

# MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

**Wednesday, 27 June 2018**  
**Robertson House, Stevenage**

## ATTENDANCE:

<b>Chair</b>	Alan Gray
<b>School Members</b>	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Dave Allen, Tom Evans, Tony Fitzpatrick, Brian Frederick, Matt Gauthier, Anna Greetham, Sara Lalis, Jan Liversage, Frances Manning, Tracy Prickett, Paul Rosen, Nick Rowlands, Kit Davies,
<b>Non-School Members</b>	Cllr Tim Hutchings
<b>Substitutes</b>	Helen Ackerman
<b>Officers</b>	Simon Newland, Catherine Tallis, Jonathan Burberry, Cheryl Faint, Juliet Whitehead, Trevor Mose
<b>Apologies</b>	Alison Saunders, David Shaylor, Robert Fielden, Helen Bray, Robert Smith
<b>Observing</b>	Cllr Terry Douris, Cllr Mark Watkin, Cllr Judith Billing, Andrew de Csilléry, John Grubb

## 1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

The minutes were recorded as accurate and there were no matters arising. The meeting was asked to note that since the last meeting, Debbie Orton had now left the Authority.

## 2. School budget monitor 2017-18 Quarter 4

Jonathan Burberry reported on the final outturn position for the Schools Budget for 2017-18 financial year and requested that the Forum agreed to carry forward the unspent balance on the de-delegated primary contingency, for use in 2018-19.

There were a number of questions about particular budgets:

- a) Early Years Disability Access Fund – Officers will circulate with the minutes guidance on how the fund can be accessed. (Please see the information circulated alongside these minutes. We have also included information about the Early Years Emerging Needs Fund.)
- b) Exceptional Needs – The budget in 2017-18 was £6.267m. Just over half the underspend (£235k) related to the budget for multiple cases and the remainder (£211k) related to the budgets of the area panels. The thresholds for eligibility for multiple cases funding vary according to the size of school and information about them will be circulated. (Please see the information provided alongside these minutes).

In view of the underspend in 2017-18, the budget for multiple cases has been reduced by £200k in 2018-19, enabling a larger resource to be allocated to the area panels.

- c) SEN Strategy Development Fund – This budget provides for new initiatives and these have only come on stream in the new financial year, resulting in the underspend in 2017-18. The £3.4m budget of the fund in 2017-18 was enhanced by £2.1m of headroom from the high needs block in 2018-19. Most of this total of £5.5m was allocated as part of the 2018-19 budget process, with £1.4m remaining unallocated.
- d) School Improvement – School Improvement work was delivered via the HfL contract but funding was not allocated to individual schools, hence the underspend on the contingency for schools causing concern.

Forum noted the final outturn position.

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

Forum agreed that the unspent balance on the de-delegated primary contingency budgets in 2017-18, net of the overspend on school improvement/education functions, may be used to increase the resource available for the primary schools contingency budget in 2018-19.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

Forum agreed that the consequential overspending of the de-delegated contingency budget in 2018-19, of £339k, will be met from the 2019-20 Schools Budget (using the resource provided by the DSG carry forward).

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

### 3. Membership quota arranges for Schools Forum – Simon Newland

Forum was reminded of the need to review membership quotas each year to ensure that those for mainstream schools and academies remained proportionate to the numbers of pupils in each type of institution. Numbers had not changed sufficient to suggest a change in quotas.

The DfE have introduced a new membership category reserved to Special Academies. It was therefore proposed to add a new member to Forum representing Special Academies and to decrease the number of Maintained Special School representatives from 2 to 1. The deleted place is currently vacant.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

### 4. School improvement and brokerage grant – Simon Newland

Simon Newland updated Forum on the receipt of this un-ring-fenced grant relating to maintained schools. It has been suggested that this may be a recurring source of funding, but this is uncertain. It is envisaged that half will be used this year to cover the costs of brokering an “Inadequate” school to an academy. The views of forum were

sought in principle round what would be most advantageous in terms of any balance, bearing in mind the existing funding for school improvement de-delegated by maintained schools.

In discussion, points were made round the benefits of the funding being used on non-recurring activities, and that it should be clearly additional and complementary to funding voted by schools. The use of this funding will be returned to when budget decisions are being made for next year.

## **5. Growth fund and falling rolls fund allocations 2018-19**

Jonathan Burberry consulted Forum on the Growth Fund and Falling Rolls Fund allocations for 2018-19.

It was explained that schools could appear on more than one list in the paper because expanding schools are also protected at multiples of 24 pupils.

Forum noted and supported the allocations.

## **6. Schools financial update – Catherine Tallis**

Catherine Tallis provided an update on the financial position of maintained schools. The paper detailed that 104 maintained schools are on an unsustainable financial trajectory and are expected to use significant portions of their reserves in 18/19. Catherine shared a desire to affect a cultural change around budgeting and shared some initial proposals around this. A further paper will be brought to Forum in September with specific proposals around the budgeting process for maintained schools. A key issue highlighted was the number of primary schools now showing signs of financial distress.

One issue noted was the recent emergence of vacancies in maintained school nursery provision, and that some further analysis of what schools might do to address this challenge was required.

## **7. Development of a School Improvement Strategy – Simon Newland**

The existing School Improvement Strategy has come to the end of its life and it is now timely to undertake a refresh. Major issues would be redefining the roles of each component of the local educational system, in the light of the impending DfE consultation this autumn. There was also a need to define our collective priorities, and how these related to resource allocation.

Some comments were made on prospective priorities, including leadership and staffing. Appendix A provided key stakeholders HCC will be engaging with and we would like to invite any other interested schools, associations or colleagues to work with the LA.

It was noted that a group would be set up to advise officers on the development of a draft strategy, initially to be considered in draft by Forum in September, with a view in the longer term to establishing an education board as a sub-group of Forum with a remit round standards and the priorities within the Strategy. Nominations to the initial group were invited, and would be sought from the Associations.

Note: Dave Allen and Tony Fitzpatrick expressed an interest in joining the group. PHF and HASSH will nominate colleagues.

## **8. School capital repairs and maintenance – Trevor Mose**

Trevor Mose updated the Forum on progress with delivering the 2018/19 repairs and maintenance programme. Forum was asked to note changes to the programme and the progress to date. Forum considered new proposals to support small schools and how best to distribute the new capital fund for Healthy Pupils made available through the Soft Drinks Levy (Sugar Tax).

Small schools – Forum agreed in principal that an amount of money be set aside from the School Condition Allocation grant fund to support small schools with minor capital repairs. Up to a nominal £15k is to be allocated per school for minor works. The threshold for small schools is proposed to be 100 pupils or less.

Healthy Pupils Capital Funding – Forum considered the priorities to be addressed by the new grant. It was suggested that proposals should consider fewer larger schemes that can have benefits beyond the host school. Forum asked that the Sports Partnerships be engaged with the process of identifying suitable schemes. The funding is only available this year and will be targeted at areas with relatively lower pupil health outcomes as advised by Public Health.

UPDATE POST MEETING: Only those responsible bodies that receive school condition allocations will receive a direct allocation from the healthy pupils capital fund. Academies eligible to bid for condition improvement funding, can bid for the healthy pupils capital funding via the Condition Improvement Fund. Full details can be found on the ESFA page: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/capital-allocations>

Alan Gray proposed a vote of thanks to Trevor and his team on behalf of Schools Forum and Schools.

## **9. Evidence to support historical commitments budget**

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper which outlines the evidence to support retaining, as a historical commitment, the central budget which contributes to the family support workers service.

Forum noted the evidence set out in the paper.

## **10. Hertfordshire scheme for financing schools – Cheryl Faint**

Cheryl Faint presented an update to Schools Forum on the directed change to the Hertfordshire Scheme for Financing Schools as set out the paper. It was advised that proposals for further changes to the Scheme would be brought back to Forum in the autumn.

Forum noted the change.

## **11. Forward work programme**

Funding to ESCs to be brought to the September/November meeting

### **Any Other Business**

None.

### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: **Tuesday 18 September 2018**

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: Laurel Room, HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage

*Please note the change of date for the next meeting. This has been necessary due to the timing of the political process and the original date of 12 September was too early.*