

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday, 17th January 2018
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Dave Allen, Anna Greethan, Kit Davies, Tom Evans, Robert Fielden, Brian Frederick, Matt Gauthier, John Grubb, Karen James, Sara Lalis, Jan Liversage, Frances Manning, Tracy Prickett, Paul Rosen, Nick Rowlands, Alison Saunders, David Shaylor, Robert Smith,
Non-School Members	Cllr Tim Hutchings
Substitutes	
Officers	Simon Newland, Catherine Tallis, Jonathan Burberry, Andrew de Csilléry, Cheryl Faint, Melany McQueen, Jackie Aldridge, Oliver Barnes
Apologies	Tony Fitzpatrick
Observing	Cllr Terry Douris, David Williams (NUT), Judi Billing, Mark Watkin

1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

Item 2 – Secondary behaviour allocations 2018/19

Frances Manning enquired when this information will be received. Simon Newland advised that this would be on the Schools Forum agenda for February, but will aim to get it to Frances ahead of HASSH.

Item 5 – Core Education Services De-delegation

Paragraph amended for clarity.

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

2. Approval of centrally retained budget 2018/19 – update – Catherine Tallis

Catherine Tallis presented a paper detailing proposed changes to the 2018/19 central budgets agreed in November 2017.

A number of small changes were proposed to CSS Block budgets as a result of the 2018-19 DSG announcement from the DfE. A reduction to the appeals budget was proposed to enable the CSS block to balance.

The rationale for a recommendation for a re-introduction of a cap to the Falling Rolls Fund set at £500k was explored; this was proposed to encourage schools to make transition arrangements prior to a scale-down of the fund once carry-forward has been exhausted. An increase in the Growth Fund was proposed following DfE agreement of the LA's disapplication request to reduce funded pupil numbers in budget shares to take account of the departure of bulge classes. The £315k increase proposed would offset

the loss of income to the Growth Fund from this change – a loss of income which equalled the corresponding saving within the Schools Block.

It was noted that work was also underway on how to seek to increase rolls at smaller schools, so as to limit the call on the Falling Rolls fund. Schools benefitting from the Falling Rolls fund have been made aware that funding cannot continue indefinitely.

Recommendations:

Forum agreed:

- (i) The central budgets set out in Table 1 of the officers report
- (ii) The inclusion in the Falling Rolls fund criteria of a cap in annual allocations of £500,000
- (iii) The changes to the criteria and funding for the Falling Rolls Fund as set out in Annex A to the officers' report.

VOTE					
For	19	Against	-	Abstain	-

3. Schools Budget 2018-19

Introducing this paper Jonathan Burberry explained that the Authority had been notified a few days previously that the free school meals data supplied by the DfE to calculate budget shares was incorrect. Revised data has now been received and the budget has been recalculated accordingly. Paper 4a (tabled at the start of the meeting) gives details of the main changes to the Schools Budget that result from this change.

A question was asked with reference to Annex B item B.6 (Inflation) as to whether there was any pension increase. It was clarified that there was not a pension increase in the 2018-19 financial year but one was expected after that.

Recommendations:

Forum agreed to support the budget proposals set out in the report, including the amendments to the budget outlined in paper 4a.

VOTE					
For	19	Against	-	Abstain	-

4. Finalisation of Primary and Secondary Formula Funding Factors 2018-19

4a Schools Budget and Primary & Secondary Funding Formula 2018-19 - Update

Jonathan Burberry presented item 4 and explained that, due to the late revision to the free school meals data by the Department for Education, it needed to be taken in conjunction with item 4a. The unit funding rates had been updated to take account of the new free school meals data and the revised funding rates were shown in item 4a.

There was considerable discussion of the issues raised in Forum, with some differences of opinion round the degree of financial pressures felt by different phases and types of schools. Nonetheless a consensus view was reached on how best to proceed.

Recommendations

Forum agreed the following recommendations:

From paper 4 – recommendations 3.1(i), 3.1(ii), 3.1(iii), 3.1(iv) and 3.3.

From paper 4a – recommendations 3.1(ii) and 3.1(iii)

VOTE					
For	19	Against	-	Abstain	-

5. Growth fund revenue protection factor – Simon Newland

Simon Newland presented a paper setting out a case put forward by a school that in light of its experience of taking bulge classes, the current Revenue Protection Funding is insufficient. The paper showed the financial impact on the school as well as advising there are schools currently in receipt of revenue protection funding in similar circumstances that are not causing the local authority financial concern, which correlates with the outcome of the summer 2015 Growth Fund review that funding for 24 AWPU is appropriate to fund a class.

Taking into account the factors outlined above along with the uncertainty relating to the future of the Growth Fund from April 2019, Forum was asked to consider whether to retain the existing criteria or amend it to enhance the funding provided. Alternative criteria wording was provided along with a modelled comparison of the cost of the current and alternative criteria.

A review last took place 2 years ago with no changes since. The school has expanded from 2fe to 3fe but insufficient AWPU to run the class.

The consensus view from Forum was that provision of protection at the level of 24 AWPU per class was an appropriate level.

Recommendations:

Forum was asked to vote whether to make no change to the Revenue Protection Factor of the Growth Fund or approve the alternative criteria. It was proposed and agreed that the current criteria were retained.

VOTE					
For	19	Against	-	Abstain	-

6. Early years budget – issues arising – Melany McQueen

Melany McQueen presented this paper – SF was asked to allow officers to consult on the following proposed changes to the early years payment process.

- Moving funding return week to the start of the summer and autumn terms (no change to spring term)
- Changing the formula for calculating monthly payments
- Changing the formula for annual budget shares

The results of the consultation will be brought to the February SF for its consideration.

Questions from the floor:

None.

Recommendations:

Forum was asked to vote on whether to proceed with the consultation of early years providers.

VOTE					
For	19	Against	-	Abstain	-

7. Schools capital repairs and maintenance – Jackie Aldridge

Jackie Aldridge, Programme Manager, Building Management Team attended to outline progress and status on the current 2017/18 R&M programme, recommend 2018/19 programme and describe management of the R&M programme to ensure best value and actions in place to bring further resilience to the programme. This will be further reported at Schools Forum during 2018/19.

Questions from the floor:

Q: Terry Douris requested an explanation of the surveyors' classifications, ie. D1/D2, C1, etc.

A: Jackie Aldridge will obtain this information and advise

Q: Clarity was sought around what encompassed 'mechanical' in Item 5.7

A: This is anything related to boilers, heating, pipework, etc.

Alan Gray thanked the team for their work on this item.

8. Recommissioning an Integrated Speech and Language Service: update paper – Oliver Barnes/Rik Boxer

Oliver Barnes presented this paper – the paper requested that Schools Forum authorise an extension to HCC’s current Speech and Language Therapy Contract, and approval to introduce a new specification.

HCC’s current SALT contract terminates in April 2018. It is proposed to extend this contract to April 2019. This aligns with CCG SALT contracts, which also terminate in April 2019. Achieving this alignment allows commissioners to develop an integrated therapies service for April 2019. Working in integration with the CCGs means a more effective service for children and young people, which is better quality assured, and more cost effective.

It is not proposed to change the level of service which schools currently receive. The provider will be expected to maintain the same level of service, and the same balance of EHCP and non-EHCP support.

The new specification is based on the existing model of support. Through consultation with stakeholders including schools and special schools, areas of improvement in the current model have been identified and included in the revised specification. Amendments to the current model are designed to make best use of therapist capacity in order to support as many children and young people as possible.

Questions/comments from the floor:

Q: Who will be responsible for holding the Sp&L service provider to account?

A: The LA contract the health provider to deliver these on their behalf, therefore the LA will be responsible for the contract monitoring

Q: Clarity was sought on the timeline on the specification

A: Work will commence in Autumn 2018 working with the provider to plan and go through the tender process. The current level of service will not be affected in the interim.

- PHF would be interested in being involved in contributing to the design of the future service
- Could feedback be provided on progress later in the academic year? This will be brought back to Schools Forum in September 2018.

Recommendations:

Forum was asked to vote on this item in its entirety.

VOTE					
For	19	Against	-	Abstain	-

9. Forward Work Programme 2017/18

The forward work programme was noted.

Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday 21 February 2018
Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm
Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage