

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum held on Monday 5th February 2018 at 9.00am

Attendance list:

Members:

Brian Crosby	Academy Representative and Chair
Adam Booker	Special School Representative
Gail Brown	Academy Representative (Deputising for Richard Ludlow)
Richard Crane	Maintained Secondary Representative
Debbie Glover	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Helen Gratton	Early Years Sector Representative
Tricia Head	Pupil Referral Unit Representative and Vice Chair
Tracey Ralph	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Claire Rigden	Maintained Nursery Representative
Lorna Savage	Academy Representative

Observers / Advisors:

Jon Stonehouse	Director of Children, Education & Communities
Richard Hartle	Head of Finance, City of York Council
Salli Radford	Coordinator and Clerk
John Thompson	Head of Secondary and Skills

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received with consent, from Trevor Burton – Academy Representative, Andrew Daly – Academy Representative, Cllr Susie Mercer – Elected Member for Education, Children and Young People, Bill Scriven – Maintained Secondary Headteacher (VA school) and Maxine Squire – Assistant Director, Education and Skills. Alison Birkinshaw – FE Representative, was absent from the meeting.

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The update was noted.

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 25th September 2017

Previously distributed.

The minutes of the meeting of 25th September 2017 were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

5. Action Plan and Matters Arising

With reference to the action plan:
Point 1 – To be taken under item 6.
Point 2 – To be taken under item 9.

Matters Arising:

With reference to item 11, Schools Forum forward plan, it was noted that all items were included on the agenda other than Basic Need Capital update which would be taken to a future meeting for information.

Jon Stonehouse advised that Cllr Susie Mercer had been appointed as Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People would be invited to future meetings as an observer. Jon acknowledged Cllr Rawlings' engagement with the work of the Forum, with this being echoed by members of the Forum.

6. School Funding Formula for 2018/19 – outcome of consultation with schools

Previously distributed. The Forum had previously agreed to consult schools on a proposal to implement the National Funding Formula (NFF) from April 2018. 14 schools had responded with 13 in favour of the proposal and one response unclear. Paragraph 4 of the paper included the comments and views received from schools. Annex 2 included further information provided to schools during the consultation. As a result of the consultation it was proposed to recommend that Council Executive approve a move to the new funding formula from April 2018. Whilst the response rate was low, there had been many opportunities for school leaders to discuss the proposals.

Richard Crane joined the meeting at 9.12am.

It was noted that per pupil AWPU rates had been uplifted by an additional £66 for all schools from September 2017 to reflect funding removed from the ESG. For maintained schools this would ensure a neutral impact on budgets as a similar sum would be de-delegated to the LA in 2018/19.

The Chair sought clarification of feedback from small schools, following previous indications that they might lose out on introduction of the new NFF. Richard Hartle advised that no specific comments had been received on this issue, though one headteacher had contacted him for a discussion. The smallest funding increases would be received by small schools. Richard would pick this issue up with the DfE. Small schools that do not meet sparsity criteria are not well served by the NFF.

Richard advised that high needs funding was allocated as a separate funding block with strictly limited ability to vire between it and the Schools Block. The High Needs block would not increase and this would result in funding pressures that the NFF would not mitigate.

Richard advised that, if approved through council budget arrangements, new allocations would be included in funding statements sent to schools later in February.

Clarification was sought as to whether each school's allocation was calculated based on a consistent amount per pupil. Richard advised that there were differing rates; figures in the paper illustrated the total funding allocation divided by the number of pupils not just the AWPU element.

A Forum member asked whether schools clearly understood the limitations of the High Needs funding block. Jon Stonehouse advised that this issue was one of the drivers behind the inclusion review.

Decision: The Forum agreed to endorse early introduction of the NFF from April 2018 and recommend this to the Council.

The Chair thanked Richard Hartle for his work on the NFF.

7. Setting the School, High Needs, Early Years and Central Services Budgets for 2018/19

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle presented the report, which provided additional information on specific funding areas within the DSG.

The number of formula blocks had increased by one as the Schools Block had been split into a Main Schools Block and a Central Services Block, with the latter to fund central services for schools. Flexibility to transfer funding between blocks would be severely restricted from April 2018.

The lack of increase in the Early Years Block was raised. Richard advised that this had been set for 2017/18, a year earlier than the other blocks, and would remain fixed for three years. There had been an 18% increase initially, but York remained the lowest funded authority for Early Years despite this. Richard would meet the headteacher of St. Paul's Nursery to discuss the longer term funding position.

Paragraph 6 detailed the significant increase in the Schools Block, a small increase in the High Needs Block and status quo position in the Early Years and Central Services blocks.

Nearly all of the Schools Block would be used to support funding formula allocations, with £800k allocated to support the Pupil Growth Fund and Infant Class Size Funding (ICSF) following a previous decision of the Forum. The LA was not proposing to change this in 2018/19 with confirmation required from the Forum.

The need for ICSF whilst there were surplus places in the system was questioned, with the implications of removal for schools also expressed. There was discussion of admission arrangements and the potential to balance surplus places with the needs of schools accessing ICSF. John Thompson provided context, advising that a significant number of schools (about two thirds) were meeting ICSF criteria with EY and KS1 classes over 30. Pupils could not be reallocated from one school (to avoid triggering ICSF) to another. Parental preference is the key driver in the allocation of schools places; it was not a straight allocation of pupils against set intake numbers.

John reported that place planning had been discussed at the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB), with information also being shared with headteachers via the LA's newsletter. This had provided an opportunity to contribute to discussion.

Jon Stonehouse advised that forthcoming place planning discussions would allow debate of all the issues and would provide an opportunity for open and transparent discussion. Richard Hartle agreed to bring a schedule of ICSF allocations and Pupil Growth allocations to the next meeting. It was noted that the role of the Forum was to agree the fund and allocation criteria, with the LA then to implement allocation.

The Forum's NFF consultation assumed that ICSF that allocations would continue in 2018/19. A further consultation should be undertaken before any amendment of ICSF arrangements.

Richard Hartle reminded the forum that ICSF funding had been committed for the next academic year and that a decision would therefore be required at the next Forum meeting were this to be amended. This would disrupt schools' budget planning. A full

consultation with primary schools should be undertaken if the Forum wished to progress a review of ICSF.

Decision: Richard Hartle to bring detail of ICSF allocations to the Forum.

Decision: The Forum agreed the proposed allocations to the Schools Block, Early Years Block, High Needs Block and Central School Services Block.

Helen Gration stated that Early Years funding remained inadequate, with York poorly funded in national comparisons. Private providers were able to make additional charges to parents but maintained nurseries and playgroups continued to face significant challenges including an increase in children with SEND. Helen stated that providers were working to ensure that children were school ready in a challenging context.

Richard advised that the High Needs Block increase of £242k was not sufficient to meet the increase in costs. Strategies to manage this pressure would need to be discussed at future meetings.

Richard advised that the new Central School Services Block was formed from elements of the old Schools Block and the Education Services Grant. There was a reduction of £5k in overall funding, with LA services, including school admissions, facing significant pressures.

Paragraph 18 onwards outlined the allocation of funds under the Contribution to Combined Budgets heading, with no changes proposed. The LA would have to manage cost pressures within this frozen budget. The School Improvement Commissioning budget was held within this funding element and a separate report would be considered under item 8.

Regarding the Termination of Employment Costs budget outlined in paragraph 14, Richard advised that the LA continued to pick up early retirement pension costs arising from terminations to contracts in maintained schools prior to 2013/14. The LA currently only met costs related to redundancies but a significant liability of around £1M annually was paid in relation to past redundancies in schools and school closures. Associated funding from DfE would be reduced as liabilities fall.

Paragraph 15 outlined the budget allocated to Prudential Borrowing Costs. Long term loans would continue and that funding would cease once these were repaid. This low-cost borrowing could be accessed by the LA to fund long-term projects and represented an affordable option. Jon Stonehouse provided examples of projects funded in this way.

There was discussion of funding for Children Looked After (paragraph 20), including the historic decisions about funding in this area (2006). Jon Stonehouse advised that the LA was reviewing all funding for accommodating children in care, which had significant budgetary implications. The £400k included in the Central School Services Block was an element of wider arrangements.

In response to a question regarding funding for a post within the Safeguarding Unit outlined in paragraph 20, Jon advised that this longstanding arrangement enabled a central appointment to support safeguarding in schools. This was not a case-work post and further information would be provided at the next meeting.

In response to a question regarding LADO arrangements, Jon advised that a temporary joint arrangement with NYCC had now ended. The LA was currently advertising the role which needed to be distinct and dedicated to York.

In response to a question regarding paragraph 21 and the setting of budgets for School Improvement and Schools Causing Concern, Richard Hartle stated that it was important to secure the overall budget and separate discussions would need to take place to take place at subsequent meetings on allocating these funds from September 2018.

This funding could not be allocated back into schools via the NFF as it was currently being carried forward as a Central School Services Block allocation from the DfE. John Thompson advised of the plan received by the Forum in February 2017 to decrease funding to Pathfinder TSA over time to ensure their offer remained sustainable.

Decision: Reports to be brought to Forum meetings on Safeguarding support (April), local fostering arrangements, the LADO service and School Improvement Commissioning fund (including Pathfinder TSA) (all July).

In response to a question regarding DfE challenge to the Central School Services Block, Richard advised that the LA was unable to change the purpose for which funding was allocated as this was a continuation of a historical funding stream which would cease when the need for it ceased. The LA could only continue to access this funding on the existing basis and could not re-purpose it. Funding would only continue if there was evidence of need and no alternative funding streams could be identified. Central government could argue that School Improvement funding had been delegated to schools via the new NFF. The LA would need to make a case to the DfE to continue this funding every year, with Forum considering whether to support these requests. More rigorous challenge is anticipated and might result in removal of this funding in the future.

Pathfinder TSA funding was discussed, notably whether it paid for TSA staff.

Decision: The Forum agreed the maintenance of centrally retained budgets at 2017-18 levels.

The Chair thanked Richard for his detailed report.

8. School Improvement Commissioning Fund update – centrally retained funding, cluster priorities, school improvement projects and school-to-school support

Previously distributed. John Thompson presented the report which covered the £400k retained School Improvement budget allocated through the York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) as well as use of £30k allocated to cluster work and the £30k allocated to school led projects. The report also highlighted the £291k returned to schools for use on school improvement activity.

It was noted that £150k allocated to Pathfinder TSA and £65k allocated to the Wellbeing Worker project were not covered by the report and would be reported separately.

Some information had been omitted from paragraph 6, which should have included an allocation of £45k to Vale of York (Hope Learning Trust York) in addition to allocations to nine other schools.

The Forum noted the cluster activity detailed in paragraphs 8 to 13.

John Thompson advised that three School Improvement projects had been approved from the East cluster, one from the Haxby and Wigginton primary schools and also one from All Saints School. A written update would be provided to the commissioning group which was keen to see information shared. It was noted that Cluster chairs also provided reports on projects.

The YSAB would meet on 26th February to receive progress reports on all funded support. Additional scrutiny was provided by the School Improvement Panel process and by the Boards of MATs.

John advised that MATs could apply for funding, if appropriate, to support their schools and the LA would apply, with input from school leaders, in the case of a maintained school. The LA and MATs identified schools through risk assessments which were shared at YSAB meetings.

Some Forum members named other schools they thought were at risk. John Thompson stated that the LA brought schools most at risk to YSAB and discussed doing so with the headteachers of schools it was considering.

Jon Stonehouse stated that funds were allocated on the basis of need identified through substantial discussion, with YSAB members seeking further information if necessary. Jon advised that the YSAB was consistent and clear about the level of information required from each applicant organisation and would not release funding if this was not clearly justified. There is a robust process in place and the YSAB had discussed other schools that might require funding.

The Forum discussed the issues regarding the identification of vulnerable schools. John advised that the LA continued to meet and visit schools to support this process. With Huntington Research School and Pathfinder TSA the LA had worked to secure DfE Strategic School Improvement Fund (SSIF) funding to support 17 Primary schools in addressing under performance in writing.

In response to a question regarding governor awareness of YSAB meetings, John advised that governors did not make submissions to YSAB. Governors should be aware of their school's risk assessment category and in the case of the maintained school being supported governors were aware of the YSAB funding and plan. John stated that he would feed back on the Forum's discussion to the YSAB and reassured members that YSAB processes were robust.

Tricia Head left the meeting at 11.10am.

The Chair advised that the full £400k had not yet been allocated. John advised that there was confidence that this would be allocated by the year-end.

Tricia Head returned to the meeting at 11.14am.

The Chair asked whether other emergency funding was available. John advised that no emergency bids had been made to the SSIF, though a regional bid was being developed with Ebor MAT and LAs across the Yorkshire and Humber region to improve the teaching of reading comprehension skills. The pilot project would include one York primary school.

Jon Stonehouse advised that the YSAB funding allocation to York High School had been made alongside RSC funding, providing further contextual information to the Forum.

Decision: The report was noted.

9. Inclusion Review update

Jon Stonehouse provided a verbal update, advising that the review was ongoing and thanking all involved. Jon stated that the initial phase had involved a review of existing provision, an analysis of outcomes data and identification of future pressures. The LA had arranged for independent facilitation of the next stage of the review through the Staff College, an organisation with relevant experience. Four workshops had subsequently taken place with both LA and school participants.

Jon advised that two workshops had involved LA staff to support the LA in considering inclusion in a wider context and to provide direction of the project overall. One workshop had been for schools, involving YSAB and Schools Forum members, but had excluded the LA. The final workshop had been for everyone together.

Much helpful discussion had taken place. A specialist sub group has now been established and Paul Murphy has been engaged to chair its first two meetings. Following these meetings Paul would, if possible, produce a first draft of an inclusion strategy. The sub-group would also consider how to best utilise a £600k SEND capital grant from DfE to improve provision for children and young people with EHCPs. Early years and post-16 representation would be added to the group as necessary.

Tricia Head left the meeting at 11.37am.

10. Schools Forum forward plan

Richard Hartle advised that the April Forum meeting would consider:

- Pupil Growth / Infant Class Size Funding funding criteria / decisions
- Local fostering – a short report on impact
- Schools contracts
- School Improvement Commissioning Group (possibly deferred to July)
- Centralised safeguarding support posts

July meeting:

- School balances

Richard Crane left the meeting at 11.39am.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 12th April 2018 at 9.00am. The meeting closed at 11.42pm.

Chair

Date

