

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS FORUM
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 31st January 2019
at 4.30pm Sporton Room, Post Mill Centre, South Normanton

Present

Members			
Stephanie Marbrow	Rosliston C of E Primary	Martin Brader	Dronfield Henry Fanshawe
Peter Johnston	The Village Federation	Barbara Arrandale	Hasland Infant School
David Baker	The Pingle Academy	Chris Greenhough	Swanwick School & Sports Coll
Tracey Burnside	Whittington Green School	Chris Wayment	ASCL
Gill Hutton	Pottery Primary	Julien Scholefield	Esteem MAT
Janet Snell	Bakewell Lady Manners	David Plummer	Netherthorpe School
Lisa Key	QEGS MAT	Deborah Turner	NUT
Angela Stanton	Alfreton Nursery		
Substitutes			
Alan Thomas	Northfield Junior		
Observers			
Cllr Julie Patten			
DCC Officers/others			
Chris Allcock	Children's Services Finance	Andy Walker	Children's Services Finance
Karen Gurney	Children's Services Finance	Alison Noble	Early Help & Safeguarding
Phil Burrows	Children's Services Finance	Mark Emly	Learning Access and Inclusion
Ruth Lane	Children's Services Finance		

Chris Allcock advised that Linda Du-Roe has resigned from the Forum. After e-mailing members for a volunteer to replace Linda as Vice Chair, Peter Johnston was the only applicant and was therefore duly elected.

Apologies

Karen Burton, Jeannie Haigh, Dawn Curry, Cllr Alex Dale, Andrew Wild, Monica White, Bridget Hanley, Caroline Rodgers, Kathryn Boulton.

Martin Brader chaired the meeting and Chris confirmed that it was quorate.

19/01 Minutes if the meeting held on 22nd November 2018

Matters of accuracy

There were no matters of accuracy raised.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising discussed.

19/02 Central School Services Block (CSSB) budgets 2019 – 20

Chris Allcock presented the paper to seek approval from the Schools Forum to the 2019-20 Central School Services Block budgets. The CSSB was introduced in 2018–19 to fund LAs for the statutory duties they hold for maintained schools and academies. Table 1 showed that Derbyshire will receive £0.100m more than in 2018-19. Table 2 set out the proposed spend.

The £1.737m historic commitments element represents the contribution towards the Council's early help offer. A report had been considered by Cabinet earlier today setting out proposals to change Derbyshire's early help offer. Councillor Patten confirmed that the report had been approved. As a result, the pooling arrangements for schools and academies will cease from 31st August 2019. From September 2019 schools will be encouraged to develop their own early help offer in line with Working Together 2018 expectations. A transition team will be required for three years and the historic commitment allocation will be required to fund the existing arrangements between April and August 2019 with the remainder going towards the transition team. The DfE want LAs to reduce their spend on historic commitments and this element of the CSSB is expected to start to reduce from 2020-21. A discussion then took place.

Stephanie Marbrow asked if the transition team would be available to help clusters of schools and Julien Schofield asked if the transition funding will be passed to schools. Chris replied that the team would be available to help schools but the funding would be retained centrally.

Chris Wayment asked how schools would access the transition team because they currently don't find accessing the early help offer easy. Stephanie Marbrow replied that now Cabinet had approved the LA proposals, messages would be passed down to schools about the new arrangements.

Deborah Turner asked if schools who had already opted out of REHO would be able to access the transition team and Chris Allcock replied that access would be available to all.

Peter Johnson asked if the REHO contribution for 2018-19 covered the financial or academic year. Chris replied that contributions collected in 2018-19 related to the financial year and a further payment would be due in 2019-20 for the period April to August 2019.

The Forum agreed to the CSSB allocations requested by the Authority for 2019-20.

19/03 High Needs Block Budgets 2019-20

Chris Allcock presented the paper to seek the School Forum's views on the Authority's proposed High Needs Block (HNB) budgets for 2019-20. The 2019-20 HNB allocation for Derbyshire is £70.318m, an increase of £2.002m compared with the original 2018-19 settlement, and before the import/export adjustment. The settlement includes £1.6m in both 2018-19 and 2019-20 as a result of the £125m increase in funding nationally for both years. Whilst the additional funding is helpful it wouldn't eradicate the forecast shortfall in 2019-20. The key points in the report were set out, including:

Place funding – commissioned places will cost £14.36m an increase of £0.060m on 2018-19;

Top Up funding - is still work in progress but is currently estimated at £14.373m, an increase of £0.600m from 2018-19, of which approximately £0.400m is due to demographic changes.

Services and centrally held budgets – initially set at £16.867m, an increase of £0.423m which is due largely to pay and price increases. The total includes a SEN Contingency of £0.300m, of which £0.250m is allocated to primary schools and academies via an agreed formula which have the highest proportions of children with AEN.

In 2018-19 the contingency formula, agreed in June 2018 by the Schools Forum, was used for the first time. The calculated payments totalled £0.297m for 37 primary schools but which were scaled back to the keep the cost within the approved £0.250m budget.

The options for 2019-20 include retaining the current criteria but increasing the fund to avoid the need to scale back payments, or changing the formula. By way of example, in 2018-19 if the threshold for support had been reduced to 2% (from 3%) this would have resulted in an

increase in eligible schools from 37 to 75 at a cost of £0.732m. Similarly, if the threshold were increased to 3.5% then only 31 schools would have been eligible at a cost of £0.191m. If the Forum wanted to make changes in the contingency formula for 2019-20 then a paper would be brought back to the Forum in June.

Table 2 shows a HNB over-commitment for 2019-20 of £2.285m, whilst Table 3 set out potential measures to reduce the shortfall by £1.394m. Chris emphasised that because of the much lower levels of DSG reserves held centrally, the HNB overspend cannot be funded beyond 2019-20 and from 2020-21 spending will need to be kept within the grant levels.

David Plummer asked how the over-commitment would be funded. Chris replied that DSG reserves will fund the shortfall. However, at the end of 2019-20, these reserves are expected to stand at around only £2m, hence the need to keep spending within grant levels for 2020-21.

Chris Wayment stated that the measures to reduce HNB over spending all were at the expense of vulnerable children which would in turn increase the number of exclusions putting more pressure on other budget areas. Deborah Turner stated that all the savings were aimed at mainstream schools and academies who are all very short of money and asked if similar savings are being made by PRUs and special schools. Chris Allcock commented that their budgets have been flat lined i.e. no increases for inflation and these schools would argue their budgets have been restricted too.

Chris Greenhough said special schools, unlike mainstream schools, were not receiving a minimum increase of 1% between 2017-18 and 2019-20. He added that he would like to see the SEN contingency fund fully funded rather than scaled back as he felt it was very important to keep children in mainstream schools rather than special schools, which was also better financially. Chris Allcock said he couldn't guarantee what contingency fund will be affordable at this stage. Chris Greenhough said some schools are fully inclusive and get a reputation as such, such schools are penalised if the full contingency payment is not received which may lead to their ethos changing.

The Forum agreed to note the report and the special school representative agreed that funding should be top sliced from special schools' budgets for redundancy costs and former ESG funded services for 2019-20.

Martin Brader alerted the Forum of a petition to Parliament regarding the level of school funding and invited colleagues to consider and/or support it.

19/04 Early Years Block budgets 2019-20

Chris Allcock presented the paper to update the Schools Forum on the Early Years Block allocation for 2019-20 and seek approval to the level of central early years spend. The Early Years Block was discussed at the last meeting on an indicative basis and very little has changed. Overall £40.877m is anticipated which is £3.074m less than in 2018-19 due to fewer hours being provided by schools and nurseries, a reduction of 1p per hour in the DfE grant rate and a lower level of Maintained Nursery School grant. Based on the proposed allocations in Table 1 an over-commitment of £0.132m against delegated budgets is forecast and which would have to be met from DSG reserves.

The DfE require that 95% of relevant funding has to be delegated to providers leaving a maximum of 5% to be used for centrally funded services. 5% equates to £1.737m, £0.107m less than the anticipated central spend shown in Table 4. This shortfall will need to be addressed during the year by services managers e.g. through staff turnover.

No comments were raised from the floor.

The Forum agreed to:

- i) Note the 2019-20 Early Years settlement;
- ii) Support the increase in the basic hourly rate to £4.08 per hour;
- iii) Support the use of DSG reserves to fund the delegated shortfall in 2019-20;
- iv) Note that changes to the Early Years Single Funding Formula may be required for 2020-21 to keep overall spending within budget; and
- v) Agreed to the LA's request to be allowed to retain 5% of the Early Years quantum centrally as permitted by DfE regulations.

19/05 School Block Funding Settlement 2019-20.

Chris Allcock presented the paper which informed the Schools Forum of the Schools Block funding settlement for 2019-20 and the proposed allocations which were due to be considered by the Council's Cabinet earlier today. Cllr Patten confirmed that Cabinet had agreed the proposals.

Chris Allcock stated that the 2019-20 settlement was very similar to that previously advised to the Forum. The allocations to schools were published on 21st January 2019 and reflected the following key points:

- No transfer of funding to the High needs Block;
- Minimum Funding Guarantee (MFG) set at 0% per pupil;
- Capped gains set at 4% per pupil (3% had been proposed in the LA's consultation);
- Low Prior Attainment multiplier increased from £600 to £750 rather than £800, due to an increase in the data count; and
- £0.341m allocated to The Mease and Chellaston Fields from the Growth Fund.

The above resulted in a net Schools Block over-commitment of £0.192m which Chris said would be offset by reductions in the rates bills of schools converting to academy status. The ESFA had raised some minor queries but Chris expected Derbyshire's plans to be approved.

The pupil Growth Fund allocation for 2019-20 is £2.352m, slightly lower than forecast but still an increase of £1.252m on 2018-19. This fund will be used to support Key Stage 1 classes, in year pupil increases and support for new free schools in line with the Forum's decisions in November 2018. The allocation of growth funding for 2020-21 is set to be reviewed by the DfE.

No comments were raised from the floor.

The Forum agreed to note the Schools Block settlement for 2019-20 and the proposed allocations set out in the report.

19/06 Dates and venues of future meetings

Members asked if the Schools Forum would be required in the future as the tenure of members had been extended on the assumption that the Forum would be dissolved in 2020-21. Karen Gurney said she had raised this point at the recent ESFA meeting and was told that they still saw Schools Forums as useful and didn't anticipate them ceasing to exist.

Chris Allcock suggested that, as Derbyshire had almost completed the transition to the mainstream NFF, the Forum could consider its role going forward at its June meeting.

Date of next meeting: 19th June 2019, 6pm to 8pm, Committee Room 1, County Hall, Matlock
The meeting closed at 5.30pm.