

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON**

**Wednesday, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2014**  
**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, Ian Morris, Brian Frederick, Nick Daymond, Alison Saunders, Paul Johnson, Paul Rosen, Jan Liversage, Sarah Hollis
<b>Non- School Members</b>	Zoe Hancock, Andrew Stevenson, Toni Finkel,
<b>Substitutes</b>	
<b>Officers</b>	Simon Newland, Jonathan Burberry, Cheryl Faint, Sue Provenzano, Debbie Pettit
<b>Apologies</b>	Denisse Skewis, Tracy Prickett , Liz Hitch, Gaenor Morris, Chris Hayward
<b>Others</b>	John Grubb

#### **1. Appointment of Chair and Vice-chair for the coming Academic Year**

Alan Gray was unanimously appointed as Chair by Forum. Richard Haynes was appointed as vice-chair.

#### **2. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising**

Minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record, with the addition of Toni Finkel as present.

Forum noted an update on bids submitted for the next round of the Priority Schools Building Programme. An outcome was expected around Christmas.

#### **3. Final Dedicated Schools Grant and Updated Schools Budget 2014-15**

Jonathan Burberry presented the paper outlining the level of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) available following the announcement of the final 2014-15 DSG.

There was a discussion around the options for the use of the DSG carry forward, which linked to the consideration of the 2015-16 budget strategy under item 7.

Forum noted the changes in DSG and in the Schools Budget since January.

Forum agreed to support the carry forward of the additional DSG resources to 2015-16, as outlined in section 3 of the paper.

#### **4. Schools Budget Monitor 2014-15 Quarter 1**

Debbie Pettit informed Schools Forum of the Quarter 1 position for the Schools Budget 2014/15 at 30 June 2014.

Schools Forum noted the report.

It was suggested that it may be helpful to consider using children's centre data to help improve the accuracy of forecast early years pupil numbers.

#### **5. Outcome of Summer Budget Consultation**

Jonathan Burberry updated the Forum on the outcome of the School Funding Consultation for 2015-16, which closed on Tuesday 23 September.

It was noted that the response rate to the consultation had been fairly low and there was discussion on how this could be addressed. It was agreed to give consideration in the Spring to how future consultations could be made more user friendly.

Forum considered the recommendations in the paper.

Forum agreed to support the continuation of capping in the primary and secondary funding formula, with the final capping percentage for 2015-16 to be set as part of the budget process.

Vote:

For: 12      Against: 0

Forum did not agree the changes to the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund outlined in questions 9 to 12 of the consultation. These have been deferred to be reconsidered at the November Forum meeting, alongside information on the use in Growth Fund calculations of 24 pupils to represent a financially sustainable class size.

Forum agreed the changes to the Growth Fund in respect of learning resources allocations for schools with bulge classes outlined in section 7.1.2 of the paper.

Vote:

For: 9      Against: 0

Forum agreed the changes to the Fund for small secondary schools in areas of demographic growth outlined in section 7.2 of the paper.

Vote:

For: 11      Against: 0

## **6. High Level Needs Funding Update**

Jonathan Burberry provided Schools Forum with an update on the High Needs funding issues, and the medium term financial outlook. In particular, it appears likely that from 2016/17 onwards we will no longer be able to meet cost pressures for providers/services in the HLN area, and in consequence priority judgements rounds services will need to be made. The County Council would like to engage schools and other stakeholders in this process.

Forum endorsed the need for this type of engagement, which might take place through Forum's High Level Needs working group. Simon Newland would write with further proposals on this.

In discussion Forum members set out several concerns, including risks to the ESC sector if mainstream schools did not buy into the services offered via any further commissioning process. Reference was made to lack of clarity round policy in some areas; and the report to Forum set out the current DfE expectations round place numbers in institutions being the same next year as this year, and the scope for considerable confusion round funding if any changes were made.

Forum noted the likely place numbers for 2015/16 as set out in para 7.4 of the report.

## **7. Schools Budget Strategy 2015-16**

Forum noted the list of budget pressures and savings presented in the paper, together with the emerging position for later years and the risks around that.

Forum considered the two potential approaches for the use of available resources, including the carry forward, which were outlined in section 12 of the paper (budget strategy for 2015-16). Option A was to fund pressures across all sectors; Option B was to target particular sectors or schools in particular circumstances. Forum supported Option A.

Vote for Option A: 13      Vote for Option B: 1

It was noted that there may be some variations within Option A for future discussion by Forum and that it would be helpful to have a breakdown of how the resource would be allocated under this option.

## **8. Primary and secondary funding formula 2015-16**

Jonathan Burberry presented the paper to Forum, setting out the illustrative unit values for each formula factor in the primary and secondary funding formula and exceptions to the minimum funding guarantee.

Forum noted the illustrative unit values for each formula factor for inclusion in the proforma to be submitted to the DfE by 31<sup>st</sup> October.

Forum also considered the Minimum Funding Guarantee exceptions for 2015-16. It was noted that the situation regarding MFG exceptions is complicated by the fact

that the funding allocations made to academies by the EFA may differ from the budget shares which the local authority is required to calculate in respect of academies. This is because the EFA allocations take account of separate academy funding arrangements. Therefore MFG exceptions may have a disproportionate impact when applied to an academy's funding allocation by the EFA or may even be calculated incorrectly by the EFA.

The concerns of Samuel Ryder academy about the possible impact of the MFG exceptions on its 2015/16 EFA allocation were reported to the Forum.

Following discussion, the Forum supported the MFG exceptions outlined in the paper.

Vote for MFG exception in respect of secondary schools becoming all-through schools:

For: 14      Against: 0      Abstained 1

Vote for MFG exception in respect of falling rolls protection in the MFG baseline::

For: 15      Against: 0

## **9. Changes to the operation of Schools Forum 2015/16 onwards**

Forum noted the proposed changes, and in particular the proposed increased representation of Academy Special Schools and Alternative Provision. Both Special and AP representatives on Forum felt that the current arrangements – with integrated arrangements across academy and maintained sector -- worked well. Forum therefore agreed to authorise a response to be made on behalf of Forum in respect of its future membership as follows:

“We believe that Special Academies and AP Academies should have the ability to choose to be represented within a single membership category covering both maintained schools and academies, provided that majorities of both maintained and Academies agree that this should be the case.”

Forum asked officers to contact the Links to let it know of the response and the reasoning, and provide an opportunity for it to comment if it wished about its future representation.

Forum noted that there was no need at this point to change the relative numbers of academies and maintained sector mainstream school representatives, since representation remained proportional to pupil numbers in each category.

## **10. Energy update**

Forum noted the papers put forward and requested attendance of officers from the energy team at the next Forum to provide an update on billing and an opportunity for Forum to question them around service cost and quality services offered on behalf of schools collectively.

## **11. Forward Work Programme**

The forward work programme was agreed with the addition of an item on Energy Update, and deletion of the presentation from the head of Roman Fields.

## **12. Any Other Business**

None

### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 19th November 2014

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage