

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON

Wednesday, 29 April 2015
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Alisdair Skinner, Rob Staples, Ian Morris, Brian Frederick, Nick Daymond, Jan Liversage, Karen James, Christine Hall, Tracy Prickett, Carole Connelly, Don Leavy, Alison Saunders, Liz Hitch
Non- School Members	Andrew Stevenson, Zoe Hancock, Helen Blay, Linda Collins,
Substitutes	
Officers	Simon Newland, Andrew Simmons, Catherine Tallis. Waqaas Munir, Trevor Mose, Lyn Stainton
Apologies	Mark Watkin, Paul Johnson, Cheryl Faint
Others	

1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

The Chair welcomed Helen Blay - the new representative for the PVI Sector.

The minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record

2. Schools Budget Monitor 2014-15 – Quarter 3

Jonathan Burberry informed Forum of the Quarter 3 position for the Schools Budget 2014/15 as at 31 December 2014.

In connection with the underspend of 2yr olds provision it was noted that incentives like free lunches for 2 year olds have been withdrawn. Settings also face difficulties in funding given the 1:4 ratio required.

Simon Newland will discuss these points with Sally Orr, and report back in due course to Forum.

The report was noted.

3. Schools Maintenance Programme

Trevor Mose attended to provide an overview of the County Council's current and planned future schools repairs and maintenance programme. It was noted that £18.8M has been provided for school condition works for 2015/16.

Forum supported the proposed 2015/16 programme.

It was agreed that a schools' representative will provide evidence at the forthcoming Scrutiny review on 9 June.

Final

Forum thanked Trevor for his work and expressed satisfaction with the overall direction of the programme.

4. Analysis of the Impact of Capping and Minimum Funding Guarantee

Jonathan Burberry informed the Forum on the scale of expenditure on Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) protection and capping in the primary and secondary budget shares, why it arises and changes over time.

It was noted that the amount of capping overall has reduced over the last year. MFG protection has not reduced for the reasons outlined in the paper.

Given that the capping has reduced so much it was suggested that capping should not be continued in 2016-17. Consideration would be given to this when next year's budget was formulated.

On MFG protection it was concluded that more work should be done to look at the schools where protection is not reducing over time. Whilst the general principle of MFG protection was supported, there were also concerns expressed that excessive support should not be provided to schools which were outliers in terms of the level of per pupil funding they received, where this was at the expense of other schools which might equally well be experiencing pressures on their budgets. A further paper will be brought to the next meeting.

Forum noted the report.

5. Primary: Secondary Balance and Future Budget Outlook

Simon Newland provided the Forum with the latest information available on the funding balance between primary and secondary and on the budget prospects for future years.

It was noted that the size of schools and levels of deprivation are also factors affecting the distribution of funding between schools, as well as differences between phases. It could not be assumed that there was a "right" level for the ratio between primary and secondary sector funding that should apply equally across all local authorities. It was noted that DfE initiatives (such as targeting funding to year 7) could affect the primary secondary funding balance. However, if Forum decided on a substantial review of the current funding formula then this matter would require some consideration.

Forum was also updated on the likely level of real terms reductions in schools budgets over the next 4 years and the programme of work being developed by HCC and HfL to try to mitigate the impact of this. It was agreed to carry out a refresh survey on the current financial pressures facing schools. The Chair will write to the new government post-election in relation to funding pressures. The letter could also be circulated by schools to their local MPs through the medium of the Associations.

The funding issues outlined in the paper will be reconsidered by the Forum after the election.

6. High Level Needs

Jonathan Burberry introduced a paper setting out the components of the High Level Needs Budget.

Andrew Simmons updated the Forum on the upcoming work to review the SEN strategy. This will be led by the DSPL Executive Group. The priority workstreams are:

- Review and update behaviour strategy, Implementation of the autism review;
- Review special schools, special units and outreach etc;
- Review DSPL arrangements;
- Link to CAMHS review.

A clear plan with timescales and resources (including input from heads) will be shared with Forum. The high needs sub-group of the Forum will look at the financial impact of the work.

Forum noted the report.

7. Growth Fund Changes

Jonathan Burberry reported to Forum on an approach for undertaking a review of the Growth Fund as requested. The report also outlined particular issues relating to funding for brand new schools/academies.

An update will be brought back to the next Schools Forum in June, setting out any issues on which consultation with schools would be beneficial, and any changes which ought to be agreed and implemented from June.

It was agreed to the establishment of a sub-group to undertake a review of the Growth Fund for 2016-17, with a view to revised proposals being agreed at Forum in June and October.

It was agreed for the sub-group to have primary and secondary representatives. Representatives will be nominated accordingly.

8. Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund Allocations 2015-16

Jonathan Burberry consulted the Forum on the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund allocations for 2015-16, which were set out in Annexes A, B and C of the paper.

Forum supported the allocations.

Vote:

For: 15 Against: Nil

9. School Budget Savings Programme

Catherine Tallis attended to brief Forum on the work that the HCC is undertaking jointly with HfL to support school budgets.

Final

Three strands of work to support schools are underway:

- Rates
- Efficient structures and services
- Value for Money

A Steering Group is to be formed which will report to Forum periodically.

It was agreed that governor involvement in this would be beneficial.

It was noted that further dialogue with Colleges would be helpful in connection with this work.

10. Recommended Junior School Meals Selling Price 2015/16

Catherine Tallis attended to seek approval from Forum to a proposed increase in recommended selling price of KS2 meals from September 2015 following a consultation with schools.

Forum agreed that the recommended selling price be increased to £2.30 from September 2015.

It was also agreed that the recommended selling price continues to be reviewed annually by Schools Forum.

It was suggested that more information about school meals prices in other local authority areas would provide useful comparative data.

11. Pension Arrears – Update

Waqas Munir attended to confirm the final agreement with respect to the collection of Teachers Pensions Agency Employer Arrears and Compound interest.

Forum noted the contents of the report.

12. LGPS Pension Fund 2016 Valuation

Simon Newland presented this report about the plan of work to prepare for the review of the Schools and Academies pooling arrangement for the Local Government Pension Scheme as part of the 2016 Triennial Valuation of the Hertfordshire Pension Fund.

Forum supported the proposed work plan set out in the paper.

13. Forward Work Programme

The Forward Work Programme is now as follows.

2015		
24 June	Policy issues arising from new Government	Simon Newland
	Progress on Supporting Recruitment in Hertfordshire Schools	Jan Paine
	Issues for the summer consultation, including Scheme for Financing Schools	Simon Newland
	Out turn report 2014/15	Waqas Munir
	Growth Fund	Jonathan Burberry
	Minimum Funding Guarantee Update	Jonathan Burberry
	Schools Budget Savings Programme	Catherine Tallis
7 October	Initial report on budget strategy	Simon Newland/ Jonathan Burberry

Any Other Business

It was request that appendices to future reports also have item numbers printed.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 24 June 2015

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage