

## CHARMOUTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

### MINUTES OF THE EMERGENCY GOVENING BODY MEETING Held in school on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2021 at 16:00

**Present:** Laura Cornish (Headteacher HT), Rachel Coney (Chairing meeting RC), Lynne Wheatley (LW), Jane O'Sullivan (JO'S), Jody Watson (JW), John Smith (JS), Caroline Dare (CD) (attended remotely from 16:10), Miranda Feasey (MF)

**Clerk:** not present. Minutes taken by MF

#### 1. Welcome

RC welcomed everyone to the meeting, explaining we were meeting to discuss the situation of being without a Chair of Governors and as of this afternoon without a Vice Chair. She explained she had agreed to chair this meeting as held the link role for governance and had spent time during the day discussing the situation with the NGA and Nicky Diment (ND) from the local authority (LA) regarding our position as a board without either position filled.

RC confirmed MF had agreed to minute the meeting.

#### 2. The situation

RC described her conversations with the NGA and ND. She went on to inform the governors that Karen Southcott had handed in her notice a while ago and would be stepping back by the end of September. Without a Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk or named finance lead the board was clearly not in a good position to perform its governance role, particularly considering the Ofsted position.

HT confirmed that Niamh Verco would step temporarily into the clerk position.

RC stated that as a board we needed to make sure we could deliver our core purposes:

- Supporting the wellbeing and education of children within the school
- Supporting the wellbeing of staff and their ability to function effectively.

This meeting is being held to move the situation forwards.

#### 3. Appointment to Chair and Vice Chair positions

RC asked if there was anyone who would be able to become Chair or Vice Chair, with the exception of HT and CD who are ineligible to hold the position.

- RC – unable
- LW – unable. Also made it clear to previous chair that she intended to step down from the board at the end of this term for personal reasons. RC asked what her intentions were now and if she was happy to continue to Christmas and LW confirmed she would be happy to do so but then would intend to leave the board.
- JO'S – unable
- JW – unable
- JS – unable at present due to other governing and work commitments and new to the board but may be able to consider Vice Chair or Co-Vice Chair in future.
- MF – unable to hold the Chair role but prepared to accept the Vice Chair role if a strong and experienced chair is in place but unable to accept the role now without a Chair in place.

It was clear from the explanations given that being unable to find a Chair from within the board is a matter of capacity for the board members and not a matter of willingness or capability.

RC went on to confirm that we are in breach of statutory requirements for the board without these positions filled. Now we have confirmed that none of the existing board are able to take on the role of chair we can inform the ND from the LA. As we are a maintained school the LA must support us.

### 3.1. Options

- a) LA can support us to develop a current board member. This is not an option considering the capacity of the board.
- b) LA can help the board to find governors and want to know if we have networks or contacts who may be able to take on the Chair position. This seems unlikely as we have been having discussions about the Vice Chair role for some time and it is clear the board do not have contacts to call on. RC noted here that it was necessary for us to have an LA appointed member on our board. The previous Chair had held this position so the LA would need to appoint a new LA appointed governor.
- c) The LA source a chair which we approve. This would meet the need to have an LA appointed governor too.
- d) If we are unable to approve the LA sourced chair the LA will define us as a school causing concern. They will then remove the whole board and appoint an executive board.

RC explained if any more of us leave option d becomes far more likely. We would like to avoid this considering the best interests of the pupils, staff and school reputation.

MF asked how many positions there were on the board. JW checked the handbook and confirmed it is 11 positions plus Associate Members.

HT informed us she has a meeting with Mark Lees (ML) from the LA tomorrow (9/9/2021) to discuss the situation again. ML would like us to hold another EGB next week at which someone from the LA would also be present. HT requested all governors complete the form sent round to confirm availability but proposing 15/09/2021 at 4:15pm.

RC informed the governors that the LA could provide meeting support until a chair was found. Governors agreed this should be requested. CD asked if there was a charge to this. HT said she believed not.

## 4. Communication

At some stage we need to communicate the change in Chair to the parents. LA have recommended this is kept confidential presently and ideally the change would be communicated once a solution is found. It was agreed to wait until the EGB next week and make a decision about communicating to parents at that point. HT confirmed some staff are aware of the situation, but she will request they remain quiet at this point.

It was agreed that all communications between governors must be transparent and professional.

## 5. Business as usual requirements

### 5.1. HT support

A governor asked if any specific items the previous Chair was undertaking with the HT required governor attention immediately. HT said as FGB was moved to the end of the month there was nothing immediately requiring attention however she requested a point of contact in case anything came up.

It was agreed that:

- If the situation was not sensitive, HT would email all governors. Governor responses would copy in everyone else, so everyone remains informed.
- If the situation is sensitive, HT would email everyone saying a sensitive issue had arisen and requesting support. Any member of the board can respond, depending on capacity at the time, copying everyone in, saying they will pick it up so the rest of the board can stand down. It is more likely sensitive issues will be pupil related and therefore likely to fall into the

Safeguarding link role. JO'S confirmed she would usually pick these up and would be happy to do so.

## 5.2. Link roles

The previous chair had started having 1-1s with governors to allocate link roles.

- JW had agreed to take over the SEN work from LW. She is happy to do this and LW and JW will work together this term.
- RC will retain governance and communication and engagement link roles but could pick up a subject lead.

No other 1-1s had been held.

ND confirmed it is not absolutely necessary to have a named finance link governor.

A discussion was had about possible governors and subject link roles. HT confirmed we definitely needed:

- English (MF agreed to do this at the end of last term)
- Maths (MF currently link governor)

In addition, Ofsted were likely to want to do deep dives on some of the following:

- Geography
- History
- Science
- PE
- PSHE

A number of governors volunteers for different link roles, but it was agreed to wait until the EGB next week as a new Chair will have their own thoughts about link roles.

Sharon Peel (SP) was previously the EYFS link governor and now an associate governor but none of the board are aware of the arrangement made with SP and the previous Chair. HT to contact SP to discuss.

RC raised the issue of HT appraisal which is due by 31/12/21. This would require members of the board but there will be a lack of consistency as this was held last year by people who have now left the board. RC asked if the HT had the paperwork for last appraisal. HT said she had the objectives but not the full paperwork as the appraisal the year before that had been carried out by different people too.

Discussed Ofsted and need for a 'homework' file to be pulled together for governors. Start working on this now.

RC said that when we are through the crisis it will be important to conduct a 'route cause' study to find out why we have ended in this situation and make sure we are doing all we can to avoid this happening again. HT stated that much of the work she had done with the previous Chair and then the Vice Chair had been lost as was conversation and not documented. Record keeping will also need to be considered as part of the 'route cause' study. This was agreed.

## 6. Meeting dates

- 16/9/21 – 13:30 (Face to face)
  - Consultation closure meeting. HT to send out the information for new parents and a reminder for existing parents this week.
- 30/09/21 – (Face to face)
  - 13:30 - workshop on SEF and Ofsted questions
  - Break
  - 16:00 – FGB

CD unable to attend the workshop section as within the school day. CD working on SEF with teaching staff however any comments to be made by CD in advance of the workshop and discussed then.

- EGB next week
  - HT to discuss agenda with ML in meeting on 09/09/21. We suggest the following:
    - How we can fill the vacancies
    - What else governors should be doing/focusing on
    - Communication strategy
    - Mapping governor roles and objectives for this term

## **7. AOB**

RC asked if any governor had any worries not discussed. All governors expressed a general anxiety about the future but confirmed they felt more confident having had the meeting today. All governors' contact numbers are on the shared drive. All governors to feel able to pick up the phone or meet socially, particularly for the newer members.

MF agreed to chair the EGB next week. All other governors agreed to take turns chairing the meetings until a permanent Chair is appointed.

HT asked if the board were happy with virtual meetings if that meant a Chair could be appointed who would be unable to attend face to face. General agreement although it was felt face to face or a mixture of face to face and virtual would be better.

KS and NV have a hand over date in the diary. RC asked HT if she was comfortable with NV acting as Clerk. HT confirmed she was comfortable with this arrangement.

### **ACTIONS:**

- RC to contact ND 09/09/21 to inform her we are unable to appoint a chair.
- All governors complete the form sent round to confirm availability for meetings
- HT to confirm EGB date and time once spoken to ML and governors completed the form
- HT to contact SP to discuss position on the board
- HT to send out the information for new parents and a reminder for existing parents this week.