

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 13 January 2016
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray (Chair)
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Alisdair Skinner, Brian Frederick, Alison Saunders, Jacky Webby, Jan Liversage, Karen James, , Paul Johnson, Rob Staples, Tracy Prickett, Don Leavy, Sarah Lallis, Ian Morris,
Non- School Members	Helen Blay, Linda Collins
Substitutes	Matt Gautier for Liz Hitch, Eddie Conway for Nick Daymond
Officers	Catherine Tallis, Cheryl Faint, Jonathan Burberry, Simon Newland, Debbie Orton, Melany McQueen
Apologies	Morris Bright. Liz Hitch, Nick Daymond, Christine Hall, Carole Connelly, Zoe Hancock
Observing	David Williams (NUT), Cllr Judi Belling, Cllr David Williams, John Grubb, Cllr Mark Watkin, Shona Bruce

1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

Apologies were received as above.

The Chair welcomed Shona Bruce who was observing whilst on a work experience, and Cllr Judi Belling.

It was noted that Alice Aharon was standing in for Richard Haynes at the last meeting, and not Carole Connelly.

Minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

2. Implications of Autumn Statement

Simon Newland provided the Forum with an overview of the implications of the Autumn Statement on the Schools Budget.

Forum noted the Government's planned consultation on changes to DSG funding formulae, and that these would be the subject of further reports to Forum.

It was noted that there would be a 60% reduction over 4 years in the level of the Education Support Grant. This would impact on the funding available to HCC to support its work on education and with schools; and would reduce the funding provided by Government to Academies in respect of activities undertaken by Academies themselves but which for maintained schools were undertaken by HCC. Alongside this reduction in funding would be a consultation on removal of various local authority powers and duties, as the education system moves towards one in

which all schools are Academies and accountable direct to DfE. Whether or not Forum will continue to exist, and if so in what form, remains to be seen.

3. Schools Budget 2016-17

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper to seek support from the Forum for the 2016-17 budget proposals.

It was noted that the DSG announcement before Christmas included an extra £2.1m of high needs DSG and the paper included proposals to allocate this resource, including using £1.3m to fund half the cost pressures in the high needs budget.

There was a discussion around funding half the high needs cost pressures. It was noted that the Forum, at its November meeting, had not supported this as it would be inconsistent with the approach in the schools and early years' sectors. Forum felt that the extra high needs DSG did not alter the position as it effectively provides an allowance for demographic growth (which is already funded in the schools and early years DSG blocks) rather than for cost pressures. Forum recommended that the £1.3m should be allocated instead to the SEN strategy development fund so that further consideration could be given to how this resource should be used.

Regarding central budgets, Jonathan updated the Forum that the appeals service now hoped to absorb the extra costs described in the paper, in which case there would be an underspend on this budget.

Recommendations:

Forum supported the budget proposals outlined in the paper but with the modification that the £1.3m to fund half the high needs cost pressures should be allocated instead to the SEN strategy development fund.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 17 Against: nil

Forum agreed to the changes to central budgets outlined in Section 16 of the paper.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 17 Against: nil

Forum agreed to support the Authority's application to the DfE to agree the increase in the admissions budget, described in section 16 of the paper.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 17 Against: nil

4. Consultation re Sixth Form Factor

Cheryl Faint reported to the Forum on the outcomes of the consultation with schools in respect of a change to the School Funding arrangements 2016 and changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools from April 2016 (the Consultation).

It was explained that whilst there was strong support for the proposal to remove the sixth form funding factor from Hertfordshire's local funding formula, the outcome of the consultation in terms of how to recycle the funding delivered by this factor was more split. Forum members discussed the merits of both options. It was explained that option 2 reduced overall turbulence for secondary schools.

Following a vote, Forum endorsed that the sixth form factor be removed from Hertfordshire's local funding factor and that funding be recycled via option 2 as set out the Consultation.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For Option 1:

For: 2 Against: nil

For Option 2:

For: 4 Against: nil

It was also agreed that any MFG offset by the change in the formula arrangements be distributed across AWPU in both the primary and secondary sectors. It was explained that this was expected to be only a nominal addition to AWPU values set out in budget papers.

The second part of the Consultation related to the changes to the Hertfordshire Scheme for Financing Schools from April 2016. It was explained that Forum members representing Hertfordshire Maintained Schools were asked to approve the changes to the Scheme for financing schools set out in paragraphs 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6. Following a discussion of the outcomes of the Consultation, the following changes to the Scheme for Financing Schools were agreed;

Recommendation 3.4:

It was agreed that the Scheme for Financing Schools be amended from April 2016 to introduce the ability to provide revenue loans to schools in financial difficulty as set out in the Consultation.

The vote was recorded as follows:

Vote:

For: 11 Against: nil

Recommendation 3.5:

Forum members representing Hertfordshire Maintained Schools agreed that the Scheme for Financing Schools be amended as per the Consultation document from April 2016 to reflect the banking criteria as set out in this Consultation.

The vote was recorded as follows:

Vote:

For: 12 Against: nil

Recommendation 3.6:

Forum members representing Hertfordshire Maintained Schools agreed that the Scheme for Financing Schools be amended as per the Consultation document from April 2016.

The vote was recorded as follows:

Vote:

For: 12 Against: nil

5. Finalisation of Primary and Secondary Formula Funding Factors 2016-17

Jonathan Burberry sought the support of the Forum for the final unit values for the primary and secondary funding formula.

Under the previous item Forum supported the discontinuation of the sixth form factor and the recycling of this resource into pre 16 funding under option 2. It was noted that this would displace an amount of MFG protection which could be reallocated as a very minor AWPU increase.

Forum supported the proposed final unit values shown in Annex B including the discontinuation of sixth form funding and its recycling under option 2.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 15 Against: nil

Forum supported reallocating the MFG protection displaced due to the discontinuation of the sixth form factor across both primary and secondary sectors.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 14 Against: nil

Forum supported the changes to special unit places in mainstream schools outlined in Annex D.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 14 Against: nil

6. Fund for Small Schools in Areas of Demographic Growth

Catherine Tallis sought agreement from the Forum to change the criteria for allocation of funding to schools through the Falling Rolls fund, to reflect a current assessment of the minimum level of funding required for short term sustainability.

Recommendations 3.1:

Forum agreed to support the increase in the funded AWPU in Falling Rolls Funding to 66% to support very small schools in areas of demographic growth to set a balanced budget.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 16 Against: nil

Recommendation 3.2:

Forum agreed to support the extension of eligibility to the Fund to those schools achieving an Ofsted Rating of 'Good' or 'Outstanding' at any point during the financial year.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 16 Against: nil

7. Schools Budget Savings Programme Update

Catherine Tallis updated the Forum on the progress that has been made in an LA programme to support schools in managing budgetary pressures.

Forum noted report.

8. Future Outlook for School Rolls and Implications

Simon Newland advised the Forum of the past and future position on the demand for primary and secondary places and the financial implications of this for individual schools and the Schools Budget in aggregate.

It appears likely that 2016/17 will be the year in which primary reception numbers begin to decline, and Year 7 admissions to secondary to increase rapidly. Management of the rising demand for primary places had taken place largely by expansion of existing smaller schools to more sustainable sizes, and care has been taken to minimise the extent of surplus and future excess supply. None the less, there will over time likely be a move away from a position where almost all primary schools are full in almost all year groups, to one where there are more vacant places. This will place considerable financial strain on some schools. Forum noted

that 2016/17 and subsequent years were likely to be ones where some at least of primary schools begin to find their financial position very challenging.

Forum noted report.

9. HLN – Progress on SEND Strategy and Workstreams

Debbie Orton provided Forum with an update on the SEND Strategy 2015-18 and associated workstreams.

Forum noted the strategy, and the additional detail on workstreams and progress.

Forum discussed how best to monitor and influence the future development of the strategy and its component parts, having regard to the role of the SEND Executive. It was agreed that:

1. At each future meeting of Forum we would seek to look in a bit more detail at progress and issues on one or perhaps two workstreams, as and when material progress is made
2. We would also wish to consider the financial implications flowing from each workstream, as they became clearer, with a view to considering how best to use the SEN development fund which has been created for next year.

We noted that it was likely a report on Exceptional Needs funding would be available in April, and that work on Autism was also relatively well advanced.

Forum noted the recommendations in 3.1

10. Free Early Education Update

Melany McQueen updated Forum regarding the progress of the free early education for two year old scheme and to gain Forum's approval to retain current free early education hourly funding rates for 2016-17.

It was noted that at the end of the Autumn term take up of the 2 yr old offer was running substantially ahead of the national average albeit 20% of entitled children were still not taking up places.

Forum agreed for 2016/17 free early education hourly funding rates for 3 and 4 yr olds would remain at 2015/16 levels, consistent with the flat cash per pupil DSG settlement.

The vote was recorded as follows:

For: 17 Against nil

11. Forward Work Programme

The Forward Work Programme is now as follows.

2016		
24 February	Standards and quality in Hertfordshire schools	Jan Paine/ Marcus Cooper
	School meals price review	Catherine Tallis/ Lin O'Brien
	Proposals for SALT Service	t/b/c/
	Growth Fund Review	Kate Ma
	Government Consultation on funding issues (if issued)	Simon Newland
20 April	HfL Recruitment support out-turn report	Jan Paine
	Repairs and Maintenance Bi-Annual	Trevor Mose
22 June	Summer Consultation	Simon Newland
	Review of Membership Quotas	Simon Newland
	Review of Exceptional Needs Funding – report from SEND strategy ENF workstream	Debbie Orton

Any Other Business

Forum noted report on De-delegated Charge for FSM Eligible Pupils which was an information item.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 24 February 2016

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage