

Oxfordshire Schools Forum meeting 12 January 2021 Paper 4
Oxfordshire Schools' Forum
Services and Contracts Sub-Committee
Meeting: Tuesday 1 December 2020
(rescheduled from 13 October)
(Virtual via Teams, due to COVID-19)

Present: Michael Dennison (MD) *(until 1100)*, Donald McEwan (DM) *(from 1015-end Item 9)*,
 Geoff Sutton (GS) (Chair for this meeting), Carole Thomson (CT), Brenda Williams (Chair)*(until 1100)*
 Officers: Hayley Good (HG) *(from 1045)*, Karen Lister (KL)*(Item 9 only)*, Sarah Fogden (SFo),
 Anne-Marie Taylor (AMT)*(from 1015-1045 for Item 4)*, Allyson Milward (AM), Tracey Talbot (TT)
 Clerk: Kit Howells

Minutes

Item	Item for Discussion
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies GS took the Chair and welcomed members, and AMT, AM and TT who were attending a meeting of this Committee for the first time. Introductions were made. Apologies received from: Jo Clarke (Co-opted member), Kim James (Officer).</p>
2	<p>Minutes of meeting held on 7 May 2020 Minutes circulated and agreed as an accurate record.</p>
3	<p>Matters arising from the Minutes of 7 May 2020, if not on Agenda /actioned</p> <p>3.1 Swimming teaching / OCC Policy – DM has not received any update from Education Health & Safety Advisory Group but will seek clarification at the Group's next Term's meeting. Action: DM</p> <p>3.2 Oxfordshire Hospital Schools – The Schools & High Needs Committee meeting held 21.10.20 had asked for clarity on the OHS website about use of its services and associated charges and full Forum had further discussed on 11.11.20, noting that the website has not yet been updated regarding admission policy and Officers had been reminded of the need for corrective action.</p> <p>3.3 Alternative Provision – The confusion about the nature of AP has now been clarified. HG and Nicola Partridge are to meet shortly for discussions about the future of AP in the County. Officers were asked to ensure this Committee's involvement in plans with tendering and contracts brought for information and comment. Action: HG It was noted that the detailed responses to the AP Consultation had not yet been shared with Forum as promised and Deborah Bell has been asked to ensure corrective action.</p>
4	<p>HCC-OCC Partnership (IBC), including HR support & IBC User Group views - update/any issues <i>(Paper 4/S&C/011220 and User Group meeting Minutes 13.7.20)</i> Tracey Talbot <i>(Finance & Business Development, School Improvement)</i> Anne-Marie Taylor <i>(Shared Services Performance)</i></p> <p>The Paper illustrates how the Partnership is performing against the model, in relation to OCC's expectations. TT has recently taken on parts of Sandra Higgs' and Sara Carey's roles in relation to this Partnership, and TT and AMT are assisting schools with queries and concerns, including those which have arisen recently in relation to timeliness of new school staff contracts and purchasing cards. The webchat and helpdesk are being well utilised by schools to enable quick response. A benchmarking survey is being undertaken on all raised enquiries with HCC in the last quarter (closes 2.12.20) and the outcome will be shared with the Committee. Action: TT</p> <p>The Committee requested more information on how schools see the service they receive and whether their expectations are met, and how OCC monitors schools' views and what processes are in place to amend processes where necessary. TT confirmed that this is her role, alongside KJ, to monitor, listen and gather schools' views on their experiences to ensure they are supported and heard as appropriate, and to work with the finance helpdesk where necessary to solve problems, which directs queries to the right Officer for assistance and logs repeat queries so it is possible to pinpoint common issues. The Committee welcomed the progress being</p>

	<p>made to better monitor the Partnership's service to schools and respond to queries, and to understand the issues that schools experience, particularly the smaller primaries, and the support they require. TT will bring a summary of schools' feedback to the Committee's Spring meeting. Action: TT</p>
5	<p>Traded Services for schools (Paper 5/S&C/011220) <i>Tracey Talbot (Finance & Business Development)</i></p> <p>There have been staff changes in relation to reporting lines and responsibility for this area; the Committee has been frustrated by lack of handover of reporting to Forum.</p> <p>TT has taken on Sara Carey's role to support traded services in relation to charges to schools and buyback forms, reporting to KJ. CT and BW reminded members and Officers of the background to inclusion of Traded Services in the business of this Committee. The annual package of services and charges is brought for review prior to finalisation, so that members could comment and advise on quality and cost issues on behalf of schools. In addition, any new contracts for services to schools are brought to the Committee for comment and review prior to final negotiation and decision by the LA. It is the Committee's remit to ensure a highly professional and robust package of services to schools which meets their needs and can then ensure that schools are not distracted by contract procurement issues and financial implications, can include costs easily within their annual budgeting process and are reassured that services are monitored and evaluated on their behalf. The Committee would expect to see the list of services provided for schools, the charges and the percentage increases proposed from 1 April and any contracts update for those due to be renewed or retendered.</p> <p>The Committee stressed the importance for schools of having a single point of contact and buyback form for all services so that they can complete their budget process in a timely and efficient way and thus it is necessary for schools to have all the services and charges/increases information by the beginning of March.</p> <p>Traded Services is now in KJ's remit. TT and AM will discuss action with KJ and the School Improvement Team in order to provide the Committee with the information it requires for its January meeting, to feed into Forum's full meeting in February, so that there is opportunity for members to comment. Action: KJ/TT for 26 Jan S&C Comm The Occupational Health contract will also come to that meeting for information (GS having been involved in the negotiations on behalf of Forum). DM thanked GS for his involvement in obtaining this new contract. Action: GS for 26 Jan (via Paul Lundy)</p> <p>GS and BW will draw up an annual work schedule for the Committee to provide clarity for Officers on reporting and timelines. Action: BW/GS -annual work schedule</p>
6	<p>Building & Maintenance work programmes for Maintained Schools (Paper 6/S&C/011220) <i>Allyson Milward</i></p> <p>The Committee noted building and maintenance work carried out 2019-20, including programmes and schemes carried forward to 2020-21 and current approvals in this financial year. AM reported that additional Government funding had been allocated in June 2020 for most pressing need and condition surveys are being completed across the County. The Committee stressed the need to ensure that urgent works are completed in a timely way. Some work required will need to be postponed to the long summer holiday 2021 due to need for pupils not to be on site. Following a DfE briefing to buildings officers, a further tranche of funding is to be made available for repair and maintenance projects in 2021-22 and the schools building programme may be revisited. AM will update the Committee as information is received. Action: AM</p> <p>The LA has made good progress on Carillion legacy work, most now being complete.</p> <p>The Committee requested Officers to provide details of funding and timelines alongside the works for schools listed for each Committee meeting.</p>

	<p>It was noted that since work has been taken back in house the LA is in a better position to respond to need. There is increased capacity for improved management and monitoring and to take advantage of funding and move works forward apace in order to reduce distraction in schools and to be flexible against demand. Antony Hulsman, Head of Hard FM, could be invited to report to this Committee.</p> <p>It would be useful to know the overall condition of the County's school property portfolio and whether the overall funding is sufficient to deal with works and this will be reviewed following the COVID crisis.</p>
7	<p>Impact of COVID-19 on delivery of services and contracts to schools</p> <p>The Committee requested update on sustainability of services to schools and any that might be at risk long term and short term due to COVID-19 and how these providers are dealing with the situation in relation to staffing and goods. Catering providers are particularly affected (but the area is coping well, as per GW's at Item 8 below). A separate report has already been provided to Forum on Early Years provision as that sector is having severe sustainability issues, and is being robustly supported by the LA and Government with additional funding.</p> <p>HG confirmed that there have not been other serious concerns thus far, apart from the Outdoor Centre provision and the LA is working closely with the Centres. School to home transport is also being supported to ensure an appropriate number of providers. SFo and Sara Carey are points of contact for provider queries since COVID and all legislation and guidance is being followed. OCC can obtain legal advice if necessary for contractual issues. There has been an increase in Supply Teacher days purchased since September due to COVID related increase in school staff absences. The Committee thanked the LA and Officers for the hard work being undertaken to support services to schools.</p>
8	<p>Schools Catering overview, inc performance to date and forecast <i>Gail Witchell</i> (Paper 8/S&C/011220)</p> <p>The severe impact of COVID on number of school meals provided due to school closures was noted and the Paper provides a clear summary of current situation and the pressure going forward. The Committee was pleased to note that the supply chain continues to work well and there is no evidence of shortages currently.</p>
9	<p>Joint Use Agreements (JuAs) – update (Paper 9/S&C/011220) <i>Karen Lister/Allyson Milward</i></p> <p>LA's Property and Education are now working jointly on this. Although a priority issue in relation to secondary schools and the ongoing high cost to the LA, there has not been as much progress in discussion and negotiation with District Councils as hoped, partly due to the COVID crisis, which has hit leisure providers hard. The negotiation process will now commence in March 2021. There have also been issues related to closure of facilities and continued charges to schools and payments to the District Councils which need to be resolved through reconciliation at year end. This may not result in recompense, however, as charges are already subsidised for schools. There is no reference within the JuAs to actions in crises and thus payments are required to be met. The Committee expressed dissatisfaction that the leisure centres were not able to be open solely for the schools during the daytime even if closed to the public. The issue of subsidised time paid for by the LA and then sold by the leisure centre was highlighted for the benefit of newly involved Officers.</p>
10	<p>Update on extension of RPA to Maintained Schools (Paper 10/S&C/011220) <i>Dale Stevens</i></p> <p>The Committee thanked DS for this achievement and the update. This Paper had also been received by Schools & High Needs Committee in October. The RPA will benefit schools and will ensure local point of contact for them.</p>
11	Items referred by the Schools & High Needs Committee - None.
12	Items for referral to Schools & High Needs Committee – None.
13.	Date of next meeting: <i>Now arranged for 26 January 2021 at 11 am</i>

	(to feed into February Schools Forum meeting) (Agenda to include: <i>Traded Services paper; HCC-OCC P'ship – schools' views</i>)
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Kh/13.12.20