

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM

Draft Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18th October 2023
At County Hall, Matlock at 5pm

Present

Members	School / Organisation
Alan Thomas	Northfield Junior School
George Wolfe	Curbar Primary
Jennifer Murphy	Hunloke Park Primary
Peter Johnston	The Village Federation
Michelle Jenkins	Etwall Primary
Chris Greenhough	Swanwick School & Sports College
Emma Haywood	Alfreton Nursery School
Karen Hayes	Esteem MAT
Keith Hirst	Brookfield Community School
Simon Redfern	St Ralph Sherwin CMAT
Peter Crowe	ASCL
Liz Seymour	Church of England Diocese - Derby

Substitutes	School / Organisation
Cilla Hollman	Hadfield Infants School

Observers	School / Organisation
Cllr Alex Dale	DCC
Cllr Robert Flatley	DCC
Cllr Ruth George	DCC

DCC Officers/others	School / Organisation
Saranjit Shetra	Assistant Director, Education & Improvement
Sarah Bryan	Senior School Advisor
Andy Walker	CS & T Finance
Phil Burrows	CS & T Finance
Eddie Grant	CS & T Finance
Elena Beard	CS & T Finance
Ruth Lane	CS & T Finance
Shelley Kerslake	CS & T Finance

Peter Johnston chaired the meeting.

23/12 - Apologies for Absence

Members	School / Organisation
Nick Goforth	Belper Secondary School
Donna Hain	Redhill Academy Trust
Emma Hill	Castle View Primary School
Sarah Baker	TEAM Education Trust
Canon Carolyn Lewis	Church of England Diocese-Derby

Members	School / Organisation
Kate Martin	Derby College Group
Margaret Mason	Children 1st
Deborah Turner	NEU
Jeanette Lloyd	UNISON
Cllr Julie Pattern	DCC
Carol Cammiss	Executive Director, Childrens Services
Dan Careless	Director Schools and Learning
Julian Scholefield	Esteem MAT

The meeting was quorate.

23/13 - Minutes of The Schools Forum 28th June 2023

The minutes were agreed and the action point below will be covered at the next meeting.

The other action point to review regarding Early Years changes will be covered in agenda item 8.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Review Schools Forum self-evaluation Form	SK	December 2023 meeting

No other matters arising were raised.

23/14 – DSG budget monitoring 2023-24 – Q2

Eddie Grant presented the paper to provide the schools forum with the Q2 projected revenue budget out turn position of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) for 2023-24.

The opening DSG balance at 1st April 2023 is a deficit of £4.775m with a predicted in year overspend of £7.072m. The main reason for this is a predicted overspend of £7.655m in the High Needs Block (HNB). Top up funding is the most significant area of overspend within special schools both in Derbyshire and other local authorities and independent/non maintained schools. Inclusion funding (IF) is the next most significant area with a predicted overspend of £1.989m however, this is largely due to a change from GRIP funding to IF with a related underspend of £0.813m within GRIP. In the Other area the predicted overspend of £0.330m is predominantly due to pay awards which are more than inflation.

The predicted DSG balance for the 31st March 2024 is now a total deficit of £11.848m.

A general discussion took place clarifying some of the terminology used in the item.

Chris Greenhough asked how Derbyshire's position compared with neighbouring local authorities with respect to the HNB deficit and Eddie Grant replied that quite a few are worse off than Derbyshire but he had no up-to-date information, however, he said he would look this up. Cllr Dale said a lot of other LAs within the F40 are worse off. He quoted Devon with an overspend of £140 million and Dorset with an overspend of £75 million as examples. He said the cumulative overspend for all LAs

by 2025 was predicted to be somewhere between £2.5bn and £3.6bn and he had raised this issue with the Children's Minister only yesterday.

Chris Greenhough said if Derbyshire were to address this issue and reduce the care and funding given to its children in future and government bail outs became available our children would have lost out. Cllr Dale replied that LAs who have significant deficits are having discussions with the DfE and they are having, at least in part, to fund these deficits from other areas. However, his view is that government will have to help in some way. Eddie Grant said this was known as the safety valve procedure and this would mean the LA contributes in some way. A meeting has already been held with the DfE with Dan Careless reporting to them what the LA's plans are. The original intention was that he would address the School's Forum tonight under item 4 but unfortunately, he has been unable to attend the meeting tonight.

Forum members requested that a summary statement of his report be sent out with the minutes.

Peter Johnson asked if we are being reactive to the issue would it be better to be proactive in some way and make savings e.g., with behaviour which is allocated £2m. Cllr George asked if the increase in Special Top ups for OLA/Independent schools is due to more children or increased costs per child. Saranjit Shetra said Dan Careless has clear plans to move forward and these will be co-constructed with schools but there does need to be more provision as the number of children with SEND are increasing and their needs are more complex. Part of the answer is reshaping services which was a piece of work started by Paula Williams which is being developed and the LA is looking to get more money directly out to schools and they are being proactive. Karen Hayes said work was ongoing to review sufficiency within special schools and they have been invited to submit interest in increasing capacity.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Compare the overspend of the LA HNB with neighbouring LA's	EG	December 2023 meeting
Dan Careless to provide a summary statement of what of his plans to be sent to members with the Forum minutes	DC	1 st November 2023

23/15 – Update from Strategic Lead for Schools and Learning

No update was provided as Dan Careless was unable to attend the meeting.

23/16 – De-delegation 2024-25

Shelley Kerslake presented the paper to ask representatives of LA maintained Primary, Secondary and Special schools on the schools forum to consider the de-delegation [re- pooling] of funds for 2024-25.

A consultation had been sent to schools, the results of which were included in table 1. Phil Burrows added that since the paper was prepared a further Secondary school had responded giving a response rate of 100% in this area and they had voted for de-delegation to each question.

Shelley said that Nursery schools must decide on an individual basis which options they would like to buy whereas forum members make the decision on behalf of the Primary, Secondary and Special sectors. Overall, the vast majority of responses were in favour of the de-delegation in all areas.

Primary sector representatives voted in favour to the delegation in all areas with five members voting for and none against.

The Special school representative voted in favour of all areas of the delegation.

The Secondary representative was not in attendance and he will be asked to confirm by e-mail his response although Forum members did note the high percentage of votes in favour of the de-delegation in all areas in the Secondary sector.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
E-mail the Secondary School representative for his decision on de-delegation for the Secondary sector.	PB	Outcome to be reported back at December 2023 meeting

No further questions were raised.

23/17 – Indicative Funding Settlement 2024-25

Shelley Kerslake presented the paper to inform the schools forum of the indicative National School funding settlement for 2024-25 and the potential implications for Derbyshire.

She explained that the original indication was received in July however an update in October indicates that the DfE got their sums wrong and that funding would be lower than the original indication. Derbyshire's provisional figure for Schools Block (SB) is now £586.742m, a like for like increase of £13.897m (2.4%). It should be noted that this figure includes £19.424m of Mainstream School Additional Grant (MSAG) that will be incorporated into the 2024-25 SB and NFF multipliers. The NFF multipliers are included in appendix 1, however we suspect the funding received from the DfE may not be enough to fully fund the NFF and the next agenda item addresses this.

Peter Johnson asked that if Derbyshire's funding had increased by 2.4% why were the multipliers only increasing by 1.4% on average. Phil Burrows replied that the extra funding was being absorbed by increases in premises/split site /PFI funding adjustments and an updated Low Prior Attainment count and on average for schools the increase was 1.4%.

Andy Walker added that School Support Finance will be updating that budget monitoring spreadsheet later this week with the revised NFF multipliers and pointed out that the 1% reduction would be cumulative for 2024-25 and 2025-26 as the latter years projections are based on the earlier year's figures. The team's previous

estimates for the 2024 – 25 had been very accurate. Cllr Dale asked if the pay award for teachers was also included in the budget monitoring spreadsheets to which Andy Walker replied it was, along with the teachers pay grant from the DfE of approximately 3% and the proposed support staff pay award.

Shelley Kerslake then moved on to the HNB and confirmed that every LA will receive an increase of between 3% and 5% per pupil. The indicative settlement for Derbyshire is £116.413m, an increase of £5.187m (4.66%) on 2023-24. It should be noted that the indicative settlement for next year is less than the current projected level of spend for 2023-24, meaning that if spending remained at the same level in 2024-25 there would be an overspend on the HNB and there would be no headroom to meet any increases in demand or inflationary rises.

A discussion then took place about the agreement of places with Special schools and Phil Burrows confirmed that if agreement could not be reached the DfE will step in and make the decision for the individual schools concerned. He also confirmed that the DfE mistake on pupil numbers affecting SB budgets does not affect Special schools.

Karen Hayes asked if the HNB place changes will be concluded by deadline of the 10th of November for the LA agreeing places with the DfE. Phil Burrows said the LA had written to schools last week however time scales were tight as the DfE had reduced the agreement window by three weeks – (this was subsequently corrected to two weeks). AP academy place numbers are to be discussed at the meeting with representatives next Monday.

Shelley Kerslake continued that the indicative settlements for pupil growth and falling rolls funding is in line with expectations. Falling rolls funding has previously only been available to Ofsted rated good/outstanding schools and Derbyshire has chosen not to allocated funding by this route. This restriction has been removed for 2024-25 and so Derbyshire may wish to revisit this decision. This will be discussed at the next forum meeting. The Central Services Schools Block (CSSB) will also be considered at the next forum meeting.

Michelle Jenkins said that lots of schools are potentially facing redundancies next September and whether there would be enough in the de-delegated budget to meet those costs for maintained schools. Cllr Dale said that regarding school budgets in general, the autumn statement later next month *may* reveal an increase in school funding and Andy Walker confirmed nothing has been included in school spreadsheets in this respect until any announcements are made.

23/18 – Proposed Changes to School and Academy Funding 2024-25

Shelley Kerslake presented the report to inform schools forum of the LA's funding consultation for 2024- 25.

As the LA thinks the DfE settlement for SB will not be enough to fund the NFF in full, schools had been consulted in order to seek their views as to how any funding gaps could be addressed. It appears as though the gap may be quite small and potentially may be bridged by growth funding. Several options were presented in the consultation with the LA's preferred option being paring back all formula multipliers.

Appendix 2 details the responses from schools which showed the majority of schools agreed with the LA's preferred option.

Shelley confirmed that ultimately the decision on the Derbyshire funding formula would be the LA's but the Forum's views were sought.

Simon Redfern and Chris Greenhough suggested that as the potential funding gap is quite small could the LA stick with the NFF formula and wait for the DfE to bail us out. Shelley replied this would add to the DSG deficit and would not be recommended by the LA finance team.

Phil Burrows explained that potential gap has arisen because the Primary Unit of funding (PUF) and Secondary Unit of funding (SUF) received is based on the previous year's data so will never be enough if free school meal eligibility is rising as it has done in recent years, however, if free school meal eligibility were to decline we would have more money than needed to fund the NFF.

There were no further comments from the floor

23/19 Early Years funding – verbal update

Phil Burrows presented a verbal update on early years funding.

He confirmed that the early years supplementary grant had resulted in an increase in hourly funding rates from September 2023 to £5.20 per hour for three and four year olds (+6.8%) and £7.35 for disadvantaged 2 year olds (+ 30.6%). An announcement for the early years teachers pay additional grant equivalent is still awaited.

As we are aware the introduction of extended entitlements has been announced. From April 2024, 2 year olds with working parents will be entitled to 15 hours per week and from September 2024, nine months to 2 year olds with working parents will be entitled to 15 hours per week and from September 2025 nine month to three-year olds with working parents will be entitled to 30 hours per week.

The extended entitlement rate for two year olds, to cover existing disadvantage 2 year olds and all two year olds is provisionally £7.41, an increase of 6 pence per hour and the rate for under 2's £10.07 per hour.

The results of the DfE consultation have not yet been published and it maybe that a mandatory deprivation element will be required for two year olds, which is not the case at present, therefore, the allowance for the deprivation funding is only 6 pence per hour, compared with £1.35 currently paid in Derbyshire for 3 and 4 year olds.

The funding for extended entitlements is estimated at £28.2m and the pass through rate of 95% would result in a maximum £1.4m being retained centrally. However, the pass through rate will be 97% when the rollout is sufficiently progressed. Derbyshire's current three and four year old funding pass through rate is 96.36% which is £1.4m. There will be separate pass through rates for all three funding streams, i.e., 9m to 2 year olds, 2 year olds, 3 and 4 year olds. The DfE are also planning to introduce early years pupil premium and disability access funding for the new entitlements estimated at 68 pence per hour and £902 annually.

The composition of 2 year old and under 2 year old formula will include Indicator of Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) funding but this is not in the 3 and 4 year old formula.

A wider discussion around nursery funding then took place with Cllr George saying a private nursery in her district had closed last year due to delays in knowing what funding would be received from Derbyshire and was there any way to speed up the passing on of that information to schools. Phil Burrows said that the figures have to be agreed by Cabinet before being published although they could be issued with a 'health warning' that such approval was required.

Sarah Bryan said a survey has been sent to schools to build up a provision of early years sufficiency and that the big question was what would the funding rates be?

Emma Hayward said that nursery schools are all struggling with funding and asked why they are excluded from redundancy support as per the earlier item on de-delegation. Eddie Grant thought that the de-delegation scheme for redundancy cannot be extended to nursery schools for technical reasons but in previous years they have been asked which individual elements available of the de-delegation for primary and secondary schools they wish to purchase. For the last couple of years, it has been assumed that whatever had been previously purchased would continue to be required. Peter Johnson said that Headteachers would not know they had a choice unless they are asked each year and requested but this was the case.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Write to Nursery schools asking which items they wish to purchase from the LA from the de-delegation list	PB	January 2024

23/20 Dates and venues of next meetings

Peter Johnson suggested that he and LA officers would look at suitable dates and that County Hall seemed the most appropriate venue due to its central location and the fact it is free.

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Arrange dates and venues for remaining meetings within the 2023/24 academic year to be sent out with minutes	PJ & SK	1 st November 2023

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

Summary of action points

Action point	Responsibility	Timeline
Review Schools Forum self-evaluation Form	SK	December 2023 meeting
Compare the overspend of the LA HNB with neighbouring LA's	EG	December 2023 meeting
Dan Careless to provide a summary statement of what he would have said to be sent to members with the Forum minutes	DC	1 st November 2023
E-mail the Secondary School representative for his decision on de-delegation for the Secondary sector	SK	December 2023 meeting
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