The emerging Regional Schools Commissioners system

And some thoughts on its implications for state education

Warwick Mansell
First DfE paper: November 2013

- Eight to 12 Headteacher Boards
- Not based in government offices, but schools
- Each board to work with a “Chancellor”
- “Softly, softly” approach to communications
Next DfE paper: January 2014

- “There is still a lot to be worked out – at every level”.

- Functions to include:
  - Checking performance of open academies
  - “Promoting and approving academy conversions”
  - “Approving and managing sponsors”
  - “Identifying sponsors for brokerage projects”
- RSCs/HTBs to be “the next stage in the evolution of the academies project”.
“Future academy system”, 40-page document

- “Ministers set policy and national frameworks. They remain accountable and deal with issues escalated by RSCs”, it said.
- “RSCs will take decisions on academies in their area, involving HTBs in their decision making.”
- And “HTBs will be advisory but will operate as an executive board and be involved in key decision making”.
- So RSCs take decisions on academies in their area, HTBs advise, but “operate as an exec board”

-RSCs’ detailed roles:
- Monitoring academy underperformance
- Recruiting and approving new sponsors
- Take on sponsor performance, though no intervention powers and...
3rd DfE paper, continued

- Recommend sponsor matches for new sponsored academies

- Approve or reject schools’ “converter academy” applications.

- Approve or reject “significant changes” to schools.

- Involved in free schools application process
Weakenes of new system

- Lack of transparency
- Most education stakeholders get no say
- Conflicts of interest and cronyism
- Comparison with the system that ministers and their advisers have decided we can do without.
Conclusion: what have we lost?

And given its obvious weaknesses, can this system survive as it is?