

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES of the meeting held on Tuesday 13 September 2023 commencing at 10.00am and finishing at 1.00pm

Present:

Members:

Carole Thomson (Academy Secondary School Governor Rep) – in the Chair

Catharine Darnton Vice Chair (Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep)

Row Martin (Council of Oxfordshire Teacher Organisations (COTO))

Chris Hart (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Rep)

Jacqui West (Alternative Provision / PRU Headteacher Rep)

Brenda Williams (Maintained Primary School Governor)

Natalie Wilson (Maintained Nursery Headteacher School Rep)

Victoria Woods (Academy Primary School Headteacher Rep)

Nathan Thomas (Academy Secondary School Headteacher Rep)

Robert Majilton (Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep)

Lorraine Wilson (Special School Headteacher Rep)

Maureen Thompson (Academy Primary Governor Rep)

Jeanne Lapsley (Special School Governor Rep)

In attendance:

Lynda Poole (Interim Deputy Director for Education, Oxfordshire County Council)

Anne Coyle (Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services)

Martin Goff (Head of Access to Learning)

Margaret Whitaker (Senior Financial Adviser, Oxfordshire County Council)

Sharon Keenlyside (Committee Officer)

These notes indicate the outcomes of this meeting and those responsible for taking the agreed action.

If you have a query please contact Sharon Keenlyside, Committee Officer (committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordsire.uk)

1.1 Apologies and welcome	ACTION
<p>The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Louise Izzo (Early Years VI Rep); Jo Clarke, (Observer on behalf of School Business Managers); Tom James (Primary Maintained Governor Rep), Sarah Fogden (Finance Business Partner (Children) Oxfordshire County Council)</p> <p>1.2 Declarations of interest</p> <p>There were none.</p> <p>1.3 Update on Membership</p> <p>The Chair informed members that there had been a significant number of vacancies. The Chair, Brenda Williams, and Jeanne Lapsley’s Terms of Office had expired and all three had been re-elected unopposed. Natalie Wilson and Lorraine Wilson had agreed to continue in their positions as Headteacher Reps. There were still two Academy Secondary Governor vacancies and one Academy Primary Governor vacancy which would need be re-advertised as soon as possible. Sam Bartholomew, Maintained Primary Headteacher Rep, had taken a secondment for a year and had to stand down from the Forum which meant that there were now two Primary Headteacher vacancies. There had been no nominations for the positions.</p> <p>Victoria Woods agreed to add the vacancies to the agenda of the Primary Headteachers Network meeting and would mention the vacancies at the Primary Maintained and Academy meeting.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Robert Majilton to the Schools Forum.</p>	<p></p> <p>Tim Brock</p> <p>Victoria Woods</p>
<p>2.0 Minutes</p> <p>The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2023 were amended as follows:-</p> <p>the name Catherine was incorrectly spelt and amended to Catharine,</p> <p>and agreed as a correct record.</p> <p>2.1 Matters arising from the Meeting of 27 June 2023</p> <p>2.1 Lynda Poole agreed to contact Cllr Brighouse regarding Cllr Brighouse’s action to contact Cllr Glynis Phillips.</p>	<p></p> <p>Lynda Poole</p>

<p>3.0 Update from Rachel Lambert (Zero Carbon Council Project Lead):</p> <p>Since presenting the Loans Scheme at the last meeting, Rachel has been in touch with a contact at the Diocese and if any schools have issues obtaining LED lighting or solar PV through the loans scheme, they can contact Rachel Lambert.</p> <p>Lynda Poole said she could also be contacted and would put the contact details in the next school's newsletter.</p> <p>To date, Rachel has had 3 schools apply for a Schools Energy Efficiency Loan. All three were looking to install solar PV and one was also looking to install LED.</p> <p>Rachel was in the process of reviewing those three applications. Action on Carbon & Energy in Schools (ACES) provided support to the schools in their applications prior to submitting to Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>There was still funding available, and therefore Rachel planned to carry out further promotion in the coming weeks.</p> <p>All information about the scheme is available on the ACES website. Please share this link with any schools who may be interested.</p> <p>As part of an internal review, it has been confirmed by Planning that the budget will sit within Environment and Place and therefore Rachel Wileman, Director of Planning, Environment and Climate Change will be the signatory to the loans and offers which will be going out in the next few weeks.</p> <p>Planning will also be responsible for collecting payments from the loans and throughout the application process Rachel and Kevin Griffin, Service Manager – School Organisation Team, will continue to be the link.</p> <p>5.0 Kate Bradley had left Oxfordshire County Council and Jayne Mumford is the new Interim Head of Send.</p> <p>Alternative Provision presentation had not been uploaded onto Governor Hub. Martin Goff had taken the audio off the presentation and would ensure that it was uploaded.</p>	<p>Lynda Poole</p> <p>All</p> <p>Martin Goff</p>
<p>3. Maintained Schools Budget Submission Dates 2024 & Scheme for Financing Schools.</p>	

<p>Margaret Whitaker presented the report which had been circulated and answered points raised.</p> <p>MW confirmed that the school budget submission dates for 2024 had been agreed as 3 May (Maintained Schools) and 10 May (Maintained Special Schools).</p> <p>To help with planning, it had been suggested that the dates for budget submission for 2025-26 were also communicated to schools and provisional dates were:</p> <p>Maintained Schools Friday 2 May 2025 (Maintained Schools) and Friday 9 May (Maintained Special Schools).</p> <p>AGREED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the school budget submission dates for 2024 would be 3 May (Maintained Schools) and 10 May (Maintained Special Schools). b) this timetable should be communicated to all maintained schools by 30 September 2023. 	<p>Margaret Whiticker</p>
<p>4. Schools Forum Budget</p> <p>Margaret Whitaker presented the report which had been circulated.</p> <p>The report gave a summary of the current position of the Schools Forum Budget and the projected variance at the end of the year was an underspend of £2,176.</p> <p>MW drew to the attention of members, that the DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities) regulations required the whole of a DSG deficit to be put in an unusable reserve and that it was not possible to hold separate reserves with surpluses in them for other blocks of DSG.</p> <p>The Chair commented that the budget could now be increased, previously, this was not allowed. Therefore, if costs did increase, there is the opportunity for it to be brought back to the Schools Forum for discussion.</p> <p>Members felt that a training budget was something to be reviewed, particularly for induction training. Discussions included paying for professional advice or training to ensure that all statutory obligations and responsibilities were met. Members also discussed the importance of effective clerking and having written</p>	

<p>references to enable effective timetabling and scheduling of the Schools Forum meetings.</p> <p>Members suggested looking at the Department for Education (DfE) online You Tube videos of the Schools Forum and online Schools Forum Handbooks.</p> <p>Sarah Fogden, Finance Business Partner, Oxfordshire County Council, had sent a Schools Forum timetable to Democratic Services.</p> <p>AGREED:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) to note the report. b) that Forum members would submit for payment all travel and expenses claims as soon as possible. 	<p>OCC</p>
<p>5. Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Overview.</p> <p>Members received a presentation from Margaret Whitaker, on Schools, Early Years, Central Schools Service Block and High Needs DSG Funding 2024-25 and informed Members that all figures at this point were provisional.</p> <p>The presentation slides would be circulated with the minutes.</p> <p>There was an annex to the presentation that had not been included and would be circulated to members.</p> <p>After questions raised by Members, MW explained that PUF was Primary Unit Funding and SUF, Secondary Unit Funding. To calculate the figure of Department for Education (DfE) funding to the Local Authority (LA) for the Schools Block, DSG DfE used the National Funding Formula for all schools and then divide this by the prior year pupil numbers to produce a figure for primary and secondary schools (PUF and SUF). These are fixed at that point in time. It is the pupil numbers that are later updated to the actual number of pupils in the October 2023 census data. The PUF and SUF are then multiplied by the updated pupil numbers and then added premises and growth funding. Final figures would not be known until December.</p> <p>Members discussed the problems with NFF funding and the disadvantages of not receiving full NFF allocations through the block transfer to the High Needs Block in the current financial year. They felt that an early indication of a decision in this regard from the Local Authority would be advantageous.</p>	<p>Clerk to Forum</p>

In response to members questions, MW confirmed that the block transfer mechanism this year had not changed and was not exclusively through the Secretary of State but through the Schools Forum, then if not approved the LA could refer the decision to the Secretary of State (SoS) as in previous years.

Members commented that an application to the SoS required the minutes of the School's Forum to record Forums view and a School's Forum vote.

Members discussed in detail, the problems of Schools' Notional SEN budget calculations and allocation of budget. Including the fact that schools on the MPPL receive little or no additional funding for additional needs.

MW outlined changes to Growth and Falling Rolls funding.

Early Years - The Early Years Supplementary Grant had been brought in and increased rates from September to March in 2023/24. 2-year-old rates were being increased significantly in 2023/24 but in 2024/25 the illustrative rate showed that a lower rate than the combined 2023-24 rate would apply in 2024-2025.

Members highlighted concerns around vulnerable 2-year-olds being unable to secure places and not being given priority when entitlements for eligible working parents increased.

Martin Goff would feedback these concerns to the relevant teams.

Central School Services Block (CSSB) and High Needs Blocks – MW outlined updates.

Unusable Reserves – MW reiterated the DLUHC regulations on the rules for how a DSG deficit is calculated. The calculation covers the whole of the DSG and where the overall outcome is in deficit, it is not possible to hold separate reserves with surpluses in them.

AGREED to:

- a) thank officers for an informative presentation,
- b) note the presentation,
- c) support finance officers' requests to obtain data directly from all schools/academies on:
 - 1. Rates, where necessary re centralised approach,
 - 2. Census (for Growth Funding projection).

Martin Goff

<p>6. SEND Place Planning</p> <p>Members received a presentation from Martin Goff on SEND Place Planning.</p> <p>The presentation explained to members, key details of planning and complex forecast modelling, to ascertain the demand of SEND placements, focusing on the secondary phase.</p> <p>The slides from the presentation would be circulated to members.</p> <p>Members discussed the significant growth in numbers of SEND children receiving an EHCP and the frustrating process of time-consuming consultations which is elongated and greater in number because there are not sufficient places.</p> <p>Members discussed an underlying need for places in special schools for young people who have autism and significant communication problems which leads to the schools needing to support children with severe learning difficulties.</p> <p>Martin Goff explained that Resource Bases need to be utilised as part of the available offer. More primary bases are in development in newly opening schools and we must ensure Resource Base provisions in primary phase link with appropriate secondary phase provision. Also at a future meeting there will be an update for Schools Forum on progress on the proposed new special schools in Bloxham, Faringdon and Didcot.</p> <p>AGREED to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) thank officers for an informative presentation, b) note the presentation. 	<p>Martin Goff/Clerk</p>
<p>7. Update on Current and Future Arrangements in LA Education including Outcome of SEND Inspection/Education Commission.</p> <p>Anne Coyle informed members that In July, Oxfordshire County Council was part of an inspection carried out by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to review services for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) across the Oxfordshire local area partnership (LAP). The report was due for publication shortly. (Post meeting note; the report was published on Friday 15 September, the LAP must publish its priority action plan by Friday 27 October)</p>	<p>Anne Coyle</p>

<p>Anne Coyle recommended that members of the Forum review the Partnership SEND Strategy, recently submitted to Cabinet, and would circulate a copy to members.</p> <p>The Local Authority wants to work in partnership with the Schools Forum and a series of meetings would be arranged with colleagues to discuss the concerns of the Forum.</p> <p>Anne highlighted recent appointments of Assistant Directors in the CEF Department; Charlotte Davey, Interim Assistant Director for Provider Services and Delia Mann, Assistant Director Early Help, Schools and Communities.</p> <p>These posts are vital to ensure staff retention and senior management capacity to move forward strategically.”</p>	<p>OCC</p>
<p>8. Dates of Future Meetings</p> <p>Dates of future meetings were AGREED as follows:</p> <p><u>Schools Forum:</u></p> <p>9 November 2023</p> <p>16 January 2023</p> <p>7 February 2024</p> <p><u>Schools & High Needs Sub-Committee:</u></p> <p>3 October 2023</p>	
<p>12. Date of next meeting</p> <p>9 November 2023: 10.00-14.00</p>	

..... in the Chair

Date of signing