

**Leicester City Council
Schools Forum**

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held at 1:00 pm on Thursday 16th March 2017 at Soar Valley Training Centre

Present:

Schools members:

Academies:

Jim Cook

Special Academies:

Julie Aquilina

Special School Governors:

Ann Marie Jameson

Special School Heads:

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Secondary School Governors:

Steph McDonald, Janet Washington, Sumeya Bhiku

Secondary School Head representatives:

Simon Catchpole, Bernie Green, Ian Johnson

Primary School Governors:

Steve Wilson, Wendy Martin, Daniel Routledge

Primary School Head representatives:

Jane Ridgewell, Karl Stewart, Martin Fitzwilliam, Nigel Bruen

Pupil Referral Units:

Shaun Whittingham

Non-Schools Members:

Teaching Unions:

Peter Flack (Chair)

School support staff Unions:

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14-19 Partnership:

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Early Years PVI Providers:

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Voluntary Sector:

Wendy Brickett

In attendance:

Ian Bailey

Interim Director of Learning

Kate McGee

Principal Accountant, Education and Children's Services

Ed Rowe

Clerk to the Forum

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Wendy Brickett, Liz Warren, Bernadette Ambler, Ian Johnson, Simon Walton, Martin Judson, Rob Thomas, Gary Garner, Eleanor Shaw, and Sandra Hamilton-Fox

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd February 2017 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

i. Apprenticeship Levy

It was confirmed that a conference was scheduled for the coming weekend to show how opportunities would be created for apprentices. Members were encouraged to search online for details.

5. Secondary expansion programme

The Interim Director of Learning provided an update on the plans that were in place to create additional secondary school places. Nine existing schools were to be expanded and the opening of new free schools was also expected to be confirmed shortly. It was planned to create c. 1200 additional places in 2017/18 and 1800 places in total over a two year period.

Initially temporary accommodation would be required while building work was carried out to create permanent capacity.

Primary representatives noted that the expansion of numbers in their phase had left a number of schools struggling without sufficient hall space, library provision etc. and that sacrifices were still being made. The

Interim Director of Learning accepted the point and confirmed that learning from the primary expansion project was being incorporated into the secondary planning process. It was noted that a board had been created to ensure that the wider implications for secondary schools of increasing pupil numbers were fully considered.

Members queried what the long term position would look like and what the impact of new free schools opening would be. It was confirmed that the free school numbers could not be guaranteed at this stage and that the local authority had to ensure there was sufficient capacity available. It was unlikely there would be any great amount of surplus capacity in future, and the pupil place planning process was being developed to try and improve the accuracy of forecasts in specific areas.

Members commented that their funding was dependent upon pupil numbers and it was noted that PFI schools had entered into long term contracts. As a result, there were concerns that the costs of these contracts may not be viable unless schools were virtually full to capacity.

A query was raised regarding arrangements for special school provision, with primary representatives noting that the numbers of pupils in mainstream schools with special needs were increasing, but there was insufficient intervention space left within the existing premises to adequately ensure their safety.

The Interim Director of Learning confirmed that plans were being developed to create additional special school places, and the aim was to create sufficient capacity to reduce the number of out of city placements that were required.

6. Response to Schools Forum's letter re: payroll access for academies

The Chair confirmed that a letter on behalf of Schools Forum had been sent to Alison Greenhill, Director of Finance, and copied to the City Mayor. This had expressed concern about the decision that had been taken and also the tone of the responses that had been received subsequently.

Other than an automated response from the City Mayor's office, no substantive reply had been received. It was agreed that the letter would be re-sent with a note confirming that no response had yet been received.

Action: Peter Flack

7. Redeployment and its role in redundancy procedures

The Chair noted that the Exceptional Cost Pressures (ECP) panel had been receiving bids from schools for help with paying redundancy costs at the same time as other schools were submitting bids for funds to employ additional staff in the same or similar roles. A proposal had therefore been made that the ECP should only agree to pay redundancy costs if the school had signed up to the redeployment scheme.

Members commented that there appeared to be confusion as to who was responsible for paying redundancy costs in schools and in what circumstances the ECP panel would approve such requests. Several members commented that schools had made redundancies to avoid a deficit budget, when it appeared they could have run up a deficit instead and then submitted a bid to ECP.

It was agreed that the Interim Director of Learning would bring a report to the next meeting to clarify the position.

Action: Ian Bailey

8. Update on re-pooling of landlord CMF monies for 2017/18

Members expressed concern that the message to headteachers regarding the need to take action on this issue did not appear to be getting through appropriately. There was a danger that schools may not ensure that relevant arrangements had been made for key health and safety issues such as water hygiene, asbestos monitoring etc. due to a communication issue.

Furthermore, clarity was required in advance of September on exactly what the top-sliced funding had historically been used for, as it appeared that some schools were paying for external contracts to meet needs that others thought were covered by the local authority arrangements. Clear documentation was required as soon as possible to allow schools to take decisions for the following financial year.

The Interim Director of Learning agreed to raise the issue with Matt Wallace, Director of Estates and Building Services.

Action: Ian Bailey

It was also agreed that the issue would be kept on the agenda for the next Schools Forum to ensure all members were informed of developments.

Action: Clerk

9. Whatever it Takes annual report

The annual evaluation report was received. It was confirmed that there were no specific performance measures that could definitively indicate the success or otherwise of the project, but a number of proxy measures were in place that could be used to gauge overall progress.

At Key Stage 1, there was a gap of 7.1% to the national average for reading assessments. At Key Stage 2, the gap was 6.6%. It was noted that these gaps were not reflected in teacher assessments.

The report provided detailed assessments of all the projects funded in whole or in part by Whatever it Takes. Historical comparisons were now difficult to make, but the attainment outcomes appeared to be low when compared to other local authorities. The 2016 results would now form the baseline figures for future comparisons.

The Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes had started at a very low base, and improvements had continued to be delivered. The gap to the national average had been reduced to under 10% for the first time. This improvement had been largely driven by the Knowledge Transfer Centres (KTC) schools, where staggering gains had been made. Gains at the 8 schools that were included in the first 2 waves of this programme had averaged almost 20% for the last 4 years, compared to a city wide average of 10% and a national average of 12%.

The pupil surveys that were carried out annually showed a relatively stable level of enjoyment of reading at both primary and secondary levels, but a slight decline in self-reported reading ability.

Virtually all the centrally organised events such as Author Week, Everybody's Reading, Reading Rampage and Storytelling week continued to prove very popular, with excellent feedback from participants.

Members welcomed the report and noted the outcomes. It was confirmed that an external evaluation of the project had been commissioned and the results would be shared with Schools Forum when they became available.

A query was raised regarding how the national funding formula would potentially impact upon the project. It was confirmed that the strategy and project board were discussing that issue, with a traded model being one of the options that could potentially emerge.

10. Any other business

i) Energy re-charge for catering

Concern was raised regarding the arrangements that had been put in place for production kitchens to raise invoices for the energy costs incurred in preparing meals for dining centres. This had become a contentious issue in certain schools and there was a desire to re-visit the arrangement to avoid any ill feeling.

The current arrangement involved production kitchens invoicing dining centres directly, based on a cost of 10 pence per meal. The charge had been arrived at following a survey of schools by the energy team within the local authority.

Some members commented that the level of the charge seemed excessive and may not prove to be viable in the long term. It was suggested that greater transparency in setting out how the charge had been arrived at would help all concerned. It was also suggested that if the charge was levied by City Catering, rather than by the production kitchens, it may prove to be less contentious.

The Interim Director of Learning advised that the charge had been calculated by sampling a range of schools, and the methodology used appeared to be sound. As a result, the charge appeared to reflect the true cost to production kitchens. Further sampling of additional schools could be carried out if required, and the local authority was prepared to consider whether the administration of the invoicing could be operated centrally.

It was agreed to issue a communication to schools to clarify the position.

Action: Ian Bailey

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3.00 p.m.

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