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MINUTES OF SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING - TUESDAY, 18 JUNE 2019

Present:

Primary School Head Teachers/Representatives

Ms J Hirst, Bispham Endowed (Chairman)

Ms E Allen, St John Vianney

Primary School Governor Representative

Ms M Lonican, School Governor, Our Lady of the Assumption

Academy School Representatives

Ms A Bailey, Star Academies

Mr S Brennand, Unity

Mr R Farley, Westminster

Ms T Harrison, Thames

Ms J Heywood, Revoe

Mr D Metcalf, St Georges

Mr E Vitalis, Bright Futures

Pupil Referral Unit

Ms W Casson, Educational Diversity

Non-Schools Members

Ms A Baines, Staff/Teacher Associations

Mr R Rendell, Early Years Strategic Group

Mr S Hughes, Blackpool and the Fylde College

In Attendance:

Councillor K Benson, Cabinet Member for Schools, Education and Aspiration

Ms D Booth, Director of Children's Services (Item 4 only)

Ms L Donkin, Consultant in Public Health

Ms M Foster, Head of Targeted Intervention Services (Item 4 only)

Ms J Hackett, Senior Accountant (For Mark Golden)

Ms S McCartan, Service Manager, Early Help (Item 4 only)

Mr P Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance Initiative Manager

Mr P Thompson, Head of SEND

Mr P Turner, Head of Schools, Safeguarding and Inclusion

Mrs H Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources

Mrs D Bowater, Democratic Governance Adviser (minutes)

1 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

New members of the forum were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Karen Haworth, Woodlands; Susan Fielder, Park Community Academy; Dean Logan, Achievement Through Collaboration; Neil Adams, Staff / Teacher associations and Mark Golden, Finance Manager, Blackpool Council.

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2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were noted.

3 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Schools Forum held on 12 March 2019 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting pending the amendment of the attendance information to change the school name from Devonshire to Revoe for Janice Heywood and the addition of apologies from Councillor Benson.

Matter arising from the minutes that were not discussed elsewhere on the agenda were considered:

Item 6: An external review of the Pupil Referral Unit had been commissioned by the Local Authority and an update was requested. It was noted that the reports had been received by the Local Authority for a factual accuracy check but no further progress had yet been made.

4 CHILDREN'S CENTRE CONSULTATION UPDATE

An update was provided in relation to the review of School Based Children's Centres from Diane Booth, Director of Children's Service, Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources and Moya Foster, Head of Targeted Intervention Services. Schools Forum members were asked to consider whether savings made from the Dedicated School Grant resulting from the review of children's centres could be used to meet any potential redundancies and pension strain costs relating to the transition to the new model arising in schools, academies and the local authority.

It was reported that the local authority were working with schools and academy trusts to mitigate the risk of redundancies by sharing vacancies internally by the staff affected.

It was noted that in Blackpool, a decision was taken to contribute £1 million from the Dedicated School Grant budget towards the cost of running school based children's centres. Due to the National Funding formula, the contributions to combined budgets were re-classified as historic commitments and funded outside of the formula. The department for education announced that the level of expenditure relating to historic commitments would reduce from 2020/21.

The review included the nine centres across Blackpool including the two local authority designated Children's Centres and seven commissioned from schools. Once agreed, the new model would facilitate the majority of savings through the unwinding of the Dedicated Schools Grant in year 2 of implementation. The local authority would then fund the centres as their contribution would remain unchanged.

It was reported that provision of multi agency family support system to children and families in the town would continue but make better use of services with the reduced funding available.

Following a question, it was suggested that the redundancy costs be met using the same

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proportion in which Children's Centres were originally funded (two thirds from the Dedicated Schools Grant and one third from the local authority). In response it was reported that the local authority would have no spare money to fund such costs, as all available resources would be required to deliver the new family hub model.

Following a further question about sustaining the same level of service through Children's Centres, it was noted that the centres would not run in their current format but would provide a hub and spoke model and avoid any duplication of services but continue to provide multi agency family support.

A final question sought clarity on the term 'pension strain'. It was confirmed that any member of staff over the age of 55 years who was made redundant was entitled to draw their pension, which placed a strain on the pension fund.

Schools Forum members in attendance were asked to consider whether savings made from the Dedicated School Grant resulting from the review of children's centres be used to meet any potential redundancies and pension strain costs relating to the transition to the new model arising in schools, academies and the local authority. Following a vote, Schools Forum Members agreed to the recommendation.

Resolved:

- **That savings made from the Dedicated School Grant resulting from the review of children's centres be used to meet any potential redundancies and pension strain costs relating to the transition to the new model arising in schools, academies and the local authority.**

5 PUBLIC HEALTH UPDATE

Lynn Donkin, Consultant in Public Health provided an update report on work undertaken by Public Health since the previous meeting.

Thanks were extended to schools for their participation in the Schools Health Education Unit (SHEU) Survey and a report of the findings would be available at the end of the year.

Following a question, it was noted that the Give Up Loving Pop (GULP) campaign was run through the 'fit to go' programme in schools and all schools had good participation.

Finally, it was recognised that Lynn Donkin would no longer attend the Schools Forum meetings due to a new job role, thanks were extended to her for her contribution to the meetings. It was confirmed that input from Public Health would continue and a new representative would be identified.

It was agreed to circulate the Public Health Update to all School Headteachers for information.

Resolved:

- **To circulate the Public Health Update to all School Headteachers for information (Danielle Bowater)**

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6 LOCAL AUTHORITY UPDATE

Paul Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion, provided a Local Authority update report. It was highlighted that to recruit to the School Improvement Adviser role following the pending retirement of the current post holder was a priority.

It was noted that the specialist maths practitioner would commence work for the Local Authority in September 2019 and in response to a question, it was confirmed that any school could request and receive support from the practitioner who would work four days per month. In response to a further question relating to the funding of the role, it was acknowledged that it was funded from the local authority general budget not through a formula.

It was agreed to circulate the Local Authority Update to all School Headteachers for information.

The report was noted.

Resolved:

- **To circulate Local Authority Update to all School Headteachers for information (Danielle Bowater)**

7 INCLUSION

Paul Turner, Head of Service for School Standards, Safeguarding and Inclusion, provided an Inclusion update report. It was reported that the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions has risen and there continued to be a lot of children placed in special educational needs settings. Paul Turner urged Schools Forum members to consider how to address inclusion and look at the spending of the high needs block fund to better address the issues.

It was suggested that special educational needs and mental health should be given more consideration and that a range of responses to address the presenting issues was required. It was also urged that the funds be spent on prevention rather than reaction.

Solutions were sought as to how to spend the funding available and to look to provide support within mainstream settings. Schools Forum members discussed the options of inclusion training for all staff and use of the current expertise available from the Pupil Referral Unit and within special schools.

It was reported that there was a Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy and a draft would be circulated.

It was noted that there was a scheduled High Needs Funding Working Group on 27 June 2019 where a gap analysis of the Inclusion and SEND Strategy could be undertaken to look at specialist and alternative provision and develop some recommendations.

It was also agreed that Jo Hirst and Wendy Casson would meet to discuss options for inclusion for Primary and Special School headteachers.

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Paul Turner provided an update on the Illuminate funding. It was suggested that the allocation of the funds required further development and the rationale and criteria be altered. In some cases the amount of funding allocation would make no considerable difference therefore it was suggested that there may be an option to request further funds.

It was proposed that from September 2019, the Illuminate funding be included in the wider considerations around high needs block funding, with consultation on the process undertaken and completed by November 2019.

Schools Forum members voted on whether to agree to freeze the allocation of the Illuminate funding from September 2019 pending the review of the allocation process and backdate any payments should new criteria be agreed. The Schools Forum members agreed to the proposal.

Resolved:

- **It was agreed that Jo Hirst and Wendy Casson would meet to discuss options for Inclusion for Primary and Special School headteachers**
- **It was agreed to freeze the allocation of the Illuminate funding from September 2019 pending the review of the allocation process and backdate any payments should new criteria be agreed.**

8 HIGH NEEDS UPDATE

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources provided a High Needs update report. Consideration of the High Needs Budget medium-term financial plan highlighted the forecasted overspend for 2019-20 as £1.5million, higher than the projected £1.2million with the in-year deficit likely to continue to increase to over £1.9million in 2020-21. Using the assumptions, the cumulative deficit against the Dedicated Schools Grant would reach over £5million by the end of 2021-22.

Following a question, it was recognised that the financial projection assumptions within the High Needs medium-term financial plan were determined through assessing past trends and forecasting where the students would be for the next year.

It was reported that the Department for Education's call for evidence sought feedback about whether the current system for funding special educational needs and alternative provision was effective to improve the outcomes for young people. The call for evidence focused on the support within mainstream settings. The deadline to respond to the evidence questions was 31 July 2019 and schools colleagues were encouraged to input to the response.

It was requested that Schools Forum agree to the retention of the existing methodology for the calculation of the Exceptional Circumstances funding in 2019-20. It was noted that the methodology was reviewed annually during the transitional period to the 'hard' national funding formula. Using the existing methodology, 10 schools would be eligible for the Exceptional Circumstances funding for the summer term 2019, which was the same as during the 2018-19 financial year.

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Schools Forum members in attendance were asked to consider whether to retain the existing methodology for the calculation of Exceptional Circumstances funding in 2019-20. Schools Forum agreed to the proposal.

Resolved:

- **To retain the existing methodology for the calculation of Exceptional Circumstances funding in 2019-20.**

9 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT - YEAR END BUDGET MONITORING 2018-19

Jenny Hackett, Senior Accountant, Blackpool Council provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant year-end budget monitoring 2018-19. It was reported that there was a £443,000 overspend with the main areas of overspend being out of borough placements and post 16 education. The Pupil Referral Unit had forecast a reduction but this was at a slower rate than previously anticipated and the demand from special schools had been higher than expected.

Considering the reserves, a small surplus had been brought forward from the previous year of £26,000 however 2019-20 began with a deficit of £417,000.

Following a question, it was confirmed that there was no risk to the school reserves as it was a separate budget.

The report was noted.

10 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT - BUDGET MONITORING 2019-20

Jenny Hackett, Senior Accountant, Blackpool Council provided an update on the Dedicated Schools Grant budget monitoring 2019-20.

It was reported that since the budgets were set expenditure on mainstream top-up funding had increased and special school numbers were expected to rise further resulting in the forecast increased overspend from £1.207m to £1.509m.

It was commented that every child who was placed in an out of borough specialist school cost up to £50,000. It was further commented that where a mainstream setting could commit to provide specialist provision within their school setting, this funding could be used in their school to staff appropriate support. It was requested that this message be reiterated to headteachers and Chief Executive Officers of Academy Trusts.

The report was noted.

11 DEDICATED SCHOOLS GRANT - DEFICIT RECOVERY PLANS

Hilary Wood, Head of Business Support and Resources, Blackpool Council informed the Forum of the Department for Education's guidance relating to the production of recovery plans relating to Dedicated Schools Grant deficits. The threshold for the requirement of a deficit recovery plan had reduced to a Dedicated Schools Grant cumulative deficit of 1% or more, where it had previously been 2%. The forecast for 2019-20 expenditure showed a potential deficit of over £1.9m by March 2020, in which case the Local Authority would

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be required to submit a deficit recovery plan by June 2020.

It was commented that central government should be aware of the continued pressures placed on schools but also recognised that the deficit recovery plan should be in place as required.

The report and the recovery plan template were noted.

12 SCHEME FOR FINANCING SCHOOLS

Paul Sharples, School Funding and Private Finance initiative Manager, provided a report outlining the changes to Blackpool's Scheme for Financing Schools and maintained schools representatives were asked to approve the revisions with effect from 18 June 2019.

It was noted that the Blackpool scheme contained more restrictive requirements with regards to the audit of voluntary and private funds than those recommended in the most recent Department for Education statutory guidance. The current and revised wording was considered and the maintained schools representatives in attendance agreed to the changes outlined.

Resolved:

- **The revised wording in the scheme for financing schools was agreed by the maintained schools representatives in attendance.**

13 SCHOOLS FORUM MEETING DATES 2020

Following consideration, the Schools Forum agreed the meetings dates for 2020 as outlined on the Agenda namely:

Tuesday 14 January 2020
Tuesday 10 March 2020
Tuesday 16 June 2020
Tuesday 13 October 2020

14 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting of the Schools Forum was agreed as Tuesday 8 October 2019 at 9.15am, @the grange.

Chairman

(The meeting ended 11.33am)

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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