

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON

Wednesday, 25 June 2014
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE

Chair	Alan Gray
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Karen James, Christine Hall, Alisdair Skinner, Rob Staples, Ian Morris, Brian Frederick, Tracy Prickett, , Nick Daymond, Alison Saunders, Liz Hitch, Mark Watkin, Gaenor Morris,
Non- School Members	Zoe Hancock, Denisse Skews, Toni Finkel
Substitutes	
Officers	Simon Newland, Jonathan Burberry, Cheryl Faint, Trevor Mose, Melany McQueen, Glenda Hardy
Apologies	Sue Howe, Andrew Stevenson, Paul Rosen, Paul Johnson, Dave Victor, Paul Johnson
Others	John Grubb, Ola Wasek-Hyde

1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising – venue for future meetings

Forum welcomed Ola Wasek-Hyde from the EFA Academies Group as an observer.

Minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

Forum noted an update in respect of the impact of Universal Free School Meals on the Pupil Premium. The DfE has issued a template for schools to use as part of the school enrolment process, to facilitate the registration of eligible children for free school meals. This is essentially the same as that issued by HCC some while ago, and schools could use either as a starting point.

2. Use of Ever 6's Free School Meals Data in the Primary and Secondary Funding Formula

Jonathan Burberry reported back to the Forum following on from discussion as last meeting.

Forum considered the paper, which reviewed the advantages and disadvantages of using the Ever 6 measure of free school meals in the school funding formula.

Forum agreed to retain the current arrangements and not to move to the Ever 6 measure of free school meals in the primary and secondary funding formula.

Vote:

For: 12 Against Nil

3. Priority Schools Building Programme

Trevor Mose attended to provide an overview of phase2 of the government's Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP2) and HCC's proposed approach to submitting expressions of interest.

It was noted that submissions have to be in by 18 July, and a series of meetings are being held with eligible schools. The criteria for approval by DfE effectively militate against almost all primary school projects by reason of scale, and so HCCs bid will be oriented towards secondary phase schools.

Hertfordshire's bid should be ready by 7 July. Results should be in by the end of the calendar year.

Forum noted the report.

4. Schools Repairs and Maintenance Programme Evaluation of Quality Feedback

Trevor Mose reported back with further information on the feedback provided by schools on the quality of contractors and consultants, together with an initial view on whether consultants in particular are offering value for money.

There are a number of areas in which consultants and contractors performance might be improved. On the other hand there is considerable evidence of good value for money in what is now procured, and it is not self-evident that we would necessarily want to pay much more for higher quality consultancy support if the consequence was that less works were undertake.

It was noted that new contracts will have improved monitoring arrangements before releasing further work. There are final penalties in the contracts. Procedures have been put together to make things clearer for consultants.

Forum expressed its confidence in the project prioritisation process and the way the money is being spent and they congratulated Trevor on his hard work.

Forum agreed that as usual a progress report would come back to Forum next year.

5. Schools Budget Monitor 2013-14 Final Outturn

Jonathan Burberry informed Schools Forum of the final revenue outturn position for the Schools Budget for 2013-14. .

It was noted that, of the total underspend being carried forward to 2014-15 (section 4 of the paper), £10.7M is being used to support the budget in 2014-15.

No specific commitments from the carry forward had been made beyond 2014-15, although it will be necessary to fund the Minimum Funding Guarantee in future years.

Officers agreed to prepare a briefing note for the next Forum meeting on potential uses of the carry forward, and Forum noted the work to be undertaken over the summer to assess the level of financial stress schools are currently under. Future cost pressures were noted, in particular changes envisaged in the employers contribution rates to teachers pensions.

It was noted that one purpose of the under spend is to provide a contingency for the Schools Budget.

Jonathan will investigate the level of under spends held by other authorities to inform Hertfordshire's view on the appropriate level of contingency to hold.

Forum noted the outturn position for 2013-14.

6. Funding for Free Early Education for 2 Year Olds

Melany McQueen attended to inform Forum of the under spend on the budget for free early education for two year olds, for the financial year 2013-14.

The paper gave details of the under spend and the reasons for it.

It was noted that the latest data for June 2014 shows that there is now a 96% take up from eligible 2 year olds. Providers have got very much behind scheme.

Forum expressed their congratulations to the team for their hard work.

7. Fund for Small Secondary Schools in Areas of Future Demographic Growth 2014-15

Jonathan Burberry reported on the allocations for 2014-15 from the Fund for Small Secondary Schools in Areas of Demographic Growth.

There is also a further allocation from the Growth Fund.

Forum noted and supported the allocations.

There will be an equivalent paper next year about the 2015-16 allocations.

8. Admissions and Appeals Budget 2014-15

Glenda Hardy attended to update the Forum on Admissions and Appeals budget 2014-15, and to set out for Forum the position in terms of the value for money of the service provided.

It was noted that Hertfordshire is now a national lead on online applications dramatically reducing volume of telephone contact.

Forum noted the report and that it was content with the value for money currently offered.

9. Forward Work Programme

It was noted that November will be meeting for making specific de-delegation decisions.

It was agreed the October meeting will include a discussion session for the budget strategy item.

It was also agreed that schools would be asked to complete a questionnaire on financial pressures to inform the autumn budget discussions.

10. Any Other Business

It was noted that the Family Support Worker funding for 2015/16 will have the same arrangements as in 2014-15.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 8 October 2014

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage

POINTS THAT WERE RAISED AT TRAINING/DISCUSSION SESSION:

- Timelines of paperwork;
- Split dispatch acceptable if necessary;
- Forum website – HTML link should be sent to governors, heads etc.
- Research would be useful on how well other forums work;
- Induction of new members requires more attention;
- Sub-groups useful in terms of strategic thinking – e.g. High Needs sub-group;
- Members happy to discuss wider issues beyond formal powers of Forum;
- Papers/reports have improved in recent years – more succinct.