

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Tuesday 18 September 2018
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

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

1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

The minutes were recorded as accurate.

- The chair advised the timing of this first meeting in the school academic year would be reviewed to closer align with the political process.
- Timescales for reports will be reviewed for the next academic year.
- Corina Foster was welcomed as the new Special Schools' representative.
- Tania Rawle was introduced as the new Head of Standards and Accountability.

2. School budget monitor Quarter 1 – Simon Newland/Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry presented this paper. The information is laid out in a different style from previous monitor reports, with the variances set out in the annex.

The Forum noted the quarter 1 monitor position.

3. Final DSG allocation and updated schools budget – Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry reported to outline the level of Dedicated Schools Grant available following the announcement of the final 2018-19 DSG.

In response to questions Jonathan explained that, due to DfE regulations, it is not possible to vary what has already been allocated in the 2018-19 school budget shares. The DfE does not currently have any mechanism in place to clawback unspent 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 2019-20, as outlined in section 3 of the paper.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	1	Abstain	-

4. Initial Report on Schools Budget Strategy 2019- – Simon Newland/Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper giving an initial outline of the Schools Budget for 2019-20. There remain a number of uncertainties about the budget, in particular the allocation for growth in the schools block as the DfE are changing the method for calculating this allocation.

There was discussion about several issues raised by the paper.

i) Teachers pay grant

After the Forum papers were completed, the DfE announced more detail about the separate grant intended to fund the additional cost of the September 2018 teachers' pay award above 1%. It was noted that the grant would not fund the additional cost of the award in all cases due to the formula that is being used to distribute it.

For primary and secondary schools and academies, the DfE will calculate grant allocations for each school. These will be paid to maintained schools via the local authority and to academies directly by the ESFA.

For schools and services funded through the high needs block, a teachers pay grant allocation will be allocated to the Authority and the Authority will need to decide how to distribute this. The Authority will consult on how to allocate this grant. (Note – it is now known that special and alternative provision academies will also be covered by this process and will not receive teachers' pay grant directly from the ESFA.)

ii) Level of DSG carry forward

There was discussion about whether a larger amount of carry forward than suggested in the paper should be allocated in 2019-20.

To provide further context on this issue, a paper will be brought to the next Forum meeting, covering historical information about the level of DSG carry forward, some comparative data from other local authorities and analysis of what level of contingency it is prudent to hold.

The Forum noted the list of budget pressures and savings.

Recommendations

The Forum endorsed the use of £6M of the DSG carry forward to support the schools and central services block budgets in 2019-20, as an initial allocation pending further consideration of whether to use more carry forward than this in 2019-20.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

The Forum supported the approach that the budgeted spend for early years and high needs should continue to be set at the level of relevant DSG blocks.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

The Forum supported the approach that the budgeted spend for schools and central services should be set at the level of the relevant DSG blocks plus an allocation of carry forward – with the initially agreed amount of carry forward being allocated as outlined in section 11.3 of the paper.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

The Forum supported consulting with schools on the proposals outlined in section 12 of the paper, subject to the following condition. If it is subsequently concluded that a larger resource than that shown in the paper is available, the Forum will consider further how the additional resource should be allocated.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

5. Minimum Funding Guarantee Exceptions and Pupil Number Variations - Simon Newland/Jonathan Burberry

New timetable with 2 windows (September/November).

Jonathan Burberry presented this paper to seek the support of the Forum for exceptions to the Minimum Funding Guarantee and for pupil number variations in the 2019-20 budget shares.

The DfE has introduced a new timetable for these dis-applications with two windows (September and November).

The Forum agreed all the recommendations in section 3.1 of the paper.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

6. De-delegation of funding for school improvement and HfL contract funding for 2019/20 – Simon Newland

Forum had previously agreed funding for a 2 year period. The current HfL contract expires and we need to re-contract for 6-7 year period on a year by year basis. Forum

was advised that we need to consult for arrangements for 2020/21. We will revisit the £20 de-delegation in 2019.

Sara Lalis raised with Forum pupils who were double funded, ie. pupils registered at their maintained school as well as an ESC.

In preparation for next year, a piece of work will take place around the number of schools HfL are working with. Schools need to see the evidence and scrutiny of value for money to inform decision making for the next year (March/April).

Voting members were asked to vote on:

3.1(i) to reconfirm the decision made at Schools Forum in September 2017 that the total cost and funding arrangements for the first year of the new contract covering the financial year 2019-20 is the same as for 2018-19

and in consequence that:

3.1(ii) the funding package set out in para 5.1 is agreed, and that:

- (a) £836,000 of Central Services Block DSG is allocated to this purpose, as last year
- (b) £250,000 of early Years DSG is retained centrally for this purpose, as last year
- (c) £285,000 of HLN DSG is allocated for this purpose, as last year

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

3.1(iii) **(all maintained mainstream school members voting, by phase)**; £20 per pupil is de-delegated by all maintained schools to support school improvement costs within the contract

SECONDARY VOTE					
For	1	Against	-	Abstain	-

PRIMARY VOTE					
For	7	Against	-	Abstain	-

3.1(iv) **(all maintained school, including special and ESC members voting)**; £5 per pupil/place is de-delegated/retained to support other costs within the HfL contract; and that each Special School and ESC pupil (place) is weighted for the purposes of this recommendation as equivalent to 5 mainstream pupils

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

7. School improvement strategy (verbal update) – Simon Newland/Juliet Whitehead

Priorities were discussed at working groups. The next step is to have an audience with various Forums around the proposals with a view to come back to Forum in November.

Note: Governors would like to be included in discussions.

8. Schools Financial Sustainability Update – Catherine Tallis

Catherine Tallis provided an update on budget pressures and how the Local Authority is seeking to support maintained schools. Forum was advised that two Sponsored Academies are likely to convert with a deficit; the level of deficit proposed to be met from the contingency fund will be shared once confirmed.

An update was provided on the series of workshops planned to support schools to develop sustainable budgets.

A proposal to consult schools on submitting a two year budget plan was shared. The purpose of extending the forecasting period is to better support schools in financial difficulty. Forum suggested that the assumptions in the budgeting software need to be clear if this is to add value. Cheryl Faint agreed to enhance the guidance to provide a clearer explanation to schools on assumptions.

Forum voted on consulting with maintained schools on the submission of a Year 1 budget and a Year 2 forecast annually (**all maintained mainstream school members voting**). The vote was as follows:

VOTE					
For	11	Against	-	Abstain	-

9. Healthy pupils capital funding – Trevor Mose

Trevor Mose presented his paper on how the one-off funding is to be allocated. Eligible schools will be able to apply during October and applications will be prioritised in areas of inequality. Further information will be posted on the GRID and sent out to schools in September. It was confirmed that if anyone wishes to volunteer to represent schools on the assessment panel they could. AN update will be brought to the Forum in November.

10. Update from High Needs Group – Simon Newland/Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry highlighted the recommendations in the paper. Simon Newland summarised the issues discussed at the high needs sub group meeting.

Forum noted the contents of the paper.

Recommendations

Forum agreed to delegate the decision to approve final high needs funded places for 2019-20 to the High Needs Funding sub group and, subject to the Group's agreement,

agreed to the submission of these changes to the ESFA .

Forum agreed to request the disapplication of the Minimum Funding Guarantee in the calculation of the special school top up rates for 2019-20, as outlined in section 6 of the paper.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

Alan Gray thanked colleagues for all the work which went into this work.

11. Review of approach to Elective Home Education – Jennie Newman/Richard Woodard

HCC have commissioned Hertfordshire University to carry out this work in relation to the EHE. The paper presents the current position in relation to EHE within Hertfordshire. Further analysis work needs to take place around the data and to focus on the child and parents' view.

Nick Rowland proposed thanks on behalf of the Forum as this is an area of concern for schools with children going of the radar.

12. Impact of actions to reduce out-county placements – Jennie Newman/Helen Redding

Helen Redding is leading on this on behalf of the Local Authority – this is a bigger piece of work than originally envisaged.

Sub-group 1 meet on a regular basis. Report will be produced in November which will lead into Sub-group 2 which is identifying options for the pattern of provision required for the future. By Spring, there should be a clearer idea on outcomes and next steps.

Requests for expressions of interest regarding the SEND Capital Grant which could support the implementation of changes arising from these piece of work have gone out. Looking at clearer specifications for specialist provision that include models for school to school support.

Forum thanked Helen and all involved in this piece of work.

13. SEND Strategy refresh – Jennie Newman

Jennie Newman updated Forum on the different work streams and noted that this is currently going through the political process. The £3M transformation bid money will be used to transform SEND provision in Hertfordshire. Jenny Coles will be sending an email to all schools outlining the details. There will be a focus on the 16+ and preparing them for adulthood as well as the use of digital technology and multi-agency working.

Note: To return to a future Forum meeting (early in the agenda)

14. Forward Work Programme

Simon Newland outlined papers due to come to the next meeting.

15. Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday 28 November 2018
Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm
Venue: HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage

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