

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

Wednesday 26 June 2019
Robertson House, Stevenage

ATTENDANCE:

Chair	Alan Gray
School Members	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Dave Allen, Tom Evans, Tony Fitzpatrick, Corina Foster, Matt Gauthier, Anna Greetham, John Grubb, Jan Liversage, Frances Manning, Tracy Prickett, Alison Saunders
Non-School Members	Cllr Mark Mills-Bishop
Substitutes	Helen Ackerman (substitute for Gemma Williamson)
Officers	Simon Newland, Cheryl Faint, Jennie Newman, Juliet Whitehead, Jonathan Burberry, Melany Knowles, Doris Mutegi, Michelle Sleath, Jonathan Burberry,
Apologies	Kit Davies, Robert Fielden, Sara Lalis, Robert Smith, Nick Rowlands, Gemma Williamson
Observing	Cllr Mark Watkin, Cllr Terry Douris

1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

The minutes were recorded as accurate.

Matters arising

Update on Integrated Therapies: a question was raised around OT assurance - this will commence in September. Simon Newland has an update from the service which will be circulated with the minutes.

Action: Caroline Inglis to circulate to Forum members with the minutes.

Fair Access and Exclusions: there was a request whether further information on the proposed changes to the operation of the Integration Team could come back to Schools Forum so that schools are aware of how this will work in future. Simon Newland advised that this can be best achieved through communication to schools rather than through Schools Forum.

Note: Item for a future Hertfordshire Headteacher Updates

2. Schools Capital Repairs and Maintenance

Forum was updated on progress with delivering the 2019/20 repairs and maintenance programme. 26 projects from previous programme years are still in progress, with a proportion of the costs now being drawn from the 2019/20 budget. There has been a downturn in funding for maintained schools due to reduced DfE allocations – Forum was asked to note the actual level of grant funding was £16.452m, approximately £1m less than anticipated. More prudent programming and delayed projects will be considered to manage the risk of returning an overspend at

year end. Designed schemes are currently being released for works tender and contract sums finalised.

Final approval of individual projects and programmes will be reported to Forum after this stage is complete.

Healthy Pupils Capital Funding – Forum was advised that 54 Healthy Pupil schemes are being funded in Hertfordshire schools and all successful/unsuccessful schools were notified by the end of February 2019.

Note: Forum requested that the list of schools in the appendices is more specific to location and with school number – this is particularly useful where there are schools will the same or similar names.

3. Schools Budget: Out turn report – 2018/2019 – Doris Mutegi

Doris Mutegi presented this report and Forum was asked to note the main over and underspends arising within the schools budget during 2018/19. Annex A provides details of the variances.

There was discussion about several budgets:

Exceptional Needs Funding- Forum was asked to note that there is expected to be additional expenditure on this budget in 2019-20 as a result of adopting a more relaxed approach in assessing allocations. This overspend would be funded by drawing resource from the SEN Strategy Development Fund, and could run up to £1m. Members of Forum supported this approach.

Education at private hospitals – the LA is obliged to fund the education for pupils placed there by health services for medical needs. It was suggested that savings might be possible overall if more effective use was made of existing hospital education provision, albeit this was not controlled by HCC.

High Needs additional DSG of £2.862m received in 2018-19 – it was confirmed that it had been previously agreed that this should be ring-fenced for high needs spending.

SEND Special Advisory Services – the vacancy factor applied to this service was raised. It was suggested that DSG funded budgets should not be covered by a vacancy factor. Officers agreed to investigate this further.

Forum noted the final outturn position.

Forum supported:

- carrying forward into 2019-20 the surplus funding resulting from each of the underspends of de-delegated funding in the line items set out in the table in paragraph 6.4, for the eventual benefit of de-delegating schools.
- carrying forward into 2019-20 the additional high needs DSG received in 2018-2019 of £2.862m and ringfencing this for high needs expenditure.

VOTE					
For	10	Against	-	Abstain	-

4. **Growth fund and falling rolls fund allocations 2019/20 – Jonathan Burberry**

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper. The annexes detail the 2019/20 financial year growth fund and falling rolls allocations.

Forum requested that schools are listed by geographical area in future papers so that patterns and trends can be identified more easily. Forum also asked for the location to be shown where schools have the same or similar names.

A query was raised about whether there would be changes in the funding for small secondary schools in areas of demographic growth for the next financial year. It was noted that the number of schools eligible may change between years depending on changes in pupil numbers and Ofsted category. (A DfE requirement is that only good or outstanding schools are eligible for this funding.) The criteria for the fund need to be approved by the Forum and officers indicated that it is planned to review the criteria for 2020-21.

Forum noted and supported the allocations set out in the paper.

5. **Teachers' pension employer contribution grant – Jonathan Burberry**

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper, which provides information about the DfE's teachers' pensions employer contribution grant from September 2019. Jonathan explained that some of the detail about the grant, and in particular about the supplementary fund, was yet to be announced.

Attention was drawn to the point made at the end of section 5.1.2 of the paper – that schools are advised to deal with their performance management reviews promptly in the autumn term, so that the impact on pension costs of any grade changes can be taken into account in any claims made to the supplementary fund.

Forum noted the contents of the paper.

6. **Requirement to submit financial forecasts to Hertfordshire County Council – Cheryl Faint**

The paper was presented seeking the agreement from members of Forum representing maintained schools and ESCs to the following;

- i) that schools and ESCs maintained by HCC be required to submit a financial forecast for the second year of their financial plan to Hertfordshire County Council along with their Annual Budget return (ABR) by 31st May each year.
- ii) agree that the Scheme for Financing Schools be changed to include a provision requirement to submit a 2nd year financial forecast as an addition to

the annual reporting requirements of schools maintained by Hertfordshire County Council.

- iii) agree that for the financial year 2019-20, the 2nd year forecast should be returned by 1st November 2019

It was explained that support, guidance and attendance at Headteacher meetings will be developed to support medium term planning in schools as detailed in the paper.

VOTE (Maintained Schools only)					
For	6	Against	0	Abstain	-

7. Review of membership quotas – Simon Newland

The paper outlined the results of the annual review undertaken to ensure alignment of representation on Forum with pupil numbers. Special schools qualify for 2 separate representatives, one each for both maintained and academy. Three options were proposed to Forum to reflect the new number of pupils. The LA preferred option is (c).

Option (a) - Reduce representation of Primary Heads by one from 5 to 4 and increase numbers of academy representatives by 1

There were no votes in favour of this option.

Option (b) - Reduce representation of Primary Governors by one from 2 to 1 and increase numbers of academy representatives by 1

There were five votes in favour of this option

Option (c) - Increase total number of schools representatives by one from 14 to 15, and for this extra representative to be an academies representative

There were eight votes in favour of this option, with one abstention

Note: Option (c) was adopted.

8. SEND Transformation: slides – David Butcher

David Butcher set out for Forum the purpose and main components of the SEND Transformation Programme. An update would likely be beneficial in the late Autumn once changes have been rolled out and become embedded.

9. Specialist Advisory Service – Jennie Newman

The Specialist Advisory Service Review is part of the work being undertaken as part of the SEND transformation, to meet the priority of transforming local delivery networks to provide clearer pathways to effective help.

The review highlighted the areas for improvement. An action plan, alongside a formal

consultation with staff and stakeholders, is being put together. This will guide the reconfiguration of service according to specialism and so that it works more closely on a locality basis with schools and other agencies to better meet the needs of children and their families.

The consultation with staff and stakeholders is planned for the autumn, with a view to implementing service reconfiguration and improvement in April 2020.

It was noted by the Forum that schools value the services of front line staff and recognised the good quality of work in some areas. Assurance was provided that the quality of the service would continue to be maintained or improved during the consultation period, and with the delivery going forward.

Note: Forum requested a further update on the SAS review and service reconfiguration in the November meeting

10. **Review of arrangements for the Hertfordshire admissions appeals service – Juliet Whitehead**

Schools Forum was updated on changes to the funding arrangements for the admission appeals service which are required in order to comply with new DfE guidance. Work has taken place since January regarding these changes. This includes a much more comprehensive analysis of the costs of the Appeals Service than has ever been done previously, and an initial outline of the proposed changes to the funding of admission appeals service going forwards.

Forum was asked to note and comment on a number of issues set out in the paper and in particular; that a consistent system for funding across both academies and maintained schools should be introduced to ensure that Hertfordshire becomes compliant; that we should charge both academy and maintained schools on a traded basis; and that the changes should be implemented from April 2020.

In the discussion that followed a number of issues were raised:

- the costs and challenges of school hoppers (parents who appeal and gain a place at a school but then move their child onto another school)
- The timing of appeals
- The financial impact on schools regarding appeals especially when a number of appeals lodged are withdrawn and there is no financial recourse to recoup this money from parents or any other source
- Trends/patterns of appeals

A benchmarking exercise has taken place with other Local Authorities but as yet we are unable to get clarity around what's included in charges, cost of recharges included or any DSG subsidies, as well as compliance to the appeals code.

A discussion took place around venues and perhaps the use of community centres which do not attract a high hire-out fee – this is an element which is being reviewed by the LA.

It was agreed that a paper would be brought to Schools Forum in the Autumn with

details about the possible charging options, and that this should include more extensive benchmarking and proposals or possible ways in which the cost of the service could be reduced.

Forum was asked to vote on Item 3.1.2 and support the carry forward of the underspend on admissions in 2018/19 to support the appeals budget in 2019-20 as outlined in the paper.

VOTE					
For	13	Against	-	Abstain	-

11. Supporting transition from Early Years Providers into Nursery and Reception classes from Primary Schools – Juliet Whitehead

Forum was updated on the progress made since the February meeting. An Early Years Working Group of Primary and Early Years representatives has been established with the purpose of agreeing the broad scope of the programme of work and to work on the specifics related to the further development and roll-out. Several meetings have taken place and the approach has been endorsed. Work is now underway, and will extend in September to engage schools in the programme of work. Delivery of the programme will be on a 2 year cycle, which will allow an assessment to be made of effectiveness/impact. A RAYG criteria has been developed to assist EY practitioners to identify children's level of needs in terms of transition. Concerns were raised by Forum about using the RAYG system and 'labelling' children. In response, Schools Forum was informed that this concern has been discussed by the Working Group and HfL are working in partnership with the group to agree a way forward.

Action: The concern about RAYG will be fed back to HfL

12. Forward work programme

Agreed, with an item of the HLN Strategy being brought back to the September meeting and an update on the implementation of SAS programme to the November meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Wednesday 18 September 2019
Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm
Venue: Ash Room, HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage