

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**HELD FRIDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2019**

PRESENT: Rishi Boyjoonauth (chair) – Chattenden; Dean Brewer – Elaine ; Jon Carthy - Byron; Paula Fewtrell – St Margaret Infants; Nickie Forrest – New Road; Maureen Grabski – St Mary’s RCP; Matt Harris – Napier Primary; Dora Indresano-Maundene; Kathy Sexton – St Michael’s ; Barry Symons -Oaklands; Tim Williams – Wayfield

APOLOGIES: Karen Joy

IN ATTENDANCE Sophie Powell (Fairview) until 10.30am

Agenda Item	Focus	
1.	<p><b>Apologies / Welcomes</b></p> <p>The chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting. He thanked the Vice Chair for her support with the agenda. He went on to outline the agenda. He also asked that if colleagues were not receiving information from him, to let him know so that this could be addressed.</p> <p>Apologies were received and accepted from Karen Joy. Apologies were also received for early departure to attend an NAHT meeting from Jon Carthy and Barry Symons.</p>	
2  2.1  2.2	<p><b>David Watkins, Head of Education and Rebecca Smith, Medway School Improvement</b></p> <p>2.1 The Head of Education provided an overview of the recent Ofsted inspection of Local Authority Children’s Services, making the point that the inspection was an inspection of all provision including partners. He thanked schools for their contribution to the inspection. Within the overall poor outcome, there had been areas of positive feedback, including the virtual school, while the main areas of concern related to strategic planning, staffing levels, turnover and caseloads. Caseloads had reduced since the inspection from 40 to approximately 25 but as individuals left, that was liable to fluctuation. It was acknowledged that Medway was a challenging area to recruit to and the poor outcome may impact on this further.</p> <p>2.2 Moving forward, the strategic board was developing an improvement plan, the process for which would be overseen by an appointed commissioner, Eleanor Brazil. In December, Ms Brazil would report to the DfE with one of a number of recommendations, ranging from expressing confidence that weaknesses had been properly identified and a robust action plan was in place, which the LA was able to deliver, to the removal of responsibility from the LA. In this scenario, tenders would probably be sought with a view to another LA or other enterprise running the service. Accountability would though remain with Medway.</p>	

2.3	Following the departure of the previous Assistant Director, an interim AD, Jean Imray has been appointed from mid-October for a period of 12 months. <b>A member of the executive queried the reason for the post being interim rather than substantive.</b> They were advised there was a view that the skill set required to effect the necessary change was not usually found in those applying for a substantive post at this level.	
2.4	<b>In response to a question about actions being put in place to safeguard children between now and December,</b> David Watkins advised of a need to move quickly and the first meeting of the strategic board was being convened on 24 <sup>th</sup> October, which the MELA chair was attending. New social workers had been recruited following a Cabinet agreement to provide funding and some staff had been asked to leave.	
2.5	<b>Headteachers raised questions about Early Help capacity</b> and were advised that there was a recognition that this aspect needed strengthening and approval to commence this was awaited. <b>A headteacher commented that Early Help had not always been supportive,</b> for example in terms of coming out to school to deliver training. David Watkins replied that if furnished with the detail of headteachers' concerns, he would aim to address them, directing activity if necessary.	
2.6	<b>Based on their recent experiences of other commissioned services, headteachers also asked whether going forward those commissioned would be fully aware of the extent of demand prior to appointment.</b> David Watkins confirmed that they would be.	
2.7	<b>A question was asked about Early Years, the impact of the loss of children's centres and the support for independent nurseries.</b> David Watkins responded that 70-80% of independent nurseries were good or outstanding and those about whom there were concerns were supported.	
2.8	<b>The executive requested that Jean Imray was invited to the next meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December</b> but in the meantime was asked to introduce herself by email on appointment setting out the plan for the weeks until that date. It was also agreed that the chair would ensure that information from the strategic board meeting was circulated.	RB/DW  RB
2.9	David Watkins concluded by advising that the substantive post for Assistant Director for both SEND and Education was being reinstated. He advised that in the short term, responding to the children's services inspection was providing capacity challenges, but that he would always deal with urgent issues raised by headteacher. He also advised that the LA was anticipating a SEND visit and while not expecting to be released from the Statement of Action following the inspection 3 years previously, was hopeful that the number of areas within the statement would be reduced and it was acknowledged that progress had been made.	
2.10	Rebecca Smith, Medway School Improvement, circulated and spoke from a powerpoint presentation, which is filed with these minutes. The presentation covered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medway strategic priorities;</li> <li>• information about LA statutory responsibilities in relation to all schools including academies and how these were enacted in a spirit of collaboration;</li> </ul>	

<p>2.11</p> <p>2.12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a review of the headline data, indicating that while KS2 outcomes at combined remained static at 2% off National, performance in individual subject areas was improving compared to other LAs;</li> <li>• a review of exclusions demonstrating a very marked downward trend, which was in part ascribed to targeted work with 20 schools, 79% of which were now below in line with or below national benchmarks and all of whom had improved;</li> <li>• key priorities in terms of standards and leadership and management and the challenges in meeting them including fragmentation;</li> <li>• Moving forward including development of Zone working and aspects considered essential for this. The values of agreeing to share data was highlighted;</li> <li>• Moderation training;</li> <li>• Information about Local Leaders of Education;</li> <li>• SEND support programme and Medway parent and carers forum, from which had come a recommendation that transition principles to Secondary school were formalised on a 'postcard'</li> <li>• Arrangements for HMI briefing.</li> </ul> <p>The Executive noted that the information about headteachers serving on groups/forums needed updating. In response to a challenge about the strategic oversight of the groups and ensuring feedback from the groups, the roles of the Medway Education Partnership board (MEP), school improvement colleagues and group representatives were discussed. It was agreed that it was sensible that the MEP retained oversight but it was recognised that early meetings had lacked focus and outward communication needed to be improved. Executive Members challenged the MEP document that was circulated to Heads and how exactly it fitted in with proactive change in education in Medway. MELA had not really been consulted on with regards to MEP yet it was mentioned in the paperwork. David Watkins suggested he had done a good job in both challenging Councillors and communicating via the mechanisms that had been put in place but that MELA needed to provide support. It was suggested that a clear process of feedback from group/forum representatives back to the MELA executive and then circulated to all would be a sensible approach.</p> <p>In respect of the HMI briefing, headteacher noted that numbers were limited to 16 and agreed that places would be allocated across zones as fairly as possible.</p> <p>Action: RB to circulate the powerpoint</p>	<p>RB</p>
<p>3</p>	<p><b>Feedback</b></p> <p>This items was dealt with under item 2</p>	
<p>4</p> <p>4.1</p>	<p><b>Kate Barry – Education Safeguarding Lead.</b></p> <p>Kate Barry spoke from handouts, which she subsequently circulated and that are filed with these minutes. Her briefing covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holiday contacts and the form for October had been modified to allow schools to indicate whether contact could be made with them over the break. It was highlighted that a MASH form was not required if social workers had all the information they required from the phonecall.</li> <li>• Training, which had been received well and in terms of the MASH education workshop appeared to have had impact as evidenced by improved practice.</li> </ul>	

<p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p>	<p>There was no further training until after Christmas unless requested. The LADO awareness raising training was expected to take place every other month and would come to Zones if requested;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The safeguarding policy was available, and the broken link had been fixed</li> <li>• The utilisation of Challenge and Escalation policy in Medway and the drive to ensure that all partners followed the process. Colleagues were encouraged to attend the training if possible.</li> <li>• A wish to attend zone meetings where possible</li> <li>• An ambition to set up a DSL drop in</li> <li>• A reminder about anti-bullying week from 11-15 November</li> <li>• The availability of plentiful resources for mental health awareness</li> <li>• The safeguarding audit tool - it was felt that it was in parts overly cumbersome and repetitive, however, the action planning element was appreciated. A revised version would be developed in partnership with MCSP based on feedback and made available in the new year. Schools that had not yet completed and returned the audit this year could choose whether to use the new excel version or the audit from last year. Return rates had been poor the previous year at 60/120 and it was hoped that this would improve.</li> </ul> <p>The Executive discussed presentation of the report to governors prior to submission and agreed that it would be useful for a 'date by' to be set. The submission of the Governors' minutes capturing governors having discussed the report was also raised; it was suggested that the chair's comment could be used to evidence this rather than submitting the minutes which would have to be completely redacted before sending to the LA and was not an efficient use of time.</p> <p>The Executive commented on the timeliness of the KCSIE release/updated and asked that if the opportunity arose at Government level, it would be helpful if it was fed back that an earlier confirmed document rather than draft version of the guidance would be helpful. The issue of the unavailability of the LADO during a lunch period was raised. Ms Barry advised that cover should have been in place and she would feed back the concern raised.</p> <p>Action: RB to circulate the briefing notes to Heads.</p>	<p>KB</p> <p>RB</p>
<p>5</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p><b>Review of Terms of Reference &amp; Improvement Plan for MELA EXEC 2019-2020</b></p> <p>The Executive discussed their terms of reference. With regard to bullet point 6, members agreed that due to having been cautious with spend and deriving sufficient additional income from the conference, it had not been necessary to charge schools a subscription this year, or indeed previous years. It was agreed to retain the bullet point within the terms of reference but to add a note to the website to the effect of this minute that this year schools would not be charged for being a member of MELA. This led to a discussion about the website and its utilisation to promote local CPD. It was agreed that the Chair would email schools, CPD providers and the LA reminding them of the MELA website and inviting them to provide a link to the website. Kathy Sexton to update the MELA website. A rider would also be placed on the website to invite schools to submit opportunities if they wished</p>	<p>KS</p> <p>KS</p>

5.2	<p>The Executive reviewed the previous year's plan and went on the discuss development priorities for the year. These were agreed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having an influencing voice in commissioning;</li> <li>• standards including changes to assessment, zone data, reception baseline and GPAS;</li> <li>• RSE, the wider curriculum and the implication of the new Ofsted framework;</li> <li>• wellbeing and retention. The Executive discussed how to promote Medway as a location of choice for teachers, and the opportunity for MELA to be a force in bringing schools together to achieve this.</li> </ul> <p>An active voice in funding including the possibility of a collective letter to parents, and improving communication were also discussed.</p>	Zone chairs
5.3	<p>The Executive agreed on the importance of developing a living plan with appropriate milestones to support these strands being taken forward and that development of the plan should be a shared endeavour. It was agreed that the Zone chairs formed a working party, which would meet on 11<sup>th</sup> November at 1pm at Chattenden.</p>	
6	<p><b>Membership of various LA led committees/working groups and how this is comprised</b></p>	
6.1	<p>The current membership list of the schools forum was circulated and the purpose, processes and representation of the group was discussed. It was agreed that Maria Beaney be invited to the next meeting.</p>	RB
6.2	<p>The Executive discussed the challenges of co-ordinating communication from the myriad groups and ensuring effective onward communication of key messages to all schools. It was agreed that the chair would email all headteachers advising that if they sat on any group they should email all colleagues in advance of the meeting to enquire whether they wished anything to be raised and should subsequently email the chair with any matters for onward circulation, which he would co-ordinate and communicate.</p>	RB
6.3	<p>The chair undertook to try to establish an up to date list of all groups and membership with the LA. It was agreed that Zone chairs would seek representation from their Zones to meet with Ruth Wells with regard to moderation, asking them to communicate their name to the chair before the end of term so that he could co-ordinate a date.</p>	RB Zone chairs
6.4	<p>The Executive discussed the importance of representation at group being drawn from a wide pool and not just Executive committee members. They also expressed concern that the headteacher representing schools on the SEND improvement board did not attend zone meetings. It was agreed that the chair would speak to the relevant headteacher about their attendance at the Improvement Board meetings.</p>	RB
6.5	<p>The Executive discussed representation at the HMI briefing on 26<sup>th</sup> November and agreed that three places should be offered to each zone, with priority given to those who were most likely to be inspected soonest. It was agreed that Anne Robinson attend on behalf of governors.</p>	Zone chairs
6.6	<p>The Executive discussed representation on the Children's Services Strategic Improvement board, and agreed that this would be best served by the Chair himself.</p>	

7	<p><b>MELA Finance</b></p> <p>7.1 The chaired shared the finance spreadsheet, which he undertook to email to Kathy Sexton for website. Overall the position was healthy with a small number of debts from the conference, which were being chased.</p> <p>7.2 It was agreed that Lawrie Rose's services would be called upon to support the organisation of the next conference.</p>	RB
8	<p><b>Simon Plummer, MSCP</b></p> <p>8.1 Simon Plummer circulated and spoke to a power point presentation which is filed with these minutes. The presentation covered: the background of the transition from the safeguarding board to safeguarding partnership; its purpose, partners, structure and key areas of work. <b>Executive members queried whether the partnership being chaired by the Director for Children and Adults' Services was appropriate given the Local Authority's inspection status.</b> They were advised that Eleanor Brazil was playing a key role in setting the partnership's priorities, that the safeguarding partnership would report into the strategic improvement board, which would be chaired by Ms Brazil and that an independent scrutineer was being appointed.</p> <p>8.2 <b>The Executive also sought clarification as to the co-ordination of groups feeding into the partnership's work,</b> which it was acknowledged remained an area for development. They shared frustrations and concerns about the number of cases that in their view should be meeting thresholds for action by social care but were not. <b>They asked about the MCSP's ability to influence practice at a practical level and how schools could work with the MCSP to ensure systems and processes were sufficiently robust that Medway did not find itself the subject of future serious case review.</b> Simon Plummer advised that a leadership forum was being established to enable an open dialogue between all partners, including schools, and that if it was felt the independent scrutineer would provide the necessary oversight.</p> <p>8.3 <b>The Executive suggested that a voice at a leadership forum may not be enough and that in addition to the three statutory partners, there should be representation from the education sector at the MCSP executive forum.</b> They also asked that they were advised of the identity of the independent scrutineer on appointment and that they were invited to attend a MELA executive meeting as soon as possible after the meeting. Simon Plummer undertook to feed the views of the Executive back.</p>	SP RB
9	<p><b>Minutes from Previous Meeting</b></p> <p>9.1 The minutes from the previous meeting held 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019 were agreed as a true record and signed by the chair.</p> <p>9.2 Other than the following, all actions were complete and there were no further matters arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It was agreed that Kathy Sexton would email the funding impact form to zone chairs for their completion</li> <li>• The chair undertook to follow up with Jon Carthy in respect of MELA leading on schools demonstrating a more active voice in the national discourse on funding</li> </ul>	KS RB

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Following on from the discussions about promoting MELA and promoting Medway, it was agreed that all members of the executive committee should be able to tweet on the MELA account. It was agreed to ask Barry Symons to share the log in details</li> <li>It was noted that Paul Clarke would attend the meeting in December</li> <li>The chair undertook to email the final copy of the minutes to Kathy Sexton to make available on the website</li> </ul>	RB
10	<p><b>Feedback from Local Authority Meeting</b></p> <p>It was confirmed that the actions from the meeting had already been circulated. It was agreed that the main content had already been discussed under item 2. Nickie Forrest provided a brief overview of the overview and scrutiny committee on which she sat, commenting on its usefulness in gaining a broader perspective of the local political landscape in respect of education. The papers from all committee meetings are public documents and can be accessed at <a href="https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1">https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1</a></p>	RB
11	<p><b>ZONE Feedback</b></p> <p>11.1 Zone chairs fed back on their meetings since the last executive committee meeting.</p> <p>11.2 Zone 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendance had been low in what was a small zone. It was noted that there had been a number of headship changes, which may have impacted this.</li> <li>The zone funding had been committed to a Jenny Mosely training at Barnsole.</li> </ul> <p>11.3 Zone 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The meeting had been well attended with almost a full complement.</li> <li>Matters discussed had included the fair access panel; Zone data, for which agreement to share had been given; feedback from the Zone chairs meeting with the LA; feedback from Kirstine Boone, a serving inspector on the group about inspection and from the headteacher at Kingfisher who had been inspected under the most recent framework. A request was made that the powerpoint from Ms Boone's training was made shared ; information about training trauma informed schools</li> </ul> <p>11.4 Zone 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zone data had been discussed and reading in addition to GPAS had been identified as key issue for the zone</li> <li>A provisional date of 19 March had been set for a zone conference addressing the above and possibly attainment gender gaps, to which all zones would be invited</li> <li>Wendy Vincent had attended and given a useful presentation on SEND funding including high needs. It was expected that she would be attending all zones.</li> </ul> <p>11.5 Zone 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good attendance was noted at 16 from 21 members</li> <li>Matters discussed included the fair access panel, zone data, which highlighted reading as an issue in the zone, feedback on the chairs meeting with the LA</li> </ul>	DI

11.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A pro -forma had been designed highlighting individual school strengths and challenges to inform and co-ordinate mutual support</li> <li>• The issue of schools being used as polling station was raised. It was noted that the Director of Education and others had spoken to electoral services to no avail. It was suggested that local rotas were established, the support of the NAHT was harnessed and/or that parents were encouraged to petition the Council. It was agreed that the chair would liaise with Jon Carthy in respect of advice and/or pro forma that could be circulated to schools.</li> </ul> <p>The chair agreed to forward details for Clive Davis from Focus Education to the Vice chair, if she was unable to find details on the internet. It was suggested that he might be a good speaker for the MELA conference.</p>	RB  RB
12	<p><b>Discussion about Lead Practitioner Programme</b></p> <p>A summary of the proposed programme had been circulated and the chair read out an email from Esther Cook, seeking facilitators for the programme.</p> <p>The Executive discussed the proposal and while they had no issues with the principle were concerned about the practicalities, including demand, capacity and quality assurance. A view was also expressed that it was for MTSA rather than MELA to take responsibility for sourcing facilitators, although if individual Heads wished to facilitate programmes, this was their prerogative. It was agreed that the chair would provide this feedback to Esther Cook</p>	RB
13  13.1  13.2	<p><b>Feedback from Snapdragons Launch and ongoing issues with Snapdragons.</b></p> <p>The Chair shared his notes from the launch, which included that: each school was now allocated a school nurse for 3 days per year; the views of MELA had been taken into account and the referral form and diagnostic form was now available as a PDF; drop ins were taking place; the majority of the case backlog had been cleared; the service now had a full complement of nurses; drop in support surgeries for SENCOS were now being supported on 15<sup>th</sup> October, 14<sup>th</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> June; the website had been updated with this information, which was also mailed direct to SENCOS; duty desk arrangements had been revised and all therapists were now available on Mondays to speak on the phone to schools or parents; core standards had been launched and free training on Hopscotch was available for bronze partners.</p> <p>The process for getting on to various pathway was discussed and it was noted that there was no pathway for global delay. The chair agreed to seek clarification from Caron Campbell about this pathway. The conclusion was drawn that the service was moving in the right direction.</p>	RB  RB
14  14.1	<p><b>AOB</b></p> <p><b>Fair Access panel</b></p> <p>Dean Brewer advised that following feedback, amendments had been made to the protocol and Simon Harrington now needed colleagues to review these. He highlighted the amendment for the benefit of Zone chairs, that each Zone needed to elect 2 representative and that they and must have decision-making authority in respect of all schools in the zone and should think about reserves in the event those individuals were unable to attend. It was agreed that the role of MELA executive members was now to encourage all Headteachers to respond to the final stage of the consultation. Comments were made about the opportunity for schools to attend as</p>	ALL



	non-participative observers, the possibility of a rolling programme for representation and ensuring that the contextual data return was not overly onerous	
14.2	<p><b>Medway education Partnership</b></p> <p>The chair advised that representation was requested and he would circulate the request to all heads</p>	RB
14.3	<p><b>Resumption of headteacher briefings</b> A headteacher had requested that these were resumed. The chair advised that he had taken this up with Rebecca Smith who was of the view that Zone meetings allowed for a more intimate conversation and exchange of views and that they were working well. There were no plans to return to an LA led briefing. The Executive discussed how global information and networking beyond immediate Zone colleagues could be better facilitated. It was suggested that the MELA conference may be the appropriate forum for this, together with enhanced use of the MELA website, for example through sharing the aspects schools were working on, and seeking to ensure Zone meetings were consistently good so that colleagues were motivated to attend these. It was also suggested that better mechanisms for disseminating information from groups as discussed earlier in the meeting would have a positive impact. It was agreed to maintain a watching brief.</p>	
14.4	<p><b>MELA Conference</b></p> <p>The Executive discussed ideas for the conference. It was agreed that it should be celebratory in nature, flow from the established development priorities and that an invitation to the chair or other representative should be extended. In terms of potential dates, it was noted that a Chartered College conference linked to social equity and quality of education was being organised for the 22nd June and a clash should be avoided. It was suggested that MELA liaised with MTSA to benefit from their knowledge of potential keynote speakers. It was agreed that the development plan working party would give the conference further thought at their meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November and put forward some proposals.</p>	Zone chairs
14.5	<p>Following the lunchtime discussions with Paul Scally and a follow up request from him, it was agreed that the chair would forward Executive e-mail addresses.</p>	RB
14.6	<p>The chair thanked all colleagues for their attendance and input and closed the meeting at 3pm</p>	

Signed as a true record \_\_\_\_\_(chair) 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019