

OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL SCHOOLS FORUM

MINUTES of the meeting held on Thursday 9 November 2023 commencing at 10.00am and finishing at 1.35pm

Present:

Members:

Carole Thomson (Academy Secondary School Governor Rep) – in the Chair

Catharine Darnton Vice Chair (Academy Secondary Headteacher)

Row Martin (Council of Oxfordshire Teacher Organisations (COTO))

Chris Hart (Maintained Secondary Headteacher) (from 11.00am)

Jacqui West (Alternative Provision / PRU Headteacher)

Brenda Williams (Maintained Primary School Governor)

Natalie Wilson (Maintained Nursery Headteacher School)

Robert Majilton (Academy Secondary Headteacher Rep)

Lorraine Wilson (Special School Headteacher)

Maureen Thompson (Academy Primary Governor)

In attendance:

Councillor John Howson (Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services, Oxfordshire County Council)

Lynda Poole (Interim Deputy Director for Education, Oxfordshire County Council) (Virtual)

Anne Coyle (Interim Corporate Director of Children's Services) (Virtual)

Martin Goff (Head of Access to Learning, Oxfordshire County Council)

Ohaz Ikedionu (Finance Department, Oxfordshire County Council)

Nilufa Begum (Finance Department, Oxfordshire County Council)

Chris Reynolds (Committee Officer)

Deborah Smit (Virtual Agenda Item 12)

These notes indicate the outcomes of this meeting and those responsible for taking the agreed action.

If you have a query please contact Chris Reynolds, Committee Officer

1.1 Apologies and welcome	ACTION
<p>The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.</p>	
<p>There were no objections to the meeting being recorded.</p>	
<p>Apologies for absence were received from Tom James (Primary Maintained Governor Rep), Nathan Thomas (Academy Secondary School Headteacher), Jeanne Lapsley (Special School Governor), Victoria Woods (Academy Primary School Headteacher), Louise Izzo (PVI Representative) and Margaret Whitaker (Finance Business Partner (Education) Oxfordshire County Council); Chris Hart (Maintained Secondary Headteacher) for the first part of the meeting but would join virtually at 11.00 am.</p>	
<p>The Chair requested that allowable expenses claims for the PVI representative should be clarified as the current incumbent works in a small charity setting.</p>	MW/CT
<p>There were no declarations of interest recorded.</p>	
<p>As there remain 5 vacancies to be filled it was noted that the meeting was quorate.</p>	OCC
2. Minutes	
<p>The minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2023 were approved as a correct record.</p>	
<p><u>Governor Hub</u></p>	
<p>The Chair asked if an experienced clerk from Governor Services could be employed to archive and update the Schools' Forum records on Governor Hub.</p>	Martin Goff
<p><u>Expenses claims</u></p>	Ohaz Ikedionu
<p>The Chair asked for any outstanding expenses claims to be paid.</p>	
<p><u>Dedicated Schools Grant Presentation</u></p>	
<p>The Chair asked that the annex to the presentation on the DSG be circulated.</p>	Clerk
3. Committees	
<p>Maureen Thompson reported on the meeting of the Schools and</p>	

<p>for the continuation of the Exceptional Rents factor in 2024-25, in relation to the existing three schools that receive funding in 2023-24, and any further schools that may potentially meet the criteria when the funding data is updated in December 2023. The vote was carried unanimously.</p>	
<p>5. Schools Funding Formula 2024-25 – General Disapplication Request – Funding from the General Fund (Covid 19 Reserve) to High Needs</p> <p>The Forum considered a report on the general disapplication request to apply General Fund resources to the High Needs Deficit to meet in year costs caused by excess demand linked to Covid. The operational guidance (Section 32) said that "if a local authority with a DSG deficit wishes to use general funds to eliminate any part of the deficit, or otherwise to add general funds to its schools budget, it must apply to the Secretary of State as set out in the annually made school finance regulations, to disregard the requirement to carry deficits forward under the regulations, to the extent of the amount of general funds that it wishes to use.</p> <p>Ohaz Ikedionu and Nilufa Begum presented the report and answered questions.</p> <p>Following discussion Schools Forum members unanimously :-</p> <p>RESOLVED to support the general disapplication request to apply General Fund resources to the High Needs Deficit to meet in year costs caused by excess demand linked to Covid, as set out in the report.</p> <p>6. Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund 2023-24 and 2024-25</p> <p>The Forum considered a report providing information on the use of Growth Funding for new and expanding schools in the 2023/24 financial year.</p> <p>The Chair introduced Barbara Chillman who had presented the issues in this report at the meeting of the Schools and High Needs Committee.</p> <p>Barbara Chillman then answered a number of questions on the report.</p>	<p>Ohaz Ikedionu</p>

The Forum then discussed the implications of the proposals and various scenarios that could arise.

The following points were raised:-

- Clarification needed on the differences between school expansion and bulge classes.
- The impact of increased numbers of service families and asylum seekers on increased school admissions at short notice
- Agreement not to instigate falling roles funding in the current year
- The implications for adopting the DfE criteria for supporting bulge classes in comparison to the current scheme

RESOLVED to

- a) note that Growth and Falling Rolls funding was included in the Department for Education (DfE) consultation, “Implementing the Direct National Funding Formula”.
- b) note the use to which Growth Funding has been applied in the 2023-24 budget year, and expected pressures for 2024-25.
- c) approve the recommendation to amend the mechanism by which expanding schools are supported in the future through adjustment of the APT (section 5).
- d) agree to amend the mechanism by which bulge classes are supported in the future
- e) agree that for the purposes of funding bulge classes, the DfE’s secondary school growth allocation rate of £2,320 per pupil per year should be used (section 6).
- f) agree to defer introduction of Falling Rolls Funding and review again next year, noting the need for sensitive communication to schools about this decision (section 7).
- g) approve in principal an unchanged contribution of £660,000 to the Growth Fund for 2024-25.but defer the final decision until the January meeting depending on the DSG available.

Ohaz Ikedionu

7. Central School Services Block 2024-25

The Forum considered a report seeking approval for Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding to be held centrally to support specified services.

The information contained within this report was based on the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) document "Schools revenue funding 2024 to 2025 operational guide" published July 2023 (updated October 2023) and the DfE document "Central school services block national funding formula: technical note" published in July 2023.

Ohaz Ikedionu presented the report and answered questions.

During discussion members referred to the need for the Forum to be provided with adequate administrative support. Members agreed that consideration of the Forum's budget be deferred pending a review of the support required.

Ohaz Ikedionu

RESOLVED to

- a) note the report.
- b) Approve individually the following budgets from the Central School Services block (CSSB) for 2024-25:
 - (i) Prudential Borrowing budget £1,566,685
 - (ii) 2.2.2 Admissions budget £642,800
 - (iii) Local authority's statutory functions for all schools' budget
£1,912,312.
- c) defer consideration of the Schools' Forum budget for 2024-25 to the January meeting
- d) that any additional funding available be used to meet increased costs of this block, against the finalised allocation in December 2023, and, if in excess of this, contribute towards the shortfall on the overall DSG.
- e) note the provisional figure of £610,960 for government arranged licences and that the Teachers' pension employer contributions for centrally employed staff have been included within the CSSB as in prior years.

8. De-delegation of School Improvement Funds from April 2024

The Forum considered a report providing information regarding how learning and school improvement was currently funded and requested to agree 'de-delegation' of funds from school budgets for the purpose of schooling improvement. ', This follows the removal of the DfE Grant School improvement monitoring and brokering grant allocations from April 2023 onwards.

During discussion, members referred concerns about the way in which the survey had been conducted and the level of response.

RESOLVED to, on a vote from maintained schools' representatives to agree 'de-delegation' of funds from school budgets for the purpose of schooling improvement on the basis detailed in the report.

Ohaz Ikedionu

9. De-delegated Functions – Union Facilities Duties 2024-25

The Forum considered a report that set out the continuing arrangements for Union facilities and requests School Forum to support those arrangements and for a de-delegation decision. It was noted that a further update will be brought to 16 January 2024 Schools Forum meeting to indicate the level of Union facilities support and therefore the unit rate (decision from all sectors), taking into consideration a 2.9% inflationary cost increase in the financial year 2024-25.

Ohaz Ikedionu presented the report. Row Martin gave further details on the background to the current position on financial support for union representation.

The Chair offered to write in support via School News

RESOLVED to

a) note that a further update will be brought to 16 January 2024 Schools Forum meeting to indicate the level of Union facilities support and therefore the unit rate (decision from all sectors), taking into consideration a 2.9% inflationary cost increase in the financial year 2024-25.

Ohaz Ikedionu

b) agree, in principle, the de-delegation of the union facilities duties budget for the financial year 2024-25.

c) to reiterate, for the financial year 2024-25, its previous recommendation (from paper 5, 3 October 2017) to all other schools and academies to buy-into the continuation of the local authority's union facilities agreement.

10. Schools NFF Update, including DfE changes October 2023, and LA funding formula

The Forum received the NFF update slides circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED to note the position

11. High Needs Place Planning for submission

Martin Goff presented the slides circulated following publication of the agenda.

RESOLVED to note the position.

12. Partnership SEND Update

Deborah Smit gave an update on the actions being taken following the SEND Ofsted inspection which included a Priority Action Plan and a Strategic Plan, and answered a number of questions She explained that the priority areas for consideration included the views and voices of young people, healthcare plans and commissioning arrangements, leadership and governance, the quality and timeliness of education, and joint working Councillor John Howson explained that the Council's administration had appointed a Cabinet Member with specific responsibility for SEND improvement and outlined the political response to the findings of the Ofsted inspection.

RESOLVED to

- a) note the position
- b) ask Deborah Smith to confirm that the priority action plan is for SEND and AP and provide further information via e-mail to Forum members

Deborah Smit

..... in the Chair

Date of signing