

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SCHOOLS' FORUM

MINUTES of the meeting held on Wednesday, 8 February 2023 commencing at 10.00am and finishing at 1.00pm

Present:

Members: Carole Thomson (Academy Secondary School Governor) – in the Chair

Catherine Darnton (Academy Secondary Rep) – Vice-Chair

Sam Bartholomew (Maintained Primary School Headteacher)

Emma Bryson (Academy Secondary Rep)

Michelle Codrington-Rogers (Council of Oxfordshire Teacher Associations)

Chris Hart (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Rep)

Tom James (Maintained Primary School Governor Rep)

Jacqui West (Alternative Provision/PRU Headteacher Rep)

Brenda Williams (Maintained Primary Governor)

Lorraine Wilson (Special School Headteacher Rep)

In attendance:

Cllr Liz Brighthouse OBE (Cabinet Member – Oxfordshire County Council)

Kevin Gordon (Corporate Director, Oxfordshire County Council)

Sarah Fogden (Finance Business Partner, Oxfordshire County Council)

Margaret Whitaker (Senior Financial Adviser, Oxfordshire County Council)

Gail Tolley (Chair, OCC Education Commission)

Kate Bradley (Oxfordshire County Council)

Chris Reynolds (Committee Officer)

These notes indicate the outcomes of this meeting and those responsible for taking the agreed action. For background documentation please refer to the agenda and supporting papers available on the Council's web site (www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.)

If you have a query please contact Chris Reynolds, Committee Officer (committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordsire.uk)

<p>1. Apologies and welcome</p> <p>The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Maureen Thompson (Academy Primary School Governor Rep), Natalie Wilson (Maintained Nursery School Rep) and Victoria Woods (Academy Primary School Headteacher Rep) and Hayley Good.</p> <p>The Chair reported that Andy Hartley had resigned from the forum.</p>	<p>ACTION</p>
<p>2. Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2023 were amended as follows:-</p> <p>The inclusion of Tom James in the list of those present and correcting the spelling of Jeanne Lapsley</p> <p>and agreed as a correct record.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Chris Reynolds, Committee Officer at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), who would be servicing future meetings.</p> <p>It was not possible to address a number of Matters Arising in the absence of HG and with a newly appointed clerk.</p> <p>Michelle Codrington-Rogers gave an update on the joint working between COTO and Academy HR</p> <p>The Chair noted that the new staffing structure had not yet been circulated.</p>	<p>Hayley Good</p>
<p>3. National Funding Formula 2023-24</p> <p>Margaret Whitaker presented the report which had been circulated and provided a verbal update on subsequent developments.</p> <p>She reported that the Secretary of State had agreed the LA's disapplication request to transfer 0.5% (£2.38m) of funding from the Schools Block to the High Needs Block by email late the previous day. This potential scenario was discussed at the Schools Forum meeting on 17 January (provisional funding reductions as in Model 2 of that report). A confirmatory letter would follow shortly. Forum agreed that Schools needed to be informed of the implication for their school's budget as a matter of</p>	

<p>urgency and an Item would be posted on School News immediately after half-term explaining the implications of this decision. The Council was required to release details of school budgets for 2023-24 by 28th February.</p> <p>During discussion, members noted the benefits that would be realised by meeting the increasing funding needs of SEND but expressed significant concern about the impact of ongoing low levels of schools funding in Oxfordshire. Concern was also expressed that the funding was only available for one year with concomitant issues around staff employment.</p> <p>Councillor Brighouse explained the need for increased SEND funding, the large number of representations received from parents on this issue, and the current deficit showing in the SEND budget. Kevin Gordon noted members' concerns but said it was unlikely that there would be further funding for schools until the next General Election.</p> <p>Members then gave examples of the impact of budget shortfalls in individual schools and the capability of schools to adequately support the needs of pupils.</p> <p>SF also advised Forum that there had been a late enquiry around funding for Joint Use agreements and that further information will be brought to Forum as part of the 2024-25 funding formula discussions.</p> <p>AGREED to note the update on the Mainstream Schools Funding Formula as set out in the report and endorse the approach to reduce the Age Weighted Pupil Units in relation to the block movement.</p>	<p>Sarah Fogden/Margaret Whitaker</p>
<p>4. Early Years Funding Formula 2023-24</p> <p>Margaret Whitaker presented the report that had been circulated and also commented on the consultation outcomes.</p> <p>A report on the formula would be considered by the OCC Cabinet on 21 February.</p> <p>Following review of the consultation response narratives which demonstrated the significant financial pressure this sector is experiencing, and comments from Forum members, Finance agreed to explore other options to address pressures on the SEN Inclusion Fund and Deprivation, rather than from the base rate to providers. This would include reviewing the Contingency budget.</p> <p>Members discussed the implications of the funding settlement including the cap on 3 and 4 year old funding in 2023-24. Without</p>	<p>Sarah Fogden/Margaret Whitaker</p>

the cap, 21p per hour more funding would have been delivered equating to approximately £1.183 million of additional funding. It was unclear whether the current cap would be lifted for 2024-25.

AGREED the retained element of 3 and 4 year olds funding formula and to note the funding rate for two-year olds and the provisional published Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) figures for Early Years Pupil Premium, Disability Access Fund and Maintained Nursery Schools Supplementary Funding.

5. Special Schools Funding Formula 2022

Sarah Fogden presented the report that had been circulated. She thanks the Headteacher of Frank Wise and the COO of the Propeller Academy Trust for their assistance with the consultation.

During discussion, members commented on the balance of priorities between admitting more pupils to the roll to balance the budgets and the ability to provide a high level of support to children with high level needs in special schools on a day to day basis. When class sizes are increased some children are unable to engage with learning. There was a likelihood of an increase in permanent exclusions as a result.

Forum noted the importance of funding Oxfordshire's Special Schools at a rate that enabled them to meet needs more effectively.

Members also referred to the impact of current industrial action on schools. They also reiterated ongoing concerns that the levels of schools funding in Oxfordshire did not meet the needs of the population.

AGREED to:-

- a) note the report.
- b) for special schools and academies (Section 4 of the report), confirm support for the proposed arrangements of no change for 2023-24 to the principles of the special school / special academy funding model used in 2022-23, as detailed at Annex 1 of the report.
- c) note the increase in top up rates to replicate the 0.5% pupil-led funding per pupil increase to be received by primary and secondary schools in the financial year 2023-24.
- d) note the new requirements under the DSG conditions of grant

<p>in respect of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (Section 4.5 of the report) and the requirement to pass on part of the additional high needs funding for 2023-24 to special schools, PRUs and the hospital school (Section 4.10 of the report).</p>	
<p>6. Delivering Better Value Project Update</p> <p>Kate Bradley gave a presentation summarising statistics and profile of SEND services in Oxfordshire and the results of a satisfaction survey which would inform a project seeking to realise improvements in services. She then answered a number of questions which highlighted, in particular, the links between economic status and deprivation, and the number of parents taking cases to SEND tribunals.</p> <p>AGREED to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) thank officers for the informative presentation b) ask officers to share more information on numbers of children with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) with all schools c) note the possible need for an additional meeting to consider new legislation. 	<p>Kate Bradley</p> <p>Committee Officer</p>
<p>7. Education Commission</p> <p>Gail Tolley gave a presentation on the work of the Education Commission which had been set up by the Council. Her role would be to take stock of the current educational outcomes in the County and draw up plans and objectives for improvement taking account of performance in Oxfordshire's statistical neighbouring authorities. She referred to the terms of reference for the commission and the importance of collaboration with stakeholders.</p> <p>The Chair referred to the need for support from schools to ensure the success of the Commission's work.</p> <p>AGREED to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) note the report b) ask Forum members to feed back any comments on the Commission and its work to the Chair 	<p>ALL</p>

8. Annual Update on Traded Services

The Chair referred to the report that had been circulated and to ongoing concerns about the increase in costs and quality of services provided by the IBC. In particular Forum noted a concern around the 10.5% increase for the IBC Finance & HR service and 5.5% for Education Personnel Service and the lack of opportunity for schools to impact the quality of service once there was a lack of officer engagement with the Services and Contracts Committee.

AGREED to:-

- a) note the report
- b) establish a working group consisting of Finance and HR officers and Forum representatives to discuss the Hampshire IBC partnership and its services to schools.

Kevin Gordon/
Committee
Officer

..... in the Chair

Date of signing