

NORTH YORKSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM

Date of meeting:	Thursday 21 May 2020 (via Skype)
Title of report:	Minutes of the North Yorkshire Schools Forum
Type of report:	For information only
Executive summary: Including reason for submission	The minutes of the previous meeting of the North Yorkshire Schools Forum are presented for approval.
Budget / Risk implications:	N/A
Recommendations:	The minutes are approved as an accurate record.
Voting requirements:	N/A
Appendices: To be attached	N/A
Report originator and contact details:	Marion Sadler – Clerk to the Schools Forum Tel: 01609 532234 E-mail: marion.sadler@northyorks.gov.uk
Presenting officer: If not the originator	N/A

PRESENT:

Chair:	Ian Yapp
Primary Headteachers:	Jillian Baker, Nick Styles, Karen O'Donnell, Fiona Beetles
Secondary Headteachers:	Nick Hinchliffe, Mark McCandless, Kath Jordan, Julia Polley
Nursery Headteacher:	
Special Headteacher:	
Pupil Referral Service:	
Academies:	Helen Flynn, Helen Channing, David Read, Andrew Krlc, Michelle Hockham, Alison Kaye, David Barber, Helen Williams, Williams Pratt
Governors:	Damian Smith
Early Years Providers:	Michael Pettavel
16-19 Providers:	
Diocesan Representatives:	Andrew Smith, Kevin Duffy
Trade Unions:	Chris Head
Observers:	
In Attendance:	Stuart Carlton, Howard Emmett, Sally Dunn, Martin Surtees, Jane Le Sage, Judith Kirk, Andrew Dixon, Paula McLean, Cllr. Patrick Mulligan, Cllr. Janet Sanderson, Mandy Lambert (Clerk)
Apologies:	Rob Campbell, Jane Turner Resignation: Jo Robinson

924: WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed the group of the current membership situation.

925: MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Current vacancies were outlined, 4 x primary, 1 x Primary Academy, 1 x PRS Academy, 1 x PRS LA, 1 x Unison Rep, 1 x 16-19 Providers, 1 x early years / childcare.

926: MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 12 March 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

927: MATTERS ARISING

NOTED: There were no matters arising.

928: NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There was no notification of any other urgent business.

929: CAPITAL PROGRAMME

CONSIDERED: The report on the proposed schools condition capital programme for 2020 / 2021.

NOTED: The report deals with the setting of a one-year capital programme. A £9.7m grant funding is for community and voluntary controlled schools. The final draft report will be considered at Executive on 9 June 2020. The appendices listed schools and allocation amounts, but are not publicised. The funding does not have to be used for maintenance and can support other capital improvements. The report deals with the provision of target capital programme. Section 7.22 of the draft report sets out the governance arrangements.

Appendix A confirms the amounts including the proposed specialist allocation; this also confirms the capital plan maintenance programme. Around 100 schools are expected to benefit from the proposed programme this year. There will be a briefing back to Schools Forum in due course.

AGREED: That the report be noted.

930: COVID-19 EARLY YEARS

CONSIDERED: A report providing an overview of the additional financial support which has been provided to the early years' sector within North Yorkshire during the Covid-19 crisis to date. The report particularly focuses on the development and operation of the NYCC Covid-19 Early Years Financial Support Fund and the associated utilisation of the Early Years DSG Reserve.

NOTED: That there are over 700 early years' providers across a diverse sector, childminders through to large nurseries. The immediate challenge was around ensuring that there were sufficient childcare places available to key worker and vulnerable children. The Covid-19 period has presented significant challenges and the LA has tried to respond in a timely manner with Executive Members approving financial support for the sector from within available Early Years DSG. The summer term funding payment had been paid 80% up front on 14 April 2020, also funding available for places during the Easter holiday period for key workers. There was also concern regarding those providers that remained open during lockdown but may not have been running at optimum provision but still paying staffing costs. Given the speed of response that was required to the Covid-19 crisis and to support the Early Years sector a decision had been taken to look to utilising part of the reserve. This was approved by the Chief Executive and Executive Members.

A group of officers looked at the development of the governance of the support fund and at the application process ensuring that we could validate applications, payment of funds and full audit processes. This work has had to be undertaken at pace. The application process for the fund was put out to the sector and from 17 April – 29 April there had been 103 applications from providers who had remained open. A validation process had taken place. A very small number were not deemed to meet the criteria of the fund and a second validation process had been undertaken. Seven more providers were found not to be eligible. Financial modelling had been undertaken to determine allocations from the fund with regard to the type of provision and associated overheads.

CONSIDERED: HF asked about business support grants from Central Government. It was noted that this question has been asked but the funding being provided is very

much around their operating efficiency. Some have still furloughed staff and need to ensure sufficient income to remain open. Childminders can access the self-employed fund but are not covering some of the losses they are incurring. A legal agreement was put together stating that providers should not be making a profit from financial support provided.

MP asked about the impact on working parents given their financial circumstances. It was noted that this has been recognised.

It was noted that the fund would continue to be reviewed.

MP asked to thank the LA for being pro active during this difficult time.

AGREED: That the additional financial support which is being provided to the early years' sector within North Yorkshire and the associated use of the Early Years DSG Reserve be noted.

931: COVID-19 SCHOOLS

CONSIDERED: The report provides an update on the financial implications for schools of the Covid-19 crisis and the associated Government guidance and the LA response.

NOTED: There are two key areas around additional expenditure and loss of income and looking at the business continuity and financial planning process. As far as the additional expenditure is concerned the DfE has stated that schools will continue to receive their core budget funding. There is a recognition that schools will face additional cost around weekend and holiday opening. The DfE has provided guidance around premises costs, provision of FSM and additional cleaning only. The DfE, in putting provision in place for schools to claim additional costs, have set maximum limits for individual schools to claim. The expectation is that schools look to their own resources in the first instance. One of the key areas that the LA is very aware of is where there is additional expenditure being incurred around FSM in particular in relation to the National Voucher Scheme and uncertainty as to whether this can be reclaimed and issues being able to access the Scheme. DfE guidance should be received next month as far as the claiming process is concerned. Within the County Council there are schools operating over the Easter holidays and weekends delivering Hub facilities. It is likely that the LA will not be able to claim staffing costs from the DfE. This may impact on the DSG.

Government have indicated that schools can furlough staff around areas such as breakfast club, after-school provision and catering provision. 41 maintained schools have submitted applications to reclaim and have furloughed some members of their staff.

The financial processes during the Covid-19 crisis are from early March until the restrictions on 20 March, LA officers along with the finance traded service did a significant amount of work around schools' continuity plans. Financial year-end closedown was a further challenge. The LA received all maintained school year-end returns by the required deadline and processed on time and on schedule.

The DfE has issued guidance regarding burdens on educational and care settings where they have paused data collection and requests until the end of June. To date there are well over 200 returns. School start budgets are being worked towards the deadline, there are 166 submissions as of yesterday.

With regard to the School Financial Value Standard, the return for 2019/20 has been cancelled by the DfE. The SFVS is good financial practice for schools and the LA would encourage schools to continue the process.

It was noted that the Administrative and Financial Conference has been cancelled. Skype conferences are being held with around 150 – 160 delegates attending the conferences. Hopefully schools found these useful.

NOTED: HF asked about the cleaning required for return to school and whether there would be any guidance from the DfE along with guidance on PPE. Is the LA looking at capacity for cleaning and catering?

SD is aware that the County Catering and Cleaning Services are aware of the issues that schools are facing and are planning for the “deep cleaning” of schools and to ensure that the catering facilities are able to operate and recognise the challenges around that.

The DfE will probably not provide any further guidance so the LA is working with the Cleaning Service to understand what a cleaning regime would look like after school and to put together some helpful guidance for cleaning during the day and what schools can do during the day to supplement the cleaning regime.

There is unlikely to be any further funding for PPE. The LA has sourced five full sets of PPE for all primary schools across the County and will ensure they are with schools by 1 June. There is ongoing work around Catering and fairly confident these will work fine. If anyone is struggling, please contact the LA.

HE stated that guidance had been sent to schools about keeping a log of finances. If schools have queries, then the LA will submit to the DfE.

AK stated that Julie Pattison and the SEAs have been brilliant and very supportive during this crisis.

AGREED: Schools Forum to note the content of the report.

932: COVID-19 HIGH NEEDS

CONSIDERED: A briefing to update Schools Forum on High Needs.

NOTED: The DfE is continuing to make available the High Needs allocation. The funding will continue to flow through to continue to support schools. The special school funding comes through the High Needs Block.

HF asked about transport for children with special needs.

SC stated that the transport providers are in touch regularly and are following all guidance which the LA is working through. If there are any children attending schools, transport is being provided consistent with social distancing guidance. The LA have modelled for 1 June looking at scenarios. There is some concern about any decision taken for September that involve all schools coming back but social distancing arrangements are expected to be in place. There could also be a capacity issue. For the suggested first phases of return to schools this can be managed appropriately.

AGREED: Schools Forum to note the content of the report.

933: SELBY FREE SCHOOL

CONSIDERED: A briefing to update Schools Forum on the current position in respect of the special free school for the Selby Area.

NOTED: The LA were notified that the bid in Selby had been approved for a school for 100 pupils and for children with Communication and Interaction and/or Cognition and Learning needs. Over the past months there has been work undertaken between

the DfE and LA in terms of interviewing the Trusts that had applied to the DfE to be a sponsor and working with the DfE with regard to the potential designs and access routes to the school. The general election and COVID-19 has resulted in delays in decisions so we are behind the original timescale. The LA were fully involved with the DfE with the interviews. The LA was notified on Monday that the Secretary of State has approved the sponsor for the school but the decision is embargoed and unable to share the outcome as yet there is no date when the embargo will be listed.

There has been work with the DfE on searches and surveys. The LA is waiting for the introductory work to be carried out and then the LA will be involved in regular check-point meetings in the development of the proposal over the coming months.

Approval had been given for this round of Free Schools but do not have clarity in terms of timescales. There are some clear stipulations in terms of the MAT.

Detail on the process to be sought.

AGREED: That the briefing be noted.

934: EMS

NOTED: The long term aim is for 31 targeted provisions with a focus around SEMH and C&I at primary and secondary levels. The first year of roll-out attracted interest from nine schools with the intention that this would be approved and the provision would commence from September 2020 with the admission of children from January 2021. A full public consultation had been held on the detail of the proposal and announced the schools in the year one roll-out.

Approval had been given by the Chief Executive to have another consultation on school organisation proposals. This would acknowledge the decommissioning of the schools that have EMS by the end of August and also to start provision in year one. The process followed is the usual online survey but four locality meetings had been undertaken and open to the public, colleagues and Unions. The next stage is to prepare a report for the next stage of approval and then will go back to Executive on 2 June 2020. Statutory notices will be issued with the intention that the final decision will be available on 18 August 2020. Even though COVID has caused difficulties in terms of the consultation, it is still on track in terms of time line of approval. If approval is given, the term from September to Christmas will be used to start the preparatory work with the targeted provision to ensure appropriate training is delivered to schools and staff. Some schools will need to go out to recruitment for staff. January 2021 is the proposed gradual start date but capital works may need to be completed and there is a potential backlog in the system due to COVID-19.

935: COVID-19 FIRST PHASE OF REOPENING SCHOOLS & CHILDCARE TEAMS

NOTED: Thank you for the comments from schools. Across North Yorkshire, we have a daily average of 3,000 pupils in schools, 3% made up of vulnerable children and children of key workers. The Government's announcement that schools will re-open on 1 June 2020 to Reception, Y1 and Y6 children is a difficult one. The LA is being as supportive as possible. Schools are completing risk assessments and should only open if safe to do so. Meetings with the Unions have taken place. Some schools may open extended from 1 June 2020, some may stagger and some will not expand further at all from where they are. The LA will support schools whatever they decide and continue to work with schools through this next phase. Headteachers are encouraged to get in touch.

Further guidance from Government is awaited around secondary schools and special schools early years and child care.

JK noted that it had been a positive experience in working collaboratively with all schools. The SEAs have worked really closely with colleagues and enjoyed working with everyone through this challenging period.

Thanks were also expressed to the Inclusion team who have been great in communicating and supporting special schools.

CH stated that it had been really helpful for colleagues to work together through a difficult situation. All are concerned about the welfare of children and staff. A further meeting will be held early next week.

NS stated that there seemed to be a disconnect between the feedback of unions locally and those at national level. A Union statement received today which basically read almost as a threat in that if schools are opened and a member of staff contracts COVID-19 whilst the school is open they would be advising their members on legal entitlement and that employers would be responsible. The pressure on headteachers by the Unions is worrying when all they are doing is responding to North Yorkshire and Government guidance and have the staff and children at the forefront of everything decided.

Government has a set of criteria for their risk assessment which should keep children safe. Unions do not agree with this. The implications are that headteachers fall between this and are having to deal with this in a difficult way. This should be resolved nationally with Central Government. If schools follow government guidance and do a risk assessment they are insured for employment.

936: TRADE UNION SUPPORT FOR SCHOOLS

NOTED: A report as agreed previously at the Schools' Forum with regard to an update on the progress made in relation to:

- The decisions made by Schools' Forum on 6 December 2018 and 13 November 2019.
- The progress of the actions to be taken to achieve a fully traded model possibly from April 2020.

Thanks were expressed to Schools Forum for supporting in 2018 and 2019. The work was continuing despite the lock-down situation to individually and collectively work with the LA and with other MATs. Thanks to the North Yorkshire team of Relationship Managers.

937: ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no further items.

938: FUTURE MEETINGS

Thursday 17 September 2020 – Virtual (via Skype)

Thursday 12 November 2020 – Harrogate

Thursday 10 December 2020 – County Hall (if required)