

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 12 February 2014
At 6.00 pm at County Hall

Present

David Baker, Peter Crowe, Julie Bloor, Martin Brader, Lesley Hartley, Andrew Cartledge, Shirley Harvey, Roger Tomlinson, Andrew Wild, Philip Sunderland, Linda Du-Roe, Penny Pennington, Julian Scholefield, Lee Floyd, Angela Colmar, Andrew Large, Trevor Clay, Deborah Turner, Chris Wayment

Officers/Others

Ian Thomas, Chris Allcock, Sue Ricketts, Mary Murkin, Karen Gurney, Ruth Lane

Apologies

Brendan Hickey, Mike Davison, Atholl Donaldson, Joe Birkin, Peter Thorne, Andrew Critchlow, Lindsey Partridge, Julie Cadman, Paul Mason, Karen Hudson, David Channon, Alison Bull, John Partington

Martin Brader chaired the meeting and Chris Allcock welcomed three new members to the Forum:

Andrew Large – Clowns Nursery – Private, Voluntary & Independent (PVI) Nursery Sector representative

Andrew Critchlow – Hope Valley Academy – Academy Sector representative

Trevor Clay – Principal, Chesterfield College - 16-19 Sector representative

14/01 Apologies

Chris Allcock read out a list of apologies, no apologies were received from the floor.

14/02 Minutes of the previous meeting – 17th December 2013

A correction was noted that Phil Sunderland's name had been spelt incorrectly on Page 7.

Matters arising:

Item 13/37

A Single Status update was requested from the floor. Chris Allcock said that he knew data was being sent to schools next week for checking in advance of March's payroll, but wasn't specifically aware of any other developments.

Item 13/38

Chris Allcock briefly updated the Forum regarding Free School Meals (FSM) for Key Stage 1 (KS1) pupils. The Government are providing Derbyshire with £1.99m to fund capital projects required to increase capacity in schools; the revenue grant rate is £2.30 per meal served. Derbyshire currently charges £1.95 per meal. A full update on the impact of these changes will be provided to the Forum at its June meeting.

Chris also confirmed that Cabinet in January had agreed to pay the Living Wage. A point was raised from the floor that staff in their school had commented that if the Living Wage was paid, salary differentials have been eroded in respect of jobs which carry additional responsibilities and those on the Living Wage.

Item 13/39

Lee Floyd said he had discussed the Teaching and Learning Consultants proposals with Belinda James in SSEN, who would welcome an invitation from the Forum to speak on this issue. It was agreed that Belinda would be invited to the next meeting in June.

14/03 Membership update – oral report

Chris said he had covered this item in the “welcomes” at the start of the meeting.

14/04 Mainstream Schools Block Budgets 2014 – 15 – final decisions

Chris Allcock presented the paper and confirmed that Cabinet had agreed the proposals presented to Schools Forum at the last meeting which were:

A general increase of 1% in the formula multipliers, except primary and secondary lump sums which increased by £2,000 and £23,994 respectively.

The cap on year on year gains being increased to 6%.

The above increases would be funded by accumulated DSG under spends of £4.72m.

A release of £1m of DSG under spend to support the provision of Teaching and Learning Consultants and £2.73m released towards the cost of Single Status from the £5m reserve set aside for this purpose.

An appendix detailing the final multipliers was attached to the report. It was confirmed that the per pupil amounts to be re-pooled for functions such as insurance, contingency etc. would be kept at the same level as for 2013–14.

Schools Block budgets have been uploaded to the Extranet for schools to view, however, budgets for ERS units, Special Schools, High Needs Block, and Pupil Premium Grant have still to be calculated. The 16-19 budgets are also awaited from the EFA.

Ian Thomas asked if the Pupil Premium Grant of £1,900 for children in care had been agreed which Chris confirmed was the case.

The Forum noted the report.

14/05 Early Years and High Needs Block funding allocations 2014 - 15

Chris Allcock presented the paper. The key driver for the Early Years Single Funding Formula (EYSFF) is the base rate per hour which currently stands at £3.70 and has been at this level for the last four years. Additional allocations are made for deprivation and schools’

other institutional costs. No increases have been applied to the EYSFF multipliers in recent years as the DSG itself has not included any allowance for inflation.

A key driver behind considering the 2014–15 multipliers is the potential raising of the national Minimum Wage from October 2014. Unfortunately no final decision is likely on this matter before the March 2014 deadline, by which time Derbyshire needs to have set its EYSFF formula multipliers. Unfortunately the DfE will not allow any mid-year changes in budgets, so a decision must be made now.

An increase in the national Minimum Wage is likely to have a significant impact on PVI providers given the proportion of their costs which are staff related; the proposal is to increase the hourly rate by 2.5% for 2014-15. The position could then be reviewed again for 2015–16 in the light of known changes to the Minimum Wage at that time. The Minimum Wage increase wouldn't have the same effect on schools as school staff are already paid above this rate.

Mainstream schools received a 1% increase in most of the formula multipliers for 2014-15 and it is proposed that the overall increase in the EYSFF allocations for mainstream schools is also capped at 1%. However, given that mainstream schools would benefit from the 2.5% increase in the basic rate, it is proposed that the non term time multipliers would be reduced marginally so that the overall increase was kept at 1%.

Page 3 of the report shows the proposed plans including a reduction in the non-term time rate. Comments on these plans were invited from the floor.

Trevor Clay asked how this would affect the 16-19 sector. Chris Allcock replied that this paper didn't specifically affect this sector. Ian Thomas added that mixed messages were being given by the EFA about college funding and he intended to arrange a meeting with representatives from colleges to discuss this.

A Forum member asked how the proposal of 2.5% had been calculated. Chris replied that it was an estimate to reflect the cost in-year of an assumed 5% increase in the Minimum Wage of 5% from October 2014.

No further comments were raised and the Forum agreed to support the proposed changes.

Chris then detailed funding for vulnerable funding for two year olds. The 2014–15 DSG settlement included £8.274m to provide up to 15 hours per week of early years' provision for vulnerable two years olds. The allocation is based on an assumed number of children (2,992) receiving 570 hours per annum (38 weeks x 15 hours) at a funding rate of £4.85 per hour.

This allocation is outside the EYSFF and therefore the rate can be changed mid-year; the proposal was therefore to maintain the existing funding rate at £4.85 per hour and reconsider the issue later in the year in the light of known changes to the Minimum Wage.

Ian Thomas asked if the grant was being fully utilised. The reply was not currently but the eligibility criteria have been opened up so more children should become eligible. In 2014–15 the grant is £8.274m but from 2015–16 the level of grant will be dependent on take-up. Sue Ricketts (Senior Advisor-Early Years) said promotions were taking place on both a national and local basis to improve take up rates.

A question was raised as to which sector is likely to take the extra two year olds. Sue Ricketts replied that both the private and school sectors will be encouraged to take up the extra children. The approach will be to fill places where vacancies exist, children will only be placed in good or outstanding settings and spaces should exist.

The Forum accepted the recommendation to delay a decision on the rate for vulnerable two year olds.

Chris detailed the proposals for Special Schools, ERS and PRUs. The three groups are funded using a similar approach based on a combination of place funding on nationally set rates, plus a top up to reflect the individual costs of provision at each institution. In order to increase overall funding to these sectors by 1% in line with other school sectors, the top up element would be increased by more than 1% as the Forum/Authority have no powers to vary the national place rates element. Indicative multipliers were set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

The proposed approach was agreed by the Forum.

With regard to Single Status Chris explained that, unlike the mainstream allocations, the funding formulae for Special Schools and PRUs recognise the individual costs of provision at each institution. The final figures for the effects of Single Status are still to be collated with the help of schools but are thought to be in the region of £280k. Whilst the costs won't be able to be exactly replicated in income to each institution, it is intended that funding will be aligned as closely as possible.

Forum supported the proposed approach.

Forum members then entered a lengthy discussion around the whole issue of Single Status and the impact of this on schools once the reserve had been exhausted. Lee Floyd was concerned about the viability and quality of special school provision if funding to support the costs of Single Status could not be found and embedded in the formula.

The effect of reducing the quality of education provided due to having to reduce staff hours either by natural wastage or redundancy and the potential impact on Ofsted assessments was also raised.

It was noted that the DSG is a finite pot of money and if more money were to be allocated for the effects of Single Status, other allocations would have to be reduced.

The Chair asked Ian Thomas to arrange for a 'Task and Finish' group to be set up to consider the challenges for all schools and report back to the Forum with options to address longer term financial pressures. This was agreed.

14/06 Every Child a Talker (ECAT) & Talkboost – Early Years Interventions

Sue Ricketts presented this paper. Sue outlined how this initiative started in Erewash and has now been rolled out across the County. The vision is that no child should enter Reception in school with an unidentified communication delay.

Statistics regarding the number of children assisted and the success rates were provided in the report.

Sue said the reason the initiative had been so successful is because of the large numbers of Practitioners who have been trained in the programme. However, the problem is these additional skills are often resulting in staff being promoted and the difficulty is now sustaining the programme. Sue requested that £150k be allocated to continue the programme in 2014-15, this cost would be contained within the total the Forum had already agreed to allow the Authority to hold centrally for 2014-15.

Forum members expressed a lot of interest in the initiative and asked questions about identification of appropriate children for the programme, the tracking of these pupils and if any long-term studies on the impact on pupils had been undertaken.

Sue replied that numerous statistics were held whilst children were on both the ECAT and Talkboost programmes but no further monitoring was done in schools at present.

The Forum agreed to support the report's recommendations.

14/07 National Funding Formula - update

Chris Allcock advised members that no firm announcements had been made by the DfE as yet. If an announcement is made shortly and a consultation required within a short timescale it may be necessary to call an additional Forum meeting, possibly during the week commencing 28th April or 5th May. If this is the case Members will of course be notified in writing.

14/08 DfE Schools Forum Operational Guide – feedback from group

Martin Brader presented the paper and noted it had been all Governors who had formed the working group. Chris Allcock said he felt it had been a useful refresher exercise

It was agreed that all the actions identified should be implemented.

The date of the next meeting will be 12th June 2014 at 6.00pm at County Hall.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.