



CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the additional Schools Forum meeting held on Tuesday 5th July 2022 at 9.00am at West Offices

Present: Dave Hewitt (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative) Chair, Steve Lewis (Academy Representative), Jo Olsen (Maintained Secondary Governor Representative), Mark Richardson (Pupil Referral Unit Representative), James Rourke (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative) from 9.45am, and

In attendance: Cllr Andrew Waller (Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC), Richard Hartle (Head of Finance, CYC), and Salli Radford (Head of Governor Services, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

The meeting began at 9.13am. It was noted that the meeting was not quorate but that no decisions were required.

1. **Welcome**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Forum Members extended their condolences to HG following the death of her husband.

2. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Adam Booker (Special School Representative), Gail Brown (Academy Representative), Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Helen Gration (Early Years Sector Representative), Mark Hassack (Academy Representative), Lee Probert



(FE Representative), Claire Rigden (Maintained Nursery Headteacher Representative (VC)), Jenny Rogers (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), Dee Statham (Academy Representative), and Helen Winn (Academy Representative).

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The membership update was noted.

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 3rd May 2022

Previously distributed. The minutes of the meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record and would be formally approved at the next Forum meeting.

5. Matters Arising

There were no outstanding action points to report.

6. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) outturn 2021/22

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle advised that movement of funds between the three blocks of funding had been restricted in recent years. Forum members noted the outturn summary for each funding block provided in Appendix 1.

Schools block – Richard advised that the majority of Schools block funding was passed to schools and academies, leaving a net nil balance at the year-end. Forum members noted that there was no carry forward surplus from the Schools block. Richard advised that a small balance had been brought forward from 2020/21 due to a delay in payment of pupil growth funding.

Central Services block – Richard advised that this funding block was technically retained by the LA for the provision of services to support statutory education functions. It was noted that historic funding

commitments were also held within this budget heading, though these were being reduced in line with the request from the DfE to cease over time. It was noted that these historical commitments made by the Forum were currently being funded by the DfE on a decreasing scale with a 20% per year reduction and anticipated removal at a future point. Richard advised that the School Improvement Commissioning Budget was funded from this block. It was noted that there had been a £216k underspend against this block in 2021/22, mainly due to the underspend against the YSAB commissioning budget. Richard advised that this funding was ring-fenced by the forum and had therefore been carried forward into 2022/23. The Forum noted a £44k underspend on central statutory services, with this relating to prudential borrowing repayments on capital expenditure to facilitate the closure of Burnholme Community College. Richard advised that this underspend was due to lower than expected interest rates and that the balance of £44k had been transferred to the High Needs block to relieve some pressure.

Early Years block – Richard advised that other block allocations were based on historic data, though the Early Years block was adjusted in-year based on take up of places, with the final adjustment for 2021/22 taking place at the end of the summer term. Richard highlighted a surplus of £347k at the financial year end, advising that this was held to balance the adjustment due from the DfE. Richard advised that some LAs held significant surpluses against the EY block as a contingency. It was noted that York did not hold contingencies but budgeted for the allocation of all funding, in line with other blocks. Maxine Squire advised that Central Services block funding was retained by some LAs but not York. The Forum noted that the low levels of funding available to the city drove the move to vire maximum levels of funding to early years providers.



High Needs block – Richard advised that actual net expenditure was showing a surplus of c£4m, though this was reflective of the Safety Valve funding received in-year which had prevented the anticipated deficit of at least £2.6m.

Richard advised that the Safety Valve plan had been signed off towards the end of the financial year and that the LA had made additional savings against the original proposal in-year.

It was noted that a deficit of c£13m had been predicted at the year end, with this reduced to a deficit of £6.4m carried forward into 2022/23 due to the additional allocation of £7.6m from the DfE. The Forum noted that the financial position of the High Needs block was now under control with the Safety Valve plan.

Richard advised of an overall DSG net carry forward balance of £5.843m, with the High Needs block deficit offset by the surplus held against the Early Years block, though this would be removed by the year-end adjustment.

Questions were invited.

In response to a question regarding the biggest risk to financial recovery, Richard advised that not delivering the actions outlined in the Safety Valve plan was the most significant risk. Maxine advised that managing demand within the funding envelope agreed with the DfE would be challenging.

In response to a question regarding the impact of increased inflation, Maxine advised that managing budget pressure within this context was difficult, and that the Secretary of State's decisions would influence impact on the LA. Richard advised that balancing High Needs block funding against the increasing costs to external providers would be challenging. Discussion followed.



In response to a question regarding the implications of failing to meet the requirements of the Safety Valve plan, Richard advised that increasing costs would increase pressure on the LA and would result in the DfE reconsidering their decision to mitigate the historical deficit. Richard advised that it was crucial that the plan was delivered. The Forum noted that the LA did not carry sufficient reserves to balance any shortfall.

In response to a question regarding the impact of the plan on parents and how this was being captured for feedback to the DfE, Maxine advised that there were frequent engagement meetings with parents, complaints data was collated, and that research work was ongoing with York St John University around Y6 to Y7 transition for SEND pupils. It was noted that the LA had submitted responses to the Green Paper consultation regionally, nationally and at local level.

The report was noted.

7. Maintained school balances 2021/22

Previously distributed. Richard Hartle advised that detail of individual balances had not been provided but would be distributed prior to the next meeting with context to enable fair and transparent discussion.

It was noted that some schools were holding increasing balances, with the assumption being that surpluses included Covid catch-up funding that would be spent during the next academic year. Richard advised however that other schools had been negatively impacted during the pandemic and had reduced their surplus balances significantly.

In response to a question regarding the option to consider the challenges facing smaller schools and pupil place management in order to support sustainability, Maxine advised that the difficulty lay in matching available places with demand as these did not necessarily align geographically.

Maxine advised that a strategic overview that took into account the needs

of local communities would be required, with strategy relating to small schools being a specific strand. Richard advised that the National Funding Formula was not supportive of small schools and that DfE strategy had not indicated any intention to address this negative impact. It was noted that York small schools were not remote enough to meet the criteria for sparsity funding. Discussion followed. Maxine acknowledged the need for a city-wide project to review place planning strategy.

Maxine advised that other areas of pressure were anticipated to impact on schools, with catering costs being a particular cause for concern.

James Rourke joined the meeting at 9.45am.

8. Safety Valve quarter 1 monitoring report

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire advised that the first monitoring report had been submitted to the DfE in June, evidencing that the LA was on track to deliver against the plan. The Forum noted that the position at the end of Q1 was £132k better than the budget target, with this ensuring that the DfE released the next tranche on time.

Maxine presented the detailed report which evidenced the delivery of the plan in line with expectation:

- Managing demand more appropriately – 54 EHCPs had been appropriately ceased, mostly post-19. Annual review process improvements had been made. The Forum noted the ongoing pressures, particularly in early years, relating to assessment and provision.
- Reduce costs of SEND transport – Procurement of taxi contracts had completed, with greater oversight by the new Home-to-School Transport Team. The Forum noted that the policy had not been changed, but that assessment criteria relating to eligibility had been

more rigorously applied. In response to a question regarding the intended level of cost reduction, Maxine advised that it was important to ensure that taxis were only provided where appropriate. The Forum noted the work undertaken by Danesgate to encourage use of public transport or to provide parental allowances to enable more efficient transport whilst supporting the independence of children and young people.

- Support the inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream provision / Create more ERP provision in mainstream schools to support the transition of children with a primary need of Autism and associated SEMH needs – Maxine outlined the planned adjustments to specialist and ERP provision, including the work to further develop the Danesgate Community site. It was noted that the Autism pathway was also being developed with the parent carer forum. Maxine outlined the need to reconsider PRU provision to relieve pressure on Danesgate. In response to a question regarding the intention to develop further PRU provision, Maxine advised that a feasibility project was in the initial stages, with a significant challenge being the lack of available space within the city. Discussion followed.
- Increase the number of young people with SEND in employment in the 19-25 age range / Build on successful pathways out of education and into employment – Maxine outlined the work with post-16 providers to develop a focus on employment beyond supported 19-25 placements. Maxine outlined the intention to develop a network of inclusive employers within the city.
- Access relevant capital bid opportunities to enhance support in schools – The bid for additional SEND capital had brought a funding commitment of £3m.

- Additional CPD for mainstream schools relating to SEND – Pathfinder TSA had published their 2022/23 offer, with other strands being offered by partners from September.

Maxine advised that Q2 of the Safety Valve plan would require representation from schools and colleges to support the required work on provision mapping relating to ERPs and mainstream provision.

A Forum member stated that early years EHCPs were helpful in ensuring TA support in the early stages of formal education. It was noted that schools were experiencing challenge in managing some young pupils with no EHCP in place. Maxine acknowledged the challenges within the 0-19 age band relating to dysregulation. It was noted that this issue impacted all settings, including the special schools. Maxine outlined some of the strategies being considered to support pupils, including TAs transitioning between phases with pupils. Discussion followed regarding the disconnection between actual TA roles and generic job descriptions, including the need to re-evaluate roles to ensure appropriate salary levels. Forum members noted the financial impact of increasing salary bands on schools.

Maxine advised that quarterly monitoring would be reported to the Forum, with KPIs to be sharpened and refined over time.

9. York Schools and Academies Board (YSAB) year-end report including School Wellbeing Service discussion

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire provided context to the report which covered the fund of £400k generated by the Schools Causing Concern grant.

Maxine advised that in 2021/22 the YSAB had focussed on more regular priorities other than Covid. It was noted that virtual YSAB meetings had continued successfully and were well attended.



It was noted that the Education Futures Plan (EFP) and allocation of funding to Schools Causing Concern had formed the main focus, with a desire to increase transparency and accountability being supported by the Research School. Maxine outlined the changes in membership and roles within the YSAB, with the partnership remaining strong and committed.

The EFP had been overseen by a subgroup chaired by Helen Winn, with the framework now established. It was noted that Helen would not be in a position to lead the group from September, but would remain an active member of the YSAB.

Maxine advised that the priorities within the EFP would remain the focus for 2022/23, with new work taking place under each heading in response to dysregulation and attendance as nationally and locally identified challenges. It was noted that the five work streams had been set using Education Endowment Fund guidelines. Maxine advised that the headteachers' conference in the autumn term would be focussed on the EFP priorities.

Maxine advised that the School Improvement Commissioning Fund (SICF) had supported the work of the YSAB, with funding committed to 2022/23. The Forum outlined the walk-throughs organised by Pathfinder Teaching School Alliance and the positive impact evidenced. It was noted that this work would be captured through a series of case studies to help share best practice and support networking.

Maxine advised that the YSAB had committed to the Attendance Project and to Schools Reading Week. Maxine outlined the programme of events during Schools Reading Week, with All Saints RC School taking the lead.

It was noted that this work was being shared with Ofsted at national and regional level.



The Forum noted allocations from Schools Causing Concern funding, with c£200k allocated to support schools in challenging circumstances.

York High School – c£73k – Support for the STAR Centre which worked to reduce exclusions. It was noted that the sustainability of this approach would be considered as part of the Safety Valve review process. Cllr Waller declared an interest in this funding stream as a governor at York High School.

Carr Infant School – c£10k – The school had retained its good judgement during the recent inspection.

St Barnabas CE Primary School – c£58k – The school had been supported to cover the planned sickness absence of the Headteacher. There would be an end of year monitoring report to the board which would show significant progress against the action plan.

Naburn CE Primary – c£47k – A grant had been made to increase leadership capacity following the school being placed in Special Measures. The HMI had judged that leaders and governors were taking appropriate action and the School Improvement Plan was fit for purpose during a recent monitoring visit.

St Aelred's RC Primary – c£8.5k – A monitoring report was awaited relating to behaviour and attendance.

It was noted that final balances were summarised in the paper and that Early Talk for York continued to receive support. The Forum noted the funding commitments and balances, with a healthy balance of £610,423 carried forward into 2022/23. The Forum noted that this historic funding commitment was tapering over time, but that the YSAB was acting as a strong and robust guardian of the funding, with challenge provided and requests for funding interrogated to ensure due diligence relating to public funding.



Discussion followed.

In response to a question regarding the uncommitted balance carried forward, Maxine advised that the strategic plan around priorities would be reviewed, and that a suggestion would be put that the YSAB partnership develop a strategic plan for the city. Steve Lewis, as a member of the YSAB Board, advised that the group was looking at a longer-term strategy to support school improvement rather than continuing to take a responsive approach. Discussion followed.

School Wellbeing Worker Service (SWWS) – The Chair advised that the SWWS had requested funding for a further three years. Maxine advised that a meeting with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) was due to take place on 6th July and that the current MoU expired in March 2023. Maxine advised of the need for a plan for the future. It was noted that the CCG no longer existed and had been replaced by the York Health and Care Partnership 1st July. Maxine advised that a paper would be brought to the September Forum meeting. Forum members noted the historic commitment supported SWWS funding at present and that the Forum would need to consider future options in the context of the Mental Health Support Team which formed part of the Health Service response.

In response to a question regarding YSAB funding focussing on vulnerable maintained schools, and the lack of contingency for maintained schools going forward, Maxine advised that the strategic discussion planned with the YSAB Board would ensure that the LA supported all schools within the city. Maxine outlined the need to consider the future structures and strategies available to the small LA maintained education community. It was noted that this would require some time commitment from Headteachers. Discussion followed. It was noted that the Forum had made the decision in 2015 to allocate Schools Causing Concern funding to the historic commitments held in the Central Services block.



Maxine acknowledged that MATs received some direct school improvement funding, and that the funding available to maintained schools could be considered for ring-fencing. Further discussion followed.

10. Schools Forum forward plan

The Forum noted the forward plan:

November

2023/24 budget planning

Maintained schools start budget

Safety valve monitoring

School Wellbeing Worker Service

Early Years NFF consultation – This had been launched on 4th July and closed on 16th September. Richard Hartle would provide an update on potential impact.

Place planning was requested as an item, with a paper covering capital funding available to support basic need.

It was noted that proposals around national SEND banding would be published in the autumn.

Discussion followed regarding opportunities to discuss strategy and performance as a wider group of school leaders. Maxine would take this forward. Further discussion followed regarding the delivery of school improvement support to maintained schools and the challenges increasingly faced by schools as LA and partner services reduced.





11. Any other agreed business

There was no other business.

12. Date and time of future meetings

Meeting dates for the next academic year would be confirmed and circulated by the Governance Service.

The meeting closed at 10.50am.

AWAITING APPROVAL

