

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum held on Monday 25th April 2016 at 1.30pm

Attendance list:

Members:

Tracey Ralph	Maintained Primary Headteacher and Chair
Brian Crosby	Academies Representative
Nicola Fox	Maintained Nursery Representative
Caroline Hancy	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Tricia Head	Pupil Referral Unit Representative
Andy Herbert	Maintained Primary Headteacher
Richard Ludlow	Academy Representative
Ken McArthur	Early Years Sector Representative
Lorna Savage	Maintained Secondary Headteacher
Bill Scriven	Maintained Secondary Headteacher (VA school)
Karen Tatham	Maintained Primary Headteacher

Observers / Advisors:

Cllr Jenny Brooks	Elected Member for Children and Young People
Richard Hartle	Head of Finance, City of York Council
Maxine Squire	Assistant Director, Education and Skills
Jon Stonehouse	Director of Children's Services, Education and Skills

Vanessa War Owner, Little Green Rascals Day Nurseries

Salli Radford Coordinator and Clerk

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received with consent, from Alison Birkinshaw – FE Representative.

It was noted that, following Millthorpe School's conversion to academy status on 1st April, Trevor Burton was no longer eligible to attend as Maintained Secondary representative. It was noted that a review of membership would take place prior to the next meeting and that the vacancy for a Governor Representative would also be addressed as part of this process.

3. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair

It was noted that no nominations had been received for either role. The meeting agreed to defer a decision to the next meeting once a review of membership had taken place.

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 14th December 2016

Previously distributed.

The minutes of the meeting of 14th December 2016 were agreed to be a true and accurate record and were signed by the Chair.

5. Matters Arising

With reference to item 4, Matters Arising, and the Civica finance system, it was noted that some staff in some schools were still encountering difficulties uploading information and producing reports. Richard agreed to ask the schools finance team to consider what additional support or training could be offered to school based staff

6. Early Years funding proposal

Previously distributed. Ken McArthur shared a short video outlining the pressures in providing quality childcare with current funding levels in place. Ken advised that costs had increased but that income had not increased in line with this, resulting in some providers reporting a loss of more than £1 per hour of provision. Ken advised that he had conducted a survey of providers which he could share, with the 46 responses highlighting the fact that the £3.38 per hour currently available was not covering costs at 99.5% of settings with over 50% of settings losing over £1 per hour.

Ken advised that wage increases of 70p per hour were being met with no increase in funding and that some settings had increased fees to cover costs. It was noted that some settings had begun to charge for non-compulsory additional items or to limit the number of free hours of provision available.

Ken advised that 87% of respondents were in favour of the proposed increase in funding but that many would prefer a larger increase. It was noted that a 50p increase would still result in a loss to the majority of settings, with the likely outcome to be increased costs for parents and potentially premises maintenance issues in the future.

It was noted that increases to wages and employers' contributions presented an unsustainable situation, suppressing staffing levels and the quality of candidates being recruited.

Ken thanked Jon Stonehouse, Maxine Squire and Richard Hartle for spending time discussing the issues and identifying areas for development.

Ken advised that the proposed increase was being made at a time when NYCC area Early Years providers were receiving an increase on the hourly rate funded from LA reserves.

The Chair thanked Ken for his paper and explained that the meeting had been postponed from its original date to allow full and proper consultation.

In response to a question regarding the implications of the proposal to provide 30 hours of provision and whether this made a decision difficult, Ken advised that this had been discussed with colleagues and that settings were aware that the government was consulting on the National Funding Formula. It was noted that York had chosen to be an early implementer of the extended provision but that impact could not be predicted.

In response to a question about the impact of the development of wrap-around care in school settings, Ken advised that he remained concerned about funding levels at the present time and that the implications of the new offer were not yet known. Ken further advised that a delay in addressing funding needs would not be helpful.

In response to a question regarding the likely impact of the significant change from 15 to 30 hours of free provision, Ken advised that government indicators were that an average uplift of 50p would be applied to current Early Years funding from September 2017.

Bill Scriven stated that the increases in costs related to National Insurance, pension contributions and other costs applied across all sectors and that impact on staffing, premises maintenance and other cost areas also applied. Bill stated that he hoped that the National Funding Formula review would address issues across all sectors, with his view being that Early Years providers were not being underfunded to any significant degree more than other phases within state education in York. Bill asked how any increase in allowances could be funded and how it could be determined that the Early Years sector was being stretched more than any other sectors. Bill recommended that the funding level remain unchanged until the National Funding Formula review had been completed.

Richard Hartle advised that the second stage of the national funding formula consultation was expected to commence prior the next Forum meeting in July, allowing further detail to be considered. It was noted that the DfE had indicated that this second stage consultation would include proposals for Early Years funding.

The Chair suggested that further discussion on the Early Years funding proposal be deferred until the July meeting. This was agreed.

The Chair thanked Ken for his input.

Ken McArthur and Vanessa War left the meeting at 1.50pm.

The observer from York Press left the meeting at 1.50pm.

7. School Improvement Commissioning Plan including funding allocations

Previously distributed. The Forum considered the proposals included in the plan, which was noted. Jon Stonehouse reminded members of the need to declare any conflict of interest in relation to voting on the allocation of School Improvement funding.

In response to a question regarding the identification of schools at risk, Maxine advised that a range of criteria were reviewed three times each year as part of the LA's risk assessment process. Maxine Squire advised that Stephanie Windsor and John Thompson checked school data and considered contextual changes alongside other risk factors, recommending that a revised letter be sent to the school if necessary.

Karen Tatham stated that the School Improvement Commissioning Group (SICG) had still not developed a clear exit strategy for supported schools, suggesting that schools provided with support be given the opportunity to contribute to this process.

The Chair asked the meeting to consider the funding proposals included in the plan. It was noted that the £320k allocated to the Ebor TSA included the provision of literacy and numeracy supernumerary teachers to support schools at short notice and to add capacity. It was noted that nationally, funding for TSAs was anticipated to increase to build capacity in the future, with the funding proposal allowing Ebor TSA to begin to strengthen its team.

In response to a question regarding the responsibility for staffing within MATs, Brian Crosby advised that MATs can apply to Ebor TSA for support but that they would need

to provide a costed plan. It was noted that MATs could go elsewhere for their support but would require a costed plan to secure support from a TSA.

Richard Ludlow advised that the DfE provided funding to MATs for schools judged to be RI or in Special Measures, with MATs being able to use this funding to build capacity. Maxine advised that the Education White Paper anticipated that funding would be provided to TSAs from 2017/18, with 2016/17 being a transitional year. In response to a question regarding the ability of schools to promote the benefits of the research work at Huntington Secondary School, Maxine advised that the research would need to be evaluated to ensure that piloted projects were properly evaluated.

Jon Stonehouse advised that a school-led school improvement model was being proposed, supported by schools funding, with the decision being for the Forum in partnership with the TSAs.

Brian advised that strategies needed to prove their value before any investment was confirmed, with reference to national trials. It was noted that the research being undertaken at Huntington Secondary School would need to be considered within the national context.

Cath Hindmarch stated that she did not think it was appropriate to allocate funds to Huntington Research given shrinking budgets and competing priorities in schools' improvement plans. Lorna Savage and Tracey Ralph agreed, commenting that schools already had full access to EEF research outcomes via the internet.

In response to a question regarding the brokering of support from the Ebor TSA and whether this would be done via the SICG, Maxine advised that this had been the case to date, though future arrangements were to be determined. Tricia Head suggested that access be based on need, asking that the evidence base be aligned with support proposals. Maxine advised that changes to national benchmarks suggested that it was more likely that an increased number of schools would be put at risk in the future, with the LA monitoring and noting a number of emerging trends during the current year that were potential concerns.

Maxine advised that a reduced contribution from the DSG was included in the proposed strategy, with Pathfinder also being encouraged to resource external funding. It was noted that the LA was proposing a decrease in funding for school-to-school support.

Bill Scrivens advised that both TSAs were being supported by the de-delegated lump sum, asking whether the future removal of funding would threaten sustainability for the TSAs. Maxine advised that details of the Education White Paper were awaited, with indications being that funding for TSAs would be provided directly by the DfE but that figures and mechanisms were unknown. It was noted that the Queens Speech on 18th May and the publication of the Education Bill would begin to add detail.

The Forum discussed the proposals. In response to a question regarding future funding for TSAs and whether this would be provided directly by schools, Maxine advised that funding would be redistributed via the National Funding Formula at regional or local level.

In response to a question regarding the future role of the Schools Forum, Maxine advised that the decision making body would continue until at least 2019.

Richard Hartle advised that the new funding arrangements being consulted on suggested that any current DSG funded school improvement budgets would be moved into the Schools Block, with detail on redistribution expected to be provided by the DfE during stage two of the National Funding Formula consultation.

In response to a question regarding the security of funding for CPD, Maxine advised that the LA was encouraging Pathfinder TSA to consider how to secure its funding. It was noted that the DfE intention was for funding to go directly to TSAs from 2017/18 but that the level of funding to be allocated for CPD was not yet clear. The Forum discussed this information, noting that the proposed level of funding for Pathfinder for 2016/17 was £226,680.

Lorna Savage expressed support for the quality of the Pathfinder CPD offer, suggesting that a phased reduction in funding from 2016/17 would help schools begin to absorb charges. Lorna also suggested that the proposed CEIT initiative at Huntington Secondary School could also be bought into by schools rather than being centrally funded as this approach would be in line with the reduction in resources.

The Forum further discussed the proposals, with a proposal emerging to decline funding for CEIT at Huntington Secondary School.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £70,000 to commission work from the CEIT@Huntington:

- Three in favour
- Eight against
- No abstentions

The Forum agreed not to approve this allocation, which would be returned to schools.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £320,000 to commission Ebor Teaching School Alliance (ETSA) to provide tailored packages of school-to-school support:

- Seven in favour
- None against
- Four abstentions

The Forum agreed to approve this allocation.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £60,000 to support school improvement in clusters, with £10,000 to be allocated to each cluster:

- Eight in favour
- One against
- Two abstentions

The Forum agreed to approve this allocation.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £65,000 to support groups of schools in developing innovation plans, via submission of proposals to the SICG. Maxine outlined the mechanism for groups to work outside existing cluster arrangements, advising that this supported collaboration. It was noted that any underspend was vired back to school budgets at the year end. It was suggested that the allocation of this fund be reviewed by the Forum during the year.

Brian Crosby left the meeting at 2.30pm.

The Chair advised that the LA would retain responsibility for SEND pupils, with the Forum discussing the option to review the contingency regularly and returning funds to schools if these were available.

Maxine suggested that funding bids be taken to the Forum as well as the SICG, with the Forum discussing the priorities and pressures on funding. Richard Ludlow suggested that the “vulnerable children” allocation be reallocated according to priority, with the Forum agreeing the importance of mental health in future priorities.

Jon Stonehouse advised that the LA was able to scope options for mental health support. Jon reminded the Forum that the funding allocation to Pathfinder represented the final year of support as school improvement funds would be delegated to school from 2017/18. It was noted that Pathfinder had engaged staff to deliver the CPD programme during the current and next academic year.

The Forum discussed funding options, noting the positive impact of the Pathfinder offer and the funding timeframe which would end on 31st March 2017.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £65,000 to support groups of schools in developing innovation plans, via submission of proposals to the SICG:

- Ten in favour
- None against
- No abstentions

The Forum unanimously agreed to approve this allocation, noting the need to prioritise mental health support.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £226,680 to commission a city-wide CPD programme from the Pathfinder Teaching School Alliance (PTSA):

- Ten in favour
- None against
- No abstentions

The Forum unanimously agreed to approve this allocation.

Jon advised that a more detailed proposal would be brought to the next meeting which would include some support for small schools as well as for mental health priorities.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £100,000 to the local authority School Causing Concern Fund. Maxine advised that this had been reduced from £200,000. In response to a question regarding the need for this fund in addition to the support provided via the ETSA, Jon advised that any unspent funds were referred to the Forum for decision. Maxine advised that some schools requested support in addition to that provided by the TSAs. The Forum discussed the allocation, noting that £137,000 had been allocated from the £200,000 fund during 2015/16.

The meeting considered the proposal to allocate £100,000 to the local authority School Causing Concern Fund:

- Ten in favour
- None against
- No abstentions

The Forum unanimously agreed to approve this allocation.

8. National Funding Formula Consultation

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle advised that the LA submission was available on request, with the Forum noting that some school submissions had been sent individually.

9. Schools Forum forward plan

A forward plan would be drafted for the next meeting.

10. Any Other Business

Lorna Savage queried whether the Civica financial package was compatible with academy accounting. Richard Hartle advised that in its current form the software was not able to support the consolidated accounts required for Multi Academy Trusts, although this may be something that Civica considers for a future upgrade. The Chair asked whether courses offered by the LA's HR team could be accessed on a "pay-as-you-go" basis by schools not buying the HR service, with Jon confirming that this could be arranged.

It was noted that the Forum would need to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair at its next meeting and that thought would need to be given to this in the interim.

The Forum thanked Tracey Ralph for her support whilst Chair.

11. Date and time of the next meeting

5th July 2016 at 9.00am

The meeting closed at 3.00pm.

Chair

Date