

CITY OF YORK SCHOOLS FORUM

Minutes of the additional Schools Forum meeting held on Tuesday 4th May 2021 at 9.00am via Zoom

Present: Trevor Burton (Academy Representative and Chair), Adam Booker (Special School Representative), Toby Easthaugh (Academy Representative, deputising for Helen Winn), Di Gomery (Maintained Secondary Governor Representative), Helen Gration (Early Years Sector Representative), Steve Lewis (Academy Representative), Mark Richardson (Pupil Referral Unit Representative), Jenny Rogers (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), James Rourke (Maintained Primary Headteacher Representative), John Tomsett (Maintained Secondary Headteacher Representative), and Dee Statham (Academy Representative)

In attendance: Cllr Keith Orrell (Representing the Executive Member for Children, Young People and Education), Amanda Hatton (Corporate Director – People, CYC), Maxine Squire (Assistant Director, Education and Skills, CYC), Richard Hartle (Head of Finance, CYC), Salli Radford (Head of Governor Services, CYC, Coordinator and Clerk)

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Toby Easthaugh was welcomed to the meeting, which he was attending in place of Helen Winn.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Gail Brown (Academy Representative), Andrew Daly (Academy Representative), Lee Probert (FE Representative), Claire Rigden (Maintained Nursery Headteacher Representative (VC)), and Helen Winn (Academy Representative).

3. Membership update

Previously distributed. The membership update was noted.

4. Minutes of the York Schools Forum meeting of 2nd February 2021

Previously distributed. The minutes of the meeting were agreed to be a true and accurate record.

5. Action Plan and Matters Arising

There were no outstanding action points to report.

Matters arising: None.

6. Deficit recovery plan

Richard Hartle provided a verbal update, advising that LA officers had been called to an initial meeting with the DfE and ESFA prior to circulation of Forum meeting papers, with this delaying production of a draft plan. Richard advised that this initial meeting had heard the LA officers outline the 2020/21 in-year deficit of £5m against the DSG and the cumulative deficit of c£10m which this would contribute to. The officers had also explained that a plan would be put in place to remove the in-year deficit by the 2023/24 financial year. It was noted that the proposals would not however address the cumulative deficit of c£15m which would result from the current deficit being increased by a reduced in-year deficit in the shorter term.

Richard advised that officers had anticipated discussion regarding support available from the DfE to address the cumulative deficit, but that the

meeting was regarded as informal and had not considered detail. It was noted that the DfE was comfortable with the outline plan to address the in-year deficit but had subsequently requested a detailed deficit recovery plan. Richard advised that it was anticipated that support would be discussed once this plan had been submitted.

Richard advised that the plan would be drafted for consideration by the Forum prior to submission to the DfE. It was noted that this process would need to be completed prior to the start of the autumn term. Richard advised that he hoped to discuss support from the DfE / Treasury at this stage.

Richard advised that the draft plan would be brought to the July Forum meeting. It was noted that the LA had been separately contacted by the Ministry of Local Government regarding the knock-on implications of the plans to manage the DSG deficit. Richard advised that this presented an opportunity to feed back to a second department, further advising that this might result in support for a request to have the deficit written-off as the recovery measures would impact on other LA services.

Questions were invited.

The Forum suggested that the July meeting be brought forward to enable earlier submission of the recovery plan to the DfE. Richard advised of the need to ensure that the plan was properly prepared, adding that this would involve colleagues from SEND, and Effectiveness and Achievement. Richard undertook to discuss options with Maxine Squire and Sue Day. It was noted that bringing the draft forward was an option, though it was not possible to commit at this stage.

The Chair stressed the need to ensure that the LA did not lose access to funds due to timing, confirming that the meeting could be brought forward if this supported submission of the plan.

Richard thanked Forum members for their support.

7. Inclusion Review

Maxine Squire provided a verbal report, advising that the LA was now ready to begin consultation on the Inclusion review. It was noted that a Survey Monkey process would be established to encourage the engagement of parents and providers. Maxine advised that the consultation would focus on the sufficiency of local provision for children with SEND and would identify pressures on local provision.

Maxine outlined the input of settings to the content of the consultation, advising that links would be shared with Forum members. Maxine urged Forum members to share the consultation link and to encourage settings and school populations to engage. It was noted that the consultation would run during May and June (closing on 30th June) and that Maxine would report initial findings to the July Forum meeting.

8. School Improvement Commissioning Fund report and planning 2021/22 & York Schools and Academies Board

Previously distributed. Maxine Squire advised that John Thompson was unable to attend to update the meeting and that she would present the report.

Summary of work of the YSAB over the last year – Maxine advised that the 2020/21 academic year had been dominated by the pandemic and that the pattern of YSAB meetings had changed in response, moving to weekly meetings to manage the Covid response across the school community. It was noted that school leaders had seen a coordinated response from the group as a result.

It was noted that some commissioned school improvement work had been paused due to the pandemic and that some elements of the usual cycle of

school improvement had been impossible to progress. It was further noted that some projects were therefore not where they expected at the beginning of the academic year. Maxine advised that monitoring reports continued to be received during the period and had been taken to the YSAB to enable monitoring and adjustments where necessary. It was noted that John had coordinated regular reports and that a programme for the current year had been drafted, with this detailed in the report. It was noted that the YSAB would monitor impact throughout 2021/22.

Maxine advised that future plans for the YSAB were outlined in the paper and were focussed on building on the success of the Board. It was noted that the last Forum meeting had heard that historic commitments under the Schools Central Services Block would unwind over time, and that these areas of expenditure needed to taper down. Maxine advised that the meeting with the ESFA had highlighted this area as needing to be addressed. It was noted that LA officers had explained the function of the School Improvement Commissioning Fund (SICCF) and that the ESFA challenger had been surprised by the low levels of funding in York and had understood how the fund benefitted the community, expressing support for this work.

Maxine Squire advised that the YSAB was keen to move towards an additional level of formality as trialled by other LAs (Sheffield, for example) through creation of a mechanism such as a Schools Company. Maxine advised that the ESFA was expected to question the use of funding to commission school improvement work, with the YSAB putting the LA in a strong position. It was noted that the YSAB held a balance of £700k at the start of the financial year due to the savings outlined at the last Forum meeting. Maxine advised of the opportunity to protect this funding outside the School Services block via creation of an arms-length body, suggesting Huntington Research School hold the funding on behalf of the YSAB and

SICF. It was noted that this would require a legal agreement to be drafted to enable a formal request to the school to initiate an arrangement.

Maxine advised that the paper also outlined plans relating to John's retirement in July 2021, noting that John had supported the YSAB to ensure efficient operation, delivery of objectives, and quality of monitoring reports. Maxine outlined the opportunity to put in place a day a week of support to enable the YSAB to continue to work effectively and to further develop its role. It was noted that a job description had been drafted by John and the YSAB executive, supported by the YSAB board. Maxine advised of the desire to ensure the input of the Forum at this stage.

It was noted that final detail could be determined by LA as the body holding the funding.

In response to a question regarding the role of Huntington Research School (HRS), Maxine advised that HRS would act as a bank for SICF funding and that the usual scrutiny would be provided by the YSAB as fund manager, with no devolved authority to use funds to be granted to HRS.

In response to a question regarding further clarification of HRS's role and what this would mean going forward if the Central Services block was separated, Maxine advised that the arrangement would only apply to funding managed by the YSAB, with HRS to act on behalf of the YSAB to establish the fund for the future and enable this to be grown with YSAB as a formal partner. It was noted that the YSAB, as a school improvement partner, would be able to bid for other funding streams not currently available to LAs. John Tomsett, as Headteacher of the HRS, advised that there would be no advantaged gained by HRS from the arrangement. Maxine advised that the YSAB had not yet decided to set up the account as this would require a legal structure and would therefore incur significant

costs, though the LA did need to ring-fence funding for school improvement. Maxine advised that the YSAB could use the coming year to identify a more formal model for the future.

In response to a question regarding any risks to the funding, Maxine advised that there were none, as a commissioning contract would be put in place by legal services which specified that HRS would only act as bank account. In response to a question regarding risk to HRS, Maxine advised that there were none.

In response to a question regarding the scrutiny of Early Years improvement board work, Maxine advised that she had discussed options to enable the replication of the success of the YSAB via an EY model with EY colleagues. It was noted that commissioning around identified need was key for EY as well as primary and secondary phases. Maxine advised that work undertaken by the YSAB during the pandemic had established successful sub-groups to cover phases and special needs and that it would be helpful to add an EY sub-group. It was noted that a city-wide education recovery plan was being developed with an EY aspect to be included alongside all other education partners.

The Chair highlighted the strengths of the YSAB sub-groups during the pandemic, advising that it would be helpful to include the wider discussions previously picked up by the Secondary Headteachers' Group. The Forum noted the need to ensure that issues normally picked up by groups operating prior to the pandemic were not dropped from the agenda going forward.

9. Schools Forum forward plan

Richard Hartle outlined the forward plan:

July 2021

- Deficit recovery plan

- DSG outturn 2020/21
- Maintained school balances
- Inclusion review – consultation feedback

10. Any other agreed business

There was no other business.

11. Date and time of future meetings

The next meeting would take place on **6th July 2021 at 9.00am.**

The meeting closed at 9.45am.