

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SCHOOLS FORUM

**Wednesday 15 January 2020**  
**Robertson House, Stevenage**

### ATTENDANCE:

<b>Chair</b>	Alan Gray
<b>School and PVI Members</b>	Richard Haynes (Vice-Chair), Dave Allen, Carole Bennett, Geraint Edwards, Robert Fielden, Corina Foster, Matt Gauthier, Anna Greetham, Alan Henshall, Peter Hilton, Jan Liversage, Nick Rowlands, Tracy Prickett, Gemma Williamson, Robert Smith
<b>Non-School Members</b>	Cllr Mark Mills-Bishop, Gary Dixon
<b>Substitutes</b>	Martin Brown
<b>Officers</b>	Simon Newland, Jonathan Burberry, Debbie Pettit, Cheryl Faint, Melany Knowles, Jo Fisher, Tony Fitzpatrick, Rachael Adler
<b>Apologies</b>	Nikki Smith, Jessica Breakwell, Frances Manning, Wayne Morris, Sara Lalis, Alison Saunders
<b>Observing</b>	John Grubb, Cllr Mark Watkin, Cllr Terry Douris, Arun Sri (HCC Finance)

### 1. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

Tom Evans has resigned as a Member of Schools Forum. Peter Hilton, Headteacher at Millbrook has been appointed as the new maintained primary school representative.

Gary Dixon, West Herts College will be replacing Gill Worgan as the 14-19 (Progression) Partnership representative.

The minutes were recorded as accurate subject to the following amendments:

- to note that Frances Manning had sent her apologies
- the date of the meeting was 27 November 2019 (not September)

### Matters arising

Integrated Therapies: Richard Haynes has had a meeting with Andrew Knox and there will be full feedback and a report back to Schools Forum in February.

Action: To be added to the forward plan

Item 8 Early Years Centrally Retained Items: The items mentioned in the minutes as still to be determined will now go to the February (rather than the January) Forum meeting.

## **2. Funding complex needs in mainstream schools**

Jo Fisher introduced this paper, providing an update on progress with a review of funding for complex needs in mainstream schools. The review has been completed, with multiple recommendations round system change and improvement to reflect changes in demand and circumstances.

As regards funding proposals, the review set out three options for consideration:

1. Keep the existing ENF system, with increased funding and consideration of recommendations
2. Introduce a two-tier model – banding approach for EHCP's plus a local funding system to quickly meet emerging needs for children without EHCPs
3. Allocation of top up funding to EHCPs either through individual assessment or banding system

Forum was asked to consider and support option 2

Forum agreed that Option 2 was its preferred option.

## **3. High level needs budget**

This paper, introduced by Simon Newland, set out the proposed approach to the High-Level Needs DSG budget for 2020-21 and subsequent years, which seeks to take account of the additional costs likely in relation to funding children with complex needs in mainstream schools.

The budget forecast set out in the paper reported expected headroom in the 2020-21 high needs budget of approximately £2m. However, this does not take into account the risk of further increase in out of county placements (perhaps £1M) and the estimated additional cost of enhanced complex needs in mainstream, creating a budget shortfall of £3m in 2020-21 rising to £7m in 2021-22.

The paper set out in further detail some of the major uncertainties affecting the budget next year, in particular the outcome of the current exercise to quantify more precisely the costs of the new complex needs funding arrangement, and the work being done round independent placement costs falling to the DSG. The position on both these issues will be much clearer in April which would allow a final decision to be made on financial provision for complex needs in mainstream within a balanced budget.

Forum asked to be informed of the total amount of the DSG contribution to the cost of looked after children with high needs in out county residential placements. Officers will provide this. Officers are also looking at a new approach to apportioning costs as between DSG and HCC funding. It is anticipated there will be an update to the June Forum.

The paper also set out the need for a detailed longer term review of the current HLN budget to support the medium term sustainability of the proposals being made in relation to complex needs funding.

Following considerable discussion, members of Forum felt that there was a need to seek to set the budget for additional complex needs funding earlier than proposed, so as to inform the training activity on the new system which will commence in February. Accordingly, it was agreed to seek to bring forward to the February Forum meeting a decision on overall provision, and to base this on the costs of a sample of the pupils who currently do not receive top up funding but would be likely to do so under the proposed new system. It was noted that this might for the initial year require additional funding from the currently uncommitted DSG carry-forward.

Forum noted the report.

#### **4. Minutes of high needs funding sub-group**

Forum was asked to note the minutes of the High-Level Needs Funding Sub-Group meeting which was held on the 9 January 2020.

#### **5. Schools budget 2020-21**

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper which provides an overview of the budget now that the DSG and the funding data for 2020-21 have been received.

Under section 11 (Early Years Block), it was requested that there be clarity around the number of early years pupils that access the family support workers service.

Forum noted the revised budget position.

Forum agreed recommendations 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 collectively.

<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>For</b>	16	<b>Against</b>	-	<b>Abstain</b>	-

#### **6. Finalisation of primary and secondary formula funding factors 2020-21**

Jonathan Burberry introduced this paper which outlines the proposed unit values for the 2020-21 primary and secondary funding formula and provides details of how they have been derived; this includes feedback from the consultation which took place in December 2019.

It was raised whether there would be an impact on schools' finances due to more children being entitled to free school meals. Forum was advised that free school meals is proving to be an increasingly volatile indicator for funding. For 2021-22 it seems quite likely that a hard national funding formula will be introduced and therefore the school funding formula would no longer be a local decision. If it does continue to be a local decision, then it may be worthwhile reviewing the deprivation factors used and switching funding to the IDACI factor and Ever 6 free school meals. The approximately 20% increase in free school meals would not seem to be an accurate measure of the change in deprivation between years.

Forum was asked to support the disapplication in respect of minimum per pupil funding for all age schools, set out in section 6.6 of the paper. Matt Gauthier declared an interest in this item and did not vote.

Forum was then asked to vote on the recommendations in the paper (schools and PVI members voting).

Vote on items 3.1.1; 3.1.2; 3.1.3; 3.1.4, 3.1.5 and 3.2

<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>For</b>	16	<b>Against</b>	-	<b>Abstain</b>	-

Vote to support the disapplication request relating to minimum per pupil funding levels in all age schools outlined in section 6.6 of the paper (item 3.3).

<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>For</b>	15	<b>Against</b>	-	<b>Abstain</b>	1

Forum noted the methodology used to prepare the 2020-21 unit values, outlined in section 6 of the paper.

## 7. Format of budget share documents

This paper, presented by Jonathan Burberry, outlines proposed changes to the budget share notifications for both the schools and early years blocks. Appendix A showed the new format for the schools block budget share and appendix B provided an example of how the early years data will be presented and what is visible on the early years portal.

Forum noted the changes.

Melanie Knowles will check the timescale of when data will be available in the early years portal and how capital funding will be notified.

## 8. Growth fund and falling rolls fund criteria 2020-21

Simon Newland introduced this paper to seek the agreement of Forum to two additions to the Growth Fund criteria, and to the Falling Rolls Fund criteria, for 2020-21.

The amended growth fund criteria are set out in Annex A, with amendments highlighted. The Falling Rolls Fund criteria are set out in Annex B, with changes from 2019-20 highlighted.

Forum agreed the recommendations in the paper.

Vote on items 3.1(a) and 3.1(b)

<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>For</b>	18	<b>Against</b>	-	<b>Abstain</b>	-

## **9. Forward work programme**

The forward work programme and agenda for the next meeting was reviewed. A paper on integrated therapies will be added to the agenda.

## **10. Any other business**

No further business was raised.

## **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of Forum will be held on:

Date: Tuesday 25 February 2020

Time: 1.00pm - 4.00pm

Venue: Ash Room, HDC, Robertson House, Stevenage