

Oxfordshire Schools' Forum Schools & High Needs Sub-Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 5 June 2018
1030 - 1300, Unipart Conference Centre, Unipart House, Cowley, Oxford

<p>Present: Kerrie Blaker (KB) <i>(until 12.30)</i> Jeanne Lapsley (JL) Sean O'Sullivan (SO) Nicola Partridge (NP) Rebecca Saunders (RS) Geoff Sutton (GS) Maureen Thompson (MT) - CHAIR Carole Thomson (CT) – Chair of Forum</p>	<p>In attendance Lorraine Wilson (LW) Head, Kingfisher School Natalie Wilson (NW), Head, Headington Quarry Foundation Stage School <u>Oxfordshire County Council</u> David Clarke (DC) Deputy Director for Education Nick Baggett (NB) Linda Calverley (LC) SEN Consultant Barbara Chillman (BC) <i>(Item 5 only)</i> Sarah Fogden (SFo) Janet Johnson (JJ) Kit Howells (KH) (Clerk)</p>	
1.	<p>Apologies and welcome to new Committee member KB Apologies received from Tristan Arnison (TA) Breda Bowles (BB), Lisa Hughes (LH) and Sarah Steel (SSt). MT welcomed members to the meeting, particularly new members JL and GS, and prospective new members LW and NW, as well as new Deputy Director for Education, DC, and SEN Consultant LC.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Schools & High Needs Committee meeting held 27.2.18 The Minutes were approved and signed by the Chair.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters arising from 27 February 2018 Minutes - <u>only</u> where these remained unactioned or not on the Agenda</p>	
3.1	<p>Update on Broadband provision for schools - Further update had been received and previously circulated. MT briefed new members on the background. All the outstanding schools except one had broadband provision by end of March 2018; the final school is due to be completed this month. KH will follow up.</p>	KH
3.2	<p>Union Facilities – All Maintained schools, including nursery and special schools, have been charged this year. Just fewer than 60% of academies had responded, the vast majority positively, and IJ is following up those outstanding responses and those that may need more information. NB/IJ will report back final outcome.</p>	IJ/NB
3.3	<p>Carillion – Programme of work following Carillion's demise is on Forum's Services & Contracts Committee Agenda for 12 June meeting. The Minutes of that Committee meeting will be available as part of the Briefing Papers pack for Forum members to be sent out in lieu of a meeting, on 21 June.</p>	

	<p>All other matters arising/action points had been dealt with, actioned or were on the Agenda.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>High Needs Review – update Funding in Oxfordshire, Special Schools Budgets and funds for support of SEND pupils in mainstream schools</p> <p>Papers 4, 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 (presentation and next steps) together with 12 appendices, had been previously circulated, although due to recall and reissue of those Papers, members had not had sufficient time to read them all carefully and thus were concerned that this would severely impede full discussion.</p> <p>CT and JJ reminded members of the background to the need for a High Needs Review, including the drive to obtain better value for the High Needs Block funding spend and, since then, the clear guidance received by the LA from the recent Ofsted inspection that expected outcomes were not being achieved. In addition, a significant additional amount of funding had been received from the DfE for High Needs. LC, an external consultant, had been brought in to provide expertise to carry out the Review, due both to lack of OCC resources and to the need for a fresh look at provision and use of funding. Her brief had been to make recommendations to improve value, timeliness and outcomes in the knowledge that the LA is overspending on High Needs by an increasing amount year on year. While many LAs are also seeing an overspend nationally, there is an expectation that improvements made to processes and procedures will help with this. Ofsted will return in March expecting to see improvements. The DfE will also monitor every 2-3 months.</p> <p>The Committee was concerned that the Review had not covered Looked After Children or Alternative Provision and LC confirmed that the Review was based solely on areas covered by High Needs block funding for children with high needs (not all children who are Looked After or in Alternative Provision have high needs). However, LC confirmed that the outcomes of the Review will need to be linked across all aspects of Inclusion, as well as to school placements and sufficiency.</p> <p>Members voiced concern that Government legislation around High Needs refers to the child irrespective of the setting and thus this strategic Review should have also included children in Special Schools. LC noted that currently Oxfordshire funds Special Schools differently but a decision could be made by the LA to change separately from this Review’s recommendations, later. However, members were concerned that the additional government funding provided recently would not be used for a significant sector that deals with high needs children: Special Schools, nor for Alternative Provision, and that putting these areas aside now might mean that there will be no funding left for those areas and that this was not an acceptable way</p>	

to conduct the process of a High Needs Review. Secondary Schools are also suffering from insufficient increase in high needs funding due to the formulaic approach and that is another area which requires to be addressed. There is also a gap between the funding of Maintained Nursery Schools and others which requires to be addressed. And no money in schools' budgets for high level of need pupils. All of these areas require urgent attention. LC explained the remit she had been given by OCC did not include these areas and there will be other areas to review subsequently including sufficiency.

LC presented her 13 recommendations emerging from her Review, grouped into 4 key categories: Funding, Process and the need for consistent and more rigorous universal application, Services Provided by OCC, and Governance (including through Schools Forum). She explained the detail of these recommendations as in her Review Report (Paper 4). LC also noted that there have already been improvements made in the LA to aspects of governance, timeliness and quality of EHCPs and in secondary fixed term exclusions for children with social and mental health needs. Many other aspects of the LA's High Needs work are strengths. Other areas are continuing to be monitored.

The Committee discussed aspects of the recommendations in some depth and made suggestions for other areas of consideration regarding membership of admission panels, need for transparency, other ways of helping children with high needs other than applying for EHCPs, ie through resource bases, and ensuring provision addresses the needs of children within mainstream schools without EHCPs. The SEN guidance support document is well known and used across all schools but requires review and refreshment.

LC emphasised the need for the LA to focus impact and achieve maximum benefit for children and that there are not sufficient resources to do everything. The Review is not a quick fix but is setting the direction of travel that should be followed and contains recommendations on how to move forward, and the next steps that will need to be carried out by task and finish groups and to focus on the areas that require urgent improvement initially, eg governance in meeting the needs of SEND children which is a key weakness and could be resolved by having a SEND Partnership Board for oversight, easily established before the end of this year.

Operational guidance for the funding for 2018-19 is due and contains a definition of High Needs. It is necessary to ensure that funding is utilised at the earliest point in the most effective ways, for the highest impact, more directly and with less bureaucracy. Currently too much resource is moving to out of county high cost placements as there might have been no support put in place early enough. Sufficiency is essential and the difficult demographic in the County is recognised whereby some areas have high concentration of SEND. Sharing

	<p>expertise and raising levels of expectation is key to improvements.</p> <p>LC recommends launching some of the recommended steps immediately by setting up some of the task groups whose work might then be completed by December, and referred to her communication and next steps papers. All Headteachers and SENCOs will have notification of the process and Partnership Heads can take the process forward through Partnership meetings.</p> <p>The process of improving collaboration with Health and Social Care has started already through EHCP planning improvements.</p> <p>In relation to resource bases, one in Banbury is on schedule to open in the Autumn. There are also discussions currently about developing bases in Bicester and south Oxford.</p> <p>Members emphasised the need to assure Heads and SENCOs that other areas, including Alternative Provision, Early Years, and resource bases, will also be addressed. There must be an overarching LA strategy for additional needs.</p> <p>JJ confirmed that the LA will pursue the recommendations in the Review and address improvements in internal processes, and set up task and finish groups working with Headteachers from September to explore and agree ways forward for each task, to be agreed by December.</p> <p>With regard to Alternative Provision, members emphasised the need for clarity and transparency with regard to financing this area, in order to be able to discuss planning and delivery of provision. Currently it is not clearly understood, despite several requests, how funding for this area is allocated, and there remains significant confusion about which settings receive funding, for what, and how it is expended. Forum members have a responsibility to understand what funding is spent where and LC raises the issue in her Review regarding commissioning and any spend through public finances should be by contract regardless of the amount and has to be specified and accounted for. LC noted the likely scenario that the LA would want to extend and enhance what is being already very well provided in the County.</p> <p>The LA will provide a detailed list of what is being funded from the High Needs Block funding and for Alternative Provision.</p> <p>Forum will receive an update report at its next full Forum meeting in the Autumn. Meanwhile, the Chairs and Sector Leads of Forum are meeting on 21 June to review Forum's programme of work and the issues will be discussed there.</p>	<p>JJ DC</p> <p>JJ DC</p> <p>SFo</p> <p>SFo</p> <p>DC</p> <p>CT/SO</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Growth needs / Falling rolls – long-term schools' organisation BC attended for this Item. NB's background briefing Paper 5</p>	

previously circulated.

Currently the LA does not have financial provision or scheme in place for a Falling Rolls Fund, as with a past growing school population such a Fund was not required. The LA has had a Growth Fund to provide additional class funding for primary schools for several years. This has not been available to secondary schools as their budgets make it easier for them to absorb growth.

Funding guidance and potential criteria in relation to creation of a Falling Rolls Fund, as well as information about other LAs' Funds, were noted. These relate to mainstream schools only as Special Schools' funding stream is separate and different and places are negotiated.

Members support assistance to schools with falling rolls alongside the criteria in the Paper.

Various aspects of the current experiences of schools were discussed, including the (usually temporary) effect of opening new schools with existing ones nearby, even when that opening is phased, and the knowledge that while some schools may currently have falling rolls, the large scale of planned housing development in the County will mean that this trend is likely to be continued in various parts of Oxon. Growth in primary school numbers overall is forecast. Planning is much more accurate now and it is thought that some parts of the County have enough spare places to support forecast population growth, even taking account of housing development, for the next 7 years ahead. BC noted that the LA is not expecting significant effect on other schools from the current school expansions.

Members discussed the need to manage new schools opening such that issues are not created due to these schools filling up with pupils from out of catchment, and the associated travel congestion issues, although this is difficult to guard against.

Members were concerned about the top slice from the DSG Schools Block which would be necessary to create the Fund, in the knowledge of reducing school budgets. The situation with the Growth Fund is different in that it was set up before the NFF and is not missed as schools never had it. It was suggested that there might be funds in the Growth Fund that could be used to support schools with falling rolls. NB explained there is money in the Growth Fund allocated against schools scheduled to open, with projection that the Fund will be spent in 2021, although this is being eked out by capitalisation of some costs. However, there is a programme to build more schools beyond that date due to demand and the diseconomies of scale and set up costs will need to be funded. It is likely that a larger top slice will therefore be required.

BC noted that there is a current transport consultation in progress. Any

	<p>analysis of pupils and transport needs and costs is difficult to reliably model until the age profile of pupils moving into new housing developments is known.</p> <p>Members discussed other aspects of concern related to schools with falling rolls, including loss of quality staff to other schools and counties, what will happen for those schools where rolls are unlikely to recover over a long period, the amount of any top slice which would be necessary.</p> <p>BC noted that work to draw up a draft place plan for 3 years' time is required to be submitted to the DfE in July. There will therefore be up to date pupil number forecasts and that work would tie in well with undertaking exploratory work based on that snapshot to develop the criteria to further discuss setting up a Falling Rolls Fund and this will be brought back to the first meeting of this Committee in the Autumn and thence to Forum's second meeting in the Autumn.</p>	<p>BC (KH)</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Schools Forum Budget – proposals for use of the balances Paper 6 previously circulated. The Committee had agreed to recommend to Forum that balances should be utilised for the improvement of schools and not held for a significant length of time. It was noted that monies would go back into mainstream schools with monies for Early Years and High Needs schools being put back into those blocks for LA decision on spend which is likely to be to those children in those blocks.</p> <p>All proposals listed in the Paper were discussed. It was agreed that NB will provide more detail on all the proposals and circulate to the Committee in order that a recommendation to full Forum can be made.</p>	
<p>7.</p>	<p>Healthy Pupils Capital Fund 2018-19 Paper 7 previously circulated. The DfE announced this Fund in March 2018, and the amount which will be available to the LA as the responsible body for Maintained Schools (Academies will be contacted direct with regard to the Fund).</p> <p>The Fund can only be used on capital areas and the LA is proposing to achieve the maximum benefit across all schools by allocating £2K to each school and then the larger schools receiving an allocation on top proportionate to the size of school by roll numbers. The funding will be notified in Schools News and money allocated this month. The allocation of funding is the decision of the LA and based on the most recent census information. There is no indication that this will be an ongoing source of revenue.</p> <p>The Committee noted the confusion about what might qualify for capital expenditure in the DfE's advice and asked that the LA clarify this when notifying schools.</p>	

	<p>The Committee welcomed a block of funding that can be accessed by every school, but noted the inequity which will apply in allocating it, similar to that of the PE/Sports Grant funding. Members suggested that consideration might be given to looking first at those schools which might be in more urgent need of new equipment than others, but acknowledged that this would require an exercise to ascertain to which schools this might apply.</p> <p>In conclusion, Maintained school Forum members supported the LA's proposals.</p>	
8.	Items referred by Services & Contracts Committee – None.	
9.	Items for referral to Services & Contracts Committee – Update on work following demise of Carillion.	S&C Comm 12.6.18
10.	<u>For information</u> Academy Update (Standing Item) NB's information Paper 10 was tabled. The content is self-explanatory.	
11.	Farewell to Rebecca Saunders and Sean O'Sullivan Forum members wished them well, RS in her new Headship role in Buckinghamshire and SO on his retirement.	
12.	Date of next meeting Following setting of full Schools Forum dates, KH will canvass members re date of next meeting.	KH

The meeting closed at 1230
KH/8.6.18

Signed as accurate (Chair)Date