

School Organisation Stakeholder Group Meeting

Monday 26 November 2018
Ground Floor Meeting Room 3, County Hall, Oxford
10.00 am - 12.00

Notes

Attendees:

Barbara Chillman, OCC School Organisation and Planning (BC)
Neil Darlington, OCC School Organisation and Planning (ND)
Allyson Milward, OCC School Organisation and Planning (AM)
Justine Miniken, OCC School Organisation and Planning (JM)
David Clarke, OCC Deputy Director for Education (DC)
Cllr Lorraine Lindsay-Gale, Cabinet Member for Education
Cllr Michael Waine, (Chair) OCC (Conservative, Bicester Town)
Cllr Anda Fitzgerald O'Connor, OCC (Conservative, Kingston and Cumnor)
Cllr John Howson, OCC (Liberal Democrat, St Margaret's)
Cllr Liz Brighthouse, OCC (Labour, Churchill & Lye Valley)
Brenda Williams, Oxfordshire Governors Association
Carole Thomson, Oxfordshire Governors Association
Jane Maharry – Oxford Diocese (on behalf of Christine Jones)
Pat Kennedy, Oxford City Council (Labour)
Sarah Brinkley, Oxfordshire Secondary School Head Teachers Association

1. Apologies

Stephen Passey, Oxfordshire Association of Special School Head Teachers
Toni Guest, Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham
Christine Jones, Diocese of Oxford
Malcolm Wright, Oxfordshire Governors Association
Jonathan Hopkins, Oxfordshire Governors Association
Kevin Griffin, OCC School Organisation and Planning (KG)
Cllr Elizabeth Gillespie, SODC, (Conservative, Garsington)
Cllr Jenny Hannaby, OCC, Liberal Democrat, Grove and Wantage
Peter Cansell, Oxfordshire Primary Head Teacher Association
Marie Tidball, Oxford City Council, Labour, Hinksey Park
Cllr Neil Owen, WODC (Conservative, Burford & Carterton North)

2. Notes of the last meeting

Cllr Pat Kennedy asked if it could be noted next to her name that she is a Labour Councillor for Oxford City Council. This will appear on all subsequent notes.

3. Matters Arising

The group discussed the issue previously raised at the meeting held in June regarding pupil census data showing where pupils go onto after

leaving the Studio Schools and UTC. Cllr Howson asked if the Education Scrutiny Committee will be taking this issue forward and Cllr Waine responded that if the data is available the Education Scrutiny could then look at this. ND clarified that his team do not hold this data and there was some discussion about how this is tracked and by whom. Cllr Brighthouse commented that pupils will take up Post 16 courses that are available at their 6th form and then find out during the first few months that they are not suited to that course and so drop out. She believes it is urgent to have this data to understand what is happening to the 16 to 18 year olds. Sarah Brinkley commented that the studio school is a choice based on the curriculum that is being offered and that there is a gap with the provision being provided. Brenda Williams asked the group to consider more immediate action from the notes of the last meeting as several months have elapsed since this issue was raised in June. AM advised that there is a team that tracks NEETs – what percent are still in Education and Training and what percentage are not.

Cllr Waine gave an undertaking to take this forward to Education Scrutiny on Wednesday (28th November).

MW

The group requested an updated CEF structure chart to be circulated to Councillors and group members.

JM

4. **CoE report – Embracing Change: Rural and Small Schools** (Jane Maharry in Christine Jones' absence) – download from <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/education-and-schools/education-publications>

Cllr Waine welcomed Jane Maharry on behalf of the group who attended the meeting in place of Christine Jones. Jane is a Board of Education Premises Officer working primarily with VA schools.

Jane provided an update on what the Oxford Diocese is doing based on the central report which was published back in March in response to funding decreasing and the need for new leaders, particularly in rural areas.

57% of schools are in a rural setting nationally, while in Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Berkshire this figure is 68%.

Some schools may not be sustainable in the future due to sparse populations and pupil numbers under 100. In our area, we are not able to close any schools but are looking at the future and discussing realistically the need. Schools are being encouraged to consider options around governance and organisation for the future to enable them to thrive, for example sharing SENCOs across partnerships. Schools can discuss their options with a School Adviser which have been allocated to each school, although they are under no obligation to do so. The diocese is also engaging with local parishes and communities.

Cllr Anda Fitzgerald O'Connor commented that in her area that is very rural she has seen the opposite problem. There has been an increase in the population due to housing development, but children then can't get into

their local schools and must travel to a school further away.

BC confirmed that we are seeing an era where the birth rate has declined and therefore there is a gulf between areas with housing and those without, which contrasts with the last decade or so. The question was asked – how far are premises a problem? Jane confirmed it is a challenge and is about being proactive about maintenance of buildings. Carole Thomson commented that as a governor of a church school she hasn't received this information and is therefore concerned that the message isn't reaching all governors. Jane thanked Carole for the useful feedback which will be taken on board.

Cllr Howson commented that school closures were considered in the 1980's under similar circumstances. The issue for the LA is the cost of transporting children to other schools if premises close. However, it was noted that there has been an increase in the retention rate of Headteachers in Oxfordshire which is positive and Cllr Howson commended the work that the church has done.

Jane Mahary confirmed that the intention is to work with the LA.

Carole Thomson commented that some schools have their own buses, so transport is not always going to be an issue for the LA. Cllr Lindsay-Gale confirmed that there is an advisory group looking at the transport issue.

5. Report 1 (attached) (BC): Pupil Place Plan – paper copies of the updated Plan will be available at the meeting

The group noted that the Pupil Place Plan was published before SOSG. BC responded that it is not a requirement for the PPP to come to this group before being published and that it is agreed by the cabinet member. Cllr Waine requested that the SOSG meeting in Autumn is held before the PPP is agreed. The group discussed whether it would be more appropriate for the Plan to be approved by full Cabinet rather than by delegated decision, as it covers all wards. BC will check with Committee Services to determine how the Plan should be approved next year.

BC

There was a general discussion regarding housing growth. Cllr Howson noted that in the city the growth is not to do with housing growth and that the university has a plan to add another postgrad college which could impact further. BC advised that places are driven by birth rates and houses and that we don't have the data for other factors that are outside the model we use so it is very difficult to incorporate it into the plan. Sarah Brinkley questioned the PAN for new schools and where the PAN of a school is increased and how these factors affect surrounding schools. ND advised that the process set up by Central Government means that schools must consult on reducing PAN but don't have to consult on raising PAN. It was noted that Aureus PAN has doubled since they opened. However, BC advised that the PAN was always meant to be 240 but was lower when the school first opened to try to manage the impact. However, the LA can't control what the academy trust then does.

Sarah Brinkley also noted that the additional capacity provided by

new/expanded schools has affected neighbouring schools at the same time as the changes to school transport have affected demand for places at some schools. Cllr Lindsay-Gale added that one example would be schools in Abingdon, as there is no longer free transport from Berinsfield to those schools. ND noted that the law allows for free transport to a school that is over 3 miles away, and the council has no obligation to fund transport to further schools.

6. Report 2 (ND): School Admissions update – secondary applications data to be tabled

The Secondary applications data report provided by ND was tabled. ND provided a summary to the group. There are currently surplus places in Abingdon, there is sufficient in Banbury and Bloxham with a concentration of spare place in Banbury Academy. Bicester is full. There are a considerable number of children from Bicester who go to the catholic school Blessed George Napier and the Marlborough CoE school, which is over-subscribed. Therefore, if children are not able to get into these schools they will be fed back into Bicester. The Bicester School is willing to increase PAN for 2019 to take on extra pupils, due to the late opening of the new Whitelands Academy. Gosford Hill in Kidlington has spare places. If children from the Bicester area go to GH as their nearest available school they will qualify for free transport which will then be a cost to the LA for 5 years. Carole Thomson asked if this is the same for the bulge class at Heyford? BC clarified that Heyford does not have a bulge class, the only bulge class is at Bicester School.

There are a sizable number of places at Carterton College. Cllr Brighouse commented that active intervention is required for this school. Cllr Lindsay-Gale and Cllr Waine confirmed that this is recognised and there is active intervention in this school which is still maintained by the LA.

Chipping Norton School does suffer from 'leaking', including across the border. **Cllr Waine requested that BC email data on this if possible.**

BC

In Didcot, the Aureus School is not yet full and there are still some houses to be built in the development.

Didcot Girls School is hugely oversubscribed. Many applications are from Oxford City. Cllr Brighouse commented that young Muslim women are choosing Didcot Girls as single sex education is a major problem in East Oxford. There are spare places in Oxford but they are concentrated at St Gregory's. The group discussed the extent to which St Gregory's contributes towards meeting the need of Muslim families in particular, and whether it would consider a non-Co-Ed stream. Cllr Waine asked BC if this could be worth asking of the school?

BC

Cllr Howson commented that the free school route has been open for some time but there hasn't yet been a bid for a single sex school from the Muslim community.

The Swan school is planned to open in 2019 but is not part of the

coordinated admissions scheme and is running a separate application process. This is not the choice of the school, trust and LA, but is due to the ESFA, which won't allow them in the scheme until they have been open a year. Most parents will therefore have applied in both schemes and some may have only applied for the Swan School. Therefore, in March we will write to parents to offer them their scheme choice and then some will also have offers for The Swan. This is a huge applications administrative task.

AM advised that she is in the process of writing a paper which will be shared with the trusts and with the schools involved in 'fall back' places, which will set out the different time scales. This will be sent out to all those involved in the new year. It will not only affect Oxford City.

Sarah Brinkley asked if Headteachers of schools that could get applications from potential Swan applications are aware that they could lose those places? AM confirmed that we are working very closely with the schools and River Learning Trust. ND commented that although they are not part of the coordinated scheme, we will know who the pupils are.

ND advised that in Berinsfield, the transport policy change is being phased in, and for most children their nearest available school would be The Oxford Academy – as a result, free transport to Abingdon was due to be phased out. However, if the Swan does not open in time, The Oxford Academy will also be full and children will be allocated to Abingdon instead, requiring an ongoing commitment to transport from Berinsfield to Abingdon.

Cllr Lindsay-Gale asked if there is a possibility of a new secondary school in Berinsfield? BC responded that this had been discussed as part of planning for SODC's housing allocations but the concentration of the population is not big enough to make a secondary school sustainable. However, we are waiting for confirmation of the housing growth across Culham and Berinsfield etc and available land also needs to be considered.

It was noted that in Wantage the admission number is artificially higher to allow for population growth ahead of the new school on Grove airfield opening, King Alfred's will come back down once the new school opens.

Cllr Howson commented on the work that has been happening regarding SEND and that the situation has changed since the last meeting. David Clarke confirmed that a full report on the SEND Sufficiency Strategy is due to be considered by Cabinet in December.

7. Report 3 (attached) (BC): New school processes:

- Witney west primary school
- Crabhill primary school, Wantage
- Graven Hill primary school, Bicester
- Whitelands Academy (SW Bicester)
- Swan School (Oxford)
- Barton Park Primary School (Oxford)

- Southam Road primary school (Bicester)
- Grove Airfield all-through school

BC advised the group that the sponsor for Witney has been recommended to the RSC, but it is still confidential until it has been approved formally.

Interviews with the four bidders for Wantage will be held next week and then a recommendation will be made.

Graven Hill has attracted a lot of interest and we have received 8 expressions of interest which is the most we have ever had for a single school. By Easter we should have a decision from the RSC.

Cllr Brighthouse asked what is the criteria used to assess the bids? BC advised that several criteria are assessed including the quality of education, financial plan, financial viability, as well as how it fits into our strategic plan to ensure we have a sustainable network of academy trusts. However, we also want to ensure we have fantastic schools so wouldn't discount bids from trusts that are outside of the county. We also get feedback from the DfE regarding the financial viability of a trust.

Cllr Waine noted that the group has always given its support to more local sponsors as its preference.

Currently there is not a confirmed list of schools to open in 2022, as this is tied up with housing and how quickly the houses are built. Things can change quickly, so it's difficult to say which schools are more likely to open first. Beyond 2025 it is less certain.

All indications are that the Wave free special school in Bloxham will open on time in 2020.

The LA presumption schools; Southam Road, Barton Park and Whitelands Academy are opening 2020. The latter being delayed from 2019.

Carole Thomson asked if the decision for Grove Airfield to be an all-through school was the Trust's? BC confirmed that it was the Trust's preference. A Deed of Variation is required on that site because the S106 didn't allow for primary education on the "secondary" site. CT commented that the funding formula doesn't favour all-through schools.

8. Report 4 (attached) (AM): Academies update

AM advised the group that all schools that were programmed to convert since the last meeting have converted. We are currently working with Larkrise Primary which is a sponsored conversion due to convert on 1st February. Other 1st February conversions programmed are Hardwick Primary School who will join GLF Schools and Stadhampton Primary School who will join Acer Trust, which is a quietly growing trust.

Sutton Courtenay CE Primary School will be the first primary to join the

Ridgeway Education Trust when they convert on 1st April.

The Oxfordshire Hospital School conversion is delayed at least 12 months as its capital and buildings are all linked in with the Swan School.

The conversion of St Johns RC Primary School, Banbury, is still on hold due to ongoing legal matters.

Bardwell School and Springfield School have received Academy Orders and are both planning to join the Gallery Trust, but dates are still to be confirmed.

ODST are in a consolidation phase for the next 12 months.

The LA has submitted a bid for a SEND Free School in Didcot and hope to hear in January if it has been successful.

9. Schools Forum questions /discussion points – could members please send issues in advance to Cllr Waine

No questions.

10. Report 5 (attached) (BC): Member for Education & Cultural Services items / decisions

A correction was noted on the decision date for item 2 – OCC's recommended sponsor for the new Primary School Located in NE Wantage. The date has been moved to January.

11. AOB

Cllr Lyndsay-Gale asked about progress with the plan to expand Benson Primary School. BC advised that the statutory consultation process for expanding from 1fe to 1.5 has now ended. There were some objections largely to do with the use of part of the playing field and concerns about the position in relation to houses nearby. The expansion would be to 1.5fe but would allow for 2fe. It is not financially viable to move the school to another site. A report will be provided to Cllr Lyndsay-Gale's delegated decision meeting in December.

Cllr Waine requested that the data requests from this meeting are highlighted and suggested that the data is circulated with the notes.

BC

12. Date of next meeting:

Monday 18 March 2019, 10.00-12.00

Ground Floor Meeting Room 3, County Hall