

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM HELD ON

Wednesday, 24 June 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, Don Leavy, Alison Saunders, Liz Hitch, Sara Lalis,
Non- School Members	Zoe Hancock, Linda Collins, Helen Blay
Substitutes	
Officers	Simon Newland, Catherine Tallis, Jan Paine, Debbie Orton, Cheryl Faint, Jonathan Burberry
Apologies	Carole Connelly, Paul Johnson, Morris Bright, Jacky Webby, Waqaas Munir
Others	Mark Watkin, David Williams, Sandra Barley (observing)

1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

Apologies as noted above.

Chair welcomed the new Executive Member, David Williams to his first meeting at the Forum.

Minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

2. Progress on Supporting Recruitment in Hertfordshire Schools

Jan Paine attended to give a presentation to the Forum on the progress on supporting recruitment in Hertfordshire Schools.

It was noted that following comments last year from Headteachers' Forums re recruitment, schools were asked for a 1 year de-delegation process contribution. It was agreed that there would be a small contribution; however academies need not be included.

A Steering Group was formed to look at the following 5 strands of work:

1. Recruit a manager for Hertfordshire to get packages in place. (This has now been completed and the manager is in post so this strand has now been replaced with work to promote the recruitment, retention and wellbeing of school leaders.)
2. Promoting Herts at Recruitment Fairs and organising Hertfordshire events
3. Encouraging young people to join the profession.
4. Planning and delivery of upskilling and returner programmes.
5. Renewing the Teach in Herts website from 1.9.15.

It was noted that there are a few schools who have opted out of contributing. Contributions of the one-off payment of payment of £138,738 have now been received, which will be spent on the following:

- Recruitment manager salary with a budget of £30K a year.
On track to manage budget.
- new Teach in Herts web site

HfL are confident that they can run a successful series of events including a recruitment fair again next year in 2016

It was noted that teaching school alliances are heavily involved in this work.

It was noted that the DfE have removed restrictions on quotas for Colleges and Universities taking on trainees.

Forum agreed that this is a good use of money.

It was agreed that an HfL end of year financial report to come back to Forum.

3. (a) Policy Issues Arising from New Government – Schools

Simon Newland provided an update on emerging government policy.

It was noted that the signs were that earlier estimates provided to Forum of the level of real-terms funding cuts to schools over the next few years were consistent with emerging government policy, but that it remained to be seen what would be announced in the July Budget.

The Chair circulated a letter he has sent to the Secretary of State about cuts in real terms funding for schools.

(b) Policy Issues Arising from New Government – Early Years

Simon Newland informed Forum of the policy proposals of the new government concerning early years. There were major unanswered questions about how the entitlement would be administered and potential risks to funding levels.

It was agreed that a further report is to come back to Forum when further details are available about the extension of the 3 and 4 year old entitlement to 30 hours.

Forum noted the report.

4. Schools Budget Monitor 2014-15 Quarter

Jonathan Burberry reported to the Forum on the final outturn position for the Schools Budget for 2014-15.

The underspend on Early Years SEND is £141K. Further feedback will be given on the background to this.

It is anticipated that the total underspend will be considerably less in 2015-16, due to the change in the method of calculating DSG funding for 2 year olds, which will be based on actual numbers of children in provision. DSG carry forward is being used to support the Schools Budget in 2015-16.

The estimated DSG carry forward at 31/3/16 is therefore in the region of £20m to £22m.

Forum noted the report.

5. Minimum Funding Guarantee Update

Jonathan Burberry presented this paper which:

- outlined the reasons for increases in MFG protection funding between years at certain schools, and
- considered potential MFG exceptions for 2016-17.

It was noted that, for schools with historic falling rolls protection in their MFG baselines, the MFG formula will not reduce protection when the school reaches a stable and sustainable number of pupils.

Forum noted the report and agreed the following recommendations :

- Support the MFG exception for 2016-17 in respect of secondary schools becoming all through schools. Vote: For: 13 Against: nil
- Support the MFG exception for 2016-17 in respect of one off resource . Vote: For: 14 Against: nil
- Support the process outlined in Section 9 for finalising any additional MFG exceptions for 2016-17, which are identified over the summer, so that they can be submitted to the DfE. Vote: For: 14 Against: nil
- Support the approach in respect of MFG protection for Samuel Ryder, set out in Section 9.1.2. Vote: For: 15 Against: nil

The Forum also agreed to bring the next meeting forward to Wednesday, 30 September. .

6. Schools Budget Savings Programme

Catherine Tallis updated the Forum on the work undertaken since the last meeting on steps to support schools in balancing budgets in the context of continued flat cash funding and evidence around the financial health of Hertfordshire schools.

Forum noted that the HCC contract with WisePay will not be renewed by the County Council in October 2015, but HCC will extend the contract for a further six months to assist the transition to new arrangements.

Forum noted progress and agreed that a further report should come back to next meeting.

7. Growth Fund Review

Jonathan Burberry sought the agreement of the Forum to consult schools on the principles outlined in the paper, in order to inform the Growth Fund review.

Forum agreed that the principles in the paper should be included in the summer consultation.

Forum also agreed the process and timescale for the Growth Fund review outlined in the paper.

8. (a) Cluster of Needs Funding

Jonathan Burberry sought the support of the Forum for consulting schools on the discontinuation of cluster of need funding.

Forum agreed to consulting schools on discontinuing the cluster of needs funding arrangements. Vote: For: 15 Against: nil

(b) Summer Consultation – Proposed Changes to the Funding Formula for 2016-17

Jonathan Burberry sought the agreement from the Forum to proceed to consultation with proposed formula changes for 2016-17. Forum was also asked to give a view on the relativity between the lump sum and the secondary split site factor.

Forum agreed to consult schools on the following formula changes:

- Introduction of retrospective adjustments when pupil number funding is based on estimated numbers (as outlined in section 5.1 of the paper)
Vote: For: 14 Against: nil
- Changes to the secondary split site factor (as outlined in section 5.2 of the paper).
Vote: For: 15 Against: nil
- Changes to the rent factor (as outlined in section 5.3 of the paper)
Vote: For: 15 Against: nil
- Forum supported making no change to the existing relativity between the lump sum and the secondary split site factor.
Vote: For: 12 Against: nil

9. SEND Strategy and report back from High Needs Sub-Group

Debbie Orton provided a summary of the key themes and priority workstreams in the new SEND Strategy 2015-18 to be published in September 2015.

It was noted that there are some crossing cutting themes:

- Behaviour
- Autism – receiving detailed Autism Review
- Ensuring quality
- 0-25 agenda – better aligned between pre16 and post 16

The following points were raised in discussion:

- schools are really struggling given the number of children with high levels of special needs being placed in mainstream schools.
Concern around sustainability of DSPL in the future, given the amount of input required from school representatives and conflicting pressures on their time in a period of reducing budgets.
- SENCOs struggling with amount of paperwork.
- Sometimes there is a lack of communication between SEN panels and schools.
- Need to transfer from strategy to implementation, with timescales.
- Schools need to know what mechanisms are available to them to help them deliver consistent outcomes for pupils across Hertfordshire.
- Need to look at the level of the High Needs Block.

It was noted that in other local authorities there were similar and more pronounced problems in the SEN arena, including substantial overspending. But in Hertfordshire we had been successful in making efficiency savings and remaining within our DSG-funded budget

Forum felt that the strategy in general was one that should be supported, but that particular attention needed to be given to the delivery of the identified priority workstreams since without effective delivery the strategy was of limited value.

It was agreed that the High Level Needs update comes back to Forum in September.

10. Speech and Language Therapy Contract

Simon Newland reported on the proposed review; given that the existing DSG-funded Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) contract is due to expire in March 2016. Consideration is being given to extending the current contract to allow adequate time for that review to take place.

It was noted that Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) are interested in this work in parallel with our contract.

Some Forum members reported concerns with the current service and would therefore welcome a consultation.

Forum agreed to support the proposed review process in relation to any future SALT contract, and in the meantime to support the extension of the current contract (if this is possible) to allow adequate time for that review to take place.

11. Review of Schools Forum Membership Quotas

Simon Newland provided an update on the most recent position in relation to membership quotas. These reflected the existing split in pupil numbers between the different relevant categories of members.

Forum noted the report.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Forward Work Programme is now as follows.

2015		
30 September	Initial report on budget strategy	Simon Newland/ Jonathan Burberry
	Proposed MFG Exceptions	Waqas Munir
	Final DSG and Updated Schools Budget 2015-16	Waqas Munir
	Schools Budget Monitor 2015-16 Q1	Waqas Munir
	High Level Needs update 2016-17 – Place numbers and top ups	Debbie Orton
	Schools Budget Savings Programme Update	Catherine Tallis
	Future Outlook or School Places	Pauline Davis
	Proposed Changes to the Growth Fund	Rachael Greenlees
	Proposed Changes to the School Funding Formula	Jonathan Burberry
	Child Care for Working Parents Update	Melany McQueen
11 November	Approval of Centrally-Retained Items for 2015-17	Catherine Tallis
	Budget Strategy 2016-17	Jonathan Burberry
	Approval of De-delegated Items for 2016-17	Catherine Tallis
	Repairs and Maintenance B-annual Report	Trevor Mose
	Proposals for SALT Service	Simon Newland
2016		
13 January	Approval of Schools Funding Proforma	Jonathan Burberry
	Approval of Schools Budget	Jonathan Burberry
	Schools budget Savings Programme Update	Catherine Tallis

13. Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 30 September 2015

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage