

NOTES OF THE CONSULTATION MEETING BETWEEN ELECTED MEMBERS AND OFFICERS OF OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (OCC) AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE OXFORDSHIRE GOVERNORS' ASSOCIATION (OGA) HELD ON MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2022 AT 8.30am VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

OGA Representatives: Carole Thomson [Chair] (CT), Judith Bennett (JB), Ian Courtney (IC), Lorraine Foreman-Peck (LFP), Doreen Rose (DR), Stan Terry (ST)

OCC Elected Members and Officers: Tim Brock (JP) [Lead Officer – Governor Services], Hayley Good (HG) [Deputy Director for Education], Kevin Gordon (KG) [Director of Children's Services], Kim James (KJ) [Head of Service: School Improvement and Learning]

In attendance: Katie Paxton [Clerk]

1. Apologies

No apologies had been received.

2. Approval of the notes from the previous meeting

3. Updates on matters arising from Meeting held on 25 May 2022

Nothing other than covered in the agenda.

Matters arising from notes of meeting held on 18 July 2022

a. Property maintenance surveys for Maintained Schools update

HG had requested a written update from Anthony Hulsman. He had verbally assured her that the programme was in place for assessments to take place. The provider, Ridge, and first tranche of schools had been identified. The list would be sent through to CT for circulation amongst OGA colleagues.

Action: HG

stock condition survey had been completed at Frank Wise and Compton and Chilton schools were due to be surveyed this week. There was a schedule of appointments through January to March 2023 for the remaining schools.

OGA colleagues queried whether OCC has adequate personnel to spend the additional funding offered by the government for school buildings and maintenance; it was likely that there would be an avalanche of requests. KG could not confirm, given that he does not manage property services. However, it was thought that capacity is an issue since property services was reorganised.

KG stated that schools have internal processes to spend the first £20,000 of property maintenance budgets within their existing budgets. Capital maintenance funding for maintained schools goes to OCC.

An energy assessment was being undertaken as part of the stock condition survey which would look at the age of boilers etc. and whether there were any adaptations to insulation or the fabric of the building that could achieve future energy cost reductions.

It was understood that contractors were freeing up due to the downturn in the recession.

b. Safeguarding: are improvements to early help assessments being seen? Any other updates relating to this issue (key Ofsted focus)?

Some information and updated guidance would be shared with colleagues.

Safeguarding complaints were coming in from a number of directions. There had been 65 complaints to Ofsted so far this term from members of the public which was about the same as last year. Many of these complaints were at a low level and should have been dealt with by the school: many had not followed the complaints process. Parents were encouraged to go back to the school to follow the

process. OGA members said they would flag up this need for parents to understand and follow the complaints procedure.

The Regional Director's office was now picking up safeguarding complaints as well which was resulting in some replication. A meeting was being held in January 2023 to try to reduce any duplication.

It remained OCC's responsibility with respect to all schools. Complaints received were tracked according to type of school and the level of complaint. Many complaints related to things that should go through a school's complaints policy, e.g. often relating to accusations of bullying.

c. Memorandum of understanding. Any progress from OCC?

Limited progress had been made since the last meeting. There would be wider discussion in the spring.

4. High Needs Crisis. Including:

Escalating deficit on High Needs Block with the DBV¹ programme scheduled to provide only £1million. Will planned additional places be sufficient to meet projected need?

What changes to EHCPs are proposed to enable schools to move away from 1:1 TA support?

What is being done to make transparent how notional the notional SEN budget is?

A disapplication request had been made for some money from schools funding to go to the high needs block to encourage inclusion in mainstream schools; it was hoped that this would be around £2.4m.

The DBV programme had not identified anything new which was heartening; it had highlighted what had already been identified by OCC. The areas of need and demand pressures were known and were rightly identified in the SEND² strategy.

Changes were being made with respect to resource bases. HG was in discussions with the headteachers of schools that host resource bases about the ownership of those bases moving across to schools. Consideration was being given to whether more resource bases were required and, if so, how to go about creating them as well as additional special schools. It was straightforward to set up a resource base for those schools that have space but it was not known whether the schools with space are located in the right places to meet need.

Schools were taking pupils with EHCPs³ that state that they should be in special school. Mainstream schools do not have the capacity or experience to properly support these pupils. There were concerns about how widespread it was.

KG admitted that the system was not set up and geared to meet need; OCC was 6-7 years behind the curve. It was a very serious situation.

More support was required to get parents to understand the changes to EHCPs. Pupils will not have one-to-one support; schools did not have the money to do so. There were 60 floor funded schools in county with no additional funding to support SEND pupils.

Kate Bradley and Deb Smit had shared with HG the work being done on the universal support offer for all schools which includes support for parents.

¹ Delivering Better Value

² Special educational needs and disability

³ Education, Health and Care Plan

HG would suggest some dates early next term for a preliminary conversation with OGA prior to a governor briefing.

5. If Hampshire declares bankruptcy as they have warned, are there implications for the partnership with Oxfordshire for support services for maintained schools?

KG had talked to the finance director of Kent County Council the previous week who had stated that they were not going bankrupt and intimated that Hampshire would not go bankrupt either. He said that if one of the councils went bankrupt, it would be the end for local government. KG was also confident that there would be a break clause in the partnership agreement in the unlikely event this circumstance would arise.

KJ confirmed that some 70 days of English support was bought in from Hampshire but this was from the separate advisory service which would not be affected in any case.

6. What is the purpose of the Education Commission in Oxfordshire? What are its Terms of Reference and proposed timescale? To what extent will it take into account previous consultations with schools?

A very short briefing had gone out to schools via GovernorHub. The Commission was currently forming and a number of members had already been appointed. There would be around eight members of the commission meeting three to four times between now and March 2023. More detailed terms of reference were now required.

The current arrangement was not strategically well organised. ST attends OSSP which was the closest to a strategic group to represent all sectors; it was not able to make strategic decisions around education and was not knitted together with a shared vision.

Nominations for governor representation to the Commission had been invited and a very large number had volunteered. Gail Tolley the Chair was likely to look positively at involving as many as possible as well as liaising with OGA.

7. Future meetings

Thursday 23 February 2023 and Thursday 15 June 2023 at 4.00-5.00pm.

The meeting closed at 9.25am