

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 7 MAY 2020 from 8.30 am – 1.15 pm – meetings held virtually using conference call

The meetings were held virtually, as separate conference calls, as a result of the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic.

* indicates attendance

All meetings

*Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
*Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair/ Colchester West
*Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer/County Treasurer

North East meeting

8.30 am – 9.30 am

*Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair/ Colchester West
*Richard Potter	North East Vice-Chair
*Sue Bardetti	Tendring South
*Liz Bartholomew	Harwich and Dovercourt
*Ceri Daniels	Colchester South
*Ian MacDonald	Tendring Mid
*Donna Parker	Tendring North
*Paula Pemberton	Colchester East

South meeting

9.45 am – 10.35 am

*Nicky Barrand	South Chair/Basildon East & Pitsea
*Richard Green	South Vice-Chair
*Liz Benjeddi	Billericay
*Heidi Blakeley	Wickford
*Emma Dawson	Castle Point and Benfleet
*Hayley O'Dea	Rochford
Angela Russell	Basildon West
*Gary Soars	Rayleigh
Karen Tucker	Canvey Island
*Matt O'Grady	West Horndon Primary (Brentwood)
*Jenni Evans	Warley Primary (Brentwood)

Mid meeting

11.00 am – 12 noon

*Dawn Dack	Mid Chair/Maldon
*Lois Ashforth	Dengie
*Dawn Baker	Chelmsford West/Mid Treasurer
*Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
*Anna Conley	Witham
*Kate Mills	Braintree
*Nicola Morgan-Soane	Mid Vice-Chair/ Chelmsford South
*Amanda Reid	Chelmsford North
Vacancy	Halstead

West meeting

12.15 pm – 1.15 pm

*Isobel Barron	West Chair
*George Athanasiou	West Vice-Chair
*John Clements	Uttlesford South

*Mary Jo Hall	West Treasurer/Uttlesford North
*Julie Lorkins	Epping Forest Rural
Jonathan Tye	Harlow
Vacancy	Epping Forest South

Each meeting followed the same agenda and the notes are collated from the four meetings.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/MEMBERSHIP OF THE EXECUTIVE

Action

The four area Chairs welcomed their representatives to each meeting.

- Nick Hutchings, North East area
- Nicky Barrand, South area
- Dawn Dack, Mid area
- Isobel Barron, West area

Harriet Phelps-Knights (EPHA Chair), Nick Hutchings (EPHA Vice-Chair) and Pam Langmead (Professional Officer and Treasurer) attended all of the meetings

Apologies were received from:

- Angela Russell Basildon West
- Karen Tucker Canvey Island

Both were unable to join the meeting for technical reasons.

Nick Hutchings (North East Chair) welcomed Ceri Daniels to the North East meeting as the new representative for Tiptree and Stanway (South Colchester).

Nicky Barrand (South Chair) noted that there is still a vacancy for a Brentwood representative on the Executive, but welcomed Matt O'Grady and Jenni Evans who were at the meeting to represent their colleagues in Brentwood. The Professional Officer confirmed that she will discuss the ongoing representation following the meeting and this will be confirmed at the area AGM in June.

Professional
Officer

Dawn Dack (Mid Chair) noted that there continues to be a vacancy for Halstead. This vacancy will be addressed at the area AGM in June. Nicola Morgan-Soane (Area Vice-Chair and representative for Chelmsford South) noted that she had been due to take a break from headship at the end of July, but explained that she now plans to stay on for the autumn term, given the current circumstances.

Isobel Barron welcomed West representatives to the meeting. Julie Lorkins (Vice-Chair for West and representative for Epping Forest Rural) noted that she had been due to retire at the end of July, but explained that she now plans to stay on for the autumn term, given the current circumstances.

Isobel added that there is still a vacancy for a representative for Epping Forest South and that this vacancy will be addressed at the area AGM in June.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 23 January 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record. The key part of the meeting had been discussion with Michelle Winter,

Senior HMI for the Eastern Region, and it was agreed that her attendance at the meeting had been very informative and helpful. The Professional Officer reminded Executive members that Michelle has been invited to attend the AGM on Wednesday 7 October. This could be an opportune time for headteachers to question her about the resumption and future of Ofsted inspection.

At the West meeting Isobel Barron noted the reference to the cost of the WEPHA conferences, which are partly subsidised by EPHA funds. As a result of the discussion at the Executive meeting in January, West heads were asked to pay more for the termly conference and it has been agreed that the cost should be increased to £60 per delegate.

3. FINANCE REPORT

Current account income and expenditure 10.01.20 - 17.04.20

	Expenditure	Income
Miscellaneous	£3,028.19	£0.00
DSG		£0.00
Subscriptions		£0.00
Supply	£3,102.00	
Travel & mileage	£1,953.01	
Professional Officer	£20,008.78	
Meetings	£12,816.16	
Colleague Supporter	£515.00	
Totals	£41,423.14	£0.00

The Professional Officer expenditure for January 2020 – March 2020 is broken down into

• professional fees	£16,950.00
• mileage	£1,300.50
• expenses paid on behalf of EPHA	£1,758.28
	£20,008.78

Bank statements for account 00795978

17.12.19	£218,959.02
08.04.20	£181,696.11

Pam reported that EPHA had paid for a consignment of hand sanitiser on behalf of the Local Authority. The payment has been reimbursed, but the hand sanitiser is yet to be distributed to schools. The key purpose of the consignment will be to offer some to each school to support re-opening, whenever that takes place.

Conference account Income and Expenditure 20.12.19 – 31.03.20

	Expenditure	Income
Deputy conference 2019	£0.00	£1,100.00
WEPHA conference January 2020	£3,864.00	£1,350.00
Headteacher conference 2020	£7,714.95	£19,840.00
Training events Spring 2020	£18,478.91	£3,300.00

The Professional Officer explained that she is not yet certain about the final cost of the Headteacher conference which, of course, had to be cancelled. Only one school has

asked for a refund; the remaining bookings will be transferred to the conference in 2021 and refunds will be offered next year if headteachers don't want to attend. EPHA will "save" some of the money spent on speakers if they are rebooked for 2021, so the Professional Officer confirmed that she will talk to individual presenters/agents to see if that is viable. Stock Brook Country Club didn't charge anything over and above the original deposit (waiving their usual cancellation terms and conditions) despite EPHA cancelling the conference at very short notice.

Bank statements for account 17215168

18.12.19	£31,565.78
31.03.20	£35,933.11

4. PROFESSIONAL OFFICER REPORT

The report circulated in advance of the meeting gave details of the meetings attended by Pam Langmead on behalf of EPHA. In addition to attendance at meetings (and writing follow up reports), her work for EPHA has included:

- Information, emails and communications with all headteachers, including in response to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Responding to queries and actions from the Executive, ECC, other association officers, interested companies;
- Individual support for headteachers when issues arise;
- Identifying and supporting new headteachers;
- Managing the Colleague Supporter programme;
- Briefings to headteacher groups – 27 partnerships/clusters are now holding termly briefings – researching and writing briefing notes and presentations –and keeping them up to date as new directives, guidance and documents are introduced;
- Writing an editorial for Education Essex;
- Writing and delivering governor training on the new Ofsted framework, pupil exclusions and governor monitoring;
- Writing 7 minute staff meetings – County Lines, Staff Code of Conduct; the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- Updating support materials for schools, including statutory policy lists, website lists, and the Support Directory;
- Organisation and management of the Equality Act training for the spring term;
- Organisation and management of the area meetings in the autumn and spring terms;
- Organisation and management of the WEPHA conferences;
- Managing the EPHA finances: paying claims and invoices (including from Colleague Supporters), supporting area treasurers, producing reports, paying in cheques;
- Managing the bookings, organising and running the Deputy Headteacher conference, future planning for Heads' conference;
- Updating EPHA records and website;
- Other tasks as required.

Pam was thanked for continuing to represent and support Essex headteachers during the current crisis and for keeping heads informed.

5. PLANS FOR HEADTEACHER MEETINGS AND FUTURE CONFERENCES

a) HEADTEACHER MEETINGS IN JUNE

It was agreed that the headteacher meetings in June will not be able to take place as usual, as there is no information about when gatherings may be able to resume once more. It is also unlikely that venues will be available by June. Each of the groups agreed that there was little point in trying to replicate the meetings online, and that the LA and EPHA are providing regular briefings and updates to heads, so having a virtual meeting didn't add any value for schools. The Professional Officer will communicate with headteachers, and the venues, to ensure that they are aware that the meetings will be cancelled this term. It is hoped that they will be able to resume in November.

b) EPHA CONFERENCES

Sadly, the 2020 annual headteacher conference was cancelled as this was scheduled for the last day before the partial closure of schools and the national lockdown. The Professional Officer reported that 246 headteachers had booked to attend the conference, and around 180 had paid. Just one school (who booked two places) has asked for a refund, and this has been processed.

Whilst it is impossible to predict what the future of large events will be, the Professional Officer is working on the assumption that next year's conference, due to be held on Friday 19th March 2021, will be able to go ahead and she suggested that she should contact the presenters and simply replicate this year's programme, as far as possible. The Executive members agreed with this approach.

It is much less certain that life will be back to normal in October and the Deputy Heads' conference, due to take place on Friday 2nd October 2020, will almost certainly not be able to take place as planned. At the Super Executive meeting on 22nd April the EPHA Chairs discussed this and it was agreed, subject to confirmation from the whole Executive, that the deputy conference should not go ahead as planned. Instead, the Professional Officer will consider running a virtual conference for deputies and assistant heads, as EPHA is keen to celebrate their work and commitment to their schools. Each group supported this strategy, and it was agreed that there should be no cost to schools if the event was held virtually, although it was stressed that the quality of speakers should remain as high as ever. It was suggested that this might be a shortened event, as a whole day online would not be practical.

6. SCHOOL EXPERIENCES DURING PARTIAL CLOSURE

It was noted that the purpose of the discussion was to receive feedback from representatives about individual and local experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, and questions/concerns to take back to the Local Authority officers.
(There was, inevitably, some repetition in each meeting as most concerns are shared by headteachers across the county.)

North East meeting

It was agreed that LA Officers have been reasonably pro-active in producing guidance, and they, and particularly Clare Kershaw, have responded well and thoroughly when

contacted. One head noted that her school is vulnerable and the LA Education Team has been particularly proactive in supporting her, offering at least weekly phone calls and virtual team meetings.

The group was considerably less satisfied with the response and support from the DfE, which has often been late, inconsistent and unsupportive (and incompetent in relation to some things, such as the roll out of the Edenred FSM voucher system).

Social Care has offered a mixed response to schools; they have sometimes put pressure on schools in response to risk assessments and have been reluctant to follow up welfare checks when a school has been unable to make contact with a family. One headteacher noted that some members of the Social Care team have been impacted by the need to self-isolate due to suffering symptoms of Covid-19 or when shielding vulnerable family members.

There has also been a mixed experience of support from the SEND workforce. Some schools have had little or no response from the SEND Operations team, particularly in relation to the assessment of EHCPs for children due to enter Reception in September. There was also a question about what the Early Years team were doing to liaise with EY settings and schools. However, in another school the EHCP review has gone ahead and the EP has been in touch. Another headteacher said that the SEN team has been in regular touch with her SENCo.

The EP Critical Support team gave good support to schools in Harwich when a parent of a pupil was killed recently. The Professional Officer asked EPHA representatives to make it clear to schools that the critical response team is still available to support schools when there is crisis.

South meeting

South representatives had similar concerns about the response from Social Care, with the feeling that Social Care workers were passing the responsibility for following up vulnerable families to schools.

One headteacher said that the support from Inclusion Partners has been mixed, tending to be reactive rather than proactive.

The group discussed the information that secondary schools were requesting in relation to Year 6 leavers. This seems to vary from school to school, and transition arrangements are variable. The Professional Officer noted that the discussions with the LA and ASHE had focused on transition and this will be developed in the coming weeks.

Mid meeting

Two of the headteachers said that they have had very little communication and contact from the SEND Operations team, making it difficult to plan for the future support that children with EHCPs (particularly those coming into Reception) will need. There was also concern that pre-schools have not been involved with statutory care plans and that some children who need care plans will not have these in place.

Another head said that she has had a good experience and conversation with the Inclusion Partner and Schools Effectiveness Partner, who have been supportive of her

vulnerable school. Another Executive Head of two vulnerable schools echoed this positive support.

West meeting

One headteacher expressed his confidence in Clare Kershaw's leadership of the crisis, and this view was echoed across the four quadrants. However, there has been a patchy and inconsistent response from the SEN Workforce and the School Effectiveness Partner team, with one headteacher suggesting that "the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing."

One headteacher had already expressed a concern about the EP helpline, which was not readily available during the times published. However, she noted that the response from the Comms team was helpful and the complaint was dealt with promptly by the relevant LA Officers.

It was generally agreed that Juniper HR for Schools' advice has been helpful, timely and consistent (albeit recognising that they are responding to inadequate Government guidance).

One headteacher noted that he had been disappointed by the messages from the NAHT branch officer, who seemed at times to be working at odds with the Local Authority. This was not helpful for headteachers, who need a consistent response.

7. LOOKING TOWARD THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS

It was noted that the purpose of the discussion was to hear views, concerns and ideas about the process of re-opening schools (when a change to the current arrangements is announced), from the point of view of school leaders. Two papers setting out questions and concerns from a primary-phase and secondary point of view were circulated in advance of the meeting, along with a draft framework for re-opening produced by the Local Authority.

North East meeting

The North East representatives expressed their serious worries about the premature reopening of schools, stressing that they themselves had received a huge volume of concerns from colleagues. The overwhelming view was that schools should not open before September as there couldn't be any guarantee that this was a safe course of action.

One headteacher argued that it was completely unreasonable that school leaders were hearing of the government plans at the same time as the general public, with no time to plan or formulate a response to parents.

Another head stressed that he didn't want vague advice from the DfE or LA about "social distancing where possible", or how schools should try to achieve this.

Harriet Phelps-Knights (EPHA Chair) noted that she had a conversation with Michelle Winter (Senior HMI, who has been deployed to support Essex LA and schools) about reopening. She explained that she stressed that school leaders need to be first to hear

the strategy, should be given time to plan for reopening and that effective social distancing in schools must be the main priority.

The North East headteachers agreed that, in the absence of clear guidance from DfE there should be an Essex approach that all schools and academies were asked to take into account.

South meeting

One headteacher noted that the primary and secondary lists of questions and concerns were a good starting point and stressed the main concerns for schools around safeguarding staff, pupils and families and therefore the need for effective social distancing. The group discussed the recent ParentKind survey that suggested that 9 out of 10 parents didn't want their child to return to school at this time and headteachers expressed their hope that schools are not asked to reopen before September. There was agreement that there should be an Essex LA approach to reopening, if required. Headteachers wanted clarity about whether the provision was seen as childcare or education, and therefore what the expectations of schools would be.

However, it was suggested that vulnerable children need to return to school sooner rather than later, and there has also been a worrying emotional impact for some children, for example on Year 6 pupils when their school closed abruptly giving them no closure at the end of their time at primary school.

A number of practical issues were raised including the length of time Ofsted will be suspended, and the apparent continuing requirement for the EYFS baseline to be completed within the first six weeks of the autumn term.

Mid meeting

The group had similar discussions and NH stressed that North East heads had been clear that they didn't want schools to reopen fully until September. One headteacher said that she needed absolute clarity around social distancing in schools and how that might be achieved. Another head argued that social distancing simply wasn't possible in primary schools (and probably not secondary schools either) and the expectation simply wasn't sensible; she argued that schools should not be asked to assure parents that their child would be absolutely safe, as this was not achievable. Mid heads noted that schools should be provided with hand sanitiser as a bare minimum in relation to PPE.

The Mid representatives agreed with the idea of a Local Authority approach, but with continued autonomy and choice as to how to run their schools.

West meeting

West heads argued that the scientific evidence that backed up the safety of all groups was critical to any decision making. One head felt that the idea of Year 6 returning was pointless as they would not be able to undertake the usual post-SATs activities, and other year groups would benefit more from an early return to school.

8. SUMMARY OF ISSUES TO RAISE AT THE AFTERNOON MEETING WITH LA OFFICERS

The following issues would be raised at the afternoon meeting with Clare Kershaw and other LA officers.

From all areas there was a strong feeling that the schools should not be reopening in June, but should wait until September – and that any decision (by government) should be based on medical evidence with safety being the absolute priority.

High level issues to take to DfE/Ofsted

Schools would like clarification around curriculum and next year's SATs, as soon as possible.

Ofsted not to resume inspection during the autumn term – let schools get back to "normal".

DfE not reimbursing schools for Covid-19 expenses if they have a healthy balance.

Early Years

Issues around transition into Reception – little or no contact with nurseries and pre-schools – is the EY team working with settings?

Impossible to see how the EYFS baseline will work, but schools have been told that this will still be expected within the first 6 weeks of the autumn term. Will those children even be in?

EYFS preschool assessments for EHCPs – are they being done, and if not, will there be more IPRA funding available.

LA teams

Excellent support from ECFWS (school nurses etc)

Need more consistent support from Social Care, particularly welfare checks, e.g. home visits and school referrals.

Support from SEND seems often be reactive rather than proactive (though clear that vulnerable schools are getting good support)

Re-opening

Strong message from all areas that schools do not want to reopen beyond current levels until September.

Concern that the communications message this morning gave the impression that schools will re-open soon – is this the case?

Has the DfE collaborated sufficiently with LA and Unions to ensure that schools can safely and legally reopen?

What are the legal issues e.g. if staff refuse to work, if heads refuse to open their schools, if parents refuse to send their child in?

Absolute clarification around social distancing?

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was noted that small self-employed businesses are pressuring schools to pay invoices and there was a question around whether schools should be continuing to pay contractors.

10. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2020/21 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (Chelmsford City Football Club)

Wednesday 7 October 2020 (to include the EPHA AGM first thing)

Thursday 21 January 2021

Thursday 29 April 2021

Area Heads Meetings

Summer term 2020 – cancelled

~~N-EAST Wednesday 10 June Colchester Community Stadium~~

~~SOUTH Thursday 11 June Holiday Inn, Basildon~~

~~WEST Wednesday 17 June Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley~~

~~MID Thursday 18 June Chelmsford City Football Club~~

Autumn term 2020

N-EAST Wednesday 11 November Colchester Football Stadium

SOUTH Thursday 12 November Holiday Inn, Basildon

WEST Wednesday 18 November Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

MID Thursday 19 November Chelmsford City Football Club

Spring term 2021

N-EAST Wednesday 3 March Colchester Football Stadium

SOUTH Thursday 4 March Holiday Inn, Basildon

WEST Wednesday 10 March Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

MID Thursday 11 March Chelmsford City Football Club

Summer term 2021

N-EAST Wednesday 16 June Colchester Football Stadium

SOUTH Thursday 17 June Holiday Inn, Basildon

WEST Wednesday 23 June Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

MID Thursday 24 June Chelmsford City Football Club

Conferences

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

Friday 2 October 2020

alternative event

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 19 March 2021

Stock Brook Country Club, Nr. Billericay

Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer