

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON

Wednesday, 30 April 2014  
Ash Room, Robertson House, Stevenage

## ATTENDANCE

<b>Chair</b>	Alan Gray
<b>School Members</b>	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Karen James, Christine Hall, Alisdair Skinner, Rob Staples, Paul Rosen, Ian Morris, Brian Frederick, Tracy Prickett, , Nick Daymond, Alison Saunders, Liz Hitch
<b>Non- School Members</b>	Zoe Hancock
<b>Substitutes</b>	
<b>Officers</b>	Simon Newland, Jonathan Burberry, Catherine Tallis, Trevor Mose, Felicity Evans, Debbie Orton, Gillian Cawley
<b>HfL/HCL Officers</b>	Jan Paine, Pat MacAteer, Peter Maguire, Mike Robinson Cheryl Faint,
<b>Apologies</b>	Mark Watkin, Dave Victor, Sue Howe, Maxine Crawley, Paul Johnson, Toni Finkel, Gaenor Morris, Denisse Skews
<b>Others</b>	John Grubb, Michael Taylor

### 1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

Minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

It was noted that the Governors conference will be funded by HfL/HCC.

Venue for future meetings: Alternative venues with car parking have been investigated. Fanhams Hall in Ware has been identified as providing facilities (with exception of induction loop) and best value for money and subject to final confirmation will be used for the next meeting as a trial.

### 2. Update on Universal Free Infant Meals

#### 2(a) Programme of works

Catherine Tallis presented a paper detailing the draft capital programme that included the £2.7m of DSG funding that Forum had agreed to allocate to support schools in meeting the duty.

Forum sought clarification round the use of DSG to fund Academy and VA sector projects. Officers confirmed that the pupil numbers used to calculate DSG include pupils in academies and VA schools and therefore it is a legitimate and appropriate use of DSG. It was acknowledged that this duty is an exception and that this is not intended to set precedent for funding capital needs in VA schools.

The impact of UFIM on identification of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium was considered. Rather than asking all parents to register for a free school meal on

Herts Direct with a view to identifying Pupil Premium pupils through the registration process, Forum recommended that the Authority provides a template to schools to use with parents, detailing the criteria by which pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium can be identified. It was proposed that schools would then work with the relevant parents to ensure that they registered on the website and that PP pupils were identified.

Forum considered whether to consult on moving from FSM to Ever 6's free school meals as the basis for deprivation funding in budget shares for 2015/16. In response to a question around the potential impact of a change, Jonathan Burberry advised that there could be distributional effects. It was concluded that the impact of change to Ever 6's as the basis of calculation should be modelled and presented to the next Forum meeting, prior to consultation over the summer.

2(b) Costs of implementation and other cost pressures on meals provision for Academic Year 2014/15

HCL presented a paper outlining the basis for a proposed rise of ten pence on the price charged by it for a Primary meal. This would set the price of a Primary meal at £2.15 per meal for the academic year 2014/15, while there would also be a time-limited one-off charge of 5p for each "newly eligible" Infant meal – those meals for which Government Grant of £2.30 per meal would be received by schools. The one-off charge proposed by HCL was to cover the one-off and set-up costs of providing additional meals. Following a question around the impact of UIFSM on KS2 meals, HCL clarified that without the economies of scale that the duty enables HCL to realise, the selling price of both infant and KS2 meals would have increased to £2.20.

Concerns were raised around perception of increases to the cost of KS2 meals among parents and of infant meals among schools. It was noted that schools absorb the utility costs of school meals and MSAs and that narrowing the gap between the DfE revenue funding and infant meal selling price places additional pressure on school budgets.

It was further noted that school budgets are being set on the basis of £2.10 per meal. Forum suggested that if cost pressures are likely to remain such that a further increase is likely next year, then HCL should alert schools as early as possible. HCL confirmed that for future years it would review its selling price before the start of the financial year but that this was not possible this year because of the impact of the introduction of UFIM.

It was clarified that for nursery schools the selling price would be £2.05 per pupil.

Having considered the report, Forum supported the proposals from HCL.

**3. Schools Repairs and Maintenance Programme 2014/15**

Trevor Mose joined for this item, provided an update on the Schools Repair and Maintenance programme and presented plans for the forthcoming Financial Year.

Forum discussed the feedback from schools on the performance management of contractors and consultants detailed in the report. Forum requested a more

comprehensive report on school satisfaction levels with consultants and contractors together with a breakdown of fees across projects. Members expressed interest in comparing the level of fees paid by HCC for works with those obtained by schools direct.

The proposed approach to 2014/15 and future funding was welcomed and supported particularly the greater transparency of assessment of bids and feedback to schools. In addition the proposal to publish details of capital bids, on the GRID was supported.

Forum thanked Trevor for the work undertaken.

#### **4. DfE Consultation on fairer schools funding in 2015/16**

Jonathan Burberry presented a paper confirming that the National Funding Formula will not be introduced in 2015/16 but that the DfE is consulting on introducing a national minimum funding level for the Schools Block element of DSG in 2015/16. LAs currently under the minimum funding level will get additional funding and LAs over the funding level will receive no increase.

Indicative data published by the DfE shows that 62 authorities (out of 150), including Hertfordshire, have Schools Block DSG levels below the MFL and would receive extra funding. The indicative figures show that Hertfordshire would receive an extra £6.9m of DSG in 2015/16 under the consultation proposals. The indicative allocation is to be re-run and it is highly likely that the final figure will be significantly different and therefore until the final allocation is announced, no budgetary decisions around this funding should be made.

#### **5. Growth Fund allocations 2014/15**

Forum noted and supported the Growth Fund allocations for 2014/15.

#### **6. Secondary Schools becoming all through schools – additional growth fund allocation**

Jonathan Burberry presented a paper proposing a new strand of the Growth Fund which would be payable to secondary schools becoming all through schools to cover set-up costs which are similar to the establishment of a brand new school. Simon Balle School in Hertford is the process of establishing primary provision that is supported by the Authority in order to meet basic need. The establishment of this new strand of funding will enable the set-up costs to be met.

Following discussion around the consultation process in respect of the establishment of a primary unit at Simon Balle, the legitimacy of use of the Growth Fund for Academies and the need to ensure that only schools meeting basic need were eligible for funding, Forum agreed the following:

- (i) Introduction of the additional element to the Growth Fund outlined in section 6 of the paper, to start from the 2014-15 financial year.

Vote:

For: 12      Against: nil

The DfE is required to approve changes to the Growth Fund, DfE approval will therefore need to be sought as a next step.

## **7. DSG settlement: 2014/15 High Needs Block**

Forum noted the final High Needs block allocation which represents an increase on the previously estimated sum of £739k.

## **8. High Level Needs Update:**

- (a) Items within HLN budget; and
- (b) Update and report from sub-group

Debbie Orton joined for this item. Forum considered the elements of the High Needs Budget. The breakdown provided was welcome and Forum suggested that it be used as a baseline for future annual report by the SEN team that enables impact to be measured.

Following discussion, Forum agreed the following:

- (i) To carry forward £0.7m from the 2013/14 ENF budget to enhance the ENF budget in 2014/15. It was requested that this carry-forward be spent during 2014/15 and not carried forward again at the end of 2014/15.

Vote:

For: 12      Against: nil

## **9. Overhead costs attributed to Servicing of Schools Forum budgets**

Forum acknowledged this item as providing the information requested.

## **10. Pupil Premium Plus Grant Funding for CLA 2014/15**

Felicity Evans joined for this item and presented a paper detailing the significant change to the conditions of grant allocation for Children Looked After (CLA) from April 2014 and the proposed strategy for allocation to Hertfordshire schools.

Views were sought on proposals in the paper which enable schools to bid for additional funds to meet the needs of CLA children. Discussion clarified that systems are in place to ensure that the grant is spent in order to avoid DfE claw-back.

Forum noted that the process of 'signing-off' a PEP in order to access the CLA Pupil Premium money needs to be simple, easy and responsive.

## **11. Presentation from Managing Director, HfL**

Jan Paine, Managing Director of Herts for Learning gave a presentation on HfL's role in contributing to standards and attainment in Hertfordshire and key funding priorities for supporting the standards agenda. Key messages were that trading surpluses are reinvested into Hertfordshire schools including requests from schools for programmes and initiatives. It was noted that a key decision for the next Board meeting is around growth and whether HfL actively seeks to trade beyond Hertfordshire borders as a way of further improving the benefits it can offer to member Schools.

## **12. Schools facing financial difficulties Contingency Budget**

Pat MacAteer joined for this item and presented an update on how the Schools facing financial difficulties Contingency Budget has been allocated in 2013/14.

Discussion centred on the ability of schools to meet the costs of interventions and support. It was clarified that the fund was not used to support schools judged able to support themselves, save in exceptional circumstances requiring rapid action. The fund generally enabled school-to-school or other external support, not services provided by HfL. Match funding by schools is common. It was further clarified that the fund is used to respond in a timely matter to meet Ofsted expectations on rapid external intervention.

Following discussion, Primary Sector Members agreed:

- (i) To support the carry forward the unspent balance of £6478 from 2013/14 to 2014/15.

Vote:

For: 5     Against: nil

- (ii) In principle to continue with de-delegation for this purpose for 2015/16, and not to consult over the summer on any changes.

Vote:

For: 5     Against: nil

## **13. Approach to de-delegation in 2015/16**

Forum accepted the recommendation of the report presented and agreed not to make substantive changes to de-delegated funds for 2015/16.

## **14. Admissions and Appeals**

It was noted that Forum had insufficient time to consider the paper and therefore

deferred the item to the next meeting.

## **15. Forward Work Programme**

It was agreed that consideration would be given as to whether a meeting in June would be required. Items needing consideration include the consultation to move to Ever 6 as the basis of calculation of deprivation funding in budget shares and the annual presentation on standards.

## **16. Any Other Business**

None reported.

### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 25 June 2014

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: To be confirmed