

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

**Wednesday, 21 February 2018**  
**Robertson House, Stevenage**

### ATTENDANCE:

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Chair</b>              | Alan Gray   |
| <b>School Members</b>     | Dave Allen, Tom Evans, Robert Fielden, Tony Fitzpatrick, Brian Frederick, Matt Gauthier, Anna Greetham, Sara Lalis, Jan Liversage, Frances Manning, Tracy Prickett, Paul Rosen, Nick Rowlands, Alison Saunders, David Shaylor, Robert Smith |
| <b>Non-School Members</b> | Cllr Tim Hutchings  |
| <b>Substitutes</b>        | Helen Ackerman  |
| <b>Officers</b>           | Simon Newland, Catherine Tallis, Jonathan Burberry, Cheryl Faint, Melany McQueen, Sally Orr, Debbie Orton, Jennie Newman, Juliet Whitehead, Fiona Timms, Richard Woodard  |
| <b>Apologies</b>          | Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Kit Davies, Karen James, Denisse Skewiss,  |
| <b>Observing</b>          | Cllr Terry Douris, Mark Watkin, Andrew de Csilléry John Grubb,  |

### 1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

#### Item 2 – Approval of centrally retained budgets 2018/19

Sentence amended for clarity in the fourth paragraph.

#### Disapplication

Jonathan Burberry provided an update on the disapplication to the school funding regulations in respect of lagged growth at secondary schools in challenging circumstances. This disapplication was agreed by the DfE for 2017-18. However, the academy conversion dates of 4 of the 5 schools covered by the disapplication have slipped to 2018-19. Therefore the County Council has asked the DfE to approve the carry forward of the disapplication to 2018-19 for the 4 schools converting in 2018-19. We are awaiting a response.

No other items were raised and the minutes were agreed and taken as an accurate record.

### 2. Review of special school funding – Debbie Orton/Jennie Newman

Debbie Orton and Jennie Newman presented a paper on the proposal to deliver additional funding to special schools to reflect changing patterns of need and complexity within special schools.

Following work with special school head teachers revised banding profiles are proposed which reflect the changed levels of complexity of need that special schools are expected to meet, particularly in some sectors. We noted, however, that further work will be

required in due course to consider how to align funding levels for comparable pupils in special and mainstream schools.

A discussion took place around children with complex needs and the number of children being placed out of the county in independent special schools. Six or seven years ago approximately 250 children were placed out of county in independent special schools and the then- strategy was to look at how more children and young people could have their needs met in county. Through re-designation of special schools and a robust strategy to reduce reliance on independent special schools the number of placements fell to just over 100.

There is now some upward pressure, partly as a result of the increased age range in the SEND reforms 0-25. We are seeing a rise in EHCPs which in turn is resulting in increased demand on special school placements and an increase in out county placements.

Forum asked for a progress report in six months on the success of actions to reduce out-county placements, together with some further analysis of the characteristics of out-county placed children, and the extent to which these have social care requirements.

### **Recommendations:**

Forum was asked to vote on the recommendations laid out under 3.1 of the paper:

- support the results of the special school bandings review and
- approve the use of £1m set aside in the Strategy Development Fund (SDF) to fund the increases in special school top ups in 2018-19 that result from implementing the conclusions of the review

Note: David Allen declared an interest.

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

### **3. High level needs budgets – Debbie Orton/Jennie Newman**

Debbie Orton presented a paper to provide an update to Forum on the 2018/19 High Needs Budget. It was noted that the proposals in the paper have already been through the high needs funding sub-group.

The paper included the proposals for the high needs budget , including proposals for allocating primary and secondary behaviour funding across all areas of the county, increases in special school numbers and the use of the Strategic Development Fund.

### **Discussion/questions from the floor:**

Q: Are there timescales for the behaviour model to be implemented?

A: Formal consultation and legal issues are still to be finalised. Richard Woodard, lead for Access and Inclusion will be meeting with all areas in the next fortnight discuss their plans for behaviour services. It was noted by colleagues

that the model indicator does not take into account ‘mover-ins’ – they come with no funding and this will increase demand on their funding.

Q: Clarity sought about lump sum figures

A: It was confirmed this is a lump sum per area and some ESCs cover more than one area.

Q: People will need to be held to account to ensure that funding is used appropriately. Can this be revisited in a year's time? Will this be monitored to ensure that funding and provision is appropriate?

A: There will be a clear specification about what the funding is for and how delivery of the service will be monitored. It will also be clear in the spec what is expected to be delivered.

Note: David Allen declared an interest in relation to the next question.

Q: How was the decision reached as to where to increase special school numbers?

A: The increase is a response to pressures across sectors especially the SLD sector. We will be looking in detail at how we can enhance provision including adaptations to existing school buildings. We will also review designations of specialist provision to reflect the complexity of needs in the system. We need to ensure provision is flexible to meet the changing needs within the high needs resources that we have available.

Q. In relation to Item 7.2 - Primary high needs behaviour the work being carried out by DSPLs is good but how can consistent practice be put in place across the county?

A: The same specification will apply to all areas. Some are already delivering to the spec and have a tiered approach established.

### **Recommendations:**

Forum was asked to vote for all the recommendations laid out Item 3 of the paper en-bloc on the understanding that there would be a review after the first year of operating the new specification to see how the behaviour provision was working to meet the requirements.

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

## **4. Elective Home Education**

Richard Woodard presented a paper on elective home education – the increase in funding would allow more time for advisers to meet with end users.

The number of pupils leaving their schools to become home educated is increasing significantly. This is a national trend but is particularly acute in Hertfordshire where EHE numbers have doubled over the last three years.

- The support, advice and guidance provided to home educating families by the Local Authority is already limited and becoming more so as the numbers continue

to increase significantly.

- Where parents give a reason for electing to educate their child at home, dissatisfaction with the school system is the most prevalent reason. However it is apparent that in a growing number of cases parents have little idea of what EHE entails, or how to go about providing an education for their child. In some of these cases parents are telling the Local Authority that they have been advised by schools to undertake EHE. Parents who subsequently no longer wish to educate their child at home often require support to secure their child's return to the school system.

### **Discussion/questions from the floor:**

Alison Saunders welcomed the report but expressed concerns about accepting children in Year 10 who have opted out of the education system.

Concerns were also raised about:

- from a safeguarding perspective
- the need to consult with wider agencies (health, social care, education)
- where children disappear under the radar and then reappear

It was noted that if this was addressed early, it will save money in the long term.

Forum was advised that review work was underway on how to improve our offer in relation to EHE, looking at the three aspects round:

- Minimising numbers of children/parents moving to EHE
- Increasing support to EHE children
- Enabling parents and children to return to the school system where they wished to do so.

A further report would be made to Forum in the autumn, including more detailed analysis of relevant local data. Meanwhile, the Associations were being requested for nominees to the working group, as were other appropriate services.

### **Recommendations:**

Forum agreed the recommendations in section 3.1 of the paper, namely to increase by £15,000 for 2018/19 Central Services funding for EHE.

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

## **5. Early Years – centrally retained budget approval – Melany McQueen**

Agreement was sought to continue with the current centrally retained early years DSG with two amendments, namely a decrease in full time places of £50k and an increase in EY maintained SEND funding of £100k. This centrally retained EY DSG funds quality improvement, the administration of the schemes, business support and SEND provision.

Rationale for reduction in full time places:

- has been under budget this year
- there has been a significant decrease in applications which indicates the success of children's centres and children accessing the 30 hours child care.

Appendix B – It was noted that the Ludwick Enrichment Group will be part of the early years SEND review.

It was reported that the vice-chair had requested that Forum look further at the nature of services provided and value for money of three of the centrally-retained items this autumn, namely Business Support, Managing free early education and child care provision, and ICT infrastructure (items 2, 4, and 7 in Table 1 in the report).

Forum agreed for 2018-19 the centrally retained early years budgets listed in table 1 of the paper.

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

## 6. Early years SEND services consultation proposals – Melany McQueen

Melany presented a paper which outlined the proposed consultation regarding future support needs for EY providers.

To ensure equality across the early years sector agreement was sought to carry out a consultation with early years providers regarding the future of EY SEND support. Currently maintained providers receive a financial contribution to go toward SENCo support and PVI providers receive access to support delivered by the Early Years SEND team within ISL.

### Discussion/questions from the floor:

Clarity sought around the 2 options under item 5.1

Q: If services are decentralised to schools how will the LA maintain accountability?

A: It was confirmed that the LA will retain responsibility for SEND applications.

### Recommendations:

Forum agreed the recommendation in section 3.1 of the paper.

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

## 7. Early years budget share proposed changes – Melany McQueen

Early years providers have been consulted regarding a number of previously discussed changes to the payment process for early years budget shares namely to change headcount week dates and to amend the formula regarding the initial budget share calculations. Only a small number of negative consultation responses were received. The changes will take effect for the financial year 2018/19.

### Discussion/questions from the floor:

- Q: Nick Rowland asked whether the process that schools have to ask parents to complete for the 30 hours free childcare could be simplified.
- A: Melany advised that feedback had been provided to the DfE however this is an HMRC requirement.

### Recommendations:

Forum approved the proposed payment process outlined in the paper for the new financial year (2018-2019).

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

## 8. Update to the 2017-18 Dedicated Schools Grant – Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry advised that a small change had been made to the DSG later in the year. The paper sets out what has changed and the reasons behind it.

### Recommendations:

Forum supported a reduction in the carry forward of DSG resources to 2018-19 as detailed in section 5.2 of the paper, to reflect the changes in DSG.

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

## 9. “Unlocking talent, fulfilling potential” (DfE Social Mobility Plan) – Juliet Whitehead

This paper has been brought to Forum for information only. The plan sets out 4 proposed ambitions to boost social mobility through education and provide opportunities for young people to ensure no-one is left behind.

- Ambition 1 – close the ‘word gap’ in early years
- Ambition 2 – close the attainment gap in schools
- Ambition 3 – high quality post-16 education choices for all young people
- Ambition 4 – everyone achieving their potential in rewarding careers

Forum noted the significance of these DfE priorities for future work on SSIF bids, and for resource allocation decisions made by Forum.

## 10. Changes to Growth Fund – Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry presented a paper proposing two amendments to the Growth Fund for 2018-19:

- removal of a paragraph from each of the primary and secondary sections regarding Brand New Schools: post- opening funding, diseconomies and viability and;
- updating of dates in Section D, Infant Class size Protection.

Forum agreed the proposed amendments to the 2018-19 Growth Fund criteria set out in the paper.

| VOTE |    |         |   |         |   |
|------|----|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 18 | Against | - | Abstain | - |

## 11. Insurance – Fiona Timms

Fiona Timms presented a paper to Forum around the methodology for recharging insurance costs to schools for 2018/19.

All services within the Council are recharged to recover a fair proportion of the cost of insurance premiums and claims. Schools that participate in the Council's insurance programme are recharged annually for insurance. As highlighted in the report to the June Forum, the Council has not historically recovered the whole of the costs associated with insurance premiums, claims and administration. The report outlined the revised methodology to apply from 2018-19. It was proposed that the rate charged for property insurance remained unaltered for 18/19 but that the rate for liability insurance is increased to £3.63 per pupil across all school types. In addition the excess for property damage claims would increase by £500 for each claim arising from the same cause or "insured peril" that a school makes in 3 year period, in order to encourage proactive property risk management. Therefore a second claim within the period would attract an excess of £1,000 (and a third claim would be subject to an excess of £1,500). This is an ever increasing excess within a three year rolling period.

Action: Amend recommendation 3.1(iii) to 'insured peril'

### Discussion/questions from the floor:

- Q: The quote of £3.63 – is that an increase or decrease?  
A: This is an increase from £1.77 for primary and £2.54 for secondary. The rationale is an overall increase on liability and to keep it as one rate as per the RPA scheme, ie. £400 increase for a 1fe primary school.
- Q: What is the level of cover for activities that take place in schools, and has an audit taken place?  
A: No audit.

Schools approach county regarding educational activities that are classed as outside the range of 'normal'.

Q: Clarity was sought as to what is classed as 'normal'

A: The insurance team will issue some guidelines via the Bulletin

### **Recommendations:**

The Forum supported the recommendations in section 3.1 of the paper but with an amendment to recommendation 3.1 (iii) The final recommendations supported by Forum were therefore as follows:.

- i) No change to the method of recharging property insurance to schools. This will continue on a rate per m<sup>2</sup> and rate per pupil basis
- ii) Recharging liability insurance to schools on an increased rate per pupil basis on a flat rate basis of £3.63 per pupil.
- iii) Increasing, the property damage excess of £500 by £500 for each claim that a school makes in 3 year period relating to the same insured peril, in order to encourage proactive property risk management. Therefore a second claim within the period for the same insured peril would attract an excess of £1,000 (and a third claim would be subject to an excess of £1,500). This is an ever increasing excess within a three year rolling period.

| VOTE |   |         |   |         |   |
|------|---|---------|---|---------|---|
| For  | 6 | Against | 1 | Abstain | - |

The Forum noted the insurance recharge rates for 2018-19 outlined in this paper and that further increases will be required from 2019 onwards until the current shortfall is met.

## **12. Standards Paper – Simon Newland**

Simon Newland presented the annual report on progress and educational outcomes within Hertfordshire.

Broadly, attainment remains very strong at all stages compared to other Local Authorities. However, the attainment of disadvantaged pupils (defined by reference to Ever 6) remains unsatisfactory, and is at or somewhat below the national average.

Support for schools with disadvantaged intakes and other challenges had been and remain a priority for Forum, both in terms of the resource allocation decisions made but also in terms of the services to be provided by HfL paid for from DSG.

The report also identified some of the emerging priorities for action in the next year, related to the above.



### **Discussion/questions from the floor:**

- Q: If a school requires academisation due to SM, is the LA instrumental in brokering the sponsorship?
- A: The LA has a degree of influence and schools themselves can state a preference. The decision, ultimately, rests with the RSC.

### **Any Other Business**

None.

### **Date of next meeting**

The School Forum scheduled for the 25 April 2018 has been cancelled and items will be brought to the June meeting.

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday 27 June 2018  
Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm  
Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage