

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 11 November 2015
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray (Chair)
School Members	Alisdair Skinner, Brian Frederick, Christine Hall, Jacky Webby, Jan Liversage, Karen James, Liz Hitch, Paul Johnson, Rob Staples, Tracy Prickett, Don Leavy, Nick Daymond
Non- School Members	Helen Blay, Linda Collins
Substitutes	Beth Honour (for Ian Morris), Alice Aharon (for Richard Haynes)
Officers	Catherine Tallis, Cheryl Faint, Jonathan Burberry, Rachael Greenlees, Simon Newland, Trevor Mose, Debbie Orton
Apologies	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Carole Connelly, Zoe Hancock, Alison Saunders, Sarah Lalis, Ian Morris, Morris Bright
Others	John Grubb, Mark Watkin
Observing	David Williams (NUT)

1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

Forum welcomed Beth Honour, standing in for Ian Morris and Alice Aharon, standing in for Carole Connelly.

Apologies are as above.

Minutes were agreed and taken as accurate record.

With reference to Item 11 on Admission Arrangements for Summer-born Children, research has been undertaken with parents which indicates that it is unlikely that the numbers deferring admission to Reception will be negligible. A further round of research will be taken for a more representative sample. Forum agreed to receive a report updating the position on this and other Early Years changes including the 30 hour entitlement at its next meeting.

2. Approval of Centrally-Retained Items for 2016/17

Catherine Tallis introduced a report setting out the case for central retention of a number of budgets as set out in Table 1 in Section 4 of the officer's report. These totalled £11.187m.

In response to a question Simon Newland agreed the authority would write to Liz Hitch setting out further detail on the scope of services covered by the £14k item relating to the School Census.

Forum agreed to the central retention for 2016/17 of the budgets listed in table 1.

Vote: For: 16 Against: nil

Final

3. Approval of De-Delegated Items for 2016/17

Catherine Tallis introduced a report seeking approval to the de-delegation of a number of budgets. Officers requested Forum to agree to continue in 2016/17 the same per-pupil de-delegations as in 2015/16. The figures for these were as set out in paragraph 3.1 of the report. The de-delegation of funding for recruitment was to be discontinued. It was noted that a more-formal review of proposals for 2017/18 would be undertaken during the coming year.

Voting on this matter was undertaken by phase, and was limited to eligible members of Forum.

Maintained Schools Primary: Proposals agreed.

Vote:

For 7 Against: nil

Maintained Schools Secondary: Proposals agreed.

Vote:

For: 2 Against: nil

4. Growth Fund Review

Rachael Greenlees updated the Forum on the Growth Fund Review. An amended report was tabled.

It was noted that a number of issues remained outstanding and would return to Forum in January. However, Forum was asked to agree an amendment to the element of the scheme relating to schools expanding to 1.5 Forms of Entry, and also to agree two additional allocations in line with the currently-agreed criteria. There was some discussion of the disparity between the sums allocated to each school, and it was noted that Academies received higher allocations than maintained schools since the allocations needed to cover a full financial year rather than 7/12ths due to different start-dates for financial years.

Forum therefore agreed the following recommendations:

(i) Additional allocations from the Growth Fund of £48,539 to Prae Wood school and £76,018 to Herts and Essex school

(ii)

Vote:

For: 15 Against: nil

(iii) Amendment to the Growth Fund for schools expanding to one and half forms of entry as set out in Section 7 of the officer's report.

Vote:

For: 14 Against: nil

5. HLN – Approach to Budget 2016/17

Debbie Orton updated the Forum on the conclusions of the meeting of the High Needs Subgroup regarding the budget. The minutes of the meeting of the sub-group were

circulated, and officers apologised to those members of Forum who had inadvertently not been sent copies as part of the main dispatch of papers. It was noted that the revised TOR are to be included with Minutes.

Forum discussed in some detail various elements of the proposals, and concern was expressed by some members over reductions proposed to Nurture funding. It was pointed out that DSPL groups would have the chance to consider further the support they wished to provide to Nurture groups, and that the proposed reduction was only partial.

Forum discussed the extent to which there was evidence round differences in outcomes for pupils in different settings, and the direction of travel in our wider SEN strategy. Forum had considered and supported the draft SEN strategy in June prior to its publication in September. It was noted that this strategy was a central subject for discussion at the SEND Executive, on which schools were represented, and that the role of the Forum sub-group related to the alignment of funding with this strategy and the annual agreement of a budget. Forum felt that it was important for Forum itself to continue to be clear both on the SEND strategy and progress of the various workstreams supporting it. It was noted that a progress report would be made to a future meeting of Forum, and that there will be an annual report on the strategy prepared for the SEND Executive, which would be available at the end of next year and would be valuable for Forum to consider.

Forum agreed the following recommendations, as set out in the officers' report. Decisions on recommendation (e) were held over to be considered as part of the next agenda item.

- (a) To endorse the proposals within this report as the basis on which the Council should draw up the High Level Needs budget for 2016-17, as summarised in table 3 paragraph 10
- (b) To support the proposal for a net increase of 52 special school places and to support the proposed place changes at Academies set out in this paper
- (c) To support the proposal to hold an uncommitted budget of £1m to support initiatives arising from the current development of the SEND strategy
- (d) To support the proposed closure of the two secondary SPLD bases
- (f) To support the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) exceptions as detailed in paragraphs 8.2 and 9

Votes cast: For: 14 Against: nil

6. Budget Strategy 2016/17

Jonathan Burberry updated Forum on the 2016/17 Schools Budget. Recommendation (e) from the previous agenda item on high needs (to support the proposal that half of the cost pressures experienced by high needs providers should be funded) was also considered under this item.

There was a discussion on whether to fund half of the high needs cost pressures. It was noted that the cost pressures were not being funded in the schools and early years sectors. A vote was held to take the view of the Forum on this issue:

Vote: Funding half the high needs cost pressures
For: 3 Against: 9

The Forum noted the present position in respect of the Schools Budget.

The Forum supported the budget proposals in the paper but with the following modifications:

- increase the use of carry forward to £10.9m in order to avoid reductions in unit funding rates in schools and early years;
- not to fund the £2.6m of cost pressures in the high needs budget relating to inflation, national insurance, teachers pensions and the national living wage;
- increase the SEN strategy development fund to £2.3m.

Vote:
For: 10 Against: 2 Abstaining: 1

6(a) Sixth Form Funding from Schools Block DSG

Jonathan Burberry tabled a late paper to seek the support of the Forum to consult schools on the discontinuation of the sixth form factor within schools block budget shares.

The Forum supported consulting schools on:

- the discontinuation in 2016-17 of the sixth form factor within schools block budget shares,
- the recycling of this funding through the key stage 4 AWPU.

Vote:
For: 13 Against: nil

It was noted that the consultation would be open to all schools; not just those with sixth forms.

Further information will be provided to the Forum on the school by school impact of the proposed change.

7. Repairs and Maintenance Bi-Annual Report

Trevor Mose provided an overview of the County Council's current and planned future schools capital repairs and maintenance programme.

Forum noted the progress of the current year's programme, and asked for the next report if possible to include an update on the current status of the PSBP2 programme, and an indication of the scale of funding being provided by EFA for maintenance of Academies.

Forum thanked Trevor for his hard work and the clarity of his report.

8. Changes to Scheme for Financing Schools

Cheryl Faint presented a paper to seek the views of members of the Forum on proposed changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools from April 2016. The Scheme only covers maintained schools.

Regarding the proposed loan scheme, it was noted that the funding for loans would come from HCC and would be limited. . .

It was noted that the EFA operates a loan scheme for Academies.

Forum approved the changes to the Scheme outlined in sections 3, 4 and 5 of the paper and for these changes to be taken forward to consultation with schools.

Vote (limited to eligible members of Forum):

For: 11 Against: nil

9. Forward Work Programme

The Forward Work Programme is now as follows.

2016		
13 January	Implications of Autumn Statement	Simon Newland
	Early Years Update	Melany McQueen
	HLN – progress on SEND strategy and workstreams	Debbie Orton
	Proposals for SALT service	t/b/c/
	Approval of schools funding proforma	Jonathan Burberry
	Approval of schools budget	Jonathan Burberry
	Schools budget savings programme update	Catherine Tallis
	Future outlook on school rolls	Pauline Davies
	Growth fund review – further report	Rachael Greenlees
24 February	Standards and quality in Hertfordshire schools	Jan Paine/ Marcus Cooper
	School meals price review	Catherine Tallis/ Lin O'Brien

2016		
20 April	HfL Recruitment support out-turn report	Jan Paine
	Repairs and Maintenance Bi-Annual	Trevor Mose
	Review of de-delegated budget for Free School Meals eligibility checking	Michael Francis
22 June	Summer Consultation	Simon Newland
	Review of Membership Quotas	Simon Newland

Budget monitors will be submitted quarterly.

Working parents child care - January.
Free school meals de-delegation – February.

Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 13 January 2016
Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm
Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage