

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday 27 February 2019
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Tom Evans, Tony Fitzpatrick, Matt Gauthier, Frances Manning, Tracy Prickett, Nick Rowlands, Robert Smith, Robert Fielden, , Gemma Williamson, Dave Allen, Sara Lalis, Helen Blay,
Non-School Members	Cllr Adam Mitchell
Substitutes	Jeremy Turner (substitute for Alison Saunders)
Officers	Simon Newland, Cheryl Faint, Tania Rawle, Debbie Pettit, Saira Muschamp, Mireille MacRaild, Jennie Newman, Richard Woodard, David Shevlane, Juliet Whitehead, Jamie Leavy, Maria Nastri, Andy Manson, Deborah Roberts, Jo Fisher, Jonathan Burberry, Melany McQueen
Apologies	Cllr Mark Watkin, Kit Davies, David Shaylor, Anna Greetham, Abi Asimolowo, Jan Liversage
Observing	Cllr Terry Douris, John Grubb, Andrew de Csilléry, Ellie Reilly (Stone King LLP Solicitor)

1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

The following amendments/comments to the previous minutes were noted:

Item 2 – School Budget 2019/20 (page 2): the funding figure to be amended to £0.25M and should read

*A query was raised around the High Needs Block (Item 5.4) and whether there is any indication how this money will be used given the delay in the review of the ESCs and pressures on the service. It was noted that Forum had previously allocated **£0.25M** additional funding for ESCs and the allocation of this will be review in detail at the next meeting.*

Item 4 – Changes to the scheme for financing schools: software to be appropriate and of quality

Update on Integrated Therapies: Simon Newland confirmed that the Integrated Therapies contract includes Speech and Language; and an engagement process has taken place with schools and Forum and forms part of the new contract. Richard Hayes asked for assurances that the Integrated Therapy services will not diminish.

Note: This will be picked up as an agenda item in the May meeting.

2. Education, Libraries and Localism Cabinet report on Standards and Quality in Hertfordshire Schools - HfL

The circulated report is that which was presented to Members in February with an overview of the standards and quality of education in Hertfordshire and presents evidence from inspections, test and examination results and other assessments.

Following discussion, Forum requested a further report to June Forum setting out how the delivery of services and impact of the work HfL undertakes under the contract with HCC is monitored and assessed.

Note: A report will be brought to the June meeting.

3. Schools budget monitor Q3 – Saira Muschamp/Debbie Pettit

The budget for Q3 was presented and Forum was asked to note the contents. Forum requested future reports include a comparison of budgets and actuals.

Action: This will be included in future reports

4. ESC funding – Richard Woodard

Sara Lalis and David Allen declared an interest and abstained from voting.

The paper described the current position in relation to Education Support Centres funding and increase in demand. There were two areas that did not receive an uplift in funding, these were St Albans/Harpenden (DSPL 7) and Dacorum (DSPL 8). Both of these areas have seen an increase in demand for places from an increase in permanent exclusions. Forum was asked to consider interim arrangements pending the evaluation and revision of the new funding model for ESC's and to vote on the following recommendations.

- i. That whilst a review is being undertaken of the revised funding formula DSPL 7 and DSPL 8 have their funding increased to provide additional capacity.
- ii. That DSPL 7 and 8 are funded for an additional five places in their base budget at a cost of £10,000 per place (Total cost £100,000)
- iii. Additionally, a top up sum of £50,000 (5 x £10,000) to be provided to each ESC in order to provide adequate funding to cover the cost of providing five additional places
- iv. These additional places to become a permanent uplift in overall place numbers and funding

VOTE					
For	13	Against	-	Abstain	2

5. Behaviour workstream update – Richard Woodard

The paper is in response to schools identifying the need and provides an update on

progress in the areas covered by the Behaviour and Alternative Provision work stream.

Note: Tiers will be reviewed over the summer. Some outcomes, (i.e. physical interventions) cannot be reported on.

Action: The SLA process is to be agreed with the ESCs

6. High Level Needs Budget 2019-2020 – Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper to provide an update on the High Needs Budget proposals for 2019-20.

The Forum supported:

- i. the budget proposals for the use of the high needs block for 2019-20,
- ii. the outline proposals for the use of the Strategy Development Fund (SDF) outlined in table 2 within the paper.

VOTE					
For	14	Against	0	Abstain	1

7. Approval of centrally retained early years DSG 2019/20 – David Shevlane

The paper details the early years' budgets for 2018-19 that are classified as central budgets, including the EY SEN Inclusion Fund. Forum was asked to approve the budgets as listed in Table 1 of the document. The paper identified all the funding strands supported by the centrally retained budget and detailed the exact amounts for each strand including some reduction in budget for the coming financial year in certain funded areas.

Note: Forum queried whether there would be a decrease in the level of service since the figures proposed were the same in cash terms as last year, and were assured that these would remain the same.

Note: Forum was advised that the budget for full time places is appropriate for the number of applications received.

Agreed: To approve the central retention of the budgets as listed in Table 1 of the document

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

8. Supporting transition from early year into nursery and reception classes in primary schools – Juliet Whitehead

Closing the gap for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups remains a priority for Hertfordshire. The paper outlined a proposal for additional work which Herts for

Learning would undertake with PVI providers, maintained schools and their early years' provision to support transition from PVI to school provision.

Forum agreed that there is a challenge facing schools with regard to the transition of children to maintained schools but were unhappy that the LA hadn't consulted with primary schools' representatives prior to the paper being produced. Forum felt that the context to some of the issues that schools face with regard to transition hadn't been explained fully enough.

Forum noted that in-year admissions were a particular concern. Any transition work done prior to September would have been of no benefit to these children, who often have very complex issues.

Forum supported the proposal that a working group to be established of schools PVI providers, the LA and HfL to further develop what was being proposed in terms of the HfL role and responsibility with regards to this work to support transition. This working group should meet as soon as possible, to consider both how to support and strengthen transition arrangements but also to consider whether other areas of activity should also be advanced.

Forum were asked to vote on the following, noting the adjustment made to Item (ii) as shown below.

Items (iv) and (v) were irrelevant at this time and would be withdrawn from the recommendations and the vote.

- (i) To note that a £1566k underspending is anticipated on Early Years expenditure in 2018/19
- (ii) To agree in principle to set aside funding of £960k, on a one-off basis, to commission from HfL a programme of action as described in this report, to improve transition between nursery and reception provision and potentially other activities, and thereby improve attainment at EYFS .
- (iii) To agree to establish a working group of Primary and Early Years representatives to agree the specifics of the programme

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

9. Early Year Budget 2019-20 – Jonathan Burberry

Jonathan Burberry presented this paper to provide an update on the early years budget proposals for 2019-20, including an increase in the unit funding rates in early years budget shares as set out in annex A.

It was queried why the nursery schools supplement had reduced by 5p, offsetting the 5p increase in the base rate, so that the overall funding rate for nursery schools had not increased. It was explained that the nursery schools supplement is intended to protect the funding levels of nursery schools at their 2016-17 levels and not to increase them.

Forum supported the early years budget proposals set out in this paper, including the increase in the unit funding rates for early years as set out in annex A.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

10. Proposals for revised Early Years funding process following consultation – Jamie Leavy

This is a follow up to the paper brought to Forum in November. Following a five week consultation in January/February 2019, over 460 responses were received with the vast majority agreeing to all the proposed changes. Results were set out by provider type in the appendices.

Four items were consulted on and recommended to Forum:

- (i) Remove childminders from monthly instalment budget share process due to large fluctuation in numbers of children each funding period.
- (ii) Budget Share instalments to be based on Spring 2019 funding return submission with the monthly instalments weighted differently each period to limit risk of overfunding
- (iii) Timing of reconciliation payments based on funding returns
- (iv) Funding rates used for budget share allocations

Members of Forum representing maintained schools were also recommended to agree that the following text to be added to the Scheme for Financing Schools

- Budget share instalments paid from the Early Years block will be paid in the following;
- 4% April, 6% each month April to Aug, 9% each month September to December, 9.5% each month January to March.

Schools Forum agreed both sets of recommendations as set out above, and that these can be implemented in 2019/2020

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

11. Options for the maintenance and improvement of the Hertfordshire Grid for Learning, HGfL – Juliet Whitehead

The paper outlined the proposed approach and funding to redevelop The Grid which is increasingly out of date and in need for modernisation. This resource is widely utilised by schools and the County Council.

Herts for Learning (HfL) had been asked to develop some proposals for the future development of the Grid which were presented to the Herts ICT Partnership Working Group in order to receive views from the schools representatives.

The paper presented asked Schools Forum to agree to commission HfL to develop and improve the Grid including exploring the possibility of introducing log-in accounts to help address the issue of open content.

Forum asked for confirmation that HfL as part of the commission would be asked to procure at least a couple of quotes for the development and improvement of the Grid. This was confirmed.

The following matters were recommended to Forum, and agreed without dissent:

- (i) Herts for Learning (HfL) are commissioned by Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) to implement a new vision for The Grid for learning with a significantly enhanced website and improved user experience
- (ii) That the proposal is developed in detail in close collaboration with schools, undertaken via the ICT Partnership Working Group
- (iii) The £130k one-off cost of this improved website would be paid for as set out in Section 5 of the paper; and if savings can be achieved then any lower contribution is paid from the same sources in the same proportions
- (iv) That in consequence an increase in the centrally retained central schools services budget of £80k is agreed for 2019/20
- (v) The £20k per annum cost to cover on-going hosting, platform maintenance and support would be covered from the Central Services School Block (CSSB) of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) from 2020-21 onwards.

12. **Safe Space – Maria Nastri**

The paper was to provide further information to Forum on the work of Safe Space (previously Counselling in Schools) and to outline proposed changes to the funding arrangements. The paper had previously been considered in November but Forum asked for additional information demonstrating the impact for schools.

Further clarity was sought around:

- Could the data include quantitative data/number of cases and could the statistics include number of children and number of sessions and where there are hotspots
- Clarity of schools on the list, ie. schools (or a student at a school) that have received a service
- Clarity about out of county schools and funding/children in the looked after system and funded from a different work stream.

Actual number of schools = 117

Actions: The data in future reports should provide more quantitative data regarding the number of interventions

Actions: To further review the impact of Safe Space with schools

Actions: Forum to receive a further report on how the funding has been spent, the development of the service and its impact.

Forum was previously recommended to support the following proposals and each item was voted on separately:

i) To continue to support Safe Space.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

ii) To reduce the cost of overheads charged to DSG by 50% / £123,000.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

iii) (As amended) To invest a further £70,000 to enhance and widen the Safe Space Offer funded from these savings in overheads **(as outlined in Item 2.4) for one year and subject to an early review of the work in Hertfordshire.**

VOTE					
For	13	Against	2	Abstain	-

iv) To implement a consistent pricing structure across all Hertfordshire schools.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

A further proposal was added:

v) To develop a marketing strategy to publicise the service to Hertfordshire Schools in a systemic roll out to ensure needs may be met and demand does not exceed availability.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

A report would come back to Schools Forum in November following the review

13. Fair Access and Exclusions – Deborah Roberts

A report was presented to the Forum on the current situation both nationally and in Hertfordshire in relation to the rise in the number of pupils who are meeting the requirements/criteria of the Fair Access Protocol and the rise in the numbers of pupils who are being permanently excluded. This growth in volume has led to significant

demand on the Integration Team resource who have responsibility for LA responsibilities for exclusions and securing school places under the Fair Access Protocol. Data for this academic year to date was included in section 7.1 and 7.5 of the report.

The report also outlined proposals to separate the Integration Team into two, thus creating a Fair Access Team and an Exclusions Team, which would hopefully enable the Exclusions Team to offer more scrutiny of exclusions, and a preventative role to schools and families.

Note: One member of Forum stated they would like to see more collaboration between ISL and the Integration Team, however another Forum member felt they had a very collaborative relationship with both the Integration Team and ISL members.

Note: Dave Allen asked Forum to recognise the excellent work undertaken by Deborah and her team, which was agreed by other members of the Forum.

Following discussion, Forum agreed:

- (i) To note the substantial increase in the workload of the Integration team
- (ii) To agree to fund an additional two H9 Officers at 0.88fte (total 1.76 fte) at an approximate annual cost of £77,000, and 2.0 fte H6 officers at an approximate annual cost of £58,000. (total annual cost of £135,000).
- (iii) To note and agree that the costs of this in 2019/20 of £68,000 (half the full year salary plus non pay employment costs for travel) would require an additional allocation of carry forward to the Central Schools Services Block
- (iv) To note that accommodating the full year consequences of this would need to be addressed in a review for 2020/21 of priorities for expenditure within that Block

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

14. **Funding adjustments for permanently excluded pupils – Jonathan Burberry**

Jonathan Burberry presented this paper to outline proposed changes to the funding adjustments for permanent exclusions. Forum asked about what happens to the money from the funding deductions and how it is allocated to schools readmitting previously excluded pupils.

Further work needs to be undertaken around the situation where a pupil is excluded from an academy and readmitted by a maintained schools or vice versa, due to the different financial years.

Concern was raised that the increase in funding deductions for permanently excluded pupils could make it more difficult to arrange managed moves. This issue will be followed up as part of the review of funding for Education Support Centres.

Forum was asked to vote separately on the following recommendations:

- a) to support the changes outlined in section 5 of the paper for calculating the amount to be recovered from a school or academy which has permanently excluded a pupil

VOTE					
For	10	Against	4	Abstain	1

- b) to agree to alter the funding period used to calculate funding adjustments for pupils excluded from (or readmitted by) academies. The funding period to be used would be the academic year, instead of the local authority financial year.

VOTE					
For	15	Against	-	Abstain	-

15. Forward work programme

Agreed, with an additional item on Integrated Therapies added to the May meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday 1 May 2019
 Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm
 Venue: Ash Room, HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage