

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 28 June 2017
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Alisdair Skinner, Brian Frederick, Tracy Prickett, Tony Fitzpatrick, Paul Rosen, Liz Hitch, Samantha Jayasuriya, Sarah Lalis, Jan Liversage, Alison Saunders, Robert Smith
Non- School Members	Tim Hutchings Zoe Hancock, David Shaylor, David Allen,
Substitutes	Sue Nesbitt-Larkin
Officers	Simon Newland, Catherine Tallis, Jonathan Burberry, Patricia Walker, Fiona Timms
Apologies	Cllr Mark Watkin, Paul Johnson, Nick Rowlands, Helen Blay, Robert Fielden
Observing	John Grubb, David Williams (NUT), Cllr Judi Billing, Terri Douris, Andrew DeCsilléry, Cheryl Faint

1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

Minutes of meeting held on 22 February were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

2. Potential Priorities of the New Government

Simon Newland gave an oral update on potential priorities of the New Government based on manifesto commitments and the Queen's Speech. It was noted that the Government remains committed to delivering a fairer funding system and that no new education legislation is currently planned.

3. Schools Budget Monitor 2016-17 Quarter

Jonathan Burberry reported on the final outturn position for the Schools Budget for 2016-17 financial year and requested that the Forum agree to fund the overspend on de-delegated budgets from the Schools Budget.

In view of the level of underspend on high needs, Forum commented that more needed to be done when allocating budgets to ensure that the money followed children's needs.

Forum requested an update on the cost and value for money of tuition for excluded pupils at a future meeting. The Special School representatives also raised a question in relation to school meals, and a question was raised in relation to funding provision of the 30 hours entitlement when parents missed the cut-off date for registering entitlement. Simon Newland agreed to respond to both these issues in writing to the questioners.

Forum noted the final outturn position.

Forum agreed to fund the 2016-17 overspend on de-delegated budgets of £836k from the Schools Budget (using the resource provided by the DSG carry forward).

Vote:

For: 16 Against: None

4. Growth and Falling Rolls Fund Allocations 2017-18

Jonathan Burberry consulted Forum on the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund allocations for 2017-18.

It was clarified that the Growth Fund allocations varied between schools with the same size of expansion due to an uplift for additional educational needs being included in the calculation.

Forum noted and supported the allocations.

5. Support for Secondary Schools in Challenging Circumstances

Catherine Tallis presented a paper updating Forum on support for smaller secondary schools where financial pressures are significant. The paper detailed that the Falling Rolls Fund will be reviewed once there is greater clarity on arrangements for the National Funding Formula. The paper also sought support for a dis-application of the School Funding Regulations to enable a £3.5m central fund to be created to meet the projected lagged growth. The fund would be formulaically allocated to five schools facing significant and immediate challenges. Sponsors have been lined up for all five schools but discussions have stalled given the budget deficit that lagged growth will cause in the future., The sponsors have agreed that if the lagged growth allocations proposed in this paper are made then they will be able to take these schools.

Forum noted that this was a complex area, given the particular set of circumstances faced by this group of school. It was further noted that whilst forum are supportive of the proposal, they believe that the DfE should be funding the solution, not leaving it to local areas to resolve.

Forum supported the dis-application request to the DfE which is outlined in section 3 of the paper, with the following provisos:

- this is a one off decision not setting a precedent,
- any future situations will be considered as they arise.

Vote:

For: 15 Against: None Abstained: 2

Forum asked the Local Authority to lobby the DfE to develop sustainable and long-term solutions for Orphan Schools and those at imminent risk of becoming Orphan Schools.

6. Schools Insurance

Fiona Timms presented this paper to inform the Forum of the current methodology for recharging insurance costs to maintained schools and to propose a revised methodology for 2018-19. The intention was to move to a per-pupil basis for charging for insurance, which would align with the arrangements made by DfE for Academies.

Fiona identified that the pupil number in paragraph 5.6 should be £113,475 (i.e. excluding academies) giving a rate per pupil in the region of £18. This compared with a figure charged by DfE to Academies of £20.

It was noted that the cost of claims could vary significantly between years.

Forum noted the information in the paper including the proposed changes in the arrangements for recharging schools from 2018-19.

Forum were asked whether they felt that school gyms used by the public and other such income earning activities should be included in the Council's cover. Forum felt this should be an additional insurance that the schools should arrange and be offset by the income schools earned.

Forum also requested that, as far as possible, insurance charges should be set to align with the schools' financial year.

Fiona Timms will arrange for information on planned increases to be disseminated.

7. Schools Consultation Including De-Delegation

Forum was updated on progress and timetable for discussions round de-delegation of funding for school improvement and activities related to maintained schools, together with proposals for schools' involvement in contract monitoring of the HfL contract. A number of meetings with schools' representatives were under way, with a view to proposals being brought to Forum in September for consultation with schools.

Forum agreed the proposed approach and associated timetable.

8. Review of Membership Quotas

Forum noted the annual review of membership quotas, and that no changes were required.

9. Post-16 High Needs Funded Places and Top-up Funding at Colleges – Update

Patricia Walker presented an update to Forum on developments in funding post 16 high needs places in colleges.

The Forum noted the update.

It was also reported that colleges nationally are lobbying the DfE for greater certainty in their high needs budgets.

10. Forward Work Programme 2017/18

It was agreed that the high level needs update paper for the September meeting would include a section on the SEN Strategy Development Fund for 2017-18 and how this will be spent.

Officers will follow up a question raised regarding the funding of lunch provision in special schools.

Any Other Business

None

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 20 September

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage