

NOTES OF A CONSULTATION MEETING BETWEEN ELECTED MEMBERS, OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OXFORDSHIRE GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION (OGA) HELD AT COUNTY HALL ON TUESDAY 3RD JULY 2018 AT 3.30pm

Present:

OGA Representatives: Carole Thomson [Chair] (CT), Judith Bennett (JB), Stan Terry (ST) and Brenda Williams (BW).

OCC Elected Members and Officers: David Clarke (DC) [Deputy Director for Education and Learning], Neil Darlington (ND), Hannah Farncombe (HF) [Deputy Director for Children's Social Care], Cllr Hilary Hibbert-Biles (HH-B) [Cabinet Member for Public Health and Education], Cllr John Hewson (JH) [Deputy Chair Education Scrutiny Committee], Allyson Millward (AM) and Jennie Perry (JP)

In attendance: Katie Paxton-Doggett [Clerk].

Apologies for absence: Cllr Michael Waine {MW}, Lucy Butler [Director for Children's Services].

1. Notes of the last meeting

Notes of the meeting held on 13th December 2017 had been agreed as a correct record of the meeting by email previously. CT explained this was the usual process enabling publication on the OGA website soon after the meeting.

CT outlined the history of OGA and the meetings with elected members and officers. Many of the items on the current agenda were from OGA, the local authority could also submit questions or topics for consideration. There were no formal terms of reference to enable an open discussion.

Any governor, trustee or member of any governing board of whatever status was a member of OGA. There was a notional charge of £10 or £15 per school; around 170 schools had bought in for the coming year through Governor Services buyback. There was a memorandum of understanding with the local authority (LA) that was published on the LA website. Communications from OGA were circulated by the LA through the clerking service; this worked well on the whole.

2. Matters arising from notes of 13th December 2017

The minutes had been previously approved by email.

2.1 Multi Academy Trusts (MAT) and the role of the LA

CT and JB had attended the NGA Conference in Manchester. The Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds, was asked a question about where independent information could be obtained comparing the performance of MATs could be found. He admitted that they 'could do better' in terms of objective information.

At the time of the last meeting, OCC was in consultation with schools about the possibility of forming a LA MAT. The national agenda subsequently changed and it was clear that the academy programme had slowed down. A number of schools indicated that they wish to remain maintained. Sessions were held at the Headteachers and Chairs' briefings in the spring investigating what services maintained schools valued and wished to retain. It was proposed that potential service options would be investigated with schools asked to pay a set fee to receive these. Sessions for the summer had now been postponed to the autumn although this had not been communicated to Headteachers and Chairs. Options would be developed after the autumn meetings.

2.2 Home education

There had been a useful discussion about home education at the Education Scrutiny Committee.

CT to share details with OGA Executive.

Action: CT

The Serious Case Review was now in its final draft but had not been published, awaiting the decision of the CPS. It was not felt to be in the interests of the family or professionals concerned that it had taken so long. The anticipated publication date is December 2018 and it is thought that there will be some useful learning as an outcome.

2.3 Governor Services Review: Local Leaders of Governance LLGs & development of a toolkit for Governors.

Local leaders of governance (LLGs) were being appointed and OCC was working closely with OTSA. There had been 10 applications, nine of whom had been interviewed and six accepted. Consideration was being given to how they would be deployed to support those in difficult situations or where there was an inexperienced board. It was hoped that a strategy would be ready for September 2018.

The geographical spread of the LLGs had not yet been mapped but although there was some spread there would not be enough to cover the whole county.

A toolkit is being developed which would form part of the buyback along with helpdesk support and unlimited access to training. There had previously been a lack of clarity about who was entitled to access the helpdesk. The website had been amended.

The governance review had been finalised in December 2017 and an action plan had been developed. Work had been done to ensure a more 'joined up' approach that would support governors better. There would be a launch day for tutors in September 2018.

2.4 Mental health support for schools

HH-B advised that school health nurses were undertaking a huge amount of work in schools regarding mental health.

CAMHS had launched a new model providing a single point of access whereby any professional, child or parent could ring in, the call would be triaged for an appointment if appropriate and for immediate advice to be given concerning strategies for coping with difficult situations. There was feedback from governors that CAMHS was perceived as ineffective, did not fulfil the child's or parent's needs and did not have capacity to provide the level of support required. It was hoped that the new offer would address issues with quality of provision. There had been a series of breakfast meetings with Oxford Health to launch the new service; DC and HH-B would also write to schools. A link from the schools website, InSite, should be put in place. **ACTION: HF HH-B**

Notification should also be put on Schools News and the Safeguarding Board website. It would be cascaded to governors and also a recommendation given to schools to include the CAMHS link on their own website. HH-B would write to schools. **ACTION: HH-B**

The report of the Children's Commissioner the previous week had identified particular mental health issues in the military community.

The response to the CAMHS Green Paper was not yet out. The Green Paper included the requirement for a mental health lead in every school.

2.5 Impact of Universal Credit on reliable data for schools

The rollout had been chaotic with as many overpayments as underpayments. The member of LA staff responsible for data had been off sick but was now back. There were rumours that data would not be robust as it was being rolled out. It was also thought that there could be a significant impact on schools' finances as well as the make-up of cohorts, if families earning up to £60,000 qualified for benefits. There were transitional rules but it was not certain how effective these would be.

One MAT had aggregated all data from the school workforce census into a single return which spanned four LAs. This would make it much more difficult to identify that which related to Oxfordshire schools.

3. Update on OCC staffing in relation to schools and the short and long-term implications for school support

The recent consultation process to expand the number of services from three to four had finished the previous week. AM was acting head of service, overseeing access to learning: admissions, school organisation, place planning, academies, etc. A substantive appointment would be made imminently. Kim James had been appointed to head the School Improvement Service which would include the virtual school.

There was to be a new Learner Engagement Service incorporating the [Oxfordshire School Inclusion Team \(OXSiT\)](#), which would focus on key issues around attendance, exclusions, Pupil Premium, Military etc., particularly focusing on vulnerable learners. It was hoped that the service would commence on 1 November 2018, although some aspects of the service may be offered prior to that time. Details would be circulated early in the autumn term.

School support would continue in its current state for the time being with a creative and innovative approach taken to working with OTSA.

Special schools would fall under the SEND service and there may be some cross-over in terms of exclusions, etc. The SEND team was looking at what provision could be provided to home educated children. However, there were significant issues with going into homes to provide support, particularly where parents did not want it. Home education numbers had increased across the country though only a very small number would be eligible for an EHCP.

4. Stress as a barrier to learning and available support services (as per agreed agenda item on 13.12.17)

Recruitment and retention issues associated with the stress put on staff had been raised at the Heads' and Chairs' meetings. Discussions had taken place with the OCC health provider concerning policies about growing expertise and recruitment and ideas would be shared.

In addition, many felt personally responsible for the wellbeing of pupils. Regular conversations took place with schools about support for vulnerable children. A lot of work had been done around inclusion and attendance as part of the new learner engagement strand: pupils who were not attending or were repeatedly being excluded often had significant risk factors in their lives. Efforts were made to put in place early intervention to support pupils.

Schools worked extremely hard on safeguarding but it was suggested that they may sometimes be over-cautious in reporting of incidents.

Social care was notoriously absent from TAC meetings and this would need to change. The LCSS service provided support where non-urgent safeguarding concerns were raised. Social workers would be involved if the pupil was a LAC, on a child protection plan or if there were significant

developmental issues as a result. It was important that help for families was targeted in the right way.

A number of Headteachers had been invited to attend the new board meeting and it was hoped that every school sector would be represented. OGA is invited to nominate a governor representative.

ACTION: OGA

Some schools had growing issues around groups of children such as a school at the centre of a community involved in drug culture, where drugs were penetrating school walls. It would be essential to make a much more robust offer, recognising these acute issues and what it is like for the community and to be a child living under threat.

Every school had been provided with a bespoke version of the support available, the roles of services and how to access them. A blank version would be included in the toolkit for governors.

4.47pm HF left the meeting

5. Update on when a comprehensive High Needs Block review will be completed including needs assessments for Alternative Provision for all ages, Primary Behaviour support, Funding allocations for Special Needs in Mainstream and Special Schools

There appeared to be a lack of clarity between the review of the High Needs Block for which the Government paid a grant of £287,494 in January 2017, and the OCC Post-Ofsted SEND review, (e.g. a paper went to Schools Forum committee as a report on the High Needs block that actually only related to the SEND review).

A paper had been put before the Schools Forum. However, OGA had a major concern about the comprehensive High Needs Block review as the SEND review offered no review of place planning, Special Schools funding, etc.

Schools Forum had agreed to fund a High Needs review shortly before the Government announced the grant, so the decision to fund from DSG had been reversed and the allocated funds shared out to schools and providers. The review should have been undertaken and the outcome available by this stage. It was essential to understand how many places were needed and how resources could be best utilised. It was thought that the review would be completed by the end of July, but HH-B and DC would investigate the situation.

ACTION: HH-B DC

Alternative provision was not included but a meeting had been held with the Headteacher of Meadowbrook College. There were few options currently available.

Provision via Didcot Early Nurturing (DEN) based at Willowcroft School had proved quite a successful model.

Funding for special schools would also need to be considered. Although it was hoped to reduce numbers going out of County to residential special schools, it was essential to have the right provision in place. DC would meet with the chair of the Oxfordshire Association of Special School Headteachers.

ACTION: DC

6. There was significant concern from Governors about the process and the decision to go to consultation for the closure of Northfield School when there is already a shortage of Special School places and in particular a shortfall of places for pupils with SEMH needs. Could OGA have an explanation of the rationale behind a decision which appears at face value to imply huge additional financial burdens on the High Needs Block?

There had been a decision not to progress the consultation this term but to secure the best way forward for pupils on the site. Rumours were circulating e.g. that there were plans to sell the land. It was felt that S106 funds could be used creatively to support the school.

Admissions for Northfield had been put on hold. Pupils currently in year 6 with an EHCP, who had identified Northfield, had places secured elsewhere, primarily Iffley Academy. However, there were significant concerns about the pressure that this would put on mainstream schools. Northfield offered for a different category of need and closure was felt to be giving the wrong message to the young people involved.

HHB & DC confirmed parents and staff are notified with meetings and letters as to future provision. It was agreed that ongoing communication would be really important.

Date of the meetings for the next academic year 2018-19: TBC

Action: DC

The meeting ended at 5.09pm

Subsequently the meeting dates for the 2018-2019 Academic Year were agreed for October 10th, February 26th and May 16th.