

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
DERBYSHIRE SCHOOLS' FORUM
Minutes of the Meeting Held on 18 February 2015
At 6.00 pm in Committee Room 1 at County Hall

Present

Mike Davison, Joe Birkin, Peter Thorne, Martin Brader, Jason Smith, Lindsey Partridge, Julie Cadman, Eileen Gunton, Shirley Harvey, Andrew Wild, Linda Du-Roe, Penny Pennington, Julian Scholefield, Debbie Gerring, Karen Hudson, David Channon, Andrew Large, Deborah Turner, Michelle Jenkins, Cathy Tattersfield, Sue Kennedy

Substitutes

Observers

Officers/Others

Chris Allcock, Mary Murkin, Karen Gurney, Kathryn Boulton, Ruth Lane, Kevin Firth, Jane Brooks, Neil Reeder (Independent Consultant), Greg Wilkinson (Independent Consultant)

Apologies

Brendan Hickey, David Baker, Julie Broadbent, Kevan Lomas, Roger Tomlinson, Heather Rolfe, John Crofts, Cilla Hollman-Sykes, Cllr Jocelyn Street, Julie Bloor

Martin Brader chaired the meeting which was quorate.

The order of the agenda was changed slightly with the approval of the Forum.

15/01 Derbyshire's Early Help Offer – Progress Report

Kathryn Boulton introduced the item reminding the Forum of the background to the 'Wicked Issue', and confirmed that the DfE have now agreed the contribution of £3m from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Individuals from schools had volunteered to form a stakeholder reference group along with three LA employees, one meeting has already been held.

Greg Wilkinson one of the Independent Consultants commissioned by the LA, presented a paper to the meeting entitled: 'Radical Rethink of Early Help Offer (RREHO) – aka 'Wicked issue' – project. Greg highlighted the current situation and project brief, what we want to do, improvement opportunities, ideas for high-level research and a project timeline plan to the end of April.

Linda Du-Roe commented that the project needed to be concluded within one year due to the funding commitment timeline from the DSG. Cathy Tattersfield said that schools would need to know the impact, if any, on their budget before April 2016 to aid the financial planning process.

Martin Brader commented that, as there is unlikely to be more money for schools in the future, consideration will need to be given to what areas of funding might have to be reduced if funding for this is required on an on-going basis.

Kathryn Boulton advised the Forum that Derbyshire's approach to this issue is attracting national interest, is at the cutting edge, and Derbyshire needs to maximise the opportunity and engage fully in the development with the consultants.

Joe Birkin asked if headteachers have been updated on this issue at their Forums recently. Kathryn Boulton replied that it was appropriate to bring the proposals to the Schools Forum first, the headteacher forums will be updated later this term. Heads and governors will continue to be updated on a regular basis.

Shirley Harvey stated that, following her conversations with headteachers, schools were unlikely to contribute financially to this project. However, Shirley felt that, if the plan is well received, schools may employ staff directly to support the infrastructures provided by the LA.

Schools Forum agreed to:

- (i) Act as the Project Board for this major development
- (ii) The other proposed roles and responsibilities as set out in section 2; and
- (iii) The proposed Project Plan in Appendix 2.

15/02 Apologies for Absence

Chris Allcock read out the apologies. Lee Floyd has resigned and Debbie Gerring has replaced him as a special school representative. Heather Rolfe from the Derby/Notts PSLA has indicated that she will be resigning. Cilla Hollman-Sykes, a governor at the Duke of Norfolk CE Primary School, has joined the Forum as a substitute member.

15/03 Minutes of the previous meeting – 16th December 2014

As a matter of accuracy on page 2 the second heading should read Dedicated School **Grant** (not Brant) and on page 6, para 1, Funding **is** finite (not in finite).

Other matters arising were;

The Schools Block DSG allocations were approved by Cabinet on 20th January 2015 and published to schools. As already indicated by Kathryn Boulton, the £3m contribution from the DSG towards the 'Wicked Issue' has been approved by the Secretary of State for 2015-16.

15/03 School Population 2002 – 2020

Kevin Firth (LA - Development Section) presented the paper showing total and area school populations, past and forecast, within Derbyshire. Pupil number forecasts are based on data provided by Health and don't take account of housing developments or local factors. Individual school numbers depend on birth rates, people moving home, development in the area and popularity of the school.

Kevin commented that new housing developments don't necessarily equate to increases in pupil numbers, also planning approvals don't always convert into actual buildings. People move into new houses but out of old ones, new housing doesn't create new people! At present there is an on-going consultation regarding a potential new secondary school in South Derbyshire.

No questions were raised by the Forum; the Chair thanked Kevin for his time and Forum agreed to note the analysis.

15/04 SEND – DfE Call for Evidence

Chris Allcock presented the paper and handed out an addendum regarding Question 1 which had been incorrectly presented.

After the next national Government election schools' funding is likely to be reviewed. The Schools Block has already been considered and now the DfE is looking at the High Needs Block (HNB) by issuing a Call for Evidence in the form of a list of questions. The deadline for response is 27th February 2015.

The paper included a draft response to each of the DfE's 18 questions; no comments were expressed by Forum members on the draft response.

15/05 Early Years and High Needs Funding 2015–16

Chris Allcock presented the paper. Much of the information was confirmation of previous figures considered by the Forum. The key points were as follows:

Appendix 1a set out proposed changes in High Needs Places for 2015 – 16; Two new profiles are proposed for High Dependency and Behaviour both at a value of £24,000 – it is estimated that approximately 40 pupils will migrate to the new profiles.

A Forum member asked if the re-profiled pupils are all in one school and are we creating problems in future years if the DSG settlements are not so big. Chris replied that, if the new profiles were not introduced, these pupils may have been assessed at the higher profile funding rate anyway. Any ongoing cost pressures will have to be considered as part of future years' settlements. Cathy Tattersfield added that if this money is not allocated more pupils will go to out of county placements instead which would cost a lot more.

Cathy suggested that it would be really useful if financial comparisons could be produced showing the LA's schools' costs per pupil compared with those for out of county providers. Children accessing out of county places often have the same or very similar needs as those in LA maintained provision but cost three to four times more. Private schools are marketing themselves to parents and they sometimes move at year 7 or 12.

Kathryn Boulton confirmed that the financial data is available and a piece of work is being undertaken with special school head-teachers to see what could be done differently and measure the efficiency of provision. This work could be brought to Schools Forum at a future date.

Martin Brader asked that this be done for the next meeting in June.

Julian Scholefield added that we need to 'invest to save' and keep Derbyshire children within Derbyshire.

The Early Years Block funding rate is unchanged from 2014-15, the only new item is an Early Years Pupil Premium Grant which will be introduced in 2015–16. This will be funded at 53p per hour which equates to approximately £300 per annum if a child takes up the full provision of 15 hours per week for 38 weeks. Access to the Pupil Premium Grant will be based on entitlement to benefits e.g. Income Support.

The report included a list of proposed central Early Years Budgets for 2015–16 which required formal consideration by the Forum. These allocations were agreed.

The remainder of the report was noted

15/06 – Alternative Provision – use of new providers

Chris Allcock presented the paper to bring to the Forum's attention a potential problem regarding the use of new providers for Alternative Provision. Derby City has encountered a problem where a Free School offering alternative provision has been set up and schools have commissioned and paid for some of their pupils to attend. The main issue is who should pay the place element (£8,000 or £10,000) and how might this be funded?

A Forum member stated that this could be a problem if a whole family transferred to such a school as parents often like all their children all to attend the same school.

Karen Gurney added that any new Free School set up is funded directly by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for the first two years and subsequently will be funded like any other school; therefore, this issue may not have been a problem in the past in Derby.

No consensus on how this funding pressure might be met, the Forum agreed only to note the potential issue at this stage.

15/07 Use of additional funding to support under-performing secondary schools 2015 - 17

Kathryn Boulton presented the paper. Kathryn explained that Derbyshire's vision is to provide a good or better school for all Derbyshire Learners by 2017. The proposal is to fund 11 schools with around £136,000 each for which they would provide a clear spending plan, cross referenced to existing improvement plans with explicit success criteria linked. Impact reports would be submitted to the LA and Schools Forum.

A long discussion took place during which the following views were expressed:

Has something similar happened in 2014-15? Kathryn confirmed that some of these schools received Schools Causing Concern (SCC) funding. Chris Allcock confirmed that the fund under consideration now is new for 2015–16.

The question was raised, if schools have had money in the past for this purpose and not improved, they should not receive further funding?

One member considered that any allocation needed to be accounted for on a similar basis to the Pupil Premium to ensure it was used to raise standards.

Another member commented that it is laudable that Derbyshire wants all its schools to be above average, but not everyone can be. Kathryn replied that it is achievable that all Derbyshire schools are within the top 25% nationally.

Another member asked why should this work? Many of these schools have struggled for years, have schools' own financial reserves been used first? If so, why hasn't that additional expenditure resulted in improvements? All schools are facing financial

difficulties and the member's own school has used up all its reserves in the past to improve standards and now has to make redundancies.

Another asked about schools that are currently good but at risk of becoming inadequate.

Do schools know about this money yet?

Schools with surplus funds should not receive additional money; they should use their own first.

Kathryn replied that schools' current balances could be taken into consideration, schools don't know the amount of money but are aware that something may be available; many secondary schools have falling pupil rolls and this is causing further financial problems. When a school is in a SCC category the LA has provided guidance, schools will be made very accountable for this new funding.

The discussion then moved onto the question of supporting academies, specifically why are we supporting them?

Chris Allcock replied that the DSG has to be used fairly across both LA and academies. The DSG grant conditions also clearly indicate this requirement.

However, Martin Brader pointed to a letter the LA had received from Lord Nash at the DfE stating that LAs should focus their school improvement work on the schools they maintain. Chris had sought clarification from the DfE on this point, however, a response is still awaited.

Another question was why are Newbold and St. Philip Howard, although they are identified as requiring improvement, not on the list of 11 schools to be supported? Kathryn replied that Newbold and St. Philip Howard have strong sponsors who will fund them.

It was commented that the Forum understood that the LA has a moral responsibility towards all children in Derbyshire, but do sponsors have the same responsibility?

Cathy Tattersfield said she has sat in meetings with schools which are considering becoming academies and headteachers often cite a reason for becoming an academy is that they are funded as well as failing schools whereas the LA doesn't fund them in that way currently. For example the Spencer Academy Trust is telling schools they will get them a better deal and provide better support.

The Chair said he thought the distribution of this funding should recognise the number on roll rather than a flat rate otherwise some schools would get far more per pupil than others. Kathryn replied that they had tried not to over complicate the distribution of this funding .

Another Forum member said some schools may argue it should be allocated to reflect deprivation or their last Ofsted report.

Cathy said another way would be to let LA officers decide and work with schools on a needs led basis.

Shirley Harvey said it was very sad that this money was required at all, some pupils have been let down in their education and the problems in these schools should have been identified earlier.

The Forum:

- (i) Noted the report;
- (ii) Expressed its views as recorded above;
- (iii) Requested that further information be provided on the financial position of the schools involved; and
- (iv) Agreed to receive further reports on the impact of the funding.

The date of the next meeting will be **9th June 2015 at 6.00pm** at County Hall.

The meeting closed at 8pm.