

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
HELD FRIDAY 27TH MARCH 2020 AT 11AM

PRESENT: Rishi Boyjoonauth (chair item1) – Chattenden; Dean Brewer – Elaine ; Jon Carthy - Byron; Nickie Forrest – New Road; Dora Indresano- Maundene; Karen Joy Abbey Court; Kathy Sexton (Chair from item 3) – St Michael's ; Barry Symons - Oaklands; Tim Williams – Wayfield

APOLOGIES: Maureen Grabski – St Mary's RCP

ABSENT: Paula Fewtrell – St Margaret Infant; Matt Harris – Napier

IN ATTENDANCE: Anne Robinson (Clerking Service)

Agenda Item	Focus	Actions
1.	<p>Apologies / Welcomes The chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted from Maureen Grabski The absence without apologies of Matt Harris and Paula Fewtrell were noted</p>	
2. 2.1 2.2 2.3	<p>Election of Chair The clerk confirmed that sufficient members had voted via email to constitute a quorum and that Kathy Sexton had been elected as chair. Expressing her appreciation of the impact that Rishi Boyjoonauth had had in moving MELA on during his tenure, and her intention to continue this, Mrs Sexton thanked colleagues and accepted the role. It was AGREED that the role of vice chair would be addressed at the next meeting. In the meantime, it was also AGREED that colleagues would step in to attend any meetings that the chair was unable to attend herself.</p>	AGENDA ALL
3. 3.1	<p>Chris Kiernan – Interim assistant director, children and adults/Rebecca Smith – Service Lead for school improvement and effectiveness. Chris Kiernan commented on the warm welcome he had received as assistant director. Strengths Mr Kiernan's initial assessment was that the school system had a number of strengths. This included the service leaders he was working with as committed and capable colleagues; the extent to which the Coronavirus crisis had demonstrated headteacher commitment to ensuring provision for key children; and in this regard the support and rigorous challenge afforded by the reference group of headteachers he had engaged with. He particularly thanked Rishi Boyjoonauth for his contribution.</p>	

<p>3.2</p>	<p>Challenges</p> <p>Chris Kiernan acknowledged the challenges of being an interim appointment but assured the committee of his intention to aim to make a positive difference that impacted beyond his tenure.</p> <p>He went on to identify the issues he considered most pressing:</p> <p>a) Those that were both urgent and important</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. COVID 19 b. Progress and attainment at KS2, particularly in relation to narrowing the achievement gap for disadvantaged pupils c. Ensuring the security of QA processes d. Addressing the issues in those schools that were less than good and achieving rapid improvement e. Reducing the overspend in relation to high needs. <p>b) Those that were important but less immediately urgent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Place planning for the next 5 – 10 years b. Ensuring sufficient specialist places providing for the right mix of need c. Implementing the recommendations from the recent review of Alternative Provision 	
<p>3.3</p>	<p>Mr Kiernan then outlined his thoughts on some of the actions envisaged.</p>	
<p>3.3.1</p>	<p>School effectiveness and improvement</p> <p>a) Tying together and refining existing strong plans, including in respect of the SEN strategy and the right priorities identified by Medway Education Partnership, to meet Medway’s potential to be world class in terms of school effectiveness and improvement.</p> <p>b) Ensuring that LA statutory duties relating to schools and academies were met. A list identifying the Council leads on each of these would be circulated to headteachers and chairs to streamline communication. Mr Kiernan went on to explain the distinction between school effectiveness and school improvement, commenting that other than where commissioned or where a school had lost the ability to self improve, school improvement was not a matter for the LA and was better served by schools supporting each other. School effectiveness, including in academies was however the LA remit and a plan was being developed setting out the LA strategy for ensuring this, which would be shared with headteachers for consultation in the summer term.</p> <p>c) Working with all schools that were less than good and ensuring accurate advance knowledge of those that were at risk of being so in order to be able to support and if necessary directly intervene, or refer to the RSC as appropriate.</p> <p>Executive committee members raised a number of questions including: how intelligence on those schools currently good or better but at risk of decline was gathered; whether this intervention had been actioned in respect of any currently schools in Medway; how heads would know if their school were subject to an assessment of at risk of decline; the arrangements for consultation on the</p>	

strategy for ensuring school effectiveness; how confidentiality would be assured for schools if support was being commissioned from other schools; how the accuracy of the view of academies would be assured.

Chris Kiernan and Rebecca Smith responded that the intention was that visits to schools and discussion with leaders would inform their view. Where that offer was made to academies who exercised their right not to engage, public data would be used. If academies deemed at risk continued to choose not to work with the LA, referral to the RSC with whom relationships were good could be made. Actions had been taken in respect of schools about whom the LA was concerned. The LA's 4 point risk assessment would be confidential to the school involved, however it was anticipated that headteachers may choose to share the concerns with any school commissioned to support them. The plan for school effectiveness would be finalised in draft by Easter. It would then be presented to Members and the Director of Children and Adult Services before being consulted on with headteachers and then finalised in term 6 for implementation from September 2020. It was noted that the plan was an LA document for comment on by headteachers rather than co-construction.

It was **AGREED** that headteacher consultation on the school effectiveness plan should be conducted via Zones.

CK

d) **Working with Medway Education Partnership's 'achieving more together' group on its strategic school improvement plans** which already provided a strong values led framework but which would benefit from some refinement of its underpinning actions plans. Mr Kiernan highlighted the specific role within the plan for MELA and MHSA in facilitating sector collaboration and partnership co-production in order to strengthen system leadership, which he would like to work with MELA on developing. He also highlighted five documented challenges to quality provision which were relevant to MELA and was keen to work with the executive committee to address these. It was noted that while MELA's own improvement plan was considered by Mr Kiernan as a good starting point, it had been written in advance of the MEP strategy. Mr Kiernan's view that there was opportunity to draw these together and for MELA to consider what they wished to prioritise in order to enhance the MEP plan was noted.

e) **Working with headteachers and other partners on narrowing the gap for disadvantaged pupils.** It was noted that Medway was in the 3rd quartile for outcomes for pupils in receipt of free school meals compared to the 4th quartile for all other pupils. Mr Kiernan commented that irrespective of this there was a moral driver to promote progress and attainment for these pupils. While not generally in favour of importing external solutions, he was familiar with the RADY programme, the result of which had been effective in Bedfordshire. It was suggested that representatives from MELA may like to see this in practice, which he could facilitate.

<p>3.2</p>	<p>Reducing the overspend in high needs.</p> <p>Mr Kiernan explained that the current £4 -5m per year structural overspend was unsustainable. A key priority was reducing the percentage of EHCPs from 3.5% of the school population to the national average of 3.1%. This amounted to a 12% actual reduction, equating to some £4m. He advised that historically some EHCPs were approved for some pupils where this would probably not be the case elsewhere in the country and while 83% of LA high needs budgets were overspent, Medway was in the top 1% of most overspent. In order to bring about the necessary cost reduction, in parallel with reducing EHCPs, Mr Kiernan advised of the need to develop the local special school and resourced provision to better meet local need. This would allow some of those in costly independent schools to be provided for more affordably, the needs of some pupils currently in special schools to be provided for in resourced provision, and a greater proportion of pupils provided for in mainstream. It was recognised that this would necessitate working with schools on capacity and ensuring funding released by not outsourcing provision to the independent sector was in part utilised to support those mainstream schools.</p> <p>A member of the executive committee recommended ‘Thrive’ as a good strategy to implement across the LA in a joined up approach to reducing demand for EHCPs. Rebecca Smith commented that further to the inclusion project the LA had undertaken with some schools there was a great deal of local good practice that could be leveraged. The imperative was that any LA approach was strategically co-ordinated in line with the MEP priorities and the previously discussed action planning would support this.</p> <p>In response to a question raised about opportunity to regularly communicate with the LA about SEND provision and strategy, Mr Kiernan confirmed he would be keen to reinstate a mechanism for doing so.</p>	<p>CK</p>
<p>3.3</p>	<p>Place planning</p> <p>Mr Kiernan advised of an anticipated 30k new homes and 20% population increase to 2035, which would provide a significant opportunity for Medway.</p> <p>Mr Kiernan and Miss Smith left the meeting.</p>	
<p>3.4</p>	<p>The committee reflected on the discussion, noting LA officers’ expressed commitment to the MEP’s strategic plan. It was AGREED that it would be beneficial if a request was made that this was recirculated and some thought given as to how MELA and its plans should best tie into this. The committee also reflected that it had itself previously commented on the lack of clear action plans to underpin the priorities and perhaps a small group should offer to work with LA colleagues on its refinement. The need to maintain clarity that while willing to support agreed LA plans, MELA was a voice for headteachers and not accountable for the delivery of the plan was voiced.</p> <p>The school effectiveness plan was discussed and it was AGREED that a request be made that it was shared with the executive committee. A committee member commented that an offer had been made for a small group to work with the LA to</p>	<p>KS</p> <p>KS</p>

	co-construct the document which had not been taken up, but Cllr Potter was keen that this happened.	
11.	AOB	
11.1	The committee noted that due to Covid 19, the planned headteacher conference had been deferred but that Lawrie Rose was rearranging the date and this would be communicated in due course	RB
11.2	As the chair's school was already managing the website and holding Zone funding, it was agreed that holding the MELA funding would pass to Elaine Primary School and that the outgoing chair would arrange to pass the funds over.	
11.3	Meeting closed at 12.55pm. Subject to COVID 19 developments, the next meeting is confirmed as a full day meeting on Friday 15 th May 2020	

Signed as a true record of the meeting _____ 15th May 20

ACTIONS

2	Vice chair election to be placed on next agenda Colleagues to support the chair in any meetings she is unable to attend	Agenda All
3.1	Ensure circulation of LA statutory duties leads to heads and chairs	CK
3.1	Consult with zones on the school effectiveness plan in due course	CK
3.2	Reinstate regular opportunity for heads to discuss SEN strategy and provision with LA	CK
3.4	Request that the MEP plan was recirculated to committee members	KS
	Request that the school effectiveness plan was shared with the committee	KS
11.2	Arrange for the transfer of MELA executive committee accounts to Elaine Primary	RB