

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the Schools Forum held on Monday 4th February 2019 at 9.00am

Attendance list:

Members:

Trevor Burton	Academy Representative and Chair
Adam Booker	Special School Representative
Andrew Daly	Academy Representative
Debbie Glover	Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative
Di Gomery	Maintained Secondary Governor Representative
Helen Gratton	Early Years Sector 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
John Thompson	Head of Secondary and Skills, City of York Council
Roy Grant	Head of ICT, City of York Council
Tina Hardman	Principal Educational Psychologist, City of York Council
Emma Hughes	Team Leader, School Wellbeing Service
Salli Radford	Head of Governor Services, Coordinator and Clerk

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed Amanda Hatton, Dee Patton-Statham and Jenny Rogers to their first meeting. Introductions were taken round the table.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Brian Crosby – Academy Representative and Cllr Keith Myers. Alison Birkinshaw – FE Representative and Claire Rigden – Maintained Nursery Representative were absent from the meeting.

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The update was noted.

Action: The Chair advised that he would pursue a maintained secondary headteacher to fill the remaining vacancy.

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 28th September 2018

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 – Update to be taken under item 6.

Point 2 – Update to be taken under item 8.

Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising.

6. Broadband contract review update

Richard Hartle introduced the update, advising that the last meeting had included a lengthy discussion regarding the funding contribution which had been guaranteed to the end of the 2019/20 financial year after which continuation would be at the discretion of the DfE. It was noted that the Forum had requested an update and that Roy Grant was attending to provide this.

Roy advised that the procurement process was active, with the LA's legal and procurement teams engaged and a draft contract in place to form the basis of the negotiation process. It was noted that this approach would reduce the timeframe by using the tender process to assess the contract.

Roy advised that the broadband contract would cover both York and Harrogate, with this joint approach driving down the price and encouraging innovation whilst attracting additional funding to the project through local investment in each area. Roy advised that the team had been testing the market to establish an appropriate process, with the anticipation being that the contract would be in place by the end of 2019. The Forum noted that the team hoped to establish a longer-term contract for York and Harrogate and to develop the opportunity to improve basic services at no additional cost through the model that had been established.

Roy acknowledged that school finances remained uncertain but believed that the project provided the opportunity to deliver a future-proof solution.

In response to a question regarding the measures taken to establish the level of commitment to the project within the school community, Roy advised that schools were one aspect of the contract and that a significant number of end points would be included in the contract. Roy explained that an increased number of end points allowed investment and improved negotiating power, advising that the team would need to ensure that any disengagement by schools would not create a detriment to other service users. It was noted that breakpoints had been included in the contract and that the market place was being tested for this aspect as well as other factors.

In response to a question regarding the number of end points that will be confirmed at finalisation of the contract, Roy advised that this would need to be established and that the team would be asking other service areas to confirm this as part of the contract negotiation process.

In response to a question regarding the likely future of funding secured to the end of 2019/20, Richard advised that funding was linked to central government's comprehensive spending review period and that there was therefore no guaranteed commitment beyond the next financial year.

In response to a question regarding the availability of two cost indications to schools; one with DfE funding and one without, Richard advised that this would be made

available once contract detail had been determined. It was noted that the DfE contribution represented approximately one-third of total school costs. Roy advised that anticipated that total costs were unlikely to increase and may in fact reduce. It was further noted that the DfE may reduce funding rather than removing it altogether from 2020.

In response to a question regarding the level of school access at the current time, Roy advised that all York schools and academies currently accessed the central broadband contract. It was noted that one school had previously accessed a contract with another provider but had now moved to the main contract.

In response to a question regarding assurances available to current school clients in a rapidly changing market and the risk management in place during the contract negotiation process, Roy advised that he hoped that the investment from 2009 had been successful in bringing an additional £50M into the city, with other options not comparable. It was noted that a consultation process was underway to outline the model but that the team were confident that the identified risks were worth taking.

In response to a question regarding the steps taken to inform schools of the benefits of the centralised contract, Roy advised that further communication was needed to explain the benefits and to take questions from schools. Roy advised that he was seeking volunteers from the school community for an evaluation panel to consider tenders, with York University, Vital and other colleagues already involved.

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

Action: Roy and Richard would produce a Frequently Asked Questions document for circulation with the minutes to support headteacher understanding of the impact of the potential loss of DfE funding and other issues relating to the contract.

Action: The Chair would discuss suitable input to the tender process with secondary headteachers.

Roy Grant left the meeting at 9.25am.

7. School Improvement Commissioning Fund – 2017/18 outcomes and 2018/19 plans

Previously distributed. John Thompson advised that the report provided detail of the 2017/18 commissioning fund, broken down into allocations for Schools Causing Concern, school improvement projects, Wellbeing Worker Service support, Pathfinder TSA CPD and LA school improvement priorities.

It was noted that the Schools Causing Concern report had been presented to the forum in summer and to headteachers in autumn 2018 and was included as Annex 1.

John outlined the working group report included in paragraph 4 of the report, following the Forum's decision allocate funding to groups of schools for collaborative projects. It was noted that all agreed projects were now underway, with John outlining the process to form groups to progress projects for both maintained and academy schools. It was noted that John was undertaking visits with project leads and would bring an update to the May Forum meeting. John advised that £19k was yet to be allocated and that £6.5k had been allocated to Huntington Research School to undertake monitoring and evaluation of the projects. The Forum noted that John would ensure further evaluation

of School Improvement expenditure, particularly relating to York High School and Hob Moor Schools.

In response to a question regarding the remaining available funding, John advised that discussions were ongoing, with some schools keen to engage but currently addressing other priorities. Discussion followed. John advised that support was being provided to vulnerable schools via the YSAB, with this to continue as appropriate.

In response to a question regarding the status of DSG funding, Richard Hartle advised that this would be available to the end of the 2019/20 financial year but was unconfirmed from this date. Richard advised that the LA hoped to be able to put forward a strong case for retention of this funding. Maxine Squire advised that, as the city rarely met the criteria for additional funding, it should be possible to make a strong case. The Forum discussed this position, with John advising that the LA would continue to work with partners across the city to identify funding opportunities as in previous years.

Noted: The report was noted.

John Thompson left the meeting at 9.40am.

It was agreed that item 9 be taken next.

9. Setting the School, High Needs, Early Years and Central Services Budgets for 2019/20

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle advised that the budget information shared included some funding decisions made in 2018 on a two-year cycle which were not for debate in the current year.

Richard presented the report, advising that:

- No long-term commitments were currently available from the DfE but it was unlikely that the Schools Block would be reduced following the recent 4.3% increase following implementation of the new National Funding Formula (NFF).
- The Early Years Block was not anticipated to increase as a new formula was already established.
- The High Needs Block would receive a 1% increase following a central government announcement of additional funding for high needs. This equated to a c£300k per year increase.
- Central Services held a neutral position, with a total allocation of £3.6M. It was noted that c£600k was allocated to the LA via the NFF, with the remaining £3M being somewhat uncertain going forward. It was noted that the current DSG allocation included funding for the broadband contract, School Improvement and other services.
- The Schools Block was distributed via the Funding Formula, with one small amendment relating to Low Prior Attainment which would be reduced by £28 from the current level of £1,050 per pupil due to the increase in the overall eligible cohort. It was noted that the total funding allocated across country for this cohort would remain the same. Richard advised that the impact would be neutral across the city but with some variations between schools. It was noted that there would be change for some individual schools, though the ceiling and floor mechanisms would help protect schools from significant variances.

Richard advised that, overall, the bottom-line protection for per pupil allocation remained.

It was noted that growth fund remained available but would be decreased by £150k due to adjustments within the NFF. Richard advised that the Forum had discussed this issue during 2018 and had agreed to continue to run this budget to the end of the funding cycle. No change was therefore proposed.

Richard advised that, though the Early Years hourly rate would continue, a significant reduction in the lump sum amount payable to the stand-alone nursery school from £107k in 2018/19 to £89k would be challenging.

Richard advised that the small increase of 1% to the High Needs Block would not address the significant pressures and that the LA was projecting an overspend of £1.3M against the High Needs Block in 2018/19. The Forum noted that current levels of spend were unsustainable and that the work of the inclusion review was essential. Richard advised that LA's were able to request a transfer from the Schools Block into the High Needs Block of up to 0.5%, though the LA was not recommending this to ensure that schools were able to function under the new NFF. The Forum noted that this would need to be considered in 2020/21.

Richard advised that the Central Schools Services Block would need to deliver efficiency savings in 2019/20, with the LA confident this could be managed.

The Forum considered the information included in paragraphs 18 to 27, noting that £3M of funding would be at risk from 2020/21 as these budgets were currently viewed as historic commitments by the DfE to support existing contracts or contributions to services. It was noted that the DfE expected these commitments to reduce as contracts ended or need reduced until the funding ended.

Richard asked the Forum to consider the LA's recommendations and to note and comment on the report, as well as agreeing the continuation of centrally retained budgets at current levels.

In response to a question regarding Infant Class Size Funding (ICSF) and specifically regarding the questions raised during 2018 relating to trigger points and the potential to review management of this funding, Richard advised that this would need to be addressed in the future. Richard further advised that there was a degree of flexibility applicable to some criteria for ICSF and that the Forum could revisit how this was working. It was noted that the DfE stipulated that the allocation must be formulaic rather than subjective.

Amanda Hatton left the meeting at 9.55am.

The Forum discussed predicted intakes for September 2019 and the potential impact on some small schools.

Tricia Head queried the funding figure for Danesgate, advising that the commissioning number had not increased. Tricia advised that Danesgate currently reported to the LA every six months to request funding for additional pupils, resulting in imprecise budget information. It was noted that the current figure for 2018/19 was 540, with Tricia asking for budget information based on actual pupil numbers and advising that Danesgate had requested a review of top-up funding. Richard advised that monitoring of expenditure against available budget was undertaken, further advising that the High Needs allocation had not increased making budgets unchanged from 2016/17. It was noted that increases in costs over two-to-three years were shown against a budget which had remained fixed for sometime.

In response to a question regarding the option to transfer up to 0.5% to the High Needs Block and whether this would cover the overspend, Richard advised that this would not be adequate and, though the LA could ask for a higher level of transfer via Secretary of State approval, it would be difficult within the city given the current level of school funding. It was noted that most LAs had asked for a transfer of 0.5% though York had not. It was noted that the Forum could debate this option and would need to agree the transfer request otherwise the LA would need to appeal to the Secretary of State for permission to transfer. Maxine advised that the LA wished to continue to lobby central government regarding the growth in the number of children and youth people needing additional support as central government was not recognising the scale of the issue. Maxine stated that funding for SEND needed a fundamental review. Discussion followed.

Helen Gration advised that the NDNA was planning a national survey to assess need and might trial this with York early. It was noted that the data collected would enable further lobbying. The Forum discussed this issue further, considering options. Richard outlined the funding mechanism should the LA seek to transfer funding to the High Needs Block.

Tina Hardman and Emma Hughes joined the meeting at 10.05am.

Noted: The Forum noted the report, noting Tricia Head's comments on funding for Danesgate.

Agreed: The Forum unanimously agreed to continue spending at 2018/19 levels as detailed in the report.

8. Wellbeing Worker Service funding request

Previously distributed. The Chair welcomed Tina Hardman and Emma Hughes to the meeting.

Tina presented the information shared in advance of the meeting, in particular the responses to the queries raised by the Forum regarding the funding request for the Wellbeing Worker Service:

- Public Health funding would not be continued and had never been a long-term commitment.
- Tina had twice approached the CCG regarding funding but this would not be increased. The Forum noted the £140k contribution to the York project and that this was not ring-fenced.
- A service budget plan had been produced which showed the impact of the decrease in funding from September 2019.
- The impact of the budget reduction would be the loss of one Wellbeing Worker (reducing the service from six to five plus the team leader) and the service would reconfigure to increase the number of schools looked after by each worker. The Forum noted that this would dilute the support available to schools resulting in an estimated 17% reduction in consultation and targeted work with this likely to result in a waiting list and impact negatively on early intervention work.

Emma Hughes advised that the Worker that would be lost (due to the status of the current contract) covered two secondary schools and a special school, being a very experienced CAMHS worker.

The Forum discussed the funding gap, with Andrew Daly, in his capacity as chair of the Wellbeing Group noting that continuity was key. Andrew advised that he now had an overview of service impact with this being significant. Andrew advised that he was very keen to support the team and proposal.

In response to a question regarding the likely restructure should the service be reduced and how the current team would be supported to ensure consistency, Emma advised that she was planning work to test consistency and would address this regardless of the Forum's funding decision. Emma expressed her commitment to ensuring a good service was provided, advising that she was auditing quality and overseeing the allocation of casework to ensure best outcomes.

The Chair noted that, across the city, significant work had already been undertaken, placing York ahead of the national agenda. The Chair thanked Tina and Emma for their work in developing the project.

Emma confirmed York's position in comparison to other LAs, with Maxine Squire advising that the progress of Rotherham, Doncaster and Kirklees as regional pathfinders was being monitored, with an NHS key lead appointed and working with the Directors of Children's Services group.

Tina Hardman and Emma Hughes left the meeting at 10.20am.

The Chair reminded Forum members that the service had requested £40k annually from September 2019, with Richard Hartle advising that this would be allocated from the School Improvement fund if agreed and would therefore represent a pre-commitment from the 2019/20 budget allocation. The Forum noted the redundancy timeframe if no decision was made at this stage and that £106k of School Improvement funds currently remained unallocated .

Agreed: The Forum unanimously agreed to commit £40k as an annual contribution from September 2019.

The Forum discussed the experiences of schools engaged with the service to date and the approach being taken to address inconsistencies. The Forum noted the challenging funding environment and the work being done to establish alternative structures to bring sustainability.

Action: The Chair would formally write to Andrew Daly to confirm the Forum's decision.

10. Inclusion Review update

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire provided context to the growth in the number of children supported by the High Needs Block. The Forum noted that EHCPs had been extended to age 25 in 2014, with the practical experience of LAs being that EHCPs are now continuing to the upper age limit, thereby increasing pressure on provision. Maxine advised that it was very difficult for LAs to end an EHCP before age 25 as this could be taken to appeal, making it necessary for the city to develop an improved local offer.

Maxine advised that historical pressure which had required the virement of funds to the High Needs Block for a number of years continued to increase. In addition, the number of children accessing specialist provision had increased, with specialist

settings (the special schools and PRU) carrying increased pupil rolls and therefore increased service delivery costs.

In response to a question regarding the availability of comparative information for other LAs, Maxine advised that the LA Comparative Tool could be used to consider the cost of service delivery along different routes. It was noted that SEN banding had been adjusted, with a graduated approach to types of provision now in place. Maxine outlined the work being done to identify reasons for cost pressures, with some necessary readjustment being identified. The Forum noted that the priority was to consider current spending and that Maxine was seeking four Forum members to be involved in Phase 3 of the review.

Maxine advised of the need to consult parents of SEND pupils as the project might otherwise encounter challenge at a future stage. Maxine outlined current parental views regarding provision and other contextual aspects influencing the review.

Maxine outlined the process being undertaken to understand each aspect of spend on SEND, advising that this information would be used to lobby for increased funding from an informed position.

Discussion followed. Maxine advised that the LA was able to demonstrate the mechanisms that triggered funding levels across SEND banding, with some growth being evident in the more complex end of the banding structure. In response to a question regarding the reason for this growth, Maxine advised that this was generally due to improved medical support which was extending lives which otherwise would not have been viable long term, creating pressure along the life pathway. It was noted that current SEND funding streams were based on historical information that pre-dated the growth in the SEND cohort, rather than a projection of actual need. Discussion followed, with Maxine outlining the need to develop a provision map to ensure all children were able to access the appropriate point in the system. It was noted that the SEN Code of Practice suggested that most children should be in mainstream schools.

Maxine shared the learning gained from other LAs also reviewing SEND provision. Discussion followed, with the Forum noting the impact on Early Years settings, as well as schools, as parental expectations increased.

Further discussion followed, including consideration of the timescale for the final phase of the review and the possibility that May might be unrealistic, though remained desirable. Maxine advised that the final report must be ready by July to lead into the 2019/20 academic year. Richard Hartle advised that the timeframe would lead into discussions on the Council's budget for 2020/21.

Maxine provided further thoughts on the role of the group required to lead Phase 3.

Agreed: The Forum approved the following members to act on their behalf during Phase 3:

**Jenny Rogers
Helen Gratton
Tricia Head
Adam Booker
Andrew Daly**

Action: Maxine would arrange meetings and workplan to meet the established timeframe.

11. Schools Forum forward plan

Richard Hartle outlined the forward plan:

May 2019

- School Improvement Commissioning Fund 2019/20
- Broadband contract review
- Inclusion review
- School place planning

12. Any Other Business

f40 group – Maxine Squire advised that the f40 group had circulated information on lobbying for funding improvements and that an NGA week of action was planned. Information would be circulated to headteachers.

Brexit – Maxine Squire advised that the LA would circulate an update on emergency planning relating to Brexit and that the LA would go into emergency planning mode in the result of a no-deal Brexit. It was noted that headteachers would be asked for feedback on community tensions and other factors if this situation arose.

13. DfE presentation – School Self-Assessment Tool

Deferred to the next meeting. The Chair advised that secondary schools had tested the tool and agreed that self-assessment as a stand-alone exercise was not particularly useful. Information would be shared between the secondary headteachers.

14. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting would take place on 9th May 2019 at 1.00pm.

The meeting closed at 11.25am.

Chair

Date