

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 20 September 2017
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

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| Chair | Alan Gray |
| School Members | Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Brian Frederick, Tracy Prickett, Tony Fitzpatrick, Robert Fielden, Nick Rowlands, Sarah Lalis, David Shaylor, Denise Skewis, David Allen, Jan Liversage, Karen James, Zoe Hancock, Alison Saunders, Robert Smith, Anna Greetham, Dave Allen, Paul Sutton for Samantha Jayasuriya |
| Non- School Members | Tim Hutchings |
| Substitutes | Frances Manning |
| Officers | Simon Newland, Catherine Tallis, Cheryl Faint, Jonathan Burberry, Saira Muschamp, Oliver Barnes, Andrew de Csillery, Tracy Warner |
| Apologies | Samantha Jayasuriya, Helen Blay, Judi Billing |
| Observing | Cllr Mark Watkin, Cllr Terry Douris, John Grubb, David Williams (NUT), |

1. Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising

Forum elected Alan Gray to continue as Chair for the next year.

Forum elected Richard Haynes to continue as Vice Chair for the next year.

The Chair welcomed new members Anna Greetham and Robert Smith to the Forum.

Minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

2. Final Dedicated Schools Grant and Updated Schools Budget 2017/18

Jonathan Burberry reported to outline the level of Dedicated Schools Grant available following the announcement of the final 2017-18 DSG.

Forum noted the changes in DSG and the Schools Budget since January.

Forum agreed to support the carry forward of the additional DSG resources to 2018-19, as outlined in section 3 of the paper.

Vote For: 17 Against: 0

3. Schools Budget Monitor 2017-18 Quarter 1

Saira Muschamp reported to the Forum on the Quarter 1 Schools Budget Monitor.

There was discussion on several of the budget variances:

Independent Placements – it was noted that this budget is overspending for the first time in recent years.

Speech and Language therapy- a question was raised as to why the budget had not been reduced given that there has been a recurrent underspend. Officers noted that the budget had not been adjusted due to the imminent recommissioning of the service.

Admissions – officers hoped to reduce the reported overspend on the Admissions Team.

Forum noted the report.

4. Schools Contingency; issues arising

Catherine Tallis presented a paper requesting that Forum agree an overspend to the contingency budget resulting from charging a portion of the closing balance of Cheshunt School.

Forum noted the report and recommendations in the context of the Authority's efforts to get smaller secondary schools on a sustainable financial trajectory. In the course of discussion the need to consider the future use of Growth Funding/Falling Rolls was noted.

Forum agreed that £605,000 of the forecast deficit on closure of Cheshunt School will be charged to the de-delegated secondary schools contingency budget in 2017-18, and agreed that the consequential overspending of this budget of £576,000 will be met from the 2018-19 Schools Budget (using the resource provided by the DSG carry-forward).

Vote:

For: 13

Against: 1

Abstain: 1

5. Initial Report on Schools Budget Strategy 2018-19

Jonathan Burberry provided a preliminary outline of the issues relating to the 2018-19 Schools Budget. Jonathan explained that the Forum papers had been issued just before the DfE's announcement about the National Funding Formula. The DSG estimates for 2018-19, shown in section 5.1 of the paper, could now be updated as follows:

Schools block – an additional £7m

High Needs block – an additional £3.5m

However, it is also likely that the pay award will be higher than the 1% assumed in the budget pressure for inflation.

Forum noted the list of budget pressures and savings.

Forum agreed recommendations (b), (c), (d), and (e) in Section 3.1 of the paper.

Vote: For: 17 Against: 0

6. Primary and Secondary Funding Formula for 2018/19

6a. Update following NFF Announcement

Jonathan Burberry reported to seek the Forum's view on changes to the Hertfordshire local funding formula for 2018-19 in the light of the introduction of the National Funding Formula (NFF) for primary and secondary schools. The DfE has announced that a 'soft' NFF will operate in 2018-19 and 2019-20 so that the NFF will be used to calculate the Authority's schools block of DSG but the local funding formula will still be used to calculate school and academy budget shares.

Jonathan also tabled paper 6a to update this item as the NFF was announced shortly after the Forum papers were sent out.

Forum supported the following recommendations (comprising the second and third recommendations in section 3.1 of item 6 and the two recommendations in section 3.1 of item 6a):

- Consulting with schools about the level of the Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG), with a proposal that the MFG continues to be set at -1.5% per pupil;
- Consulting with schools about the looked after children (LAC) factor, with a proposal that it is amended as outlined in paragraph 5.3.2 of item 6;
- Guaranteeing an increase of 0.5% in the unit funding rates of all primary and secondary pupil led funding factors (i.e. AWPU plus additional needs factors) as compared with the 2017-18 budget shares (including the element funded by carry forward);
- That the Forum should consider at its November meeting how the remaining balance of the additional resource should be allocated.

Vote For: 17 Against: 0

7. Minutes of High Needs Funding Sub-group and Matters Arising

Simon Newland presented the minutes from the Schools Forum High Needs Funding Sub-Group meeting held on 7 September.

The minutes were noted, with the following specific comments:

1. Forum requested that if schools were individually identified in Forum papers, as was sometimes unavoidable, the head teachers should be informed in advance

2. The adequacy of existing levels of funding for Exceptional Needs would be reviewed as part of the budget setting process for the HLN Block
3. A report on capital spending priorities for HLN capital funding would be presented to Forum in November
4. Forum endorsed a number of principles which should be reflected in the Speech and Language contract retendering process. These were:
 - the need for transparency round the purposes for which DSG funding was used, so as to demonstrate that its use supported educational objective/met educational needs;
 - the need for school-level engagement with the service round the day-to-day work of therapists, and so far as possible an ability of Heads in part to direct and prioritise work;
 - feedback on performance to Heads collectively and to Forum as the funding body
 - attention to key qualitative issues, such as the need to reduce the current high level of change of therapists at school level.

Cllr Douris referred to questions which Cllr Watkin had asked him on Exceptional Needs and said that he would be happy, with the Forum's agreement, to share with the Forum the answers to these questions.

Forum noted the minutes.

8. Recommissioning an Integrated Speech and Language Service: update Paper

Oliver Barnes and Rik Box attended to provide a progress update on the re-commissioning of speech and language therapy services for children and young people age 0-25.

It was noted that the Current SALT contract is around £5.5m including around £1.7m from High Needs DSG funding. The principles raised at the High Needs Funding Group in relation to re-tendering were noted.

A further report will come back to Forum on 29 November.

9. Proposals for Consultation on De-delegation of Funding for School Improvement, etc

Simon Newland updated the Forum on de-delegation proposals for school improvement and other services provided to maintained schools, for next year and 2019/20.

Last year Forum agreed a funding package to allow a set of services provided by HfL under contract to HCC to continue for the current year. Part of the funding was in the form of de-delegation from maintained schools budgets, agreed by the representatives of those schools. Part was provided by HCC, drawn from the Education Services Grant provided by DfE to the Council for that purpose. Together, these two funding streams covered the costs of services specifically in respect of Maintained Schools as opposed

to Academies. Elements of the HfL contract relating to all schools, maintained and academies alike, were separately funded.

For 2018/19, DfE will complete the process of withdrawal of ESG, leaving a funding shortfall if the current contract/set of services for Maintained Schools is to continue. A working group of schools' representatives has been working with HfL and HCC to review what services should continue to be offered, the scope for efficiency savings, and what would be an appropriate level of de-delegation for 2018/19. A proposal has consequently been developed for de-delegation of £25 per pupil to support services provided by HfL, which is now inclusive of some services previously separately identified. Various detailed background was also provided to Forum in relation to benchmarking and details of services covered.

In addition, Forum considered proposals for de-delegation of £1 to cover the costs of education leadership undertaken within HCC.

Schools finance regulations require some elements of de-delegation to be covered under arrangements relating to School Improvement, and applicable only to Primary and secondary schools. Some are dealt with more widely, and apply also to Special schools and ESCs. The latter also include a provision whereby special school pupils can be weighted as equivalent to more than one mainstream pupil for the purposes of de-delegation. Such a weighting is common in formulaic funding processes, and it would be reasonable to apply it in this case.

Following discussion, Forum agreed to support the funding assumptions set out in para 3.11 of the report on the meeting agenda in relation to services provided by HfL and agreed that these should be used as planning assumptions when drawing up budget proposals for 2018/19.

Vote:

For: 13 Against: nil

Representatives of maintained schools were therefor recommended to agree that schools should be consulted on a proposal for de-delegation of funding for 2018/19 as set out below, as follows:

- (i) £20 per pupil in relation to School Improvement services provided by HfL (voting by phase);

Vote: (Primary)

For: 6 Against: nil

Vote: (Secondary)

For: 1 Against: nil

- (ii) £5 per pupil in relation to other services required to support maintained schools provided by HfL (voting by all maintained schools members, including special);

Vote:

For: 8 Against: nil

- (iii) That each Special School and ESC pupil (place) is weighted for the purposes of recommendation (ii) as equivalent to 5 mainstream pupils;

Vote:

For: 7

Against: 1

- (iv) £1 per pupil in relation to management and advisory services provided by HCC Childrens Services (voting by all maintained schools members).

Vote:

For: 8

Against: nil

Forum also agreed to give an in-principle commitment to support for a similar funding package for 2019/20.

10. Forward Work Programme 2017/18

This was noted.

Any Other Business

Cllr Douris announced that Alan Gray had become TES Headteacher of the Year, and proposed that Forum formally congratulate him on this accolade. This was agreed.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday, 29 November 2017

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage