

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 9th June 2015
At 6.00 pm in Committee Room 1 at County Hall

Present

Brendan Hickey, David Baker, Julie Broadbent, Joe Birkin, Peter Thorne, Martin Brader, Andrew Critchlow, Jason Smith, Julie Cadman, Roger Tomlinson, Philip Sunderland, Linda Du-Roe, Julian Scholefield, Debbie Gerring, Karen Hudson, David Channon, Andrew Large, John Crofts, Chris Wayment, Cathy Tattersfield

Substitutes

Cilla Hollman-Sykes, Sue Kennedy

Observers

Cllr Jim Coyle, Cllr Caitlin Bisknell, Lindsey Henning (EFA)

Officers/Others

Chris Allcock, Mary Murkin, Karen Gurney, Kathryn Boulton, Ruth Lane, David Jackson (Independent Consultant), Greg Wilkinson (Independent Consultant)

Apologies

Lindsey Partridge, Andrew Wild, Penny Pennington, Alison Bull, Cllr Jocelyn Street, Deborah Turner

Martin Brader chaired the meeting which was quorate.

15/08 Apologies for Absence

Chris Allcock read out the apologies.

Julie Bloor from Shirebrook Academy has resigned.

Cllr Caitlin, who has joined the Forum as a replacement for Cllr Gillott, was welcomed.

Lindsey Henning from the EFA was welcomed as an observer

Cilla Hollman-Sykes, a substitute governor from the Duke of Norfolk School, was welcomed to her first meeting.

15/09 Minutes of the previous meeting – 18th February 2015

Martin Brader asked if further clarification had been received from the DfE regarding the use of DSG between LA maintained schools and academies. Chris replied that no further clarification has been received but that the grant instructions confirmed the DSG has to be applied fairly across schools and academies.

15/10 Radical Re-think of Early Help Offer project – Scoping report

Kathryn Boulton introduced the LA's consultant Greg Wilkinson who presented the paper.

Greg summarised that there are two main routes to tackle the problem - Top- down and Bottom-up. Given the magnitude of the challenge, we need to pursue both routes.

The LA has already set in motion the Top-down efforts and £6.5m of improvement opportunities have been identified.

Bottom-up efforts are centred on a number of workshops across the county and four clusters have agreed to run a prototype in Whittington Green, Hope Valley, Heanor and Kirk Hallam.

The next steps are for each cluster to sign off a detailed proposal and implement its operation; at least one of these should be up and running by the end of September 2015. A prototype needs to run for one year to assess its impact.

A lengthy discussion took place during which the following points were raised:

- How will effectiveness be measured?
- Reply-working with clusters to agree measures but likely to adapt current MAT performance measures.
- As pilots need to operate for 12 months to be measured, will the Forum be asked to agree additional financial support?
- Reply-the £2m already allocated from DSG goes up to March 2016, therefore it is possible that additional funding may be requested, this will be a matter for the Forum to decide. A progress report will be provided to the Forum in the autumn.
- Schools were appreciative of the LA's efforts to include them in the process.
- How have the pilot areas been selected?
- Reply- the consultants have worked with the most enthusiastic respondents.
- Would like to see the south of the county involved.
- Reply- Kathryn Boulton will arrange for South Derbyshire to be involved in the pilot.
- Do we have sufficient funds to approve further investment? If we say no, a lot of work and costs may have been wasted and the project may fizzle out?
- Reply- Forum must decide what their priorities are and money will be allocated accordingly.

The Forum was broadly in favour of the project. A long debate took place as to whether or not to approve additional funding from the DSG now or wait until the autumn. The Forum decided to wait until later in the year to make a decision.

- What has the £2m been spent on so far?
- Reply- it has been used to allow existing support services to continue whilst the review is undertaken. The money has replaced the loss of Council budget, effectively buying time for the Forum, schools and LA to determine how to proceed.
- Are the other Agencies involved in this review committed to providing more financial support?

- Reply-the others at present are LA services, discussions with Health will take place in the future.
- We haven't seen enough evidence that savings can be made and the original letter from Ian Thomas said schools would need to contribute towards this issue. Schools need to see results to understand the value and will either have budgets top-sliced or be asked to contribute on an individual basis. Secondary schools may not be in favour of contributing towards something that they will not feel the benefit of for at least 10 years.
- Have costings been done in the four prototype areas?
- Reply-These are being done at present. Individual clusters can decide how money can be saved from the emerging ideas. There is a risk that clusters may not find sufficient savings in which case the LA may have to make savings in other ways. Whatever the long term outcome of the review the LA and schools will have learnt from the project from their engagement and have a clearer idea of what the key priorities should be.

In terms of the decisions required:

- a) The Top-down cost-reduction and income-generation proposals listed in para 10 were noted.
- b) The proposed four clusters were approved, and Kathryn Boulton agreed to pursue involving a fifth cluster in South Derbyshire. Greg Wilkinson confirmed this would not result in significant additional cost.
- c) No comments were made on the suggested approach to prototype monitoring and evaluation.
- d) Forum agreed the process and timetable for prototype design, although it may need to be brought forward due to funding questions.
- e) Schools Forum agreed to provide over-arching governance for the prototype initiatives and that a smaller group should meet more regularly to review progress involving some Forum members. Any volunteers should contact Kathryn Boulton who requires 3 or 4 people. Membership beyond July would have to be reviewed in the light of the Schools Forum elections.
- f) No comments were made regarding the SRO.
- g) No comments were made regarding the identification of a Programme Manager.

15/11 SEN Briefing

Kathryn Boulton presented this paper to inform the Schools Forum of the DSG costs relating to SEN and behaviour provision for 2014-15 and the work-streams in place to review service delivery.

Points raised by Forum members included:

- In Appendix 2, summary of estimated out of county costs 2015-16, why are pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties more expensive than pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties?
- Reply- not known but needs to be reviewed.
- Why is the average cost for a medical placement more than the 2015-16 forecast spend?
- Reply-the actual placement is only for part of the year.

- How many of these places are residential, because the costs of a residential place used to be in excess of £100k a few years ago?
- Reply- These figures are used for the educational element of out of county places and are non-residential.
- Julian Schofield felt that the figures for autism are wrong, can the figures be checked.
- Reply-Yes
- Could the out county profiles be placed alongside the LA profiles?
- Reply- Yes, but ultimately we need to compare the costs of similar/equivalent provision across LA and out county placements, and this will involve more than matching at overall descriptor level.
- Can the figures be broken down by year groups in order to estimate future commitments?
- Reply- Yes, but in general medical placements tend to be made at a younger age than behavioural placements.

Kathryn summarised that a lot of work is on-going around SEND provision, the LA is looking to provide services and assessment on a local basis and health, social care and education need to work together, with a central commissioning hub.

The report was noted by the Forum.

15/12 DSG out-turn 2014-15 incl pooled budgets

Karen Gurney presented the paper to report the final DSG revenue out-turn 2014-15 including the position in respect of pooled (de-delegated) funding.

The largest contributory factor towards the DSG under spend was against two year old provision as resources were allocated by the DfE based on population rather than provision. This underspend will not recur in 2015-16 as the grant will be based on take up too.

A Forum Member from the PVI sector commented that Derbyshire's rate of funding for two year olds is 15p per hour less than Staffordshire and 23p less than Nottinghamshire. He asked if Derbyshire's rate could be reviewed and the LA agreed to look at this.

The report set out the position in respect of accumulated underspends in previous years and a summary of the commitments to date in Table 3.

Over the last 12 months schools' balances increased by £2.4m, within this overall picture primary balances are increasing whilst secondary balances are decreasing, mainly due to the impact of falling rolls.

A Forum member commented that the balances of £1.744m held in capital reserve accounts was hiding money from these balances. Chris Allcock replied that, although the excess balances framework applied by previous governments is no longer current, schools can be challenged regarding their carry forward. Monies held in capital reserve accounts required a governors' minute number and suggested that we review the

balances to ensure that these funds are still required. The Forum member agreed that this should be done.

Chris Wayment drew attention to the difference between falling balances for secondary schools and rising balances for primary schools and asked if this indicated that the funding formula needed reviewing? Martin Brader said it would be useful to know about schools which are over spending their budgets at present and the potential impact of that in future years? Could every secondary school be heading for a deficit?

Chris Allcock replied that regular meetings are being held with a number of secondary schools at present, not only those currently in a deficit position but also those that have potential shortfalls in the future.

Benchmarking was discussed and it was confirmed that the LA already make benchmarking information available to schools.

The report was noted and the Forum agreed that surplus in respect of de-delegated funds be retained centrally.

15/13 – Future Shape and operation of the Schools Forum

Chris Allcock presented the paper to seek the Forum's views regarding potential changes to its Constitution. One of the issues was the size of the Forum, Appendix 1 set out the results of a benchmarking exercise which showed that Derbyshire's Forum was significantly larger than the comparator group. The paper presented five options to address this ranging from retaining the current membership of 40 to a reduction to 28.

A numbers of views were expressed:

- School surveys often attract a poor response and having a large Forum provides an opportunity for members to express views on behalf of schools. Useful discussions are often held.
- The benchmarking data doesn't take into account the number of schools in an LA just the pupil numbers.
- A working party approximately two years ago felt the Forum was too large and that numbers could be reduced.
- What is the negative effect of the current size?
- In general 16-20 people on average attend, largely the same attendees but not always.
- The Forum would be more effective if substitutes were used more often when people couldn't attend.

The Forum's views regarding the report's recommendations were as follows:

- (i) A vote was taken which revealed overwhelmingly that Members wanted the Forum to continue at its current size.

With regard to the other recommendations:

- (ii) Creation of two temporary places - not applicable in the light of (i);
- (iii) Four years term of office to be retained – supported;
- (iv) Election of school representatives - revised arrangements noted;

- (v) Election of academy representatives - revised arrangements noted;
- (vi) Review of non-schools membership - not applicable given (i);
- (vii) Voting arrangements – no changes proposed;
- (viii) Revised proposals for arrangements to deal with urgent business – supported;
- (ix) Timing and location of future meetings – to be decided by the new Forum;
- (x) Circulation of self-assessment form – supported;
- (xi) Proposed induction of new members – supported;
- (xii) Other comments – none raised.

15/14 Future potential work-streams

Chris Allcock presented a paper to set out potential work-streams for the Schools Forum from September 2015. The report was noted and it was agreed that a review of 2 year old funding be added to the list.

15/15 Review of the 2015 – 16 Derbyshire Scheme for Financing Schools

Mary Murkin presented the paper and explained that this would be a temporary update of the Scheme pending further guidance from the DfE following the election.

The Forum agreed the interim Scheme.

No date was set for the next meeting.

The meeting closed at 8pm.