions. Questions were challenging but overall the meeting was both constructive and positive. Julie and I have also been invited to attend the Uttoxeter Town Council meeting on 13/12/16.
3. **TUPE Meetings**: The formal TUPE meetings are underway to consult with staff over their transfer from employment with Staffs CC to the MAT. 3 issues that might affect terms and conditions ("measures") are being raised with them: reviewing staffing in line with budgets; opportunities to work at other MAT schools (by agreement); and reviewing exit and redundancy packages (as SCC is currently doing).
4. **Joint Strategic Committee (JSC) Meeting** (22/11/16): This meeting with CoGs and Heads gave approval: to tender for an accountancy software package; to buy into the DfE insurance liability policy for academies; and to create a single bank account for the MAT (probably with Lloyds, who specialise in this area and charge minimal costs). The issue of maternity leave costs was raised. Alison Hodgson is now investigating the costs of maternity cover insurance. The JSC agree to devote future agendas to MAT issues.
5. **MAT Conversion Meeting** (30/11/16): The 5 founder school Heads are now meeting fortnightly to try to ensure everything is in place for a 1st February start; CoGs and other Heads are also invited. At the first of these meetings, a draft Regional Capacity Growth Fund application was discussed, including bids for supporting vulnerable schools and for expanding the MAT, each totalling around £100,000. These bids are being prepared.
6. **Regional Schools Commissioner Large MATs Event**: Julie Rudge and I attended an afternoon event in Birmingham for large MATs led by the new Regional Schools Commissioner for the West Midlands, Christine Quinn. The purpose was to present

the ESC strategy and to consult with MATs on changes. It was made clear that: MATs are central to the RSC strategy; the DfE wants new academies to be part of MATs rather than stand-alone (existing single academies will be encouraged to join MATs); and the success of applications will be based on quality and sustainability. We were also consulted on the DfE Discussion paper, "Schools that work for everyone", which seeks to involve independent schools and universities in creating new academies, expanding grammar schools and allowing faith schools to admit all pupils on the basis of faith (currently capped at 50%).

7. **LA Support:** We are receiving good support from the LA over conversion. Sid and I are hoping to meet the senior LA representative, Geoff Crockett, to discuss the new responsibilities the MAT will take on from the LA and the funding that will come with them.
8. **Academy Show:** Alison Hodgson (CFO) and Tracey Evans (School Business Manager at Ryecroft) attended the recent Academies Show in Birmingham. They attended sessions mainly relating to finance, including on accountancy software, absence insurance and catering.
9. **Uttoxeter Learning Trust Improvement Plan** (draft): The DfE asked for a Trust Improvement Plan for the meeting on the 22nd. I drafted a simple plan based on what we had included in our Vision, Values and Strategy statement. The draft plan should be circulated to you along with this news briefing.

Mike