



LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
22 APRIL 2021

PRESENT: GAVIN BOOTH (CHAIRMAN)

Amy Stancer (Headteacher, St Giles Nursery School, Lincoln), Anthony Stevens (Governor, The Holt Primary School, Skellingthorpe), Martin Kyle (Head Teacher, St Faith and St Martin's Junior School), Ian Randall (Head Teacher, Reepham Church of England Primary School), Catherine Stratton (Head Teacher, Saxilby Church of England Primary School), Michele Anderson (Head Teacher, Spalding High School), Rachel Barrett FCCA (Governor, North Kesteven Academy), Professor Ken Durrands CBE (Governor, The King's School, Grantham), Steve Baragwanath (Executive Principal, University Academy Holbeach), Frances Green MA (Oxon) (Head Teacher, Somercotes Secondary Academy), Simon Pickett (Head Master, The King's School, Grantham), Katie Grivil (Head Teacher, Kirkby la Thorpe Church of England Primary Academy), Simon Morley (Head Teacher, Boston West Academy), Lea Mason (Executive Head Teacher, Lincolnshire Wolds Federation, Louth), Dr Stephen Hopkins (Trust Chair of Communities Inclusive Trust), Martin Shelton (College Principal, Linkage Community Trust), Helen Stokes (Branch Secretary, UNISON) and Julia Merivale (Manager, Trinity Day Nursery).

Officers in attendance:-

Elizabeth Bowes (Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team), Katrina Cope (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Eileen McMorrow (Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy), Dave Pennington (Head of Property Development), Mark Popplewell (Head of Finance (Children's Services)) and Martin Smith (Assistant Director for Children's Education).

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Daniel Callaghan (Governor, Hartsholme Academy), Josh Greaves (Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Wellspring Academy Trust), Paul Thompson (Faith Group Representative) and Sarah Wilson (Executive Principal, Stamford Welland Academy).

27 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

There were no declarations of members' interest made at this stage of the proceedings.

28 MINUTES OF THE LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2021

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the Lincolnshire Schools' Forum meeting held on 14 January 2021 be agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

29 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman on behalf of the Forum welcomed Amy Stancer to her first meeting. The Forum noted that Amy had replaced Jo Noble as the Nursery representative on the Forum.

The Chairman also advised that Penny Davies had resigned from her position on the Forum. Thanks were extended to both Jo and Penny for their valued contributions to the Forum over the years.

It was noted that currently there were five vacancies on the Forum; and that arrangements would be made for an election to be held in due course.

30 PROGRAMME UPDATE - BUILDING COMMUNITIES OF SPECIALIST PROVISION:
TOGETHER IN LINCOLNSHIRE

The Chairman invited Eileen McMorrow, Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy, and Dave Pennington, Head of Property Development, to present the report, which provided the Forum with an update on the implementation of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy.

It was reported that on the 6 November 2018, the Executive had granted approval to implement the Building Communities of Special Provision Strategy. It was noted that the strategy had commenced in January 2019, and would be implemented over a five year period up to September 2024. The Forum noted further that once fully implemented, the strategy would make significant changes to the existing special education provision, by creating an integrated and sustainable school system where pupils would be able to attend their nearest school and be confident that their health and educational needs would be met. It was highlighted that the projected cost of the programme had risen to £86.794m, and the reasons for the increased costs were explained, namely schemes presented particular challenges due to their existing school conditions; further developments of the schools external grounds and improvements to traffic and transport areas. The Forum noted that the programme had secured additional funding through revised grant allocations and the Council agreeing to fund the £15.600m funding gap left predominately by the authority's unsuccessful free school application in the Lincoln City area.

Appendix A to the report provided the Capital Build Programme Timeline, including details of pre-construction and construction completion dates. The Forum received a brief update on each of the projects, details of which was shown on pages 19 to 21 of the report.

A copy of the Special School Reorganisation policy was appended at Appendix B to the report, which had been developed by the Local Authority in collaboration with the SEND Alliance Project Board and key advisors from the sector, to provide a formalised approach to the revenue funding of special school reorganisations in supporting the Local Authority's

statutory duty to provide sufficient school places. It was highlighted that the policy had been approved and had already been applied to Boston Endeavour Academy, The Willoughby Academy, Bourne and Eresby School, Spilsby.

The Forum was advised that funding had been earmarked to support the implementation of the strategy in special schools to provide all needs education to pupils with SEND in their local communities. It was highlighted that a £2.000m commitment from Dedicated Schools Grant reserves had been approved by the Forum in October 2018. This commitment would fund the revenue fixtures and fittings for the new 60 classroom spaces and other new building spaces through the SEND capital programme, such as sensory and soft play rooms, medical intervention spaces and specialist teaching facilities. It was also noted that a further commitment of £0.143m had been agreed to support workforce development for the sector, which would be rolled out to mainstream schools. The remaining funding and High Needs block funding would support the implementation of the planned growth costs of increased special school places in accordance with the policy, during this growth period.

It was reported that a model of delivery had been approved, with the development of Specialist Community Led Panels for each locality to meet the needs of children and young people requiring a special school place at the right time as close to home as possible. Paragraph 4.1.3 provided details as to how the panels would seek to identify a local special school place.

The Forum noted that the health workstream had successfully developed robust partnership working across the Local Authority, Health Trusts and the Clinical Commissioning Group, to ensure an effective health offer will be offered to all special schools.

It was reported that to ensure the most effective use of specialist medical and therapy equipment, all special schools had joined the Lincolnshire Community Equipment Services contractual arrangement held by the Local Authority.

The Forum was advised that the workforce development work stream had designed the concept of a SEND Learning Platform; a sector-led approach to professional development, which would ensure that all pupils with SEND would be able to access a quality education facilitated by skilled and knowledgeable staff. The forum noted that the Platform had been approved by Directorate Leadership Team; and by the SEND Alliance Project Board. It was noted that the Local Authority was currently developing the commissioning and contractual arrangements for the learning platform.

In conclusion, the Forum was advised that despite some challenges, the strategy had made significant progress across all aspects of the programme, including securing an additional £15.600m of Council capital funding to fulfil the programme.

Paragraph 6.1 to 6.15 provided the Forum with information relating to the risks and impact of the programme.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:

- Whether the funding allocated would cover the cost of the strategy. The Forum was advised that the £86m allocated would cover the cost of the scheme. Confirmation was also given that there had been increased costs across all projects and that all projects were on target and on budget;
- One member suggested that future progress reports should contain more information as to costs of each individual projects;
- Some concern was raised as to whether provision of the 500 extra places would be sufficient to meet demand. The Forum was advised that a five year projection had been modelled, which had included an extra 10% flexibility. Also, the Forum noted that there would be transformation across the whole system, i.e. providing enhanced support to mainstream schools. Reassurance was given that the 500 places would be sufficient;
- If consideration had been given to the growth in post 16 numbers. Reassurance was given to the Forum that this was being considered;
- Where the investment of £69.724m had been accessed from. The Forum was advised that this had been secured from a number of government capital grant allocations, which would provide for all special schools in the programme to access improved capital solutions and enhanced facilities. It was also highlighted that in addition, the Full Council in February 2021 had agreed to fund £15.600m through the Council's capital programme to address the funding gap left after the authority's free schools application to create an additional 111 places in the Lincoln City area had been unsuccessful;
- How equity of places and affordability was being managed. The Forum noted that there had been challenges, as not all the schools were starting from the same position. However, the implementation of the capital build had continued, despite these issues and Covid-19, to ensure each special school had a consistent offer for the children and young people of Lincolnshire. Thanks were extended to the hard work of the Programme Manager, Special Schools Strategy and the Head of Property Development and their teams for their commitment and collaborative working ensuring the implementation of the strategy to help young people in the county attend their nearest school, knowing that their health and educational needs would be met; and
- Confirmation was given that demand would be led by Lincolnshire pupils.

The Chairman on behalf of the Forum extended his thanks to everyone involved in the strategy.

RESOLVED

That the report concerning the Programme Update – Building Communities of Specialist Provision: Together in Lincolnshire be noted.

The Chairman invited Mark Popplewell, Head of Finance – Children's Services, to present the item, which provided the Forum with an overview of the current schools broadband services for all Lincolnshire schools (including academies) to October 2022 and to outline the direction of travel for securing schools broadband services from November 2022.

The Forum was provided with background information relating to the current broadband arrangement, which had been entered into in November 2012, details of which were shown on pages 41 to 43 of the report. The Forum noted the operational broadband service benefits for Lincolnshire schools through the contract; these were listed on page 43 of the report. It was highlighted that nearly 300 Lincolnshire schools receive the consolidated broadband offer through the central contract with the remaining Lincolnshire schools contracting with an alternative IT provider directly.

It was reported from November 2022, Lincolnshire would not be able to retain a central budget for schools broadband services in accordance with the schools funding reforms.

The Forum noted that the government's direction of travel was for schools to have a direct relationship for school related costs rather than it being contracted centrally by a Local Authority. The Forum noted further that going forward schools would have a direct relationship with an IT provider and that the cost of this would be met from their delegated budgets. It was highlighted that from November 2022, all schools would be expected to meet the full cost of broadband services.

It was reported that the Local Authority was keen to support Lincolnshire schools to continue to have high quality, affordable network provision; and as a result the Local Authority had established a Wide Area Network Advisory Board to help govern this process. The Local Authority was also currently engaging with the sector to understand schools future intentions, to either seek service continuity or to procure alternatives. It was highlighted that the Local Authority considered that a sector solution and unified approach provided all schools with the optimum outcomes of cost and service performance, by ensuring quality and secure broadband provision was sustained and value for money continued to be achieved.

To ensure a smooth transition for schools (if required), a diagram on page 44 of the report provided details of the planned timeline for securing service continuity; and page 45 provided the key activities required by stakeholders to enable the transition to happen.

In conclusion, the Forum noted that feedback from schools would enable the desire of service continuity to be understood by the Local Authority and to enable modelling of future indicative costs, which would aid financial planning within schools. It was highlighted that the final price would be dependent on the procurement solution for schools.

Details of the risks and impact analysis relating to future procurement were shown on page 46 of the report.

During discussion, the Forum raised the following points:

- One member inquired as to how many schools had responded. The Forum noted that this was unknown at this stage as the survey had only concluded the day before the meeting, but the Local Authority would endeavour to get full coverage from as many schools as possible, as potential participants. The Forum were reminded of the operational broadband service benefits for Lincolnshire through the existing contract (as listed on page 43 of the report);
- The planned timeline for securing service continuity, and when the indicative costs would be known. The Forum was advised that once the procurement had been completed, indicative costs could be available for December 2021. Some concern was expressed that without cost implications it was difficult to say whether schools would remain; and
- Whether any lessons had been learnt from the current contract with East Midlands Public Sector Network (EMPSN). The Forum noted that the service provided by EMPSN achieved significant economies of scale, value for money and provided a resilient, secure and quality broadband service for all schools in delivering the schools educational goals. It was highlighted that the retention rate had been good with just short of 300 schools being in receipt of consolidated broadband offer. It was highlighted further that schools needed to carefully consider all the risks associated with entering into a contract with a new provider. Some members highlighted that schools were unable to assess the impact of the proposed new procurement until indicative costs were known. Some members highlighted that schools needed to make an informed decision of the full package if entering into a contract with a different provider; and not to be guided by just the price of a lower priced contract. A number of members commented on the positive service they received through the current contract, and the importance of Lincolnshire schools working together to obtain the best offer.

RESOLVED

1. That the update on Schools Broadband Services be noted.
2. That support be given to the direction of travel of the Local Authority in securing continued access for Lincolnshire schools to high quality, affordable network provision and management services from November 2022.

32 ACADEMIES AND TRUST UPDATE

The Chairman invited Elizabeth Bowes, Strategic Finance Manager, Schools Finance Team, to present the report, which provided the Forum with information on the latest number of academies, pupils in academies and academy trusts.

It was highlighted that since the effective date of the last report (1 December 2020), Stamford The Bluecoat School had converted to academy status and had joined the Cambridge Meridian Academies Trust; Pinchbeck East Church of England Primary Academy and Spalding Primary Academy had become academies and had joined the Infinity

Academies Trust. Also, Surfleet Seas End Primary School had become a sponsored Academy, sponsored by Keystone Academy Trust. It was highlighted that 28,726 (51.5%) FTE primary pupils were now educated in non-maintained schools.

It was reported that a further four primary schools were intending to be academies and jointly form a new academy trust. Friskney All Saints Church of England (Aided) Primary School would be joining Lincoln Anglican academies Trust as a converter academy; and Horncastle Community Primary School had applied to join the Wellspring Academy Trust.

Information relating to the projected six month status of all Lincolnshire State Schools was provided on pages 48 to 49 of the report presented.

The report also provided a list of academy trusts nationally that operated within Lincolnshire.

In response to a question raised the Forum was advised that the number of academy conversions did not affect the Local Authority's strong commitment to providing the best support to Lincolnshire's maintained schools. The Forum was advised further that when budgets changed as a result of the number of pupils or schools determined as Local Authority maintained, the Local Authority would consider this through its annual budget setting exercise, and respond accordingly.

RESOLVED

That the Academies and Trust update be noted.

33 LINCOLNSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM - WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman extended his thanks to report writers and presenters, with particular mention being made to the inclusion of risks and impact analysis information.

Consideration was given to the work programme detailed on pages 51 to 54 of the report pack.

RESOLVED

That the work programme as presented be noted.

The meeting closed at 2.19 pm