

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON

**Wednesday, 12 February 2014**  
**Ash Room, Robertson House, Stevenage**

## ATTENDANCE

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Chair</b>               | Alan Gray  |
| <b>School Members</b>      | Paul Johnson, Dave Victor, Alisdair Skinner, Rob Staples, Paul Rosen, Ian Morris, Alison Saunders, Tracy Prickett, Nick Daymond, Jeni Houghton, Sue Howe, Liz Hitch, Michael Taylor, Christine Hall, Richard Haynes, John Grubb, Gaenor Morris |
| <b>Non- School Members</b> | Maxine Crawley, Zoe Hancock, Denisse Skewis  |
| <b>Observers</b>           | Chris Hayward  |
| <b>Substitutes</b>         | Jeni Houghton, David Shaylor, Peter Coldwell, Sheri Hart   |
| <b>Officers</b>            | Jonathan Burberry, Cheryl Faint, Simon Newland, Melany McQueen, Sally Orr, Catherine Tallis, Debbie Orton, Gillian Cawley, Jonathan Rowland. Sheelagh Sullivan   |
| <b>Apologies</b>           | Toni Finkel, Karen James, Brian Frederick  |
| <b>Others</b>              | John Grubb, Mark Watkin  |

### 1. Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising

Minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

Funding of Governors Conference – HfL have agreed to look into possibilities of sponsoring the HASG annual conference.

### 2. Roles and responsibilities of Schools Forum in relation to school and service improvement (verbal)

Simon Newland provided Forum with a verbal update.

At the last meeting of Forum it was agreed that it would be valuable to remind members of Forum's role and powers. A session on specific powers would be included as part of the April meeting. However, as context for this, Forum was reminded that the exercise of these specific powers needed to be informed by judgements around what would best promote educational attainment and progress for children in the county, from ages 0 to 18, and in some cases beyond.

Major strategic resource allocations decisions in recent years (such as the Primary/Secondary balance) had been taken in the context of assessments of educational need and discussion of likely outcomes. The report on Standards and Quality elsewhere on the agenda is important as a measure of overall progress.

For more specific projects, Forum has been keen to see the impact of decisions and programmes properly assessed, and to de-commission activities where benefits seemed unclear. Recent examples include support given to school family support workers, KCLE, and (later on this agenda) the Full Time Nursery place provision and the requirement in due course properly to consider its impact. It is planned that a paper will be brought to

the next meeting of the Forum, which considers the cost of the admissions service. The next meeting of the Forum will also consider a paper on support to primary schools in difficult circumstances in terms of impact and value for money.

Forum noted the position.

### **3. Standards and Quality in Hertfordshire Schools**

Gillian Cawley attended for this item and presented a report setting out in some detail, data and commentary on performance of Hertfordshire schools/settings in aggregate at EYFS, and KS 1-5. The report commented on both overall levels of attainment, where Hertfordshire is generally in the top quintile, and the “gap” between the performance of more disadvantaged pupils and the average. Addressing this issue is something that remains a high priority for Hertfordshire. Forum will need to continue to bear this gap in mind in future decision-making.

It was noted that the revised School Improvements Strategy is currently the subject of consultation and being discussed with governors this month.

Forum welcomed the report but require a further breakdown.

Forum agreed the following;

- To continue to look closely at the impact of specific programmes and decisions on attainment and closing the “gap”.
- To consider again next year a formal report on progress and attainment.

It was agreed that Jan Paine (Managing Director of HfL) would be invited to attend Schools Forum and talk about the work of HfL and its contribution to attainment and standards.

### **4. Budget Monitor Q3**

Jonathan Burberry informed Schools Forum of the outturn monitor for the Schools Budget 2013/14 at 31 December 2013. A forecast underspend was reported of £7.258m. The most significant change from last monitor was an under spend on funding for 2yr old places, which was a common pattern nationally though it was noted that in Hertfordshire, provision of places was high relative to the national average.

Forum noted the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter monitor position.

### **5. Early Years Developments – 2013/15 to 2015/16**

Sally Orr attended for this item.

Forum welcomed the provision of information on the Children’s centres recommissioning process. It was agreed that the members of the Schools Forum might beneficially be involved in the Consultation, and SO would be in touch with potential contributors.

It was agreed that all schools need to be informed when Children Centres are being inspected.

There was considerable discussion of the operation of the Full Time places programme.

There was support for the programme and members felt it was valuable in terms of outcomes, but questions were raised round its implementation, and in particular how to make access more streamlined. SO set out proposals being developed round this.

It was agreed that in due course, once an appreciable number of places had been provided for a year or more, a formal evaluation of outcomes and benefits would be valuable. A similar report was requested round the delivery of the 2 yr old programme and its impact.

Following discussion, Forum agreed the following:

- (i) To allocate £80,000 through the EYSFF to early education providers who have CLA children attending their setting, according to the formula outlined in section 4.2 of the paper.

Vote:

For: 14 Against: nil

- (ii) That a budget of £250,000 for full-time places is centrally retained in 2014/15.

Vote:

For: 14 Against: nil

Forum noted the updates on the quality and impact of Hertfordshire's early years' services and the planning for redesigning the current children's centre programme.

## **6. Servicing Schools Forum**

Simon Newland provided further information to Forum on the budget for its servicing.

Forum requested that a detailed breakdown of the derivation of the £20,713 cost of overheads and support services be provided to the next Forum.

## **7. High Level Needs**

Debbie Orton attended for this item.

Simon Newland introduced the paper and explained that it was in response to a series of requests from Forum for an update on Hertfordshire's High Needs strategy, including DSPL, and the use of the underspend arising from out county placements.

The paper was considered by Forum. It was agreed that further information should be brought to a future meeting of Schools Forum which will set out in detail the Authority's High Needs Budget strategy for 2015-16 and 2016-17, and in particular addresses concerns and questions raised by Forum. It was explained that there were several critical issues which could affect the High Needs strategy going forward. These are:

1. The High Needs Block allocation for 2014-15 has not been announced. Depending on the allocation, it may be necessary to review High Needs funding.
2. Proposals for a national funding formula, if and when they appear, will also potentially impact on resources available for the High Needs block.
3. There are considerable medium-term uncertainties about post-16 funding requirements.

4. The DfE proposals to withdraw funding from special schools for unfilled places, from September 2015, if implemented will have an impact on the pattern and cost of local provision.
5. The implementation of Education, Health and Care plans may also have an impact.

These issues will need to be considered carefully as part of the High Needs strategy, particularly from 2015-16. This consideration is expected to take place in early Autumn.

Forum considered the issues in the report and a series of questions were raised and responded to. Debbie Orton agreed to meet separately with a number of members of Forum to address their concerns in greater detail.

Forum requested that officers ensure that the questions formulated by Richard Haynes on behalf of Forum are addressed in the proposed report. Forum also requested that the questions be attached to the minutes of this meeting.

Following discussion Forum agreed to support:

- (i) The introduction of Clusters of Need allocations for qualifying PVI providers on a similar basis to the system for primary and secondary schools. The budget of £45,000 for this to be provided through a further redeployment of funding from the Independent Placements budget.

Vote:

For: 13 Against: nil

- (ii) The additional funding for special schools detailed in sections 7.2 and 7.3 of the paper, and comprising:
  - The allocation of £0.3m from the special schools DSPL budget into special school top ups to increase funding for higher needs pupils, the detail of how this funding will be allocated is to be agreed with the special school heads funding task group.
  - The one off use of £0.3m of the DSG carry forward in 2014-15 to replace the funding transferred to special school top ups so that the special schools DSPL budget remains at £0.5m in 2014-15.

Vote:

For: 14 Against: nil

Forum also requested:

- Detailed breakdown of the DSPL budget.
- Paper on issues and challenges for April meeting, setting the scene for further discussions and decision in autumn.

Richard Haynes, Nick Daymond, Sue Howe, Paul Johnson and Zoe Hancock agreed to be part of a working group to help work with officers on these issues.

## **8. Forward Work Programme**

It was agreed that the 'Two year-old Strategy' be added to the Work Programme for June.

Schools Forum congratulated Justin Donovan on his new appointment, and his contribution to education during his time in Hertfordshire. Accordingly, Forum agreed to invite Justin Donovan to attend the next meeting so that he could be thanked in person for his contribution.

### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 30 April 2014

Time: 13.00-16.00

Venue: Robertson House, Stevenage