

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday 28 November 2018
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Tom Evans, Tony Fitzpatrick, Corina Foster, Matt Gauthier, Anna Greetham, Frances Manning, Tracy Prickett, Nick Rowlands, David Shaylor, Robert Smith, Robert Fielden, Brian Frederick, Jan Liversage, Gemma Williamson
Non-School Members	Cllr Tim Hutchings; Cllr Mark Watkin
Substitutes	Jeremy Turner (substitute for Alison Saunders)
Officers	Simon Newland, Catherine Tallis, Jonathan Burberry, Cheryl Faint, Melany McQueen, Jamie Leavy, Andy Manson, Julie Reddish
Apologies	Dave Allen, Kit Davies, Alison Saunders
Observing	Cllr Terry Douris, Andrew de Csilléry, John Grubb, David Williams (NUT)

Nominations and thanks

Nominations were invited for the Chair and Vice-Chair

Chair: Alan Gray (proposed Richard Haynes and seconded Robert Fielden)

Vice-Chair: Richard Haynes (proposed Alan Gray and seconded by Robert Smith)

Alan Gray and Richard Haynes were elected to their respective posts.

Simon Newland proposed thanks to Karen James for the services she has given to the Forum over her tenure.

1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

The minutes were recorded as accurate.

Item 6 – De-delegation of funding for school improvement and HfL contract funding
Frances Manning was advised that the meeting to address the above and agree the objectives for HfL will take place with school representatives early in the New Year.

2. Safe Space, previously Counselling in Schools (Children and Young People's Counselling, Arts Therapy & Mentoring) – Andy Manson

- The recent prevalence study: "Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2017" stated one in eight (12.8%) 5 to 19 year olds had at least one mental disorder when assessed in 2017.

- So far in 2018 135 Schools have accessed Safe Space through a range of funding streams. Renewal for School contracts take place each year, prices remaining static across a number of years, alongside rigorous quality assurance have been highlighted by schools as key reasons for them continuing to commission Safe Space. Demand for services is currently higher than the service can respond to.
- Safe Space forms part of the Hertfordshire continuum of emotional and mental health services supporting step up and step down.
- Recommendations from the report were:
 - i) To continue to support Safe Space
 - ii) To reduce the cost of overheads charged to DSG by 50% / £123,000.
 - iii) To invest a further £70,000 to enhance and widen the Safe Space Offer funded from these savings in overheads.
 - iv) To implement a consistent pricing structure across all Hertfordshire schools.

Forum commented that:

- The service was not widely advertised nor known about, and that improved marketing was needed.
- Supporting evidence was requested of the value for money / competitive pricing of Safe Space.
- Keen to bring all services funded by DSG to Forum

Forum therefor agreed:

- a) A further report should be made to the February meeting demonstrating the impact for schools, including from their perspective.
- b) This should include greater clarity on the proposed use of any additional funding and an indication of where Safe Space fits with other provision.

3. Review of the level of DSG carry-forward – Jonathan Burberry

At the request of Forum, a further paper had been prepared examining what should be the planned level of future carry-forwards and how this level should be achieved.

In the light of the paper Forum agreed:

- (i) a target for a general contingency level of DSG carry forward of £8m, as set out in section 7 of the paper,
- (ii) a target for a specific reserve of DSG carry forward for high needs of £2m, as set out in section 8 of the paper,
- (iii) the approach to managing a reduction in the level of DSG carry forward which is set out in section 9 of the paper.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

4. School Budget 2019/20 update – Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry presented an updated paper based on the previous information provided to Schools Forum and the proposal to use carry forwards of £6m for 2019/20.

In discussion a further paper was requested setting out how the proposed additional £250,000 for ESCs is to be used, and the level of specialist advice and support which ESCs will be expected to provide.

Following discussion, Forum agreed:

- (i) the budget proposals for the schools block, subject to the separate decision on how to distribute the unallocated headroom which is covered by item (iv) below.
- (ii) the budget proposals for the central school services block,
- (iii) the budget proposals for the high needs block,
- (iv) consulting schools on the proposals on how to allocate headroom funding to primary and secondary schools outlined in section 6 of the paper.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

Forum also noted that the detail of the 2019-20 Early Years budget (including the allocation of the early years' headroom) is expected to be considered in the new year.

5. Draft Minutes of the High Needs Funding Sub-Group – Simon Newland

The draft minutes were noted, including the way in which they had informed the budget proposals set out in other papers. The need to examine in future the sustainability of expenditure on post-16 placements was also noted.

6. Approval of centrally-retained budgets: Central Service Block – Catherine Tallis

The paper outlined the planned use of Central Schools Services Block and centrally-retained schools block resources for 2019/20. Forum noted the need at its January meeting to agree some minor changes to CSSB allocations for continuing functions to accommodate the overall reduction in funds available and a number of other pressures issues including funding for SACRE. Subject to that, Forum was asked to agree the proposed budgets for CSSB and centrally-retained functions described in the report.

Forum therefor agreed the 2019/20 central budgets as listed in Table 1 to the report.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

7. Approval of de-delegated budget items – Catherine Tallis

The purpose of the paper was to seek approval of the 2019/20 other de-delegated budgets. The only significant change proposed was in relation to the de-delegated funds for the Head of School Standards and Accountability. No funding is being requested for this for 2019/20 as the current and future costs will now be met by the LA.

It was noted that the surplus of funds de-delegated for 2018/19 might usefully be used to refurbish or replace The Grid. This proposal has been discussed with and is supported by the Schools ICT Working Group.

It was noted that additional funding would be needed from other sources to cover the costs. The Grid would be available to all schools including academies and there would be funding packages and pay walls. It was proposed to bring back a further report detailing the investment proposal for the Grid to Forum in the new Year.

Alan Gray proposed thanks on behalf of Schools Forum to the LA for picking up the funding of the Head of School Standards and Accountability post.

Recommendations

Maintained Schools were asked to agree the following:

- i. That rates of de-delegation per pupil remain at 2018/19 levels for the following items:
 - Determining Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility
 - Trade Union facilities time.
- ii. That the 2018/19 contingency support for reorganizing schools and schools facing financial difficulty continues at the reduced rate of 80p per pupil.

Maintained Primary

VOTE					
For	6	Against	-	Abstain	-

Maintained Secondary

VOTE					
For	2	Against	-	Abstain	-

8. Schools Capital Repairs and Maintenance – Trevor Mose

As requested at the last meeting, a paper was tabled to provide an update on the schools' capital and maintenance programme and other property issues. A query was raised about small schools as some appear not to be on the list.

Confirmation of funding for 2019/20 will be available before the end of the financial year and an update on the programme can be provided in April.

Healthy School Grant – this will be distributed across the community. Schools have been invited to submit business cases which will be evaluated for funding by a panel as agreed by Forum in November 2018.

As Trevor is leaving the Authority and this will be his last Forum, Alan Gray proposed his thanks on behalf of Forum and look forward to welcoming Claire Saban as an interim cover at future meetings.

Forum agreed to note the valuable contribution made by Trevor in recent years to the quality and effectiveness of schools maintenance, and thanked him on behalf of schools.

9. Early Years Budget Share Proposed Consultation – Jamie Leavy

A paper had been circulated to inform Forum and seek approval to consult Early Years providers about the mechanisms for funding EYs providers next year.

Forum agreed to consult on the proposals set out in the paper, but commented that it would be valuable for such highly technical issues to be considered in advance by the Early Years Consultative Group.

VOTE					
For	16	Against	-	Abstain	-

10. Early Years DSG Centrally Retained Funds evaluation – Melany McQueen

As part of a regular programme of scrutiny of the value of services funded from DSG, Forum considered a range of issues relating to services funded from Centrally-held Early Years DSG. Generally, Forum was happy that these services represented a good use of money. Members were referred to the circulated reports and asked to note the following service elements funded from the DSG:

- quality improvement
- business support
- full time places
- managing free early education and childcare schemes
- early years sufficiency
- IT infrastructure

11. Integrated Therapies – Julie Reddish

Forum was asked to note the contents of the report. Members emphasise the importance to Forum that the quality of service at the point of delivery was maintained r enhanced compared with that offered at present.

12. Forward Work Programme

Simon Newland outlined papers due to come to future meetings, including some of the additional reports now requested by Forum in discussion on earlier agenda items.

13. Any Other Business

None.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Monday 14 January 2019

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: Ash Room, HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage