

Oxfordshire Schools' Forum
DRAFT Services & Contracts Sub-Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 24 January 2019
1000 - 1200
Jurys Inn, Godstow Road, Oxford OX2 8AL

Present: Ian Jones (IJ), Geoff Sutton (GS), Carole Thomson (CT), Sue Tomkys (ST), Brenda Williams (BW) (CHAIR), Jo Clarke (JC)[Co-opted member]

In attendance:

Maureen Thompson (MT), Chair, Forum's Schools & High Needs Committee

Donald McEwan (DM), COTO rep-designate (Observer)

Nick Baggett (NB), Education Finance Manager, Corporate Services, OCC

Sandra Higgs (SH), School Services Manager, OCC (*Items 2, 3, 8 & 9 only*)

Sara Carey (SC), Finance and Business Development Manager, OCC (*Items 2, 3, 8 & 9 only*)

Kit Howells (KH), Clerk

The meeting was quorate

	ACTION
1. Apologies and Welcome BW welcomed members, and also welcomed Donald McEwan (DM), attending his first meeting of the Committee, as new COTO representative (designate). Apologies, from Michael Dennison (MD) and Brian Mitchell (BM), were accepted.	
2. Traded Services – update and for 2019-20 Sandra Higgs and Sarah Carey attended to provide update following discussions at the last meeting of the Committee. Paper 2/S&C/240119, providing details of Traded Services and the offer for 2019-20, had been previously circulated. The Committee noted the Services offered to schools and that information about buyback process will be provided to schools via Schools News and intranet. The Committee was concerned to ensure that prices are available to schools as soon as possible with budgets being finalised in April, via Governing Board meetings, and submitted in early May (Maintained schools). SC confirmed that the information will be circulated to schools by end of February. This Item will come to 4 February full Forum meeting. There are some gaps and anomalies remaining, eg there are no costs listed for job evaluation in academies (noted on this week's HR update), and this is very short notice, despite SH's email to Headteachers on 2 January. Also, there appear to be gaps across the Premises area, eg urgent call-outs, cleaning, building maintenance, surveys, and catering. It is essential that schools receive a joined-up and comprehensive offer of services as they will be unaware of what gaps there are. It is understood that continual change in staffing in OCC has had an impact on continuity.	KH for agenda (done)
CT asked SH to pass on concerns to senior Officers that there seems to be little awareness or understanding of Schools Forum and its role in schools' funding strategy and issues, and the County's need to fulfil statutory duties in relation to Forum.	SH SH

3. HCC-OCC Partnership (Integrated Business Centre (IBC) inc User Group
Sandra Higgs and Sara Carey attended this Item. Paper 3/S&C/240119 and the IBC User Group Minutes from October 2018 meeting had been previously circulated.

Data and user concerns are reviewed at senior level meetings quarterly, with schools being reviewed separately from corporate data so that school concerns are clear and can be addressed quickly. Surveys indicate that customer satisfaction is improving steadily. Main issues affecting users include the length of time needed for answers and responses, and referrals back from ESS Lite (pay etc) to managers or tax office. The latter is due to IBC not being able to make judgements on reasons for payments authorised. Concerns about staff contracts are still significant, but are reducing and with the introduction of a 'new starter form' will improve still further, alongside work to assist in the understanding of paid weeks and working weeks and the reasons for late notifications to payroll. The number of emergency payments has much reduced. SH is working with schools to understand the reasons for these. Monthly data drops indicate the schools generating the most queries and SH is visiting all these to understand problems, some of which have been found to be due to IT issues in schools. Internet Explorer 11.0 is the engine to use for HR and Finance. Suggestions were made to improve ease of entering new staff via Grade and Point rather than salary amount, although it is understood there is a background check which should flag up any problems. The manual rather than automated process for Headteacher pay increases was noted. There continue to be problems connected with late notification of staff leavers and the resulting costly exercise in recovering monies paid after staff have left.

Customer response improvements have been made: to ensure that when a query is directed to the right person for answer, it will be held by that person until resolution; and the introduction of the Webchat feature for answering HR queries immediately. SH will highlight this in the Briefings to Headteachers after the Half Term holiday. The IBC is now meeting the 5-day SLA and is now seeking a reduction to a 3-day response maximum time, due to average response time being 2.2 days across the board.

SH is not yet happy with the level of training provided for users. Good training is provided by EFS and schools must take this up. Lack of training is often the reason for queries.

SH noted the work being undertaken to improve purchasing processes for schools and the authorising of payments through the system.

The Committee was pleased to hear that, after a number of years, there appear to be sustainable improvements in the quality of service.

4. Minutes of meeting held 27 September 2018

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2018 were approved as a correct record.

5. Matters arising from 27 September Minutes, not on the Agenda

5.1 Water Procurement for Schools – Inga Doherty (OCC Energy Strategy Officer who has been reporting to this Committee) had updated the Committee by means of email update previously circulated. The Committee asked to be assured that all schools are aware of the change in supplier and that they have received the Link, and

<p>of what they should do if they have outstanding queries with the previous supplier. There were some concerns about incorrect charging by the previous supplier that remain to be resolved. KH will bring these issues to Inga's attention.</p>	KH (done)
<p>6. Joint Use Agreements (JuAs) – update Kay Thomas' (KT) is the new Officer responsible for JuAs, but was unable to attend the meeting and had not provided an update.</p> <p>The Committee emphasised concern that, although these continue to cost the LA a significant amount of money, progress to address the issue is very slow and this is a waste of public money, although it is understood that ongoing staff restructuring has had an impact. The Committee agreed the current situation is unacceptable and asked Forum Chair CT to write to the Chief Executive detailing concerns and asking that resources are allocated to resolving this issue.</p> <p>Kay Thomas to be asked for update to come to next meeting.</p>	CT KH
<p>7. Update/review of work and processes following Carillion demise The new Officer overseeing this area had been invited but was unable to attend. Paul Pearson's update paper 7/S&C/240119 had been previously circulated.</p> <p>The Committee was assured that OCC will continue to deal with issues resulting from Carillion work in schools, including where there is need for insurance claims.</p>	KH invite appropriate Officer to 21 May meeting
<p>8. Occupational Health provider – re-tender Email updates from Ruth O'Loughlin had been previously circulated. The Committee emphasised the urgency of this due to the end of contract being August and the dissatisfaction with quality and lack of understanding of schools experienced from the current provider.</p> <p>An HR update in Schools News included the issues for consideration and asked schools to comment, but was not easily located. It was agreed that the information should be more widely disseminated, including to School Business Managers in Academies, who may be able to provide interesting sources of information and experience about their current providers, and to better highlight the information in Schools News. The deadline for submission of comments to HR has been extended to 13 February. Unions will also wish to submit comments.</p> <p>It was noted under Traded Services Item (2 above) that there is a possibility that OCC may commission two separate providers and this consideration is part of the procurement process.</p> <p>OCC Officers should note that if the tender is above the formal threshold then Forum must be formally consulted and therefore the procurement process will need to fit with timing of Forum meetings for the remainder of the academic year.</p> <p>The Committee suggested that having 1/2 high level school representatives on the procurement panel would be extremely useful to OCC's deliberations, in addition to a COTO representative, as their experience would encompass support, as well as teaching, staff. School representation would need to be from large schools which are able to put in the necessary time for this process. It was suggested that approaches be made to Forum member Lisa Hughes, who is COO of River Learning Trust, and to</p>	SH to pass on to ROL SH to pass on to ROL SH to pass on to ROL

Forum member Maureen Thompson as Primary School representative, plus the Union representative. NB will advise regarding use of the Forum budget.	NB
The Committee asked that SH pass on its comments and suggestions. KH will also copy this Minute to Ruth O'Loughlin in HR.	SH KH
9. OCC Support Staff Pay – update The Committee is concerned that the Support Staff pay scales have not yet been published and schools require this information urgently for budgeting purposes for 2019-20, especially in light of the significant scale changes and substantial increases in some Points, and schools already having extreme funding pressures (with the effects keenly felt, particularly in small schools and nurseries). The proposals had come to Forum's Schools & High Needs Committee's October 2018 meeting confidentially, awaiting Union consideration. CT has been in email communication with Ruth O'Loughlin and emphasised the need for schools to be informed.	SH for HR Officers
The Committee noted that the Budget Planner can only be updated from the end of February Half Term. The Committee asked that schools be informed before the end of February.	SH for HR Officers
SH will pass on the Committee's comments to HR Officers. KH will copy this Minute to Ruth O'Loughlin.	SH KH
KH will circulate the public paper which had been provided to Schools & High Needs Committee, for the information of this Committee.	KH/GS
CT noted that the HR pages on the OCC website are extremely out of date.	SH for HR Officers
10. Items referred by Schools & High Needs Committee – None.	
11. Items for referral to Schools & High Needs Committee – MT will update the Committee on OH Provider re-tender and Support Staff Pay when the Committee meets in March.	MT for SHN Comm. next mtg
12. Other business: Swimming teaching The Committee expressed concern that the recent changes in staff training requirements for taking children swimming are unaffordable by schools, with funding implications not only from the training requirements themselves but also from the back-filling issues arising from the teachers deployed to swimming. Swimming is a requirement of the curriculum.	
13. Date of next meeting - Tuesday 21 May 1000 – 1200. Venue to be confirmed.	All to note KH
This is IJ's last meeting. The Committee thanked IJ for his commitment to Forum and wished him well in his retirement.	

Meeting closed 1210
Minutes/KH/29.1.19

Signed.....

Date