

<p><b>Minutes (draft)</b></p> <p><b>Meeting of the Oxfordshire Schools Forum</b></p> <p><b>12 January 2021</b></p> <p><b>10 am – 11.45 am</b> <b>Virtual meeting via Teams</b></p>
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**Present:**

Maintained Primary School Headteacher Reps	Maureen Thompson <b>MT</b>
Maintained Primary School Governor Reps	Geoff Sutton <b>GS</b> Brenda Williams <b>BW</b>
Maintained Secondary School Headteacher Rep	Chris Hart <b>CH</b>
Maintained Nursery School Headteacher Rep	Natalie Wilson <b>NW</b> (from Item 4)
Academy Secondary Rep	Catharine Darnton <b>CD</b> (Vice Chair) Lisa Hughes <b>LH</b>
Academy Secondary School Governor Rep	Carole Thomson <b>CT</b> (Chair) Michael Dennison <b>MD</b>
Special School Headteacher Rep	Lorraine Wilson <b>LW</b> (Items 1-5 inclusive)
Special School Governor Rep	Jeanne Lapsley <b>JL</b>
Alternative Provision Rep	Nicola Partridge <b>NP</b>
COTO rep	Donald McEwan <b>DM</b>
Post 16 Rep	Tristan Arnison <b>TA</b> (from Item 4)
Cabinet Member Education & Cultural Services OCC	Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale <b>LLG</b>
Oxfordshire County Council Officers	Dan Cooper <b>DC</b> , Schools Finance (Items 1-6.1 inc) Sarah Fogden <b>SFo</b> , OCC Finance Partner Hayley Good <b>HG</b> , Deputy Director, Children's Services (Education) Kevin Gordon <b>KG</b> , Director, Children's Services Margaret Whitaker <b>MW</b> , Senior Financial Adviser (Schools)
Observer	Jo Clarke <b>JC</b> (School Business Manager rep)
Clerk	Kit Howells <b>KH</b>

1.	<p><b>Apologies, Welcome, Introductions</b>  <b>CT</b> welcomed Forum Members.  <b>Apologies</b> were received from:                  Kerrie Blaker <b>KB</b> Maintained Primary Governor Rep                  Tom James <b>TJ</b> Academy Primary School Governor Rep                  Sarah Steel <b>SS</b> Early Years/PVI Rep (substitute)                  Cllr Michael Waine <b>MWa</b>                  Kim James <b>KJ</b> Head, School Improvement &amp; Learning, OCC</p> <p><b>Declarations of Interests - None.</b>                  There was no <b>Notice of Urgent Business.</b></p>		
2.	<p><b>Election of Chair for new 3-year term of office</b>  <b>KH</b>, Clerk, took the Chair, reminding members that she had called for their nominations for the role. Several nominations for one member had been received. Having asked for any further nominations, and there being none, <b>CD</b> nominated <b>CT</b>, with <b>MT</b> seconding. Members <b>voted unanimously</b> to elect <b>CT</b> for a further 3-year term of office.</p>		

	On behalf of Forum, <b>CD</b> thanked <b>CT</b> for standing again, and for the time, energy, experience, knowledge and efficiency she brings to the role to the benefit of Forum. <b>CT</b> thanked <b>CD</b> and Forum members and noted that this will be her last term.		
3.	<b>Minutes of Meetings held on 11 &amp; 18 November 2020</b> Minutes of 11 and 18 November 2020 meetings were <b>agreed</b> .  <b>Matters Arising from Minutes of 11 November, where not actioned or not otherwise on the Agenda</b>		
3.1	<b>(Item 2.1) Oxfordshire Hospital School (OHS)</b> The OHS admissions policy has now been revised to include the option to solely provide tuition and is on the OHS website; this has clarified the legal position for schools.		
3.2	<b>(Item 3) Alternative Provision (AP)</b> The breakdown of detailed responses to the Consultation had now been circulated to Forum members.  <b>HG</b> and <b>NP</b> are holding ongoing discussions about the nature of the County's provision, and <b>NP</b> represents AP on one of the County Transformation Project's Task & Finish Groups and <b>HG</b> will also include her on the SEND Continuum Group and Finance Group and she will be consulted on AP recommissioning when work on this continues (halted currently due to COVID). <b>CD, CH</b> and <b>MT</b> emphasised that Secondary and Primary Headteachers would welcome the opportunity to be fully represented in AP provision discussions, to ensure understanding of need and equality of access throughout the County.	<b>HG/NP</b>  <b>HG</b>	
3.3	<b>(Item 3) SEND place planning</b> The spreadsheet illustrating place numbers per setting required had not been shared and HG will ensure circulation to Forum.	<b>HG circ SEND places s'sheet</b>	<b>asap</b>
	<b>Matters Arising from Minutes of 18 November, where not actioned or not otherwise on the Agenda</b>		
3.4	<b>SEND High Needs Block one-off top up funding in primary and secondary mainstream school for 2020-21</b> HG confirmed this one off funding had been paid to schools.		
4.	<b>Services &amp; Contracts Committee – meeting of 1.12.20 (For information and comment)</b> Minutes of the meeting had been previously circulated.  <b>-Swimming Teaching/OCC Policy - DM</b> noted that this issue is on the Education Health & Safety Committee agenda this week and he will report back to the next meeting of this Committee on 26 January. <b>MT</b> will also attend the next meeting of Services & Contracts Committee to provide update.		

	<p><b>-OCC's Occupational Health Contract - GS</b> noted this had been concluded satisfactorily and schools had been informed of the new contract. Further update will be provided to the Committee at its January meeting.</p> <p><b>-COVID Health &amp; Safety, and HSE Inspections in Schools - GS</b> had discussed overarching H&amp;S with Jean Noonan who had reported excellent work by schools staff to ensure high quality COVID risk assessment processes and the high assurance being seen at HSE Inspections in schools.</p> <p>-The Committee welcomed the good progress being made to monitor responses and queries from schools in relation to the <b>HCC-OCC Partnership</b> (provision of HR and Finance support).</p> <p>-A report on <b>buyback of traded services</b> by schools will be received at the January meeting of the Committee.</p> <p>-The Committee was pleased to receive the first of regular useful progress report on the <b>Repairs &amp; Maintenance</b> programme in Maintained Schools and to note that the Carillion legacy work is now mostly complete.</p> <p>-Officers reported that schools are currently experiencing minimal disruption to their <b>deliveries and contracts</b> as a result of COVID, and/or Brexit, although catering services are known to be experiencing severe variation in demand, which is impacting viability of business for some.</p> <p>Progress on renegotiations with District Councils in relation to <b>Joint Use Agreements</b> has been slower than desired, exacerbated by COVID, which has raised additional issues for schools in relation to payment for access to leisure centres which are currently closed. There is also need to access leisure centres for pupils to be COVID-tested and <b>HG, KG</b>, and OCC's CEO are discussing these issues with the DCs.</p>		
5.	<p><b>SEND High Needs Block – Top up funding for Special Schools for 2020-21 (to mirror that agreed for mainstream schools) (For information and comment)</b></p> <p>Decision on this rests with OCC Cabinet, which will discuss the recommendation on 19 January. Forum is a statutory consultee and therefore is required to be consulted and provided with the opportunity for its views to be provided to Cabinet via Officers.</p> <p>Forum agreed the need for equity across County schools. The County's Special Schools have historically been funded below their peers regionally and nationally. The aim is to address this discrepancy and provide some parity and uplift Special Schools</p>		

	<p>funding alongside that already agreed for mainstream schools in September 2020, which represented a 16% increase.</p> <p>Forum noted that this one-off top up funding, over and above the core place funding received per pupil, will provide some 'breathing space' while the in-depth Transformation work is being carried out, but while recognising the complexity and size of task involved, emphasised the urgent need for a longer term solution to the inadequate funding provided to Special Schools in the County. Also noting that this has been an issue for a number of years without resolution.</p> <p>Despite the known overspend in High Needs, and the increasing demand for places, it is essential that solutions, including investment, are found to ensure realistic funding for Special Schools. The funding formula is not realistic. As yet, the DfE has not provided a steer on how the County will be allowed to handle the High Needs deficit, although it is recognised that the growth of debt needs to be halted. Officers are committed to working with all schools over the next six months to develop a more equitable way of funding.</p> <p>Forum discussed Resource Base provision, management and financing, and noted that a review of County Resources Bases is being carried out, the outcome of which will be reported to Forum when complete.</p> <p>Forum agreed it is essential for top up funding to continue until a long term solution has been implemented. The importance of investing to save was agreed. DfE has indicated that its SEND Review will be published shortly.</p> <p>Forum <b>recommended that Cabinet approves</b> the proposed one-off increase in top-up funding by 16% for Special Schools for 2020/21 funded through the High Needs Block (HNB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), in line with the increase provided for mainstream primary and secondary schools' SEND funding in September 2020, to better meet the needs of pupils. If approved by Cabinet, this will represent an increase of £1321 per pupil for the 2020/21 academic year to be provided in two tranches, one before the end of the financial year ending March 2021 and one in the Summer Term.</p>		
6.	<b>National Funding Formula (NFF)</b>		
6.1	<p><b>De-delegated functions 2021-22 – Union Facilities Duties (For decision)</b></p> <p>Members representing the primary and secondary phases of maintained schools of Schools Forum <b>agreed</b> in principle the de-delegation of the union facilities duties budget for the financial year</p>		

	<p>2021-22. The current agreement requires renewal from April 2021. Contribution levels have been discussed in depth in light of schools' budgets. It is noted that an increase in contributions is necessary to cover the cost of continuing high quality and good value support, and the slightly lower than expected take up, as explained in the Paper accompanying this Item.</p> <p>Forum (all sectors) <b>agreed</b> the level of Union facilities supported and therefore the unit rate of £1.33 per pupil for 2021-22. Maintained School representatives <b>agreed</b> to the de-delegation of this amount from Maintained School budgets.</p> <p>Schools Forum <b>reiterated</b> for the financial year 2021-22, its previous recommendation (from paper 5, 3 October 2017) to all other schools and academies to buy-in to the continuation of the local authority's union facilities agreement, the aim being for these schools and academies to contribute to a 'pool' to share the costs of paying for teaching trade union facilities time and draw on an established wealth of expertise, and for those schools paying not to have to subsidise those that are not. Clarity about the reasons for the increase and the value of this provision will be reiterated via <i>Schools News</i> and directly to academies.</p> <p><b>DM</b> thanked Forum and Officer colleagues for their support in encouraging schools' participation.</p>		
6.2	<p><b>DSG Funding (For information)</b></p> <p>On 17 December 2020 the Department for Education (DfE) released Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding allocation figures for 2021-22 to local authorities. This followed the release of the schools funding planning tool – Authority Proforma Tool (APT) on 15 December. Forum noted the background information regarding the latest funding allocations for 2021-22, detailing the changes made to the four blocks of the DSG, and that Forum will be appraised of any changes and implications as further information is received from the DfE.</p>		
6.3	<p><b>Authority Proforma Tool (APT) (For decision)</b></p> <p>Schools Forum was briefed and discussed the proposals, noting the well written Paper and the constructive fair solution proposed for the Schools Block.</p> <p>Schools Forum <b>endorsed</b> the implementation of the NFF unit rates in full (including the ACA for Oxfordshire), as applied in both Models 1 and 2.</p> <p>Schools Forum noted the £0.4m unallocated DSG in Model 1, after full NFF unit rates are applied and after a contribution to the</p>		

<p>Growth Fund of £0.66m. (The £0.4m equates to a potential increase in the Lump Sum factor rate of approximately £1.9k, although not all schools would generate this amount).</p> <p>Schools Forum <b>unanimously agreed</b> the proposal that there is no contribution made to the Growth Fund in 2021-22, for reasons outlined in the report, to support Model 2. (The provisional allocation for 2021-22 was £660k).</p> <p>Schools Forum <b>endorsed</b> the proposal to use the £0.4m unallocated DSG, along with removing the £0.66m contribution to the Growth Fund in 2021-22, to identify approximately £1m (as in Model 2) towards continuing to deliver the High Needs Top-Up rate increases, agreed for 2020-21, in 2021-22. This transfers 0.25% of funding from the Schools Block to High Needs but is delivered back to mainstream schools for this specific purpose, rather than contributing towards offsetting the deficit on the High Needs block.</p> <p>Schools Forum <b>noted</b> that, if the Secretary of State is minded to approve the disapplication request to transfer funding from the Schools block to High Needs, against the recommendation from Forum, then the total transfer of 0.5% (of eligible funding) equates to £2m (precise figure, £2,051,325).</p> <p>The decision of the Secretary of State is awaited. Forum expressed its deep dissatisfaction that there has been no decision received before the Forum meeting and so close to the date the APT is due for submission and that this has necessitated looking at alternative funding methods and severely increased the workload on Officers.</p> <p>Forum also expressed its dissatisfaction that this arrangement for one year would result in schools being funded less than the full National Funding Formula in 2020-2021, noting that even with this additional funding (in Model 2) the top up from the High Needs block and the £6,000 from the school is insufficient to fund the hours required by the EHCP. Forum reiterated that social deprivation is not a good measure for funding SEND in schools and that the notional SEN budget is also unhelpful. Forum additionally expressed the hope that the outcome of the High Needs Review is to be published very soon.</p> <p>Schools Forum <b>endorsed</b> the approach to identify the £2m if the Secretary of State approves the transfer request: £1m funding as in Model 2 (£0.4m DSG funding remaining and £0.66m from no contribution to the Growth Fund in 2021-22, thereby reducing the impact on individual schools) and the remaining £1m from adjusting NFF factor values, achieved by reducing the Lump Sum factor by approximately £5k. This straightforward clear approach is being taken as it will have no adverse impact on the protection</p>	<p>SFo/ MW</p> <p>SFo/ MW</p> <p>SFo/ MW</p>	
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	<p>mechanisms for the Minimum Funding Guarantee.</p> <p>Forum <b>noted</b> that reduction in the Lump Sum factor will adversely affect small schools, particularly the 75% of small schools in Oxfordshire that do not receive sparsity funding, and agreed that this will be further discussed at the February meeting of Forum by which time the Secretary of State's decision should have been received and to take account of this when the use of Forum balances is being considered</p> <p>Schools Forum <b>noted</b> that school budget shares will be published on the OCC Intranet as promptly as possible following approval of the APT by the DfE. Officers will take the opportunity of regular meetings with the DfE to flag up the urgent need for response. (The official deadline for publication is 28 February 2021, but previously schools' budgets have been released earlier than this in Oxfordshire).</p> <p><b>MW</b> and <b>SFo</b> were thanked for their hard work, clear briefing and well-written Paper.</p>	<p><b>CT/KH/SFo</b> Further discussion re small schools impact when considering use of Forum balances</p> <p><b>HG/SFo/MW</b></p>	<p><b>4 Feb SF meeting</b></p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>Update on current and future arrangements in LA Education (Standing Item) (For information)</b></p> <p><b>HG</b> briefed Forum on the key issues within Education, including the SEND Transformation work and the focus on COVID response for schools which is currently a heavy workload.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The pandemic is causing resource and response issues in the LA, with staff absences resulting in longer turnaround times for responses to schools, including on EHCPs (and it was noted that communication between schools and the SEND Team has improved). Regular County-wide briefings continue to be held for School Leaders and Chairs of Governors.</li> <li>-The DfE is being supportive of the LA in relation to the High Needs deficit, through acknowledgement of change of Education leadership and provision of extended time to evidence the impact of the current work to address the issue.</li> <li>-The condition of maintained schools remains an issue and a new programme of condition surveys is being planned when it is possible for surveyors to be on school sites. Capital funding is already being provided for new Resource Bases.</li> <li>-The LA is working to appoint a new Head of SEND as soon as possible.</li> </ul>		
<p>8.</p>	<p><b>Date of next meeting: 4 February 2021: 1000-1230 (virtual)</b></p>		

Meeting closed 1230

Minutes/KH/18.1.21

Information:

Dates of Schools Forum meetings 2020-21: 4 February and 17 June

Forum Committee dates: Services & Contracts Committee: 26 January 2021 at 11 am  
Schools & High Needs Committee: 24 March 2021 at 10 am