

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 WEDNESDAY 25 MAY 2022 AT 4.00pm VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

OGA Representatives: Carole Thomson [Chair] (CT), Judith Bennett (JB), Ian Courtney (IC), Lorraine Foreman-Peck (LFP), 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. It was noted that no elected members were present.

2. Matters arising from notes of meeting held on Tuesday 30 November 2021

The notes had been previously approved by email.

- **F40 MP briefings**

The briefing had taken place but few MPs had attended due to business in the House. Another briefing is planned for July 5th.

- **OGA Open Meetings**

The Spring Meeting had unfortunately been postponed and would take place in the autumn. Mina Fazell, a Professor from Oxford University, would speak on children's mental health.

The Summer Open Meeting would take place on Saturday 9 July 2022 at Gosford Hill School. The speakers were Tim Brighouse and Mick Waters. All were encouraged to attend for which there was no charge.

- **Place planning information to Governors**

It was agreed that, with reduced numbers, it was important to share the information on place planning with governors. Place planning was primarily of interest to primary schools though there were likely to be some issues over the coming years at secondary level as well. OCC Officers, Allyson Millward and Barbara Chillman, ran locality groups in some affected areas. However, governors were not always invited to attend. Efforts would be made to contact governors direct to invite to relevant meetings.

Action: KJ

An external appointment had been made to the Head of Access to Learning role.

- **SEND support / share best practice through Governor Hub?**

It was felt that training for governors on SEND was covered by a number of courses offered by Governor Services. It was important to make sure that all courses were kept up-to-date.

GovernorHub did not allow for a free flow of information. A specific governor briefing would be arranged.

Action: TB

- **Capital expenditure/ Schools' Maintenance update**

A member of the property team would be invited to attend the next meeting to discuss.

3. Recruitment in many schools is increasingly challenging for all categories of staff. The number recruited for initial teacher training nationally and in Oxfordshire are of concern for future recruitment. There are reports of increasing numbers of Headteachers leaving the profession, is this reflected in Oxfordshire's maintained schools? With the increasing number of EHCP's the need to recruit high quality Teaching Assistants has become even more important, but some schools are getting few or no suitable applicants. Does OCC have any plans to promote Oxfordshire and its schools as a good place to work?

There had been 20 headteacher appointment processes taking place since September 2021. The majority of those were due to retirement, some of whom had seen their school through Covid. There were some really strong candidates applying. There was a strong programme to support new headteachers going forward. Another piece of work 'so you think you are ready for headship: what can we do to help you?' had increased the number of candidates including those from outside the local authority.

There were 40 very tiny schools in Oxfordshire with various agendas including finance. There was another piece of work around the role of the executive headteacher and skilling people up for the role. There was often a reluctance amongst governors when the headteacher left to move to this model as they want to replace like for like.

OCC officers were not aware of any schools saying that they did not have teachers and TAs for September 2022.

The HR business partner had provided a general update. Work was going on to ensure recruitment methods were current and as attractive as they need to be. It was thought that there would be more DfE focus on this area. The recruitment pages on Schools Web was currently being refreshed to make more attractive/provide more information in respect of working with local authority schools.

Recruitment to teacher training courses was down by 25%. Officers would consider asking school communities whether there was more that the local authority should be doing. Some of the underlying pull factors such as access to affordable housing was outside of schools' control; consideration may be given to keyworker housing.

Action: OCC

An OGA representative explained that schools were unable to fill vacancies for TAs with the increasing numbers of pupils with EHCPs. Pupils with SEND were significantly affected. It was requested that OCC be more proactive.

HG stated that priority should always be on Quality First Teaching in the classroom, and schools were duty bound to provide this. The level of funding for EHCPs was not commensurate with the salary for TAs. It was a national issue; the team are very aware and are looking at putting in place support for TAs and SENDCos.

4.25pm ST joined the meeting

KG explained that work was taking place with SENDCos to reimagine the roles of people in the classroom supporting the teacher.

KJ explained that someone had been recruited to look at SEND support. They were looking at the leadership role of the SENDCo and how to lead and manage a group of TAs to get best outcomes. It would be extended next year to another 10 schools. Anecdotally it was understood to be making a big impact; Quality First Teaching is key.

LFP agreed but felt that the Quality First strategy depended on having TAs in the classroom to support the teacher; the idea was to switch TAs to helping the whole class while the teacher attends to those pupils with SEND needs. It was essential to look at other ways to encourage people to work in schools.

A few years ago local colleges ran training courses for TAs but these were not run any more. CT queried whether OCC could talk to colleges to start them again.

These were issues that affected academies as well as maintained schools. However, there were issues with strategic workforce planning.

4. In connection with refugees from the Ukraine, what financial resources does the LA receive and how much of this can be passed on to schools? What other support is available for schools?

Funding of £3,000 was provided in respect of Early Years pupils (ages 2-4), £6,580 for Primary (ages 5-11) and £8,755 for Secondary (ages 11-18). The money had not yet been received by the local authority and was expected at some time in July 2022. A similar process to other refugee children would be employed with a pro rata amount given to schools this term and another payment in

September to take through to the census next year. This education funding must include everything that pupils need including those with significant SEND needs; there were already some children in the system awaiting SEND reviews based on initial assessments. A number of enquiries had been received from independent schools but the guidance was clear that the additional funding was only for state funded schools. Confirmation from DfE was awaited on when funding would be received but cash flow problems with any individual school were not anticipated at this stage.

One request had been received on whether the local authority would provide money for uniforms. This had not been done for any refugees and all schools had sourced appropriate uniform for refugee starters. There had also been some queries regarding free school meals; there may be some delays due to paperwork.

187 applications had been received for school places and 109 offers given.

5. Does OCC, as an employer, give staff time to be a governor?

OCC gave an abundance of time to staff to be governors and paid time off was given. It was supposed to be given to maintained schools but flexibility was also given with academies. There was a process for staff to follow to apply to have time to be released. TB was a member of staff who benefited from the system. OCC would make efforts to thank all volunteers including school governors during Volunteer Week.

OGA representatives queried whether OCC could promote governor roles with local employers. This was already done on an ongoing basis. TB had raised this at a recent apprenticeship and careers fair. OCC was the first local authority to be a champion with Inspiring Governance; a lot of close work had been taking place to encourage new governors.

6. How will Governors from schools that do not attend the LA briefings be informed about the outcome of the SEND consultations?

The report from the SEND consultation was being finalised giving an analysis of the data collated. It would go into the public domain along with the SEND strategy which had been signed off by Cabinet that week.

There was no additional funding and governor involvement would be required to put into operation. It would be a major headline in the long-proposed governor conference.

Work had been done to improve communication with governors and it had made an incredible impact. There were six briefings each year as well as engagement through training events. It was noted that a lot of governors were reached but not all were engaging. *Schools News* also reached a lot of people but not all read it.

A lot of work had been done around the clerking service which would enable OCC to engage with clerks more closely and for it to truly be an OCC clerking service.

7. Can the model letter for schools in relation to exclusions be amended to remove the statement that "You may request that the local Authority attend the meeting" as the Inclusion and Reintegration team no longer attend these meetings and it raises a false expectation for parents. Could the team be requested to get the comment letter to the school a minimum of three full working days before the meeting to enable parents, staff and the Governor's panel members sufficient time to properly consider representations from the LA.

Deborah Bell had advised that the team would provide a written report if requested five days or more prior to a hearing. However, Officers had been unaware that the Inclusion team did not attend these meetings. KG felt that it was necessary to understand more from both sides and he would take it away to explore.

Action: KB/HG

8. Date of the next meeting

Monday 18th July 4.00-5.00pm

Proposed agenda items:

- Where does OCC see education in Oxfordshire in 5 years' time
On the back of the White Paper, an education commission was being established to think about the future relationship of the local authority with schools, examine its role in the future and talk to schools, governors, etc. This would then be discussed with members. Some guidance from DfE for local authorities was anticipated that would give further information.
- Maintained schools property maintenance
- Revised Memorandum of Understanding between OCC and OGA

Closed at 5.06pm