

# CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

## Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting held on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2023 at 8.00am at West Offices

### Present:

Dave Hewitt (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative) Chair, Jo Olsen (Maintained Secondary Governor Representative), Jenny Rogers (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Lamara Taylor (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Glen Duxbury *deputising for* Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Jordan Cairns *deputising for* Helen Winn (Academy Representative), James McGann *deputising for* Mark Hassack (Academy Representative), Steve Lewis (Academy Representative), Dee Statham (Academy Representative), Chris Nichols (Pupil Referral Unit Representative), Adam Booker (Special School Representative)

### In attendance:

Cllr Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), Martin Kelly (Corporate Director, Children and Education, CYC), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC), Mike Barugh (Principal Accountant, CYC) and Barbara Kybett (Governance Advisor, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

### 1. Welcome

Dave Hewitt welcomed everyone to the meeting and round the table introductions were made.

## **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Gail Brown (Academy Representative), Lee Probert (16-19 representative) and Claire Rigden (Maintained Nursery Headteacher Representative (VC)).

Richard Hartle (Head of Finance) had also sent apologies.

## **3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Dave Hewitt was formally confirmed as Chair of York Schools Forum for a term of one year.

Jenny Rogers was formally confirmed as Vice Chair of York Schools Forum for a term of one year.

## **4. Membership update**

Previously distributed. The Forum received the membership update.

## **5. Minutes of the Schools Forum meeting of 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

Previously distributed. The minutes of the last meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were duly noted as approved.

## **6. Matters Arising not on the agenda**

There were no outstanding action points to report.

## **7. York Schools and Academies Board terms of reference – for ratification**

Previously distributed. The Chair reminded the Forum of the discussion held at the last meeting regarding the relationship between Schools Forum and the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB). The Chair reported that he had recently attended a YSAB meeting and highlighted the Board's focus on disadvantaged pupils. He invited comments on the YSAB terms of reference.

Members of Schools Forum ratified the terms of reference for the York Schools and Academies Board.

## **8. Schools Budget and Dedicated Schools Grant for 2024/25**

Previously distributed.

Mike Barugh (Principal Accountant) referred to the details in the paper regarding the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2024/25 which was allocated by the DfE according to a specific National Funding Formula (NFF). He reminded members that, following consultation with the Forum and schools in 2018, it had been agreed that the City of York Council (CYC) would calculate allocations to schools based on the new NFF. These funding factors remained the same for 2024/25 apart from a new factor affecting schools on split sites. This had implications for two schools in York, which had previously been funded according to a local split site formula. Mike provided further details. A second change to the NFF was the rolling in of the Mainstream Schools Additional Grant (MASG) into the NFF from 2024/25. Mike outlined the changes which were set out in detail in the paper and expressed the view that the calculations made by the DfE were based on a logical premise. The MASG would be rolled into main funding from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 for maintained schools and would be received by academies from September 2024. Academies would continue to receive the MASG from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.

Mike reported that the DfE had published the 2024/25 NFF in July 2023 but had issued re-calculated figures in October 2023, following the discovery of an error based on incorrect pupil numbers. The consequence of this was a significant reduction of just over £1m for York schools than had been previously announced. As yet, there was little clarity about the error and Local Authorities awaited further details from the DfE.

Mike advised that the Teachers' Pay Additional Grant (TPAG) would continue for 2024/25; the DfE had no plans to roll it into main funding at this stage.

Mike referred next to details in the paper regarding the growth fund, in particular the DfE's decision to tighten the national criteria for its use. The current amount of the growth fund was c£330k and this had been used locally to underpin Infant Class Size Funding. Mike cautioned that the restriction on the use of the growth fund was likely to make this more difficult. The figures would be modelled and brought back to the next meeting.

Mike reported that the allocation to the Early Years block was yet to be confirmed following the consultation this year on the Early Years National Funding Formula. Figures would be confirmed at the February meeting but, subject to the detail of any announcement, Mike sought the Forum's approval to agree to continue the current policy of increasing the basic hourly rates to providers and the hourly deprivation supplement by the same percentage as any increase in the hourly rate received by CYC from the DfE.

With reference to the High Needs block, Mike advised that it had not increased as much as in previous years. He highlighted the financial pressures caused by rising numbers of pupils with SEND and noted that further funding of £5m through the Safety Valve agreement was dependent on delivering the outcomes according to the plan. Further efficiency savings would be needed to ensure this result. Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills) reminded Forum members that the Safety Valve funding had been secured to offset a deficit. Mike added that the £17m provided through the Safety Valve agreement would have been a further cost to the CYC budget otherwise.

Moving to the Central Services block, Mike advised that this funding was to cover the Local Authority's statutory duties to its schools, as well as historic commitments. The amount of funding in this block continued to decrease and as a result, savings would need to be identified. Details would be brought to the next meeting, but it was likely that there would need to be savings from the School Improvement Commissioning budget, managed by YSAB. Mike highlighted the long term commitments of redundancy costs and prudential borrowing.

Maxine reminded the Forum that the Central Services block supported the costs of Local Authority statutory duties under the 1996 Act; the DfE had reduced funding for these statutory duties by 40% over a number of years. She encouraged members to consider the Forum's role in lobbying for increased funding.

Questions were invited.

In response to a question about the Council's position as one of the most poorly funded for education in the country, Mike explained that this was historic: the funding calculation had been made around 20 years ago and it was now unclear what criteria were used. It was clear, however, that the calculation used was now not fit for purpose but the decrease in funding over time had meant that inequalities in funding had not been rectified. Maxine outlined some of the reasons why the city was not as well funded as other areas, including a perception that there were fewer children in York who were disadvantaged. The lack of funding had resulted in children experiencing disadvantage in multiple ways, as there were fewer local services to support them.

Maxine stated that the Local Authority would continue to lobby as even a small amount of extra funding for the city would make a difference.

*Martin Kelly joined the meeting at 8.32am*

Mike commented that the city's unusual context had been referenced in the application for Safety Valve funding, on the recommendation of the DfE.

Robert Webb (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education) underlined that the new Council Executive was focussed on supporting York's most vulnerable communities and hoped that this would be evidenced in time. He noted that all areas of the Authority's work were underfunded but the Executive would work with bodies such as Schools Forum to make the best use of available resources. He encouraged members to contact him with any ideas.

**Action: The Chair agreed to work with other members and Council officers to lobby the DfE for more resources for the city.**

A query had been raised by headteachers of the city's smaller maintained schools about specific support for them. Maxine noted that small schools had been negatively affected by the change to the NFF, previously agreed by Schools Forum, which had benefited most other schools in the city. She would bring a proposal to maintained school headteachers to establish school schools as a particular focus group. It was noted that the sustainability of small schools in the current educational context might be a discussion point for YSAB.

A question was raised about the process of place planning for the city's schools. Maxine provided some background but highlighted that place planning was distorted by parental preference, which resulted in some schools being oversubscribed compared to others, despite similarities in their expected pupil numbers.

There were no further questions.

Members of the Forum confirmed that they were content for the schools budget to continue to be allocated to schools under the formula and factors contained within the National Funding Formula.

Members of the Forum agreed to an increase in Early Years funding rates to providers in proportion to any increase in the Early Years funding allocated by the DfE to the LA, subject to the final announcement on Early Years funding from the DfE.

## **9. Maintained school start budgets 2023/2024**

Previously distributed

Mike referred to the details in the previously distributed paper regarding the process for the setting of maintained schools' Start budgets. He noted that the budgets were evidence of the increasing financial challenges being faced by

schools, which included inflationary pressures around pay and energy in particular. As much support was offered to schools as possible, and many budgets had been approved, but in some cases, schools had been asked to look again at their budget forecasts. Meetings have taken place with school leaders which had been useful in terms of raising awareness of the issues schools were facing.

The Chair agreed that the budget figures forecast for future years were concerning. Mike added that it was likely that funding would remain constrained and that pupil numbers were also a concern for some schools. The Chair noted that a number of schools had reduced their Published Admissions Number (PAN) which was reflective of the challenges facing schools. Maxine highlighted the financial pressure caused by the number of very experienced teachers working in the city's schools. She also drew attention to the lack of funding for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Mike advised that base funding for special schools had not increased since 2014 and the DfE seemingly had no plans to take action on this.

The Chair asked if there was any update on the procurement of energy contracts for maintained schools. Mike responded that he was not aware of the latest position. It was agreed that information around LA procured contracts for maintained schools would be presented at the next meeting.

## **10. LMS Scheme Review**

Previously distributed

Mike explained that, as the Local Management of Schools (LMS) Scheme had not been updated for a number of years, it had been recently revised to incorporate changes and clarifications which ensured that it more closely reflected the DfE model scheme. Once the revision was complete, it would be circulated to all maintained school headteachers and chairs of governing bodies

for consultation, and then presented for ratification at the next meeting of Schools Forum.

## **11. Safety Valve quarter 2 monitoring report**

Previously distributed

Maxine advised that the previously distributed monitoring report had been approved by the DfE so the next tranche of Safety Valve funding would be released. The LA remained on track to deliver against the plan, but Maxine cautioned that the next phase would be challenging. The main issue would be around sufficiency which needed to be sustainable after the Safety Valve funding was exhausted. Maxine highlighted the increased level of complex pupil needs which had created unprecedented demand from parents and carers, and was mirrored nationally. Parental preference was overwhelmingly for special school places to be available as early as possible in their child's education. Maxine underlined the changing nature of special school cohorts which was adding to the pressures in the system.

Adam Booker and Chris Nichols (Special School Representative and Pupil Referral Unit Representative respectively) shared some examples of the issues they were experiencing in their schools.

Maxine observed that there would not be enough funding to create sufficient places for the number of pupils with needs: there would need to be alternative solutions, including an increased Early Years offer. A multi-agency approach was key to addressing the issue. She explained that parents and carers were anxious to secure a diagnosis of their child's needs and maintained high expectations of schools in terms of meeting these needs.

A member noted that mainstream schools were not able to meet the level of needs currently being encountered and shared some examples. Maxine responded that there would be action taken to remedy the sufficiency problem. Work on capacity had also taken place but this was still not enough. It was also

important to work with parents and carers to temper their expectations. Martin observed that the system needed to work for children, and specialist provision was not necessarily the solution.

In response to a question, Maxine advised that the Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) referred to in her paper, which had been ceased, were those of young people, aged 19-25, not of pupils in schools. Nevertheless, it was important that schools should consider ending an EHCP if it was no longer appropriate for the pupil, even though it might prove difficult for parents to accept this decision. There was further discussion on the award and application of EHCPs.

In response to a question about the number of pupils attending Enhanced Resource Provisions (ERP), Maxine provided details, noting that all ERPs in the city were oversubscribed.

## **12. Schools Forum forward plan**

Use of Growth Fund for Infant Class Size funding

Confirmation of Early Years National Funding Formula

Procurement of contracts for maintained schools

Ratification of LMS Scheme

## **13. Any other agreed business**

There was no other business.

## **14. Dates and time of meetings for the next academic year**

1 February 2024

9 May 2024

4 July 2024



All meetings would take place on Thursdays from 8.00 to 9.30am at West Offices.

The meeting closed at 9.38am.

APPROVED