**To           :              Headteachers; Chairs of Governors; Foundation Governors; Ex-officio clergy;**

**From     :               Jeff Williams**

**Date      :               29th June 2022**

**Re           :              Academisation Consultation Meetings**

Dear colleagues

I outlined at the April and June Termly Briefings that our approach to the government’s White Paper and now the Bill that is going through Parliament, that we are taking a measured and structured approach. At the recent round of Briefings, I updated colleagues on the issues that have arisen while some of the detail in the White paper has been lost, or emerged with different statements in the Bill. My apologies to those who signed up for Monday’s briefing but I was chairing and leading on an item and went down with covid last week for the third time, and two other presenters had to send apologies.

You’ve heard me repeatedly stress that we are engaged in a full and structured consultation process – and will not therefore deal with this on a piecemeal, school-by-school or area approach. Thank you for your support and positive feedback on how we are moving forward – always discussing with LA colleagues.

The Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and both dioceses have not yet determined the policy regarding the options for our schools or the timing. This is important because no CofE school can academise without the permission of the DBE, and the DBE is pleased that whatever the eventual policy states, the policy will have been informed by conversations with all stakeholders. Hence my reiteration at every meeting with you that it is inappropriate and not best use of HTs and Governors’ time to approach MATs to discuss possibilities of joining them, as permission is required from the DBE, and that permission will be based on the policy that emerges.

This will be the most significant decision for CofE schools since the establishment of VA and VC schools under the 1944 Education Act – hence the need to take our time to get this right.

I am a member of the Bishop’s Staff Team (BST) in both dioceses, and have engaged them, and the DBE in substantial discussions on the government’s proposals; stressed the importance of a policy that secures our schools in perpetuity; anticipates ramifications across a range of matters; considers specifically how rural and small schools will be impacted; and high level information on some of the possible routes forward.  Detailed discussions within BST and the DBE, with options and risks will be tabled at the appropriate time, and not before we have completed our consultation with you, and not before the full and detailed and final Bill is known. I hope this reassures you.

Our consultation started in April, when I presented the proposals in the White Paper, and received initial feedback from you. This was followed up by presentations by some existing Heads of CofE academies in our dioceses, with opportunities to raise questions and feed-back to me on anything discussed. The next part of the Consultation process involves meeting with you in person – I’ve shared the dates with you fortnightly for several months. At these meetings I will update colleagues on any developments with the DfE and the Bill. There will then be small group discussions and a plenary. The small group discussions will focus on the following areas, and not any policy proposals (as these will be the next stage of consultation based on your comments and input in July) – it would be helpful if you could come prepared with some thoughts and comments, which we will gather. Members of the DBE will be observing, to reassure you that direct feedback will be given to the Board. So your advance preparation on the following would be helpful:

* What do you see as challenges of system-wide academisation?
* What do you see as opportunities of system-wide academisation?
* Whatever policy emerges, in terms of timing, what do you think would be an ideal timeframe for conversion?
* What are your concerns about academisation?
* What would you wish to see retained from current stakeholder relationships, ways of working and partnerships under the system-wide academisation government policy?
* Would you want Local Governing Boards (with changed responsibilities and accountability under law) to be part of any MAT proposal (nb - LGBs are not part of all MATs approach to governance)

I will present some scenarios at the meetings, and will then be seeking feedback on your views on :

* The Memoranda and Articles of all MATs to ensure CofE schools for the next 200 years
* Cross-diocesan border possibilities
* Hub models to academisation
* Phased area academisation
* The place of LAs in the new government proposed landscape and our relationships going forward

If there are specific questions or areas you’d like me to consider including at the meetings, please email my pa Sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org – noting that we will not be covering any detail on proposed models of MATs at these meetings – these will be covered at a future round of consultations when we have more detail from government but also our own context and preferences in this region.

It’s important that places are **booked in advance** – please contact my pa Sam.powell@portsmouth.anglican.org Thank you.

Monday 11th July,  10am-12pm, St Pauls Church, The Green, Tadley, Basingstoke, RG26 3PB

Wednesday 13th July, 10am-12pm – Cornerstone CofE School, Bader Way, Whiteley, Fareham, PO15 7JH

Wednesday 13th July, 2.30-4.30pm – St Barnabas Church, Fromond Road, Winchester SO22 6DS specific focus on Small Schools - the most commonly used definition is ‘fewer than 210 = small school’ (i.e. smaller than one class of each year group) and ‘fewer than 105 = very small school’ (i.e. smaller than half a class of each year group). This is the definition which the CofE uses and the definition which the DfE seem to have last used in their guidance on academy funding

Wednesday 20th July 6pm-8pm - online

Thursday 21st July 6pm-8pm – online

Kind regards

Jeff

Jeff Williams

Director of Education

Diocese of WINCHESTER &

Diocese of PORTSMOUTH

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