**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SCHOOLS FORUM**

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday 16 January 2024 commencing at 10.00am and finishing at 1.00pm

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| **Present:** |  |
| **Members:** | Carole Thomson (Academy Secondary School Governor Rep) – in the Chair |
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|  | Catharine Darnton Vice Chair (Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep)  Chris Hart (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Rep)  Jacqui West (Alternative Provision / PRU Headteacher Rep)  Brenda Williams (Maintained Primary School Governor Rep)  Natalie Wilson (Maintained Nursery Headteacher School Rep)  Robert Majilton (Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep)  Lorraine Wilson (Special School Headteacher Rep)  Maureen Thompson (Academy Primary Governor Rep)  Jeanne Lapsley (Special School Governor Rep) |
| **In attendance:** | Councillor Howson, Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People’s Services.  Kate Reynolds (Interim Deputy Director for Education, Oxfordshire County Council)  Lisa Lyons (Director of Children’s Services)  Martin Goff (Head of Access to Learning)  Danny Doherty (Finance Business Partner, Oxfordshire County Council)  Mohamed Cassimjee (Democratic Services Officer)  Sharon Keenlyside (Senior Democratic Services Officer) |
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| *These notes indicate the outcomes of this meeting and those responsible for taking the agreed action.*  *If you have a query please contact Sharon Keenlyside, Committee Officer (*[*committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordsire.uk*](mailto:committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordsire.uk)*)* | |

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| * 1. **Apologies and welcome**   The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and introductions were made.  There were no objections to the meeting being recorded.  Apologies for absence were received from Victoria Woods (Academy Primary School Headteacher Rep); Nathan Thomas, (Academy Secondary School Headteacher Rep); Row Martin (Council of Oxfordshire Teacher Organisations (COTO)); Tom James (Primary Maintained Governor Rep).   * 1. **Declarations of interest**   The Chair declared an interest in paper 3.5, Addition Funding for Schools, as a Governor of Fringford Primary School. The Chair informed Forum that she was no longer a Governor Trustee of Bernwode Schools Trust, which ceased to be on 31 December 2023. The Chair had become a Trustee of the Acer Trust, a multi-academy trust of seven primary and secondary schools.  Chris Hart declared an interest in paper 3.5, Additional Funding for Schools, as the Head of Carterton Community College.  Maureen Thompson informed Forum that she had formally become Governor at St. Aloysius Maintained School.   * 1. **Update on Membership**   Martin Goff informed members that he had attended the Tuesday Morning Briefing for Headteachers and asked for shows of interest in the Schools Forum vacancies. This resulted in 4 Headteachers of Maintained Schools and 2 Academy Reps interested in joining Forum. All vacant posts should be filled once these were processed.  Members discussed the rules of the election process, and it was agreed that an election statement should be circulated.  There were currently two Academy Secondary Governor vacancies that would be re-advertised. Martin Goff would mention the vacancies at the Heads and Chairs meeting in February and the Chair agreed to mention them at the Oxfordshire Governors Association meeting in March.  Members commented that the effectiveness of the Forum was being compromised by the vacancies. | **ACTION**  Martin Goff  Carole Thomson |
| **2.0 Minutes**  The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2023 were amended as follows:-  Page 8 - the name Smith was incorrect and amended to Smit,  and agreed as a correct record.  **2.1 Matters arising from the Meeting of 9 November 2023**  Administrative support for Forum  Kate Reynolds informed Forum that they were expecting to appoint an officer to provide administrative support for Forum. The appointed officer would report to Kate Reynolds and possibly Martin Goff’s Team. It was hoped that the Chair of the Forum would be involved in reviewing the job description and that the appointed officer would be in place by 1 April 2024.  The Chair commented that she would no longer be Chair of the Forum within that timeframe but having been part of Forum for many years and having a considerable amount of experience would provide any necessary advice and support.  Schools Forum Budget  The Chair asked for confirmation that there were enough funds in the 2024/25 budget to cover all costs including the cost of a new administrative support role, especially in view of the upcoming DfE deadline. Lisa Lyons and Danny Doherty agreed that they would arrange a briefing and circulate the budget information to Forum.  Members raised concerns regarding the whereabouts of handover notes provided by Sarah Fogden on the operation of Forum. Danny Doherty reassured members that the Finance Team had possession of the notes. Members were concerned that the Forum did not have enough clarity or information on the structure of the Forum, for example, what items were due on the agenda and when. This was of particular concern with the current Chair stepping down who had many years’ experiences, both as Chair and an original member of Forum.  Members again raised concerns about training new members of Forum, having previously raised this issue during September’s meeting.  Kate Reynolds agreed to bring a paper to the next meeting on support for the Forum including a budget update. It was hoped that the new administrative support officer would be knowledgeable on Forum structure and regulation.  Kate Reynolds suggested arranging pre-meetings with the new Chair of Forum to discuss the agenda and agenda planning and would take some responsibility for training new members of Forum.  Councillor Howson reassured Forum that there was a clear commitment to get back on track and provide a better service than in recent time.  Martin Goff would arrange for Deborah Smit’s presentation from the last meeting to be published on Governor Hub. | Kate Reynolds  Lisa Lyons/Danny Doherty  Kate Reynolds  Kate Reynolds  Martin Goff |
| **3. National Funding Formula (NFF) DSG 2023-24 and 2024-25**  **DSG 2023-24**  Danny Doherty presented the previously circulated report and explained three alternative funding formula model options for the allocation of funding to mainstream schools. The preferred choice for the Local Authority (LA) was Model 2. With model 2 there would be sufficient remaining balance to replenish the Growth Fund by the target contribution of £0.660m.  Members discussed the three models and expressed concerns over how the NFF value had been applied to the models. Members had expected each model to show the same amount of funding for Schools Block Formula, but model 2 showed a higher value. Officers agreed that the excess value for Schools Block Formula should be replicated elsewhere in the table.  Members raised concerns that if money in excess of the NFF baseline were to be given to schools, it would be misleading as it would not be replicated in future years.  The Chair commented that at the last Forum meeting, it had been agreed in principle that any surplus would go into the High Needs Block, which is in deficit.  Members discussed how the excess funding should be allocated including potentially supporting High Needs.  Members asked for clarity and information on the £3.3m budget for the four intervention projects: Special Schools Reach & Outreach, Enhanced Provision in Secondary Schools, Behaviour and Relational Practice. Martin Goff agreed to bring a paper to the next meeting.  **AGREED** that:   1. the Schools Forum recommend Model 0 as the preferred basis, 2. £0.66m is allocated to the Growth Fund, 3. the unallocated balance of £0.6m is used to support mainstream schools with Special Educational Needs, 4. a re-drafted APT to be circulated to Forum members with the assurance that it matches the NFF with cost adjustment applied.   **Update – Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund 2023-24 & 2024-25**  The Forum considered a report which provided an update to the report considered by Schools Forum on 9 November 2023.  **AGREED** to:   1. approve the corrected level of payment for a bulge class:   £79,714 to an academy for a whole year  £46,500 to a non-academy school for the period September –March.   1. note the amended data on the use to which Growth Funding has been applied in the 2023-24 budget year and expected pressures for 2024-25 (Section 4.2), 2. approve the proposed rate of funding by which bulge classes are supported in the future (section 5), 3. approve an unchanged contribution of £660,000 to the Growth Fund for 2024-25.   **De-delegated Functions-Union Duties 2024-25**  The Chair commented that at the meeting held on 9 November 2023 it had been agreed in principle to support de-delegation for union duties. Forum had been unable to approve as exact figures were unavailable at the time. Members had been expecting an update at this meeting and expressed concern that approval would be needed before the APT is submitted.  **AGREED** to approve the same amount per head as the 2023-24 rate.  **Additional Support for Schools in Financial Difficulty 2023-2024**  Martin Goff presented the previously circulated report regarding additional support for schools in financial difficulty 2023-24. Oxfordshire had been awarded the sum of £331,272.92. The proposal from the LA was to use some of the monies to provide expert financial support for schools with a financial deficit and where appropriate, pay off some smaller budget deficits on a targeted basis.  Forum discussed the proposals and exemplified some causes for the difficulties schools had with funding and budgeting. Members also discussed the problem with falling rolls and new school heads taking on a school with a deficit budget. The distinction between historic and increasing deficits was also highlighted.  Members were concerned that some school heads and governors may not have the requisite expertise to manage their budget deficits. | Martin Goff  Danny Doherty |
| **4. Election of Forums Chair**  Martin Goff informed Forum that there had been one nominee for Chair of Schools Forum - Forum member Nathan Thomas had offered to take over as Chair from the next meeting. Nathan had a great deal of experience and had chaired Schools Forum on the Isle of Wight. He was also very active in SEN work.  Carole Thomson would remain a member of the Forum as Academy Secondary School Governor Rep.  Catharine Darnton, Vice Chair, spoke on behalf of Forum, and thanked Carole for her many years in the Chair and as a member of Forum since the start of its existence. Catharine spoke in appreciation of Carole’s hard work, knowledge and expertise and that it had been an enormous pleasure to work in partnership with Carole as Vice Chair.  **AGREED** that:   1. from the next meeting Nathan Thomas would be the new Chair of Schools Forum, 2. Carole Thomson would continue to represent Schools Forum on the F40 group. |  |
| **5. Early Years Funding Update**  Martin informed Forum that the consultation had been launched in December 2023. Members would receive a report and update at the meeting being held on 7 February 2024.  DLT had recently produced a paper on the work required to be ready for the three new entitlements rolling out from April onwards: Working Families, 9 months - 2-year-olds (in addition to current entitlements) and in September, 30 hours per week to eligible under 5’s. There was also an aspiration around wraparound childcare for children in reception to year 7.  The Government had provided an additional £122k for the additional work and new provision. The capital allocation was £1.286m. | Martin Goff |
| **6. Update on Current and Future Arrangements in LA Education** (standing item)  Kate Reynolds asked Forum if it would be helpful to have a SEND update as a standing item on the agenda. Members agreed that it would.  Councillor Howson raised the issue of falling birthrates across the County and the consequences for forward planning, particularly regarding Section 106 monies for new schools, schools with falling rolls and the way NFF was calculated.  Lisa Lyons would provide Forum with a report on Banding Reviews.  Members discussed the problems for schools with falling rolls and the need for this issue to be addressed strategically. | Kate Reynolds  Lisa Lyons |
| **12. Date of next meeting**  7 February 2024: 10.00-14.00 |  |

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