

# CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum held on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 1.00pm

## Attendance list:

### Members:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Trevor Burton      | Academy Representative and Chair                   |
| Adam Booker        | Special School Representative                      |
| Debbie Glover      | Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative      |
| Tricia Head        | Pupil Referral Unit Representative                 |
| Richard Ludlow     | Academy Representative                             |
| Dee Patton-Statham | Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative (VA) |
| Jenny Rogers       | Maintained Primary Representative                  |
| Lorna Savage       | Academy Representative                             |

### Observers / Advisors:

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| Amanda Hatton  | Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities                          |
| Maxine Squire  | Acting Director of Children, Education & Communities                               |
| Richard Hartle | Head of Finance, City of York Council  |
| Mark Ellis     | Head of School Services, City of York Council                                      |
| Laura Conkar   | ICT Client Manager, Information and Communication Technology, City of York Council |
| Lee Farrow     | IT Officer, Information and Communication Technology, City of York Council         |
| Darren Kilburn | Principal Consultant, Policy – FarrPoint   |
| Salli Radford  | Head of Governor Services, Coordinator and Clerk                                   |

The meeting began at 1.13pm.

### 1. Welcome

As the Chair was unavoidably delayed, the Vice-Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were taken round the table.

### 2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Alison Birkinshaw – FE Representative, Andrew Daly – Academy Representative, Di Gomery – Maintained Secondary Governor Representative and Claire Rigden – Maintained Nursery Representative. Brian Crosby – Academy Representative and Helen Gratton – Early Years Sector Representative were absent from the meeting.

It was noted that John Thompson – Head of Secondary and Skills, City of York Council – was unable to attend and that Maxine Squire would present item 8.

*Trevor Burton joined the meeting at 1.16pm.*

### 3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The update was noted.

#### **4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

Previously distributed. The minutes of the meeting 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:

Point 1 – Completed. Update to be taken under item 9.

Point 2 – The Chair advised that the Secondary Headteachers' Group would meet week commencing 13<sup>th</sup> May and would consider the broadband contract.

Point 3 – The information was ready for circulation following the meeting.

Point 4 – The Chair advised that the Secondary Headteachers' Group would confirm a maintained secondary representative at their forthcoming meeting.

Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

#### **6. Broadband contract review update**

Laura Conkar introduced Lee Farrow and Darren Kilburn to the meeting, providing some context to the verbal update.

Darren Kilburn outlined the national picture, explaining that York had historically been forward thinking in its engagement with broadband and that the city has invested to ensure that schools are included in the development of infrastructure. Darren advised that the school-specific programme was being used to bring connectivity into communities and that current provision was ahead of access available in other parts of the country.

Darren advised that the current contract for City of York and for Harrogate was coming to an end, providing an opportunity to evolve the service. Darren further advised that ideas were being included in the tender specification which would be taken to the market in six to eight weeks to enable the contract to be awarded by the end of 2019. It was noted that a competitive process was anticipated.

Darren advised that he was keen to hear thoughts and queries from schools.

Laura outlined the intention to support schools in moving to fibre and increased data security. Laura tabled an outlined of the DfE's Education Technology, Strategy advising of the opportunities for schools to become innovators via an application process.

In response to a question regarding the nature of innovation being encouraged, Laura advised that the DfE was keen to establish systems to support specific groups within the education sector, for example, the use of ICT to support and enable pupils with SEND.

In response to a question regarding the deadline for schools to make a decision on the contract and the availability of information on the removal of the funding subsidy by the DfE, Laura advised that consultation with schools during 2018 had indicated that the current contract would end in August 2019. Laura advised that costs were not yet available but that a worst case scenario for schools had been based on the maintenance of current cost levels. It was noted that indicative costs would be made available during the tender process. Laura advised that the LA would need to know

whether schools were moving away from the centralised infrastructure by September 2019.

In response to a further question regarding the availability of DSG funding for the scheme, Richard Hartle confirmed that funding was guaranteed to March 2020 but was unknown from this point. Richard advised that the DfE had indicated that the DSG would be reduced incrementally in future years with LAs to be left to decide how to manage this reduction. It was noted that the rate of decrease was not yet known.

The Chair explained that the information regarding notice requirements for schools intending to step away from the contract would need to go to schools directly via the Headteacher Bulletin and briefing.

In response to a question regarding the time period between September 2019 and January 2020, Laura advised that an extension to the current contract had been agreed to ensure continuity of service. The Forum asked Laura to update headteachers on this decision.

In response to a question regarding the proportion of the contract allocated to schools, Darren advised that schools formed the largest pool of users based on bandwidth and size of group. Darren further advised that bandwidth requirements were specific to individual schools, with Laura advising that schools had a dedicated fibre ring which was separate from the corporate ring.

In response to a question regarding the value and duration of the contract, Darren advised that the length of the contract was dependent on discussion during the tender process, with an estimated period of five to ten years. It was noted that the specification was yet to be completed and considered by Legal Services. Darren advised that similar contracts in other cities had values of £20M-£35M and included opportunities to refresh and update services and technology throughout the term.

In response to a question regarding potential providers, Darren outlined the breadth of providers including some domestic providers operating at large scale.

In response to a question regarding costs for the current year, Laura advised that there would be two charging periods, September 2018 to March 2019 then April 2019 to August 2019, with no price change. Laura advised that the period from September 2019 would need to be considered.

Laura tabled a briefing paper on the project as it related to schools.

In response to a question regarding the opportunity for representatives from schools being asked to look at tenders and how this would be arranged, Darren advised that input would be sought once the service specification had been written, adding that he would like to engage stakeholders in signing-off the specification. Laura advised that she was keen to work with a representative group and that she and Lee Farrow were currently representing schools in the process. The Forum asked that a request for representatives be sent to all headteachers. It was noted that Schools Forum papers were made available to all Headteacher who could then make representations to Forum members. Laura further advised that stakeholder engagement groups had already been held with some sectors and could be arranged with schools.

Discussion followed, with the Forum noting the potentially technical nature of the specification and the option to have Darren present key points to headteachers and to take questions.

Laura confirmed that schools were able to withdraw from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 or to continue their contract during the extension until further information became available.

In response to a question regarding infrastructure availability for schools choosing to access support from elsewhere, Laura advised that this would not be available and that the schools would be separated from the system. Laura further advised that it was likely that this decision would result in school being connected to the domestic ring and associated firewalls which might result in schools needing to access additional services as an add-on.

Laura advised that access to VOIP was linked to the broadband contract and that this needed to be taken into consideration by schools to ensure that any savings identified by moving away from the central contract are fully understood.

Laura sought the view of Forum members on whether schools were likely to continue their contract during the extension. The Chair advised that it was difficult to assess this without costs. Darren advised that tender documents would be drafted based on full buy-in from schools and that the withdrawal of schools might impact on pricing; this would require an element of flexibility in the tender process.

Further discussion followed, with Laura highlighting the need for schools to understand the scope of other options and to ensure that like-for-like services were compared to ensure costs were fully understood.

Laura sought the view of the Forum on the length of the proposed contract, asking whether this was deterring support. Forum members provided varying views and concerns including implications for MATs of high-value contracts with long terms.

Forum members pressed for indicative costs, with Darren outlining the views expressed nationally on the extension of fibre and the keenness of schools to access the type of contract being developed for York.

The Chair countered that York schools were significantly underfunded and that budgets were under increasing pressure, making the context different to many other areas.

**Noted: The Forum noted the update and the next stages of the tender process.**

**Action: Further information would be provided to headteachers via the Bulletin and briefing.**

*Laura Conkar, Lee Farrow and Darren Kilburn left the meeting at 2.00pm.*

## **7. School Place Planning**

Previously distributed. Mark Ellis presented the paper which included primary and secondary school data relating to admissions in September 2019, advising that the LA held statutory responsibilities for securing sufficient places.

It was noted that primary schools would accept 100 fewer pupils in September 2019 than in 2018, whilst secondary schools would accept 74 additional students. Mark advised that these trends would continue in future years.

With reference to paragraph 3, Mark highlighted the change to primary school intake data and the overall increase in the number of unfilled places. Mark further advised

that secondary school places were under pressure and that the LA would continue to work with schools and MATs to address this.

Mark advised on the LA's work in planning areas, explaining that some areas included a small number of schools whilst others included several schools. It was noted that the DfE was happy with the LA's approach and that the LA is able to provide information on projects annually to schools.

The Forum noted the projected increase in the number of unfilled primary school places, with this anticipated to increase to 1,497 in 2025/26.

The Forum further noted the reduction in surplus secondary school place, with this falling to 26 in 2025/26.

Mark advised that a report would be taken to Council Executive in June and would highlight the priorities summarised at the end of the paper:

- Secondary provision East
- Secondary provision South
- Secondary provision West
- Primary provision South and East
- Additional SEND and Alternative Provision places

It was noted that conversations were taking place with MATs, with their being some urgency regarding provision in some areas. Mark advised that some schools had been required to accept additional students above their PAN but that this could not continue.

Mark further advised that some primary schools were oversubscribed whereas others had capacity and that there was a need to consider overall use of space. Maxine Squire advised that some space could be utilised in different ways to address local pressure, for example by hosting additional SEND provision.

Mark referred to the Local Plan and proposed housing development, advising that Section 106 funding was discussed at an early stage with developers.

In response to a question regarding S 106 funding and the allocation of funding from the DfE for additional places, Mark advised that Basic Need Funding was based on projected pupil numbers provided in an annual return. It was noted that no funding would be available for primary expansion going forward as projections showed that this was not needed, whereas secondary demand had been evidenced. Mark outlined the process by which planning applications triggered analysis and an application for funding for places when appropriate.

Maxine Squire advised that land was an issue and that it was better to expand current sites than establish new schools, though this was challenging given site limitations related to area-based regulations.

*Mark Ellis left the meeting at 2.15pm.*

## **8. School Improvement Commissioning Fund – 2018/19**

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire presented the report, which focused on city-wide priorities identified by the analysis of outcomes. Maxine advised that projects needed to address the priorities and had also required stronger methodology than in the past as they were subject to scrutiny from the Research School. Maxine outlined the

variable engagement with the evidence-informed approach to date, giving examples from the report. It was noted that some projects were in their second or third year but that others, whilst showing promise, were at too early a stage to be fully evaluated. Maxine outlined the variety of projects being funded.

Maxine advised that John Thompson had been undertaking monitoring visits and had made recommendations on the future use of funding in his report. The Forum noted the discussion points on page 4, with Maxine outlining the aspects that had supported the success of projects locally and nationally. It was noted that some projects benefitted from expert input and that this was evidencing the need to consider best practice from outside the city. Maxine advised that the Research School had access to national research and that schools needed to engage with this as it would support the development of an evidence-informed approach and ensure maximisation of teacher time and commitment rather than potentially waste time on experimentation. Maxine highlighted the need to use recommended approaches with fidelity rather than tinkering with processes as this was more likely to deliver the desired results.

In response to a question regarding projects to address school-specific issues and whether schools could work alone, Maxine stressed the need to show rigorous methodology that proves that a school is an outlier, advising that schools should work collectively to address common issues and that it would be necessary to consider specific risk to the school and whether this would continue despite work with a city project before a stand-alone project could be supported. It was noted that clear evidence would be required.

Discussion followed, with Maxine advising of the need to consider whether an evidence-informed programme of activity could be developed around an issue. Richard Ludlow outlined Ebor Academy Trust's experience of this approach. Further discussion followed.

The Chair acknowledged the increased transparency and scrutiny applied to the SICF, stating that he was keen to share the learning and impact information with all headteachers. Maxine advised that a sharing best practice event had been planned but had been postponed as it was too early in the life of the projects. It was noted that there was an opportunity to take an update to the autumn term Director's Briefing.

It was noted that schools would be invited to bid for projects linked to the identified priorities for 2019/20, with any projects not linked to the priorities requiring a strong rationale to be approved.

In response to a question regarding the financial data included in paragraph 17 which indicated that £85,489 from the 2018/19 SICF remained unallocated, Maxine confirmed that this fund had been carried forward to enable schools that haven't yet opted into a project to benefit. Maxine confirmed that during 2019/20 there would be £496,489 available to the SICF for project work.

In response to a question regarding the inclusion review reference within the report and the lack of reference to Pivotal during the review, Maxine advised that information had been provided to the inclusion review steering group. In response to a question regarding the initiation of this project, Maxine advised that two schools had identified behaviour and climate for learning as a barrier to improvement and had been keen to engage with the Pivotal approach so had submitted a proposal to the SICF.

Further discussion followed.

Maxine advised that she was keen for the city to develop trauma informed practice and to work with external experts in this area. The Forum discussed this information, noting that Pivotal had not been chosen by the inclusion review steering group and that other options were available.

Maxine outlined the thoughts behind the strategy to increase capacity to address identified need and deliver sustainable improvement against a background of budget reduction. Further discussion followed.

In response to a question regarding a lack of referral to the curriculum, it was noted that the paper was an interim monitoring report.

In response to a question regarding centrally retained funding and option to support primary schools with reducing rolls that might need to restructure staffing; Maxine advised that the ESFA was offering support to schools with financial modelling and that the LA was considering the offer.

Forum members thanked John Thompson for his report, noting that the next meeting would be provided with further information on process for the next round of spending.

**Noted: The report was noted.**

## **9. Inclusion Review update**

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire advised that the steering group had been established as requested and that the pace was accelerating. Maxine asked Forum members to familiarise themselves with SEND financial information to support the LA's response to the DfE's call for evidence on the financial arrangements for children and young people with SEND and those who need alternative provision. It was noted that nationally, discussion of funding for SEND was in-line with York findings.

Maxine advised that the steering group had considered current provision and pathways and was in the process of establishing areas to be developed into recommendations. It was noted that funding provision for children represented the majority of the funding received through the High Needs block of the DSG. Maxine advised that the LA retained some statutory functions including EHCP process management and delivery. Maxine further advised that the number of children with SEMH was increasing as was the identification of Autistic-spectrum conditions, with or without formal diagnosis. Maxine advised that the presenting need should be addressed via mainstream provision (with or without support) and that a refreshed understanding of the statutory framework for SEN in mainstream settings was needed. Maxine advised of the importance of Headteachers' understanding of their legal responsibilities under the Children and Families Act in order to reduce risks associated with legal challenge.

Discussion followed. Maxine advised of the requirement for local areas to keep SEND processes under review, including consultation, and co-production, with parents. The Forum noted the need to engage and involve parents. Maxine advised that options would be brought back to the Forum in July and that parental voice would need to be arranged prior to this. It was noted that the current mix of provision was generally successful though there was not enough provision overall. Maxine outlined the implications for funding, as it was not an option to leave needs unmet. Maxine advised of the need to understand gaps and to consider where additional investment would be needed.

In response to a question regarding the link between EHCP plans and funding, Richard Hartle advised that costs above £6k per pupil were currently funded. In response to a question regarding the costs relating to an increasing number of pupils with additional needs but without formal plans, Maxine advised of the need to submit views to the DfE call for evidence. Richard advised that DSG funding was available from the LA but that SEND was not taken into account during the calculation of the funding allocation to the LA from the centre. Maxine advised that the default position was that the majority of children should have their needs met in mainstream education. Further discussion followed.

Tricia Head outlined the role of the EHCP and the quality of information as children moved through the system to post-16. Tricia emphasised the need for a clear description of the issues relevant to each child.

Maxine advised that post-16 options were a key area for development. Amanda Hatton further advised of the work being undertaken with adult services colleagues on transition arrangements, with adult services considering different ways of delivering support using technology. Amanda suggested that schools would also need to think differently in order to enable children and young people to move securely into adult life.

Maxine outlined the needs being identified by parents and ways in which the LA and schools might build parental confidence in the system. Maxine acknowledged pressure on mainstream settings and emphasised the need for a supported approach. It was noted that the steering group had identified pressures across all phases. Further discussion followed, with Forum members noting the role of parents in establishing packages of support and the challenge that this brought.

Maxine outlined the pilot work being undertaken in the early years on speech, language and communication needs, with input from a variety of services. Forum members noted that the outcome of the pilot and a toolkit would be shared.

Maxine advised that the review had identified a lack of capacity in Enhanced Resource Provision (ERP) at primary level and that the steering group was considering further provision of the type in place at Haxby Road Primary Academy. The Forum noted the pressure on Early Years provision. Further discussion followed.

The Forum discussed the model established by the Wellbeing Worker Service to increase capacity and how this might be used as a model for SICF projects on workforce development relating to SEND support.

Tricia Head outlined the model in place with primary schools which had supported increased capacity overall.

The Chair advised that the secondary headteachers meeting taking place in the week commencing 13<sup>th</sup> May would focus on the inclusion review. The Forum noted that a strategy paper would come to its July meeting.

Amanda outlined directorate priorities and the focus on an evidence-based approach.

In response to a question regarding the recently advertised role of School Inclusion Advisor, which had referenced the inclusion review but had not been discussed by the steering group, Maxine advised that this role was being established to address a gap identified around LA statutory duties which were being addressed as a separate issue. Maxine advised that the role would contribute to the overall work relating to the review but in the context of LA statutory duties including the requirement to challenge schools.

The report was noted.

**Action: Recommendations would follow in July.**

*Dee Patton-Statham left the meeting at 3.30pm.*

**10. Schools Forum forward plan**

Richard Hartle outlined the forward plan:

**July 2019**

- School Improvement Commissioning Fund
- Inclusion review
- Schools outturn balances
- DSG outturn report
- Local Management of Schools Scheme – revisions requested by the DfE / LA

**11. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

**12. Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting would take place on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at 9.00am.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm.

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Chair

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Date