

Leicester City Council Schools' Forum - Minutes

Minutes of the MS Teams meeting held at 1pm on Wednesday 30 September 2020

Present

Schools members:

Mainstream Academies:

Special Academies:

Special School Governors:

Special School Heads:

Secondary School Governors:

Secondary School Head representatives:

Primary School Governors:

Primary School Head representatives:

Pupil Referral Units:

Name:

Mike Hobbs, Jane Ridgewell, Julie Robinson,
Danny Bullock

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Sarah Osbourne

Chandrika Patel

Anna White

Liam Mahoney, Glenys Mulvany

Matt Potts, Nigel Bruen, Karl Stewart

Julie Aquilina

Non-school members:

Teaching Unions:

School support staff Unions:

16-19 Providers:

Early Years PVI Providers:

Name:

Jessica Edmonds (Chair)

Sam Randfield

No attendee

Matthew Leedham

In attendance:

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin

Sue Welford

Martin Judson

Craig Picknell

Jo Poynton

Martin Walsh

Role:

Deputy City Mayor (Education)

Principal Education Officer

Head of Finance

Head of Human Resources

HR Policy & Projects Manager

Clerk to the Forum

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Shaun Whittingham

2. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting held on the 26 August 2020 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

4. Matters arising

- Training.

The Chair explained that a training session date had been arranged and asked for feedback on the format of the training.

Forum members were keen to have a training event looking into voting rights, finance and budget aspects.

The Head of Finance explained that the budget had been explained previously and offered to go through that again if there was a demand.

The Principal Education Officer explained that it would be helpful to have another quick refresher due to the complexity of the finance role.

5. Facilities time report (Jo Poynton)

The HR Policy & Projects Manager explained that there was a lack of understanding regarding how facilities time worked and presented a briefing paper entitled Teacher Trade Union Facility Time.

The Chair explained that although some areas of de-delegated items are very clear there is lack of understanding about what Trade Union Officers do as part of their role and how the money is spent. Financial transparency would be welcome.

The Head of HR agreed that financial transparency was very important. He agreed to share a report relating to the financial position in order to allow an informed decision.

Action (CP)

Members asked what the implications would be of funding trade union facility time at a lower rate or not at all.

The Head of HR explained that there is a fixed amount of money that is available to support the current level of trade union facility time across the schools. If the revenue from Academies is not available this would result in a deficit. This would leave the options of either continuing to meet the cost of the deficit and the underspend or reduce the facility time to schools.

Members explained that there was some overspend in the previous year and the timescales for the consultation were tight. Head of HR promised to report early the following week.

Members also questioned transparency regarding what the funds were being used for and asked if the facilities time report could be shared with Headteachers.

The HR Policy & Projects Manager agreed to share the report as part of the consultation.

The Chair explained that there is a statutory obligation for TU representation. If there were no union officers (because de-delegation ended) school representatives would have to be trained. Pooling money is a more cost-effective way of funding facilities time, as opposed to each school paying for their own school representative. If funding was at a lower rate there would be a reduction in the hours available. This would lead to cuts along with the human impact.

Members asked how other LAs managed facilities time?

The Chair explained that most LAs de-delegate. However, the rate does vary, and other LAs vary in size and pupil density.

The Principal Education Officer suggested looking at our statistical neighbours.

The HR Policy & Projects Manager explained that we are required to do statutory reporting relating to facility time. This is available on a Government portal. The latest figures are available for 2018/19 and shows the percentage of the education budget spent on facility time. Our rate is 0.13% which is the thirteenth highest out of one hundred and sixteen LA's

The Head of Finance explained that the only comparison that is helpful is the unit rate in comparing other LAs.

Members agreed that the unit rate is more useful in terms of transparency in how we compare with our statistical neighbours.

Members asked why Academies are charged per teacher and Maintained schools are charged per pupil and is this fair.

The HR Policy & Projects Manager explained that Maintained schools are charged per pupil due to the regulations. The process for Academies is based on per teacher due to the relationship between the amount of facilities time needed and the number of teachers employed. In arriving at the charges per teacher the intention was to keep the charge in line with what the Academy would have paid as a Mainstream school.

Members noted that if the formula for charging Maintained schools is per pupil basis where is the logic of changing it for Academies.

The HR Policy & Projects Manager explained that for all de-delegated services the rate had to be on a per pupil basis. The rates had been looked at between the two methods and they were broadly similar.

Members suggested that the method of charging should be the same in order to encourage Academies to support the service and sought clarity on the mechanisms to support it.

The Principal Education Officer stated that Academies must not appear to be charged a different rate to Maintained schools. It was agreed that this needed looking at, but this was not the right place. The discussion should be continued outside of Forum.

6. Review of Schools' Forum (Update)

The Chair presented a document showing the current School's Forum representation. The conclusion suggested that there was not a balance of representatives between Academies and Maintained schools. The Diocese and 16-19 sector representatives remained vacant.

Members asked if it was possible to represent more than one sector.

The Chair explained that this could be possible but would have to be agreed by the membership.

The Principal Education Officer explained that the Primary and Secondary Maintained schools could be reduced, allowing the balance to be maintained.

Members explained that if decision making was broadly balanced and showed no inbuilt bias there should be no issues.

The Chair explained that the DfE guidance states that the Schools' Forum must be representative in terms of pupil numbers.

The Chair explained that the options for members were to maintain the status quo after checking the DfE guidance or change to the representation, specifically, Maintained versus Academy and asked members for a vote.

Members voted to keep the membership the same with the proviso to review the membership again in September 2021.

Members also agreed to allow one more representative from the PVI sector to attend the Forum.

7. De-delegation report (Martin Judson)

The Head of Finance presented the de-delegation report to Forum members. He explained that the rates are as they were in the previous year with a 3% inflationary increase in line with the expected pay increases. He asked for comments.

Members noted that there were some service updates that would go towards the consultation document.

The Head of Finance stated that any further updates would be required before the start of the consultation.

Cllr Elly Cutkelvin asked when the consultation started and finished and if there is a statutory timeline to follow to allow full participation.

The Head of Finance explained that there is not a statutory guidance and the length of the consultation had been agreed by the Schools' Forum.

Members suggested that part of the consultation should highlight the impact of de-delegation along with the impact of COVID -19.

The Principal Education Officer explained that there needed to be clarity and the updates needed to be included in the document.

The Chair agreed that more time was needed to allow informed decisions to be made. It was agreed to have a short meeting to discuss the draft de-delegation document.

8. Special School funding consultation

The Head of Finance explained that a meeting will take place with Special school Headteachers. He asked if members wished to have a link to the on-line consultation or a meeting.

Members agreed to discuss the Special school funding consultation at the meeting scheduled for 9 October 2020.

9. COVID - 19 cost pressures

The Chair explained that Leicester faced a unique position in terms of shielding, which increased cost pressures.

Members noted that Special schools had spent twice as much as this time last year on supplies resulting in budget issues.

The Principal Education Officer explained that the additional shielding costs had been raised with the DfE and further letters will be written to highlight the issue.

Members also noted that private nurseries had been impacted due to parents who are not paying full fees when children are absent due to Covid.

The Chair agreed to draft a letter from the Schools' Forum to the DfE to highlight the cost pressures relating to shielding and other issues. This letter would be based on a template from the LA and adjusted to show Forum members' comments.

(Action Chair)

10. Any other Business

i) SIMS contract

Members asked if the SIMS contract is changing and is this licence de- delegated?

The Principal Education Officer explained that the SIMS contract is direct from CAPITA and the support comes from ESS. CAPITA has decided to sell SIMS and has nothing to do with the LA. Schools will, therefore, have to liaise with their provider.

ii) Schools' Forum self-assessment kit

Members suggested that it would be useful for Forum members to complete the assessment in order to help with direction and discipline.

The Chair agreed to complete the self-assessment and review the findings at the November meeting.

(Action Chair)

There being no further business, the Chair declared the meeting closed at 3pm.

The next Schools' Forum date will be 1pm on 30 October 2020 Via MS Teams, this is a special meeting with a single agenda of the SEND consultation. The next full meeting will be 1pm on 25 November 2020.