

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum held on Monday 2nd July 2018 at 9.00am

Attendance list:

Members:

Brian Crosby	Academy Representative and Chair
Trevor Burton	Academy Representative
Richard Crane	Maintained Secondary Representative
Andrew Daly	Academy Representative
Debbie Glover	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Helen Gratton	Early Years Sector Representative
Tricia Head	Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Richard Ludlow	Academy Representative
Tracey Ralph	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Claire Rigden	Maintained Nursery Representative
Lorna Savage	Academy Representative

Observers / Advisors:

Jon Stonehouse	Director of Children, Education & Communities
Maxine Squire	Assistant Director, Education and Skills
Richard Hartle	Head of Finance, City of York Council
Salli Radford	Coordinator and Clerk
Laura Conkar	ICT Business Engagement Manager for Schools
Leigh Farrow	IT Officer
Gemma Donnelly	ESFA / Observer
Annie Wood	ESFA / Observer

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

No apologies had been received in advance of the meeting. Alison Birkinshaw – FE Representative, Adam Booker – Special School Representative and Bill Scriven – Maintained Secondary Headteacher (VA school) were absent from the meeting.

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The update was noted. Salli Radford advised that three vacancies would need to be filled for September, to cover two Maintained Primary roles and one Maintained Secondary role, with the requirement for at least one appointment to be a governor and for the appointments also to include a representative from a VA or VC school. Richard Hartle advised that membership proportions would remain valid to January 2019.

Richard Crane and the ESFA observers joined the meeting at 9.04am

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 12th April and 3rd May 2018

Previously distributed.

The minutes of the meetings of 12th April and 3rd May 2018 were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

5. Action Plan and Matters Arising

Previously distributed. With reference to the action plan:

Points 1 to 3 and 5 to 6 – Completed.

Point 4 – It was noted that Clare Rigden had been appointed as Early Years representative to the Inclusion Review working group.

Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

6. Schools broadband contract

Previously distributed. Laura Conkar highlighted key messages included in the paper, which outlined reasons for the delay in the procurement process. Laura advised that the paper included options for schools including information on technology and comparisons with other provision options. Laura highlighted the current risk to further delay in the contract process and the benefits of the fibre network once this was in place, emphasising the long-term benefit to schools of being linked to the fibre network. Laura acknowledged the competing pressures of school budgets and the need to keep pace with technological developments.

In response to a question regarding the reasons for the delay in procurement, Laura advised that the delay was at corporate level and related to the need to identify an appropriate procurement route. Laura advised that the procurement process would be shortened overall as Elected Member approval had already been provided.

Richard Ludlow joined the meeting at 9.15am.

It was noted that centrally retained DSG funding would remain available during the procurement period. Laura advised that fibre infrastructure was in place, making fibre sustainable as capital costs were already in place, with increases in bandwidth available to schools without additional costs during the lifetime of the contract.

It was noted that all but one school was currently connected to the CYC network, with the intention being for all to access this in future.

Richard Hartle advised that the £195k contribution from centrally retained budget would be available to the end of 2019/20 with future funding not confirmed.

In response to a question regarding the a cost comparison with other LA broadband contracts, Richard advised that the contract was a local decision with the centrally retained funding aspect subject to review over coming years and not guaranteed in the future. The Forum noted the mix of approaches taken by other LAs.

In response to a question regarding policies permitting pupils to connect to networks in schools, Laura advised that the LA was seeking to extend bandwidth in schools to enable increased use of ICT in the classroom. It was noted that the CYC network included filtering and virus checking with a managed system to ensure that any devices connected to the network were screened. The Forum noted approaches to management of this issue in secondary schools.

In response to a question regarding the provision of the service to MATs working across LA boundaries, Matt Farrow outlined the LA's work with Ebor Academies Trust to bring schools outside the city onto the platform. It was noted that this included work with major communication providers across Yorkshire to enable the use of existing connections which routed back to the CYC structure. Laura advised that the VOIP system allowed calls between schools at zero tariff, being particularly cost-effective for MATs working across a wider geographical area.

In response to a question regarding costs to schools, Laura advised that the LA was interested in developing a new model for charging schools, with this currently based on pupil numbers. Laura invited representatives from the Forum to work with the LA to consider this aspect and also to help explore technical issues from a user's point of view.

The Forum discussed the request for approval of a £195k allocation from DSG to enable continuation of the project, noting the uncertainty relating to funding beyond 2019/20. Laura confirmed that the LA would continue with the project with the aim to deliver broadband without increased costs to schools. The Forum discussed proposals further, noting the likely costs to schools if the DSG contribution was not available. It was noted that funding had been agreed for the current year and that the proposal was for an agreement in principle to commit funding for 2019/20, subject to setting of final budgets at a future meeting.

It was noted that the 2019/20 funding position was not known at the time the paper was drafted, with it now confirmed that funding would continue into 2019/20, enabling the Forum to take a view on future funding. Laura asked the Forum to confirm if it was moving towards consensus on termination of funding as this would influence the project and therefore would need to be known.

Laura Conkar and Matt Farrow left the meeting at 9.30am.

The Forum discussed the request, with members providing positive feedback on the quality and reliability of service received to date.

The Forum agreed to request further information on likely costs to school with and without the DSG contribution to enable more informed decision making. It was noted that the uncertainty relating to the availability of future funding was unhelpful. Laura Conkar would be asked to provide financial modelling to enable a decision.

7. Maintained school outturn balances 2017/18

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle presented the outturn balances to the 2017/18 financial year end for information. It was noted that the role of the Forum was to review any excessive balances, though the Officer recommendation was that no schools fell into this category this year.

Richard presented graphs 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 which illustrated the outturn position over time; 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 with more detailed information on 2018/19 start budget predictions and outturns. It was noted that data generally showed that schools were predicting a lower outturn position than was realised at the year end. Jon Stonehouse advised that this illustrated a trend of falling balances over time, further advising that continuation of this trajectory would result in the level of balances dropping to a very low point.

The Forum discussed this information. Richard advised that funding for school nursery classes had not been clarified early enough during the last financial year but that the LA would now make adjustments on a termly basis to support schools.

Richard presented graph 4.7 which illustrated uncommitted revenue balances. It was noted that no schools were above the thresholds of 8% for primary schools and 5% for secondary schools. It was further noted that neither of the special schools or Danesgate were above their 8% threshold.

Tricia Head outlined the difficulties facing Danesgate in meeting unanticipated need arising in-year. It was noted that this would be addressed as part of the inclusion review. Tricia outlined the difficult budget management processes relating to lagged funding for pupils joining the unit mid-year. The Forum noted that the special schools (including Danesgate) were working with a number of LAs and that high-needs pupils were increasingly joining the schools without any forward planning.

The Forum discussed the issues raised, with Maxine Squire outlining work being done to predict pupil needs at an early stage. Helen Gratton highlighted opportunities to gather information from Early Years providers, with the Forum noting insufficient provision in the current Early Years Funding Formula.

In response to a question regarding the recommended levels of school reserves, Richard advised that there had been some suggestions in the past to reduce the thresholds, however the forum had decided not to make any changes. Richard advised that Annex 3 included an extract from the LMS Scheme which included the committed reserves criteria and approval process. It was noted that the papers included detail of some school proposals to carry forward reserves that did not meet agreed criteria and an officer recommendation to reject these proposals .

The Forum discussed the outturn information further, with Richard advising that start budgets for 2018/19 would be brought to the September Forum meeting and would include information on support available to schools facing challenging financial circumstances.

Jon Stonehouse left the meeting at 9.58am.

8. DSG outturn 2017/18

Deferred to the next meeting.

9. Centrally retained school improvement funding – update from working group

Previously distributed. John Thompson reminded Forum members of previous discussions which had included consideration of analysis of school use of funding returned to support school improvement. It was noted that this information had informed discussion by the working group which had noted the range of activity undertaken and that summarise impact across the city was challenging.

John advised that the Forum meeting of May 2018 had established a working group to consider use of funding, with Gill Williams standing in for Debbie Glover. The group had met on 23rd May and 12th June, with a second paper shared with the Forum summarising the thinking of the group.

John outlined this summary:

- funding should be used to address key school improvement priorities for the city as a whole;
- allocations need to be based around key work streams not broken up into very small bundles;
- clear accountability for funding allocations and expenditure needs to be established, though this should be minimally bureaucratic and not burdensome.

John outlined the status of the funding, which did not now form part of the schools block of the NFF. It was noted that the LA would bring forward proposals for further themed work streams addressing key city-wide priorities early in the 2018/19 academic year. It was further noted that SSIF 3 bid outcomes were awaited which would influence this planning.

The Forum noted the four key priorities identified by the working group:

- outcomes for disadvantaged / SEND pupils and narrowing gaps
- Personal development (including Careers Education and Guidance, British Values)
- Curriculum (KS4 breadth, developing pedagogy and teaching skills in EYFS and primary)
- Attendance, especially persistent absence

John outlined the suggested timeline:

1. Agree a pledge around participation in school improvement activity and link it to the Pathfinder and Ebor CPD offers (July)
2. Working group to agree gate-keeping, monitoring and reporting arrangements (July)
3. Schools / groups of schools / MATs to identify their priorities from the agreed city-wide list (by mid-September)
4. Identify project / strand leads (September)
5. Schools to confirm choice of strand / partnership grouping (end Sept)
6. Activity to start as soon as possible (October)

John advised that the recommendations included in paragraph 20 included reference to the “Teach York” initiative, though the funding allocation had not yet been scoped. It was noted that this would need to be addressed quickly to allow a project to be identified and costed and that other factors including Inclusion Review and Early Years work would need to be considered.

In response to a question regarding the mechanism by which the fund of £291k would be allocated, John advised that gate-keeping arrangements would be developed by the working group. It was noted that the framework would ensure that schools and partnerships had an appropriate focus. The Forum noted the need to increase the number of primary representatives on the working group.

In response to a query regarding the reference in the paper to the inclusion of key priorities in school improvement plans and performance management targets as these were already established or being set by headteachers, John advised that the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) was working to identify trends.

Richard Crane advised that the working group had discussed how best to manage funding allocations, evaluate impact and hold leaders to account, advising that key priorities were likely to align with headteacher performance management targets. Maxine Squire advised that improving outcomes for pupils was part of the headteacher appraisal process. Further discussion followed.

The Forum discussed the systems and groups involved in funding allocations, with clarification sought of the strategic roles of the YSAB and working group. It was noted that the YSAB could allocate delegated funds but that the Forum retained overall responsibility and held the YSAB to account.

Maxine advised of the opportunity to work with maintained schools as a group to use funding collaboratively to deliver maximum benefit to the wider community. It was noted that the Council Executive had committed £100k of the LA's underspend of general funding to the school system to help close the attainment gap. Maxine recommended a focus on closing the gap at the end of EYFS as this was where the most significant gap was. It was noted that this would help secure progress in the following years but would require closer working between PVI's, the maintained nursery and schools.

The Forum approved the working group recommendations to allocate the £401k available:

- **£291k to be allocated to schools on the basis of pupil numbers (as illustrated in Annex 2) for use in collaborative activity on York system priorities, subject to the arrangements outlined in the proposal and timeline;**
- **£110k to be retained and subsequently allocated to fund work streams in priority areas, including the "Teach York" initiative and support for the accountability framework for allocations to schools and ongoing monitoring of, and reporting to, Schools Forum on all strands.**

The Chair thanked Richard Crane for chairing the working group and John Thompson for coordinating.

10. Inclusion Review update

Maxine Squire advised that the Inclusion Review Group had continued its work and that Paul Murphy was now ready to make recommendations. Maxine advised that these would include recommendations to ensure that facilities at Hob Moor School and Danesgate were appropriate for the cohorts accessing provision, with funding to be made available from capital grants. It was noted that the Council Executive would receive a capital paper early in the autumn term which would advise on school capital including recommended work linked to the Inclusion Review. It was noted that Council Executive were required to sign off capital spend.

Maxine advised that an invitation for expressions of interest to provide additional provision via satellites at primary and secondary phases had been extended to schools, with responses to be assessed and outcomes notified to schools by the end of the week commencing 9th July. It was noted that two primary and two secondary expressions of interest had been received.

Maxine advised of the identified need to ensure provision for older students in the 19-25 year-old bracket following maintained school provision. It was noted that requests to access provision were increasing, with the LA needing to consider capacity grants to increase local provision for older members of this group. Maxine advised that savings would result as increased local provision would reduce the need for young people to access out-of-area provision at significant cost to the LA, bringing a savings benefit against the high needs block. It was noted that transition packages were being developed with adult social care.

Maxine advised that accommodation for young adults with SEND had also been identified as a priority area, with a need to ensure sufficient local accommodation for adults with high-level needs.

Maxine advised that Paul Murphy had considered all current provision including specialist and mainstream school provision, and had suggested a thorough review of each part of the system to ensure they were delivering best value. Maxine advised that an external review of ERPs, satellite provision, school nurture groups and other specialist provision was recommended, with Paul also suggesting a full review of all current governance systems around SEND, including panels and the Behaviour and Attendance Partnership.

Maxine advised that Paul had also recommended that the inclusion review be moved forward by convening a project board in September to take work forward and provide structured governance. This would drive planning and link to the Council Executive to ensure sign-off of funding on a rolling programme. Maxine advised that this would represent a more formal stage of the project.

In response to a question regarding high needs funding to primary and secondary phases, Richard Hartle advised that this would form an aspect of the review. It was noted that the role of the Forum was to agree the formula and that Richard recommended reviewing this as part of the Inclusion review. Maxine advised that the project board would ensure this was addressed.

The update was noted.

11. f40 briefing paper

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle outlined the role of the f40 campaign group representing the 40 lowest funded LAs. It was noted that the new NFF had improved funding outcomes but that York remained the lowest funded LA despite a 4.5% increase overall. It was noted that the Forum had asked what was being done to press for improved funding, with Richard advising that the LA was taking lobbying forward in a number of ways including engagement with f40. Richard advised that he had contributed to the drafting of the briefing paper which would be taken to the DfE and ESFA.

The Forum discussed the briefing. General questions were taken by the ESFA representatives.

In response to a question regarding the Area Cost Adjustment and the criteria used by the ESFA when setting adjustments, Gemma Donnelly advised that this information could be provided. Richard advised that the ESFA used government's established criteria for other funding issues and not just those related to education. It was noted that costs were higher in York than in neighbouring LAs, with this creating issues for the LA across a range of areas.

In response to a question regarding the very low funding rates available to small primary schools in the city and the differential between these and the rates available to similar schools in other cities, Gemma advised that small schools were being considered in the future NFF, with the ESFA aware of the issues raised by schools. Gemma advised that the ESFA was seeking to make funding as fair as possible, including consideration of aspects other than sparsity which impacted on small schools.

A question was raised regarding the impact of area costs on national pay and conditions for teachers, specifically the four geographical boundaries based on London and the surrounding area, and the costs for schools in York which were not significantly different. Gemma advised that the ESFA was looking at teachers pay, with the area cost adjustment being considered. It was noted that policy direction had changed slightly during 2017/18 but that Gemma could feed concerns back to the policy team.

A question was raised regarding local health data and how this was taken into account in funding allocations as issues could impact on school provision. Examples were provided, including the higher than national incidence of suicide and self harm. Gemma advised that high needs funding crosses responsibility areas into health and adult care. Gemma further advised that the ESFA was aware of the challenges in moving young people from EHCPs to adult care.

The Forum discussed this issue.

In response to a question regarding lagged funding for schools with increasing rolls, particularly where taken into a MAT via a sponsored arrangement, and whether a more responsive system might be developed, Gemma advised that funding had to be allocated by a mechanism, with lagged funding being the chosen approach. It was noted that the RSC project team might be able to help in specific circumstances, with it being possible to accommodate MAT deficits if a sponsor arrangement was the cause.

In response to an example from within the city where lagged funding had created a significant deficit until funding caught up, Gemma advised that the release of funding could be changed to an estimated rather than a lagged arrangement, with a case required by the ESFA.

The Chair thanked the ESFA representatives for taking questions.

12. Schools Forum forward plan

Richard Hartle outlined the forward plan:

September 2018

- DSG outturn report
- School start budgets 2018/19 including deficits
- Budget preparation 2019/20 / initial report or update
- Inclusion review
- Broadband contract

February 2019

- 2019/20 budget setting paper

A suggestion was made that consideration of CPD provision across the four local TSAs included the option to explore partnership models of delivery, with this requiring transparency around each TSA offer to ensure that the system recognises the strength of each TSA. This suggestion was supported by the meeting, with a joined-up approach to feed into the 2019/20 academic year budget allocation for CPD.

13. Any Other Business

In response to a question regarding the future requirement to establish a Schools Forum, Gemma Donnelly advised that an announcement regarding the NFF would be made later in July which would provide more information, though it was likely that a Forum would be required in some form.

It was noted that Jon Stonehouse would be leaving the LA late in September, with a meeting to take place later on 2nd July to request Elected Member approval to recruit.

It was noted that a Chair would be elected at the next meeting and nominations would be sought over the summer.

14. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 28th September 2018 at 9.00am.

The meeting closed at 11.10am.

Chair

Date